

Church as the Community Center in Whitby, West Virginia McClellan, Virginia

Story Narrative:

What does living in a small town teach you?

"Living in a small town teaches you that individuals can be an individual, except that in a small town, you just know everyone. The thing I learned about living in a small town which was Whitby, West Virginia which is a coal mining town, is that a lot of small towns have churches. It's really odd. You go to this really small place and you have a town and you have a church. Every one of these little small towns, although they're less than a mile away from each other, has a church.

A church in a small town serves two purposes. One is of course place of worship. The other one is it's a community center. It's where you go to meet and greet, and just see what's happening in the town. A big myth though is that everybody's religious in small towns, or that as you go out in small town America there are just wholesome folks. It's a really total drag to hear that but the reality is your church kept the community together. Invariably, in many small coal mining towns at least and also any small town, when the church dies, the town dies. What I learned is that it's important to have a church not only as a place to worship but as a place to keep your community together."

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