

THE STEWARDSHIP OF NEIGHBORLINESS

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, SELC Stewardship Director

THREE CARDINAL RULES ON BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

1. Be Sensitive to Your Neighbor's needs

Everybody has needs. Who doesn't have problems? A pastor once had a sign on his door: "Come to me with your problems and, if you don't have any, come anyway and tell me how you do it." It's God's will to be concerned about the well-being of your neighbor. Cain had a problem with that. When God asked him regarding his brother, Abel, he said: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9) Christian stewardship involves being "our brother's keeper". 1 John 2:10 states: "whoever loves his brother lives in the light." Jesus taught: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 19:19b) In the Parable of the Good Samaritan a penetrating question is posed: "Which of these three do you think was neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" An expert in the law replied: "The one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him (and us): "Go and do likewise." The word "steward" means "caretaker". Christian stewardship involves a commitment to care about our neighbors - especially in their time of need.

2. Mind Your Manners

Politeness is essential for good neighborliness. The words, "Please" and "May I", are necessary for cordial relationships. Humble requests are usually met; demands are resisted and tend to alienate. How sweet the sound of the words, "Thank You". Showing appreciation beyond words with a thank you card or gift cements neighborly relationships. And don't be invasive. Respect your neighbor's right to privacy. Excessive time in conversation could end up a resented intrusion. Then again, no neighbor is perfect. To forgive and forget is necessary for neighborly stability. "To err is human; to forgive is divine" wrote Alexander Pope. Everyone has quirks, including you. So be understanding. Be ready to overlook the faults of your neighbors. Accept them for who they are. When things fly awfully awry, listen patiently, keep your "cool", zip your lip, count to a hundred and walk away with a smile. Repaying evil with good helps heal ailing relationships.

3. Mind Your Own Business

Do you have a nosy neighbor or are you the neighborhood snoop? A "Nosy Neighbor Survey" was conducted by ServiceMagic.com. Here's a sampling:

4. Have you ever caught a neighbor red-handed in an act of being nosy?
 - a. No 28%
 - b. Yes 67%
 - c. No, but it's only a matter of time 5%
6. What kinds of snooping do you suspect go on where you live now or in the past? (Select all that apply)
 - a. Eavesdropping 32%
 - b. Looking through trash cans 7%
 - c. Gossiping about other neighbors 62%
 - d. Looking over the backyard fence 48%
 - e. Watching thru the window 73%

Sometimes its good to have a watchful neighbor - like the time one told you about your teenager throwing a wild party when you weren't home. But there's a difference between being a watchful neighbor and a meddling snoop. Snoopy neighbors love to get involved in everyone else's business, delight in gossip and are quicker than a snake to strike and report you whenever for whatever. "Good fences make good neighbors" wrote the poet, Robert Frost. Respect your neighbor's privacy. Don't be a meddlesome neighbor like the young widows in 1 Timothy 5:13 - "gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to."



Shaking hands as an act of trust, friendship and non-aggression originated during the Roman Empire. Claspng right hands was symbolical of disarming hands from aggressive assault.