

Commentary: Neighbors' peace despite political differences

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"We don't see them as Democrats. They're the Mitchells. We know they are good people who live next door. We love them."

In a country where [93 percent](#) of us say civility is a problem, this [story in *The Wall Street Journal*](#) is welcome news. We meet the Gates family, who are lifelong Republicans, and the Mitchells, who are lifelong Democrats. The two families are next-door neighbors in suburban Pittsburgh. The Gates home displays a Trump yard sign; the Mitchell home displays a Biden sign.

But next to each there is another sign which says, "WE [HEART] THEM" with an arrow pointing to the other family's home and "One Nation" inside the heart drawing.

What is the key to such civility among families who disagree politically?

Each couple has three children, roughly the same ages. They share a love for hockey; the boys play on the same team. They gather for dinner together each Monday evening. As the *Journal* notes: "They don't argue. They don't label each other. They listen to each other's perspective, look for common ground, and recognize that reasonable and good people can reach different conclusions."

Gillian Mitchell, age 14, says: "I'm not a voter, but I think people should be mature and not argue all the time or fight. Fighting just leads to more fighting."

“One of the best set of hearings”

The U.S. Senate is expected to vote later today on President Trump’s nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. During a rare Saturday session, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) [announced](#) her support, making it more likely Republicans will have enough votes to confirm Barrett’s nomination.

However, as another example of how bitterly divided our partisan politics have become, the Senate Judiciary Committee [voted](#) 12 to 0 last week to advance the nomination to the full Senate. The vote was unanimous only because the 10 Democrats on the committee boycotted the vote to protest what they called a “sham process.”

After Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) [thanked](#) committee chairman Lindsey Graham (R-SC) last week for presiding over “one of the best set of hearings that I’ve participated in,” *NBC News* [reported](#) “calls for her ouster from Democratic leadership were swift, unequivocal and relentless.”

Why Sudan’s agreement with Israel is so historic

In other news, Israel and Sudan will normalize ties in a U.S.-brokered deal. The agreement is part of what *The Wall Street Journal* [calls](#) “a broader diplomatic realignment in the Middle East.”

Friday’s announcement follows accords Israel entered last month with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Unlike these countries, however, Sudan has engaged in armed conflict with Israel in the past as part of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the 1967 Six-Day War.

Sudan also hosted the Arab League summit after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War

at which eight Arab nations approved what is known as the “Three Nos”—no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiations with Israel.

The United States designated Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism in 1993 for harboring Osama bin Laden and others and accused the African nation of supporting Hamas, Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. U.S. officials have suspected Iran of using Sudan to smuggle weapons to Hamas militants in Gaza.

In other words, Sudan’s normalization of relations with Israel truly is historic. U.S. and Israeli officials say they expect Morocco and Oman, along with several other Muslim and Arab nations, to join the so-called Abraham Accords in coming months as well.

A Persian proverb on peace

Neighbors who oppose each other politically can still be friends. Judge Barrett’s confirmation would end the divisive process of filling Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s vacant seat. Sudan and other Arab nations are taking unprecedented steps toward peace with Israel. All of this is good news in our divisive days.

However, the Nov. 3 election will not end political rancor; some fear it will only exacerbate tensions. The confirmation of Judge Barrett would not end battles over the Supreme Court, as court-packing could prove an even more divisive issue. Israel’s agreement with Sudan will not lessen the threats posed by Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, and it may exacerbate them.

As urgent as political peacemaking is, the ultimate key to peace is not political. A Persian proverb quoted by Cal Thomas in his new book *America’s Expiration Date* still is relevant: “There can never be peace between nations until it is first known that true peace is within the souls of

men.”

The prophet said to God, “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you” (Isaiah 26:3). Jesus told his disciples, “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace” (John 16:33). Paul testified, “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

How to “become a loving person”

Let’s seek to be at peace with the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Ask your Lord to show you anything keeping you from “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7), then confess any sin or take any step he brings to mind. Ask the Spirit to produce the “fruit” of peace in your spirit (Galatians 5:22). Then determine to give others what God has given you.

Frederick Buechner noted that by God’s sanctifying grace, “the forgiven person starts to become a forgiving person, the healed person to become a healing person, the loved person to become a loving person.”

Will you be a “loving person” today?

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[How neighbors with conflicting political views stayed friends: Good news for peace and the best news of all](#) was first published in The Daily Article by the [Denison Forum](#). Daily Articles are republished in the Baptist Standard under agreement with Denison Forum and are not intended to represent the Standard’s views.