



Who is my neighbor?

Stories of social ministry in action

In answer to the question “And who is my neighbor?” in Luke 10:25, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan, an outcast traveler who stops along the road to give assistance and sustenance to a victim of violence. Every day, the staff of Lutheran Community Services Northwest reach out, reflecting the compassionate face of God, in service to our neighbors and our communities. Here is the story of one of the thousands of lives touched each year through our ministry.

Meet our neighbor,

Greta

“Are you ready yet?”

In her own words

My friend Joe has cancer. He doesn't have a lot of family nearby, but he has me. I am Joe's Senior Companion. Senior Companions are seniors volunteering to help other seniors and people with disabilities. Joe was one of the first people I was partnered with when I joined the program three years ago.

I used to volunteer a lot. But a few years ago, I had to give it up to care for my husband. After his death, I found myself living alone for the first time in my life. I suffered anxiety attacks, and had trouble leaving the house. So I started seeing a counselor. After a few sessions, she suggested I volunteer, and showed me an ad from Lutheran Community Services' Senior Companion Program. I didn't really want to get involved, but week after week, she asked me, “Are you ready yet?” Finally, I decided I was. And I am so glad I did!

Every senior I work with has become a new friend - like Miko. She and her husband moved to an assisted living residence when they retired. Their friends and family are now further away and can only visit

occasionally. I go and visit her once or twice a week. Sometimes I take my little grandson - Miko really loves being around children, and there aren't any little ones where she lives.

But Joe is one of my favorites. Perhaps it's because we've been together for so long. He moved a few months back - now we live 40 miles apart. But I still drive out to see him once a week and take him to his chemo-therapy appointments every three weeks. When he's feeling up to it, we go out for tea or take a drive along the waterfront. It helps lift his spirits.

You know, most seniors don't need a lot of help. What they really need is a friend - someone to be there for them when they are lonely. And being able to help them has been a blessing for me too. When I lost my husband, I thought that I might end up alone. But now I have all these new friends. Sometimes they ask, “What would I do without you?” But, the truth is, I would be lost without them.

Greta reminds us of the importance of friendship. Just as Christ walks with us, we extend the gift of friendship to our neighbors, especially those who are isolated and lonely.

Greta is a volunteer in LCS' Senior Companion Program. The program provides seniors in Washington's Pierce and Kitsap Counties with volunteer opportunities - providing companionship and support services to individuals in need, allowing them to live more independently.

“Who is my neighbor?” presents the many faces of social outreach ministry, as carried out by our agency in communities across the Northwest.

For more information about the programs of Lutheran Community Services Northwest, and to learn how you can help support our ministry, contact your nearest LCS office or visit our web site at www.lcsnw.org

