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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Sociology  Written and researched by [Bob Murray, PhD](http://www.upliftprogram.com/bob_murray.html)  [Latest News](http://www.upliftprogram.com/healthupdates.html) | [Back Issues](http://www.upliftprogram.com/newsletter_issues.html) | Get updates: [Subscribe Now](http://www.upliftprogram.com/sign_up.html)   * [When is A Church Not A Church?](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h10) When is a neighborhood not a neighborhood? * [If Richer Isn't Happier, What Is?](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h9) A good marriage is worth $100,000 a year. * [Junk Food for Breakfast](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h8) Children eat sweets and crisps for breakfast. * [TV Wrestling Leads to Violence](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h7) Watching American wrestling is strongly linked to violence. * [Daycare Leads to Aggression](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h6) The longer children spend in daycare the more aggressive they become. * [What You Don't Eat May Kill You](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h5)  Eating disorders are amongst the biggest killers. * [Juries 'Deaf to Ear-witness Failings'](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h4) The law ignores research showing that our memory of voices is very poor. * [Happiness Is ...](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h3) The four key elements of happiness revealed. * [Bottom Slapping Isn't Sexual Harassment High Court Says](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h2) Two related reports call the libido of Italian men into question. * [Socialising keeps you young](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_01.html#h1) Surprising findings as Harvard researchers publish 13yr study into ageing.  |  | | --- | | [Previous](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_02.html)   [1](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social.html) | [2](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_04.html) | [3](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_03.html) | [4](http://www.upliftprogram.com/h_social_02.html) | 5 |   When is A Church Not A Church?  July 30, 2001  A court case in Connecticut spotlights the meaning of a "house of worship." The town of New Milford went to court to prevent a man from holding prayer meetings in his own home on the grounds that the property wasn't zoned as a church.  Immediately the case became a constitutional issue, and it didn't take long for the plight of Robert and Mary Murphy to become a cause celebre in the conservative world. The American Center for Law and Justice, an international public interest law firm founded by evangelist Pat Robertson, took up the banner, filing a federal lawsuit on behalf of the couple to prevent the town from enforcing its dictate.  They also received backing from the American Libertarian Party. "No American town should be able to snob-zone God out of existence," said Steve Dasbach, the party's national director.  The town countered that the issue was parking -- each day that meetings were held at the house there were up to 30 cars parked in the small cul-de-sac and there were complaints from the neighbors.  The Murphys won.  *It seems to me that both the town and the ACLJ are missing the point, and it is a serious one. It is a question of how we define 'neighborhood.' Most 'neighborhoods' in the US and other developed countries are little more than dormitories from which people go to work in the city. A functioning neighborhood, I believe, must be more than that. In order to achieve happiness, as many studies have pointed out, we must be able to live in association with people who share our beliefs or have common assumptions about how the world operates. It is from this that we get, to a large extent, our feeling of physical safety and in part, perhaps, our sense of purpose. A dormitory neighborhood does not fulfil this elementary human need, yet our laws often openly work to prevent local neighborhoods based on shared beliefs -- witness the outlawing of the words "walk to worship" in real estate ads in many US states on the grounds that the words are a code for "this is a Jewish community." As part of the* [*Uplift Program*](http://www.upliftprogram.com/about.html) *we teach that this need for a more meaningful concept of community is one of the fundamental requirements for human happiness. The real problem in what the Murphy's were doing, I believe, is that the people who came to the prayer meetings had to use their cars to get there and the people in the immediate proximity were alienated. They would have done better to have started a co-housing project peopled by those who shared their beliefs. BM*  [Read more](http://www2.marketwatch.com/news/story.asp?guid=%7B49862C71%2D8388%2D4E2D%2D990E%2D9FF3B48C7A24%7D&siteid=yhoo) in *CBS Marketwatch* | |