



Getting Started

This guide is about your “**third place**,” or the place aside from work and home where you spend the most time and get the most value. These places are essential for getting our needs met, and often form our community. This guide will help start a conversation around what you value, where you are going for those values, and how Christian communities may serve as third places.

For some it’s church. For others it’s pub trivia, a coffee shop, the library, CrossFit, gaming, a book club, or yoga. In today’s world there are so many options for third places.

Third places are important, especially if you live in individualistic societies and cultures where you feel isolated even when surrounded by others. Third places are restorative in reconnecting you with others, particularly those who are unlike you.

A recent survey of 296 young adults (23-29 year-olds), indicated that these are some of the most common third places for this age group:

- The Gym
- The Outdoors
- Social Groups
- Exercise Classes/Sports
- Yoga Studios/Meditation

How do these third places compare to your third place or the social communities around you?

“Third places contribute to the life worth living. They root us; they give us an identity; they restore us; they support us. Bottom line: They allow us to be us. And everyone knows our name.”

Christopher Peterson

“When I first discovered in the early 1980s the Italian espresso bars in my trip to Italy, the vision was to re-create that for America—a third place that had not existed before. Starbucks re-created that in America in our own image; a place to go other than home or work.”

Howard Schultz

◆ Choose One

Who else is at your third place?

What is your third place and what values do you get from it?

What type of third places did you have growing up?

How much should or could the church play into your third place?



Church as a Third Place

The church used to be a common third place.

Most big events took place there, nearly the whole town attended, and the church was capable of meeting many core values. It served as a place where everyone came together and formed community. However, as other places are now better at meeting young adults' values (such as yoga providing peace), the church seems to have become a less popular choice.

One main purpose of a third place is community, which is something that is valued in Scripture:

"**24** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."
Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV

"**42** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. **46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Acts 2:42-47, NIV

Do you expect your church to be your community? Why or why not?

Which of the fellowship activities are most meaningful to you?



Going Deeper

For many people, it's important to them that their third place meets these criteria:

- Focused on community with others, with conversation being the main activity
- An inviting place for everyone
- Everyone is treated equally
- Facilitates interaction with those who are different than you
- Highly accessible
- Inexpensive or free
- Plain and unpretentious
- Fosters a playful mood
- Contributes to the life worth living

Choose one

What about these factors of a third place excites you?

What about these factors of a third place feels limiting or exclusive?

Has your church adopted a third place mentality? Why or why not?

The Journey Ahead

Try out a new third place this week. How does it match the criteria above? How do the values you receive from it differ from your usual third place?



Ask your friends what their third places are and what values they are getting from them.



Think of a few creative ways the local church could provide a third place for your community.

To Learn More



The Great Good Place by Ray Oldenburg

Life Together by Bonhoeffer

True Spiritual Community by Larry Crab



How We Gather by Ter Kuile & Thurston

It's Time to Take Back Third Places
<https://www.curbed.com/2018/5/31/17414768/starbucks-third-place-bathroom-public>



Happy Places, Third Places <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-good-life/200912/happy-places-third-places>



The Secret to Living Longer May Be Your Social Life

https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_pinker_the_secret_to_living_longer_may_be_your_social_life/transcript?language=en#t-88734



<https://player.fm/series/irenicast-a-progressive-christian-podcast>

<https://player.fm/series/irenicast-a-progressive-christian-podcast/chosen-community-creation-cultivation-consent-143>

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