



GCORR
CHURCH TO
COMMUNITY:
CHURCH FOR
ALL PEOPLE

THIRD PLACES

Every community has those special places that just seem to draw neighbors together. A local hangout where people can talk, relax, and enjoy one another, with no fanfare or pretense. Is your church on of those places?

'Third Places' are those gathering points within a community that are neither one's home (your first place), nor one's workplace (your second place), but the spaces we find ourselves in between (see: 'The Great Good Place' by Ray Oldenburg). Healthy Third Places actively transcend cultural barriers by creating accessible, equitable spaces for people to meaningfully connect with one another. You don't need to look a certain way, you don't need a membership card, you don't even need to have much money. Just come and be yourself.

When done well, Third Places bring people together across traditional divides of race and class. People come on equal footing, allowing for authentic conversation and the building of trust. Then, as trust is formed, the foundations are laid for meaningful transformation to create an opportunity rich community that benefits all its residents, not just the privileged. Third Places are often found in the form of libraries, bars, barber shops, or parks. But what about the Church?

At their best, churches are welcoming and inclusive of all. We strive to be a complete Body of Christ that is not made only of hands, but eyes and ears and feet as well! We know that we need the unique gifts of our many diverse members to truly live into our collective calling as Christ's hands and feet on this earth.



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In a world of too much divide, what if our churches are a part of the solution in bringing people together across cultural divides? What would it look like for our churches to create Third Place both within and outside their walls? After all, aren't we just preparing for that day we will all be in that ultimate Great Good Place together?

Observe your neighborhood: Where do people like to hang out? Where people from many background come together for conversation? Why do people like to gather there? What type of environment facilitates this type of setting?

Observe your church: How can your church model some of the features of the Third Places you observed in your community? How might your church help put visitor at ease as they enter your space? What sort of activities or services might your church offer that would facilitate bring people together across cultural divides?