

Thursday Circle

What is it?

Thursday Circle is a group that came about from the success of *Third Wednesday*, a monthly pub meet-up of libertarian-leaning individuals who previously only knew each other via Twitter. It is named after the group set up by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to oppose the nazification of the German Church during the Third Reich.

Knowing how refreshing and life-affirming it is to meet face-to-face, especially after two years of attempted enforced isolation, it became really clear to me that this formula would work for a Christian meet-up.

Initially inviting friends within the *Third Wednesday* groups by word-of-mouth, we started meeting in the rarely-used upstairs room of a favourite local pub in Worcester. After about 6 meetings it's become clear that there are as many different types of Christian as there are people who attend. We've had Catholic, Protestant, Church of England, Church of Scotland, Church of Wales, Chapel, Methodist, ex-Jehovah's Witness, high church, low church and one regular who doesn't yet identify as a Christian. One thing we all have in common is a dissatisfaction with the state of The Church as it stands today and this is one of the major topics discussed in the meetings. Another thing we all have in common is that we are fans of Irreverend Podcast, so it seemed obvious to ask Jamie Franklin for help in expanding the idea.

How does it work?

The format of the meetings has emerged organically and has been helped considerably by the addition of a church Rector who was already part of the *Third Wednesday* group. The meetings take place on the fourth Thursday of every month. We meet at 7pm and aim to start the meeting at 7.30pm. We sit in a single group, around one or two tables so that everyone can hear everyone else. We start with a short prayer, then the conversation starts naturally enough, helped by the fact that we're in a pub and everyone can have a drink if they like. This helps the more shy overcome their nervousness. It should go without saying that this is not a heavy drinking session as it is a "school night". I act as a kind of low-key chairman to keep the conversation vaguely on-topic (faith in relation to current affairs). Everyone gets a chance to speak and we do our best to have only one person speaking at a time. The first session is a chance for everyone to say a few words about themselves, what their church background is and what they're looking for. Having a priest present is a big bonus as we can defer to them on things biblical or technical. We try to call time at 10pm as everyone has to be somewhere the next day, and we end with a prayer and in our case as we have a priest, a blessing.

Thursday Circle is not:

A prayer meeting, a Bible discussion group, a drinking club, denominational, overtly political, exclusive or anti-church.

Thursday Circle is:

Grass roots, traditional and rebellious.

To start a group local to you:

1. Find one or two like-minded souls locally.
2. Find a venue - a bookable room in a pub is good for privacy and intimacy but also accessibility and the ability to have a drink if needed.
3. Let JF or DD know about it and they can add it to the list/map and let others in the area know about it.
4. Be the host, welcome guests, run the group, encourage discussion.

If you can land yourself a sympathetic priest who isn't on a recruitment mission for their own church then so much the better. There will be a website with a map in due course.

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