



CIRCLES
+
DINNERS

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toolkit

CIRCLES + DINNERS

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We must all hang together,
or assuredly we shall all hang separately.

Benjamin Franklin

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I never considered a difference of opinion in
politics, in religion, in philosophy,
as cause for withdrawing from a friend.

Thomas Jefferson

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In 1787, 55 delegates, gathered at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, accomplished a seemingly impossible task. Through debate and compromise, face-to-face, this disparate group united opposing opinions and priorities into an entirely new model of government. It wasn't a perfect document, as Ben Franklin himself admitted in his final speech, but it was a testament to working together.

To mark the 230th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution, 92Y & The Village Square call for a return to that goal of collaboration.

Join us the week of September 17, 2017, as we revive the American tradition of engaging conversation and dynamic friendship across profound disagreement, and forge a path forward.

HOST A BEN FRANKLIN CIRCLE AND/OR A JEFFERSON DINNER

Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, each in his own way, left us with a unique model to bring people together face-to-face, to hash out differences, to explore big questions and ultimately, to form the personal bonds that moved the country forward. Franklin gathered a small group of community leaders weekly to explore how they could be better people and citizens through the lens of 13 civic virtues. Jefferson regularly hosted private dinners for political opponents to get to know one another outside of the political sphere.

92Y & The Village Square re-envision these intimate gatherings for the 21st Century.

BEN FRANKLIN CIRCLES

gather small groups of 10-12 people to regularly reflect on Franklin's 13 civic virtues and how those qualities can help us be both better individuals and better citizens. Circles encourage people of different backgrounds to reflect on core values like justice and moderation, humility and order.

JEFFERSON DINNERS

gather between 8 and 14 people around a dinner table for a single conversation about a topic of interest or concern. Just as Jefferson invited early legislators described as having come to Washington "in the spirit of avowed misunderstanding, without the smallest wish to agree," this American tradition gathers people with differences to share a meal around their common humanity.