



# MESA

## NAME:

La Mesa is a Spanish word for table. It suggests a way of coming together in mutual acceptance, respect, and service. It reminds us of the life and message of Jesus - who used a table to tell the story of God's welcoming and reconciling love. In that spirit, we gather around a table for conversation and then rise from the table to serve our neighbours in the Spirit of Jesus. In Africa, the Swahili word "meza" and the Kirundi word "imeza" have a similar meaning, as does the Bahasa word "meja" (from Malaysia and Indonesia), which can also be the word for liturgy. In every language, the image of gathering for a meal carries a similar feeling of warmth, solidarity, and companionship.

## AIM:

- 1 To embody and articulate what we perceive to be an emerging ethos amongst diverse groups of followers of Jesus, and to help that ethos deepen and spread through a global spiritual and social movement.
- 2 To encourage online connections and in-person gatherings which will bring together networks of emerging missional ethos around the world.

## ANTICIPATED INFLUENCE:

Mesa seeks to facilitate the emergence of a new Christian ethos by helping those who embody it find one another, know and encourage one another, and model that ethos for others in their local contexts. We hope to achieve this through one-to-one relationship building, online networking, and regional and global gatherings. How we meet is as important as anything we do or say.

As our name suggests, we are interested in creating relational tables rather than traditional hierarchies or structures. Around these tables, we need not be separated by the categories that have too often divided us in the past - Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant, liberal and conservative, colonizer and colonized, clergy and laity. Instead, we can meet one another as sisters and brothers in Christ, members of the Kingdom-of-God community and colleagues in mission.

As grass-roots relationship-based gatherings we hope to serve and augment the work of existing churches and organizations (both traditional and non-traditional) and inspire new ones.

## BACKGROUND:

A growing group of Christian leaders, thinkers, and activists from around the world have been exploring a new Christian ethos. Though coming from many varied backgrounds, we find ourselves travelling with commonalities of praxis and passion in our faith and mission. As a circle of friends and colleagues, we seek to provide a constructive, viable, and hopeful community for connection and conversation.

As some forms of Christianity are becoming increasingly reactionary, strident, ingrown, consumerist, or exclusionary, the need for an ethos which seeks a different future becomes even more acute. In response, many Christians around the world, especially younger, self-critical, and socially conscious ones, are deciding that they can no longer associate with the Christian faith as it is expressed in their contexts. Many seekers are presented with no viable Christian ethos with which they would ever want to affiliate.

We believe it is time to now intentionally bring together a network of people who are already on a journey with this ethos from key platforms around the world. Our goal is to open the way for a global conversation which relationally connects diverse regional networks, both existing and emerging. This network will not be a new organization in the familiar sense, because it aims to enrich and stimulate existing and emerging organizations rather than control or compete with them in any way. It will focus on ethos and example rather than institutional profile. It is not anticipated that participants need to agree on everything but that they are willing to give space to discern and struggle together with the realities of their diverse contexts.

We have four main audiences for our work:

1. Emerging leaders: We hope to build a growing sense of connection and belonging among new generations of Christian leaders around the world who seek a similar ethos, a way of relating, and a developing integral practice of mission in our world.
2. The poor and vulnerable: If our efforts don't result in solidarity with and service alongside our neighbours in need, our work is in vain.
3. People of other faiths and persuasions: In an era of inter-religious conflict, we hope to embody a spirit of peace-making and neighbourliness, building bridges of respect, understanding, and collaboration for the common good.
4. Observers: We hope to demonstrate that, over 2,000 years after Christ and the apostles, 1,000 years after "the great schism," and 500 years after the Protestant Reformation and the beginning of the Catholic counter- Reformation, followers of Christ are engaging in grass-roots movements around the world to heal what is broken and prepare the way for better things to come.

We are focusing our efforts in the period ending on the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation (October 31, 2017) and the beginning of the era which stimulated the Catholic Counter- Reformation. We anticipate that by then, there will be many robust networks in place to guide this important work in exciting new directions.

## ETHOS:

We draw the ethos for Mesa from the story of Jesus, particularly his message of the upside-down and world-transforming reign of God. Paul, in the letter to the Philippians, talks about how Jesus ‘did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage’, but ‘made himself nothing’ even to the point of being killed on a cross. Later ‘God raised him to the highest place’ (Phil 2:5-11). This narrative of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus inspires us to live ‘in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ’ (Phil 1:27), which entails ...

- 1 That we turn away from arguing and disputing, and live lives that are blameless, innocent, and radiant (Phil 2:14-15). For this reason, we seek to move beyond divisive arguments that have characterized our faith communities in the past and seek an ethos of solidarity, rooted in the love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Jesus’ message of the reign of God. As an expression of that ecumenical ethos of solidarity, we seek to embrace and appreciate the church in its wide array of historic and emerging forms.
- 2 That our gentleness is to be ‘known to everyone’ (Phil 4:5). For this reason, we seek an ethos characterized by gentleness.
- 3 That the mixed motivations of others become our motivation for communicating the message of Christ from the purest motives possible (Phil 1:14-18). For this reason, we are dedicated to becoming and making disciples in authentic community for the good of the world
- 4 That followers of Christ strive ‘side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel’ (Phil 1:27). For this reason, we seek to support one another in our efforts to live and share the good news of Christ, and to be personally and passionately engaged in the spiritual life of worship, prayer, fellowship, service, study, stewardship, and other faith-practices. We believe this vital spiritual life will be expressed in a commitment to reduce poverty, care for the planet, and promote peace and reconciliation among all people.
- 5 That they manifest their fellowship in the Spirit through kindness and compassion for one another (Phil 2:1-4). For this reason, we seek an ethos characterized by welcome and acceptance, with an eagerness to draw others into this conversation, network, and movement.

## LAUNCH AND COMPLETION:

With the launch of this website, we invite you to help us define and develop this emerging global movement. We hope that by October 31, 2017, which is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and the beginning of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, robust and growing expressions of this emerging ethos and movement will be found around the world.

## MESA GATHERINGS:

Any gathering of the various groups in the network will actively reflect the ethos of the network in its gatherings by seeking to include the following:-

1. Working alongside each other in practical participation in actions to care for the planet, promote peace and reconciliation or reduce poverty. These service engagements at the gatherings will always be done in and through local expressions of the mission of God, in a learning spirit and will encourage and promote the local ministries with whom we partner. These experiences are intended to model and practice the ethos of the network and to ensure all our conversations 'make sense' in the reality of our world.
2. Time of intentional spiritual reflection/prayer.
3. Gathering around table(s) for conversation and serving each other as we share food and community.
4. The facilitation of the conversation to be shared by women and men and people from the global south and the global north.
5. Participants from a diversity of Christian expressions – Anglican, Catholic, Evangelical, Lutheran, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Protestant, independent, emerging, traditional and indigenous forms of faith expression.

## STRUCTURE:

This network will have a very defined agenda, focused on relationship-building at the core, and providing an ethos around which others can gather, and create their own local initiatives. It will form around four groups:

### 1. MESA STEERING GROUP

This group has been initiated by Carolyn Kitto, Fuzz Kitto (Australia), and Brian McLaren (USA). The steering group will eventually consist of 12 – 15 people giving representation to the regions of the world and various age groups, traditions and perspectives. The people on the steering group do not represent the groups they work for so much as they come seeking to engage their own networks and circles of friendship in the Mesa conversation. A wider reference group will also be established to shape Mesa.

The role of this group will be



1. To be first and foremost a generative group of friends and companion travellers who support each other in the mission of engaging in God's purposes in the world
2. To offer hospitality to each other and to others journeying in the ethos of the network
3. To use their networks to promote the various gatherings and their influence to ensure significant people are included in the various conversations and events
4. To organise 1 - 3 Mesa gatherings in their region of the world between 2013 and 2017
5. To seek to attend a regional gatherings in another region for support and resourcing  
To actively contribute to the conversation on the Mesa website

## 2. CHRISTIANS OF INFLUENCE AND IN PUBLIC LIFE

Some people have been walking this journey, seeking to influence issues of social justice, poverty alleviation, peace and reconciliation, for a significant time. Their journey began long before names and categories were used to describe the ethos we are seeking to embody. Mesa will actively seek to engage these people in the gatherings as mentors and guides, sharing their wisdom and experiences.

## 3. REGIONAL MESA GATHERINGS

The steering group will facilitate 2 or 3 gatherings in each region of the world between 2013 and 2017. In many cases the gatherings will be alongside existing groups such as Amahoro Africa and Red del Camino who will open their gatherings to people from other regions of the world and allow them to be promoted through Mesa.

The organisation and funding of these gatherings will be undertaken independently in the regions by the members of the steering group from that region but will be promoted through the broader network. It is hoped there will be a pool of funds and cross-subsidising between the Regional Mesa Gatherings.

## 4. OPEN MESA GROUPS

This will be an open invitation to people who choose to participate and affiliate online. It will include people who attend events and who register online and people who form a local 'Mesa'. These will be groupings of 10 - 25 people. They may be either geographically or issue focussed and agree to meet 3 times either face to face or through web interfaces such as "Throwing Light" or "Skype". These groups will be invited to register on line and share their conversations, resources and actions. Each group may nominate a person to attend the final gathering in 2017.

## FUNDING:

The network will seek to fund a modest budget focused on a five-year ministry plan, beginning in 2013. Funding is sought for

- Supporting regional gatherings
- Scholarships or subsidies for people from developing countries to attend the global and regional gatherings
- Development of processes for local gatherings
- Coordination of the above
- Development of website

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact or dialogue with anyone on the current steering group

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