



Mesa Friends in Pattaya, Thailand 31 October 2013

Over recent years, many of us have felt something stirring in us ...

- ❖ a thirst for a more authentic, honest, and sustaining spiritual life
- ❖ a hunger to do justice, to show compassion, to walk humbly with God
- ❖ a desire to understand and engage with the critical problems of our world
- ❖ a need for a space to grapple honestly with our questions of theology and practice
- ❖ a loneliness for a sense of shared identity and belonging.

As Christians, we were searching for companions on a journey

- ❖ a journey from many of the forms and assumptions that were no longer working for us
- ❖ a journey toward something new that we had not yet seen.

The journey was often frightening and difficult. Whenever we found someone who shared our questions, desires, and dreams, we gathered around a table for conversation. Through conversation, we became friends on a journey. And from our friendships, we gained the courage to try new things.

Sometimes we met each other online. Sometimes we traveled great distances to be together. Sometimes we formed networks in a city, nation, region, or continent. We would share books, ideas, and websites. We would share our successes and setbacks. As our numbers grew, so did our confidence and so did our dreams. We found that we became better together than we were alone.

Soon, we realized that all around the world, similar tables and networks were forming:

- ❖ in Africa and Asia
- ❖ in North, Central, and South America
- ❖ from Europe to the Middle East to Australia.

So we eventually decided to invite people to gather face to face in one place for the first time in Thailand, in 2013. About fifty of us traveled from around the world. We chose the name Mesa, the Spanish word for table, because it suggested a space of conversation, companionship, and nourishment for life, work, and action.

Our group included pastors, theologians, activists, authors, NGO leaders, and lay people from a variety of professions. We began by spending a few days in a poor rural village, sharing in the hard work and beautiful culture of our hosts. Later, in an urban center, we walked the streets where the sex trade is a major industry. We knew that whatever God was doing among us, it must be rooted in a concern for our neighbors who live in poverty.

Then we gathered at a retreat center for prayer and worship. We reflected on the Scriptures and we began to talk about what we thought we might be able to be and do together, with God's help. We brought different gifts, weaknesses, and concerns to the table, but we shared these deep commitments:

- ❖ We believe in Jesus and the **good news** of the reign, commonwealth, or ecosystem of God, and we seek for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven by focusing on love - love for God and neighbor, for outsider and enemy.
- ❖ We seek to know, serve, and join **the poor** in the struggle for justice and freedom ... through advocacy, relationships, and action.
- ❖ We seek to honor, interpret, and apply **the Bible** in fresh and healing ways, aware of the damaging ways the Bible has been used in the past.
- ❖ We seek to reconnect with **the earth**, understand the harm human beings are doing to it, and discover more responsible, regenerative ways of life in it.
- ❖ We seek the **common good, locally and globally**, through **churches** of many diverse forms, contexts, and traditions, and we imagine fresh ways for churches to form Christlike people and join God in the healing of the world.
- ❖ We build **inclusive partnerships** across gaps between the powerful and vulnerable - including disparities based on wealth, gender, race and ethnic identity, education, religion, sexuality, age, politics, and physical ability.
- ❖ We engage conflict at all levels of human society with the creative and nonviolent wisdom of **peacemaking**.
- ❖ We propose new ways of **encountering the other** in today's pluralistic world and we collaborate with other religious and secular groups in alliances for the common good.
- ❖ We host safe space for constructive **theological conversation**, seeking to root our practice in theological reflection and seeking to express our reflection in practical action.
- ❖ We value **the arts** for their unique role in nurturing, challenging, and transforming our humanity.
- ❖ We emphasize **spiritual and relational practices** to strengthen our inner life with God and our relationships with one another.

Having affirmed these commitments, we prayed for strength and guidance. We prayed that others would join us. We prayed that goals, plans, and resources would be provided as needed. We

decided to gather again in four years to see and celebrate what fruit will be born from our little seeds of faith, and to see what new dreams might take shape.

We have many possibilities ahead of us. We also have many unanswered questions and challenges. But we are beginning, and we invite you to join us. If your heart resonates with our story, we invite you to ...

- ❖ Invite some people to gather around a table. Get to know each other. Share your stories.
- ❖ Talk about the commitments and if your heart moves you, make them your commitments too.
- ❖ Identify as a participant in Mesa.
- ❖ Invite other individuals and networks to connect to the network too.
- ❖ Make use of the resources on this website.
- ❖ Let us know you've organized a mesa community so we can link to it.
- ❖ Stay informed, participate, and contribute in any ways you can.
- ❖ Let us know if we can help you.
- ❖ Report what God does in and through you so we can celebrate together.