

2017 EKKLESIA PROJECT GATHERING PLENARIES

Plenary 1 - Treasure in Clay Pots: Church as Mission

Led by Gayle Gerber Koontz

The New Testament suggests a high calling for the church: to be a light to the nations and to join in God's reconciling mission on earth. But how can a cracked, leaky and sometimes broken pot—God's church—communicate good news to the world? To what extent do Christians need to repent for historical mission initiatives gone awry and what would this entail? What does an understanding of the gospel as God's peacemaking initiative toward and among humans mean for the church in mission and the church as mission?

Gayle Gerber Koontz is professor emerita of theology and ethics at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary where she taught for more than 30 years and co-edited *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective* based on John H. Yoder's class recordings. She was a guest member of the faculty at Silliman University Divinity School in the Philippines from 1988-1990 and accompanied students or taught short sessions in Guatemala, Rwanda, and Burundi. She is a member of a lively Mennonite congregation in Goshen, Indiana, married to Ted Koontz who formerly taught ethics and peace studies, and continues to "parent" three children and three grandchildren.

Plenary 2 - Becoming the Gospel of Peace

Led by Michael Gorman

Paul is seldom thought of as a successor to the prophetic voices calling for God's people to practice shalom. But the God of peace and the peace of God are rich Pauline motifs with significant implications for our life together as the body of Christ, who made peace by the blood of his cross. This plenary explores the theme of peace and peacemaking as central missional practices in the life of the church, with suggestions for embodying the peace of God in these troubling times.

Michael Gorman is a professor at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, Maryland, where he holds the Raymond E. Brown Chair in Biblical Studies and Theology— a United Methodist in a Catholic institution with strong ecumenical commitments. His goal as a biblical theologian is to bring every thought captive to Christ — that is, Christ crucified, resurrected, and coming, with special emphasis on the cross as the definitive self-revelation of the triune God.

Plenary 3 - Resurrecting Church

Led by Shane Claiborne

Amid the ruins of an abandoned cathedral where homeless families were living, Shane and his community caught a fresh vision of what it means to be the Church. With ancient stories of the early Christians and contemporary stories of ordinary radicals, Shane invites us to re-imagine what it means to be the Body of Christ alive in the world and what it looks like when the church lives out the mission of God's peace in a localized way. Let's move beyond complaining about the Church we see and start becoming the Church we dream of.

Shane Claiborne is a best-selling author, renowned activist, sought-after speaker, and self-proclaimed "recovering sinner." Shane writes and speaks around the world about peacemaking, social justice, and Jesus, and is the author of numerous books, including *The Irresistible Revolution*, *Jesus for President*, and most recently *Executing Grace* (June 2016). He is the visionary founder of The Simple Way in Philadelphia and Executive Director of Red Letter Christians. His work has been featured in Fox News, Esquire, SPIN, the Wall Street Journal, NPR, and CNN.

Plenary 4 - Engaging the Antagonisms of Our Culture: The Peculiar Challenges of Mission in a Post-Christendom World

Led by David Fitch

A post-Christendom culture is one that is no longer aligned or even friendly with the Christian church(es). Yet it is different from non- or pre-Christendom cultures. In post-Christendom, there are lingering struggles for power as well as cultural resentment, all left over from the church's former alignments. Because such antagonisms are inherently violent, churches seeking to bear witness to Christ's peaceful kingdom must not participate in them. Ideology runs on antagonism. People rally around what they are against. Real issues become ensconced in objects that we aim our angst at. These same ideological ways too often drive the mission of churches today. Just look at how Christians have recently engaged racism, other religions, and LGBTQ sexualities. How else might the church be present and open space for God's Kingdom to come in the world? David outlines a missional politic of fullness in Christ versus the empty politic of ideology, which is made possible by faithfully practicing His presence in the world.

David Fitch is Betty R. Lindner Chair of evangelical theology at Northern Seminary, Chicago. Besides teaching, he directs Northern's programs in Theology and Mission. He is an ordained pastor in the Christian and Missionary Alliance and currently pastors the Peace of Christ Church in Westmont IL, a suburb of Chicago. He writes and presents regularly on culture, politics, political theory, ecclesiology and mission. His most recent book is *Faithful Presence: 7 Disciplines That Shape the Church For God's Mission* (IVP). He is married to Rae Ann and they have one child, a son Max. He is also a PeeWee Hockey coach for the YMCA.