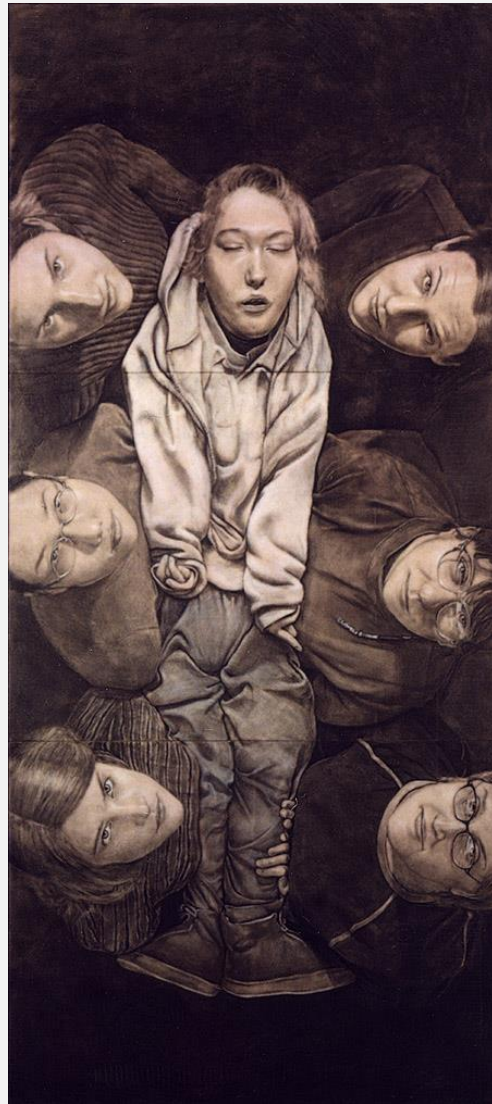


Ekklesia Project Summer Gathering
July 12-14, 2018 · Techny Towers · Northbrook, Illinois

Defining Beauty

“What, I ask, is more wonderful than the beauty of God?”

St. Basil



Carry Me, Tim Lowly © 2002, mixed media on panel, 108" x 48", private collection, Chicago. The following North Park University students are pictured (carrying Temma Lowly) and also provided collaborative assistance with this work: (clockwise from the top right) Krissa Harwood, Robin Spencer, Amanda Hasse, Heather Yanul, Yoonhee Kim and Michelle Ness.

“Live such beautiful lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your beautiful deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” 1 Peter 2:12



Worship · Plenaries · Workshops · Friends · Food · Film · Books · Poetry · Art · Nature

Plenary Speakers

Natalie Carnes will explore a tension in Christian Scripture and tradition between a God identified in beauty and a God identified in suffering—a tension that finds a secular analog in modernity's simultaneous valorization of beauty and critique of it as bourgeois and elitist. Christianity's commitment to a "God who goes out" undoes this tension and leads us into a more robust vision of beauty. Natalie's presentation will draw on a short story by J.M. Coetzee ("The Humanities in Africa"), two paintings mentioned in that story that dramatize the beauty/suffering tension (Antonio da Correggio's *Madonna Nursing* and Matthias Grunewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece*), and Gregory of Nyssa's famine sermons.



*Natalie is a constructive theologian interested in how Christian doctrine can speak to the complexities of modern life. She has published several articles and two books, *Beauty: A Theological Engagement* with Gregory of Nyssa and *Image and Presence: A Christological Reflection on Iconoclasm and Iconophilia*. Natalie earned a Ph.D. at Duke University and is Associate Professor of Theology at Baylor University. She lives in Waco with her husband and three daughters.*



According to **Scott Cairns**, our personal or cultural definitions of beauty are famously fickle, inextricably tied to our experience, which is at the very least wildly variable. That said, our definitions of beauty are not nearly so important as our response to whatever it is that we behold as beautiful. Scott's plenary will attend to beauty's effects—its effects on us, the affected



beholders. Given our varying experiences, dispositions, and opportunities, we are each of us very likely to differ regarding what it is that occurs to us as beautiful; yet the heart of the matter is our response, and our response, Scott contends, is universal. The beautiful captures our notice, draws to itself our attention, insists on our lingering gaze.

Librettist, essayist, translator, and author of multiple poetry collections, Scott was Curators' Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Missouri until leaving that position to serve as Director of the Low-Residency MFA Program at Seattle Pacific University. His poems and essays have appeared in Poetry, Image, Paris Review, The Atlantic Monthly, The

New Republic, and many other venues, and both have been anthologized in multiple editions of The Best American Spiritual Writing. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2006, and the Denise Levertov Award in 2014. His new poetry collection, Anaphora, will appear from Paraclete Press in spring 2019, and his current projects include Descent to the Heart, verse adaptations of selections from the writings of Saint Isaak of Syria.

Lanecia Rouse Tinsley and **Cleve V. Tinsley IV** will explore race, aesthetic traditions, and the moral imagination, combining theoretical, visual, and aural expression in their joint presentation.



They will draw on their experiences as a multidisciplinary artist specializing in abstract expressionism (Lanecia) and an ordained Baptist minister, scholar of religion and African American culture, and community organizer (Cleve).

Lanecia is the owner and creator of [LAR Art Studio](#) in Houston, TX. She also contracts with Holy Family HTX as their Artist-In-Residence; works with [projectCURATE](#) as Spiritual Director and Consultant for the Arts; and is Co-founder/Co-Creative Director of ImagiNoir Group, an international alliance and think-tank of black activists, artists, writers, scholars and educators. Lanecia earned an M. Div. from Duke Divinity School.

Cleve is the Co-Managing Director of [projectCURATE](#)—a non-profit educational and social enterprise incubator—and a PhD candidate in the Department of Religion at Rice University. His research focuses on critical understandings of wider social scientific and historical approaches to the study of religion in general and African-American religion in particular.



Sherrie Lowly and **Tim Lowly** offer reflections from a life shared with their daughter who is profoundly other. They invite us to think about beauty in relation to creativity, community, collaboration, church, and a culture of adoration.

Beginning with thoughts on the art of three Georges, Tim contextualizes the development of his work as an artist; Sherrie reflects on the influences of the Catholic Worker and Korean *Minjung* movements. Together they note how these influences have prepared them for building beauty-in-relationship with their daughter, Temma, as lived out in their vocations, and in their wider spheres of connection, including church.



Sherrie Lea Rubingh was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After marriage to Tim Grubbs and taking the family name of Lowly, Sherrie gave birth to Temma Lowly in 1985. Sherrie received a Master's in Pastoral Counseling from Loyola University, Chicago and an M.Div. degree from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. She has served as a United Methodist pastor for the past 21 years and is currently working on a memoir.

Tim grew up in South Korea with missionary parents. He earned a BFA degree from Calvin College and in the early '90s became gallery director, then artist-in-residence, then professor at North Park University in Chicago, where he currently teaches. He is a visual artist and a musician.

Children



Beauty is not just for adults. Join us this year as we pilot a program offering both sensory and practical ways for children to engage the Gathering's theme.

Children's formation sessions offered concurrently with the plenary sessions will explore beauty & nature, beauty & the arts, beauty & the church, and beauty & the unlovely. Please bring your children!

Check out our [Christian Formation page](#) and weigh in with your creative thoughts as to what particular pieces of music, art, and liturgy are best to share with children and youth.

Also feel free to contact [Julie Gunby](#) or [Jonathan Tran](#).



Workshops

Rethinking the Christian Moral Life in Light of the Harlem Renaissance

Reggie Williams

In 2015, Reggie's book *Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* (Baylor University Press) was selected as a Choice Outstanding Title in the field of religion. Drawing on the book's content and related research, this workshop will examine ways that morality has been scripted to fit an understanding of beauty put in place during the Enlightenment and how the Harlem Renaissance challenged that.

Reggie teaches at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, having earned a Ph.D. in Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. His interests include Christological ethics, theological anthropology, Christian social ethics, the Harlem Renaissance, race, politics and black church life. His current book project includes a religious critique of whiteness in the Harlem Renaissance. In addition, he is working on a book analyzing the reception of Bonhoeffer by liberation activists in apartheid South Africa.



Beauty, Body, and American Culture

Shannon Schaefer

In the broader American culture, beauty language about the human body has been commodified toward capitalistic ends. Bodies have been placed along a spectrum from not beautiful to beautiful,



and we are offered products and services to help us achieve unachievable body standards. Far beyond questions of mere body image and conversations about health, the language of beauty in the American context has been employed in making not only aesthetic judgments, but moral judgments—judgments about which bodies are capable of and most likely to perform the good, and which are worthy of justice. These judgments, too easily implicit in our ways of seeing, often participate in discrimination, systemic oppression, and injustice based in race, sex and gender, social class, size, disability, nationality, religion, and so on. In this workshop, we'll explore what it means to be a Christian cruciform

body in a context shaped by the Capitalist project, and how our body politics as the church might offer a new way of seeing and being bodies.

Shannon Schaefer is the Community/Worship Coordinator for Kindred, an ELCA dinner church being a taste of home for those who find themselves on Houston's streets, as well as a member of Holy Family HTX, a budding UMC church plant nurturing artists and reaching those who have been wounded by the church. She lives with her son Luke and two amazing housemates in a small house in Houston's Third Ward, where they can be found gathered around a gigantic home-built table over dinner with friends, making art, or baking bread.



The Young and the Beautiful

Janice Love and Jameson Love

How might connecting an appreciation for beauty to the Divine call forth discipleship in youth? What do youth of different ages and cultures consider beautiful (full of beauty)? Join Jameson and Janice as we explore these questions together, grounded in Brendan Thomas Sammon's *Called to Attraction: An Introduction to the Theology of Beauty*.

Jameson Love is a teenager who has a deep appreciation for beauty, which he expresses in his photography, geometric art, and cooking. His first spoken word, after "dada" and "mama," was "wow!"

Janice Love, B.Ed., M.P.S., is a freelance editor and regular contributor to the Ekklesia Project's Blog. She loves the beauty of words, art, and the Divine as revealed to us in Jesus.



Displacing Beauty: Flannery O'Connor and the Gift of Excess

Daniel Train

Flannery O'Connor once told a friend: "the word beauty never crosses my lips." This comes as no surprise for those familiar with her violent stories about characters who are often described as "ugly." Nor is it surprising to anyone who has read her scathing criticism of "pornographic" sentimentality in the guise of "Christian" literature, or her dismissal of readers who associate beauty with moral instruction and edification in the form of "instant uplift."

On the surface, then, O'Connor may seem like the last person we should turn to in this context. And yet, it seems clear that her skepticism can offer an important corrective or warning as the church reconsiders and embraces the language of the beautiful. This workshop will explore O'Connor's use and critique of beauty with at least two goals in mind: 1) to better appreciate O'Connor's worry that a "Christian" account of beauty will not only gloss over communal and ritual violence but distort and sanitize the shock of the Gospel; and 2) to ground a more constructive account of beauty in a Trinitarian theology of Creation—one which has clear implications for how Christians conceive of "difference" and hospitality towards the "other." To do this we will ground our conversation on two O'Connor short stories: "Partridge Festival" and the "Displaced Person." (Persons planning to attend this workshop are encouraged to read the stories ahead of time).



***Daniel Train** is the Assistant Director of the Duke Initiative in Theology and the Arts at Duke Divinity School. He teaches courses at the intersection Christian theology and Literature, and is currently completing a book on O'Connor and beauty. A collection of essays he is editing on The Saint John's Bible will be published later this year.*



"There Are No Unsacred Places": Icons, Liturgy, and Learning to See the Sacredness of Creation

Ragan Sutterfield

Wendell Berry once wrote that "there are no unsacred places, there are only sacred places and desecrated places." Despite this truth, many of us lack the eyes to see the sacredness of the given of creation, much less its desecration. This workshop will engage with reflections on how we might draw from the established practices of prayer and worship in our traditions in order to see the beauty of the sacred all around us. Drawing on his experiences leading outdoor liturgies and the insights he's gained as an amateur naturalist, Ragan will facilitate a conversation about how we might learn to recognize the sacred in the world and resist its desecration.



***Ragan Sutterfield** is a priest in the Episcopal Church whose most recent book is *Wendell Berry and the Given Life*. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Little Rock, Arkansas.*

Reflected Light: Theology in Photography

Lee Kuiper

Photography teaches us how to have a discerning eye, how to notice moments of beauty, how to see things differently and how to tell a story. Not only does photography offer us the opportunity to notice and share beauty but it is also the art of capturing light. Everything we see is reflecting light into our eyes and our lenses; it is literally the way we see. Photography reminds us to see everything in life as reflected from a specific source of light. Join us as we explore the connection between our true source of light and our reflected beauty as humans. With the help of photographs and stories we will engage in conversation about the many connections and analogies between light, photography, our lives, our faith, and our creator.



Lee Kuiper has traveled all over the world as a photographer, and had the opportunity to work (and photograph) in four National Parks before moving to San Francisco. He is currently a member of Church of the Sojourners and works doing freelance video and photography.



Dark Beauty: Finding God in Harsh and Dreadful Things

Brian Volck

Beauty is not the same as prettiness. Writers and artists of faith betray their readers and the church in settling for pious sentimentalities. Well-crafted renderings of the crucifixion can be beautiful, and well-chosen words may capture splintered reflections of God's light in the most broken of settings. We will take a close look at some examples of dark beauty in visual art, poetry, fiction, and music that engage profound theological questions.

*Brian Volck, MD, MFA, is a pediatrician and writer. His most recent book is *Attending Others: A Doctor's Education in Bodies and Words*. He is also the author, with fellow Ekklesia Project endorser Joel Shuman, of *Reclaiming the Body: Christians and the Faithful Use of Modern Medicine*. Brian lives in Baltimore and travels regularly to the Four Corners region to provide clinical care to the children of the Navajo Nation.*



Worship

David Butzu and **Shannon Schaefer** coordinate our worship. Shannon will write the liturgies and David will lead us as we sing *a cappella* in different musical styles. David has also written some of the music for this Gathering. In addition, we will observe these liturgies of the hours: compline (night prayer) on Thursday and Friday; vigils/lauds (morning prayer) on Friday and Saturday; and vespers (evening prayer) on Friday.



David Butzu is a native of Detroit and a lifelong church musician with roots in the Pentecostal tradition. He holds a BMus in Music Theory from the University of Michigan and an M.Div. from Emmanuel Christian Seminary. While doing post-graduate work in Liturgical Studies and Spirituality at Catholic University of America, David lived with the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, a religious community in Washington, DC

that contributed much toward the foundations of his present vocation. For the past 15 years, he has served Hopwood Christian Church as pianist while working with area churches and institutions in ecumenical worship gatherings. In 2015, after several years of discernment with friends and family, he made solemn profession to the monastic life in the Order of St. Benedict, founding a hermitage with an ecumenical outlook near the campus of Milligan College.



Our Gathering Preacher, **Miriam Perkins**, will lean on Ignatian spirituality to explore the biblical themes of beauty as desolation, beauty as consolation, and beauty as apostolic courage. For each of these, respectively, Miriam will draw us into Luke 1-2, especially Simeon's words to Mary; the story of the woman who washes Jesus' feet with her tears in Luke 7; and Luke 24's account of the women at the tomb.

Miriam is Associate Professor of Theology at Emmanuel Christian Seminary at Milligan College where she teaches courses in Christology, ethics, feminist theology, and spiritual writing. Her vocational interests are shaped by a diverse upbringing in the United States and abroad, and sustained now by international travel connected to global friendships and ministries. She holds a PhD in Religion and Culture from the Catholic University of America and her writing focuses on interdisciplinary aspects of theology and prophetic voice. Her most recent publications include "The Politics of Voice: Reflections on Prophetic Speech as Voices from the Margins," in Enemies and Friends of the State: Ancient Prophecy in Context (2018), and "Greenscreen Teaching: Institutional Instability & Classroom Innovation," in Teaching Theology and Religion 20.4 (2017). Miriam is an ordained minister in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, a yoga instructor, fine arts devotee, and lover of all things outdoors.



Brian Volck leads us in *visio divina* on Friday and Saturday mornings. He will alternate brief observations on aesthetic, historical, and theological aspects of each morning's image—related to Miriam's sermon—with periods of quiet reflection and contemplation.

Film



We will screen the 2017 Oscar-winning documentary, *Heaven is a Traffic Jam on the 405*. The 40-minute film follows Los Angeles artist Mindy Alper who, over a lifetime of devastating anxiety and depression, has produced a body of work that expresses her inner life with powerful psychological insight and great tenderness. Through interviews, reenactments, the building of an eight-and-a-half-foot papier-maché sculpture, and an examination of drawings made from the time she was a child, we glimpse Mindy's life and loves in all of their complicated, soulful, fragile beauty.



"She's the most human of us humans . . . just the very core of her is honest."

--Director Frank Stiefel describing Mindy Alper

Erin Dufault-Hunter will lead a discussion following the film.

A native of Los Angeles, Erin teaches Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. Her recent work explores the intersection of technology, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic change. She is also the author of The Transformative Power of Faith: A Narrative Approach to Conversion. Erin is a member of Mountainside Communion, a church in the Wesleyan/Nazarene tradition.



Beautiful Things

All attendees of the Gathering are invited to bring something beautiful to share—a painting, for example, or photographs, sculpture, woodwork, pottery, textiles, ceramics, knitting/crochet, jewelry. Or maybe a beautiful story, poem, dance, song, or other musical offering. We will have a dedicated space for objects and artifacts and will curate their display. And we will host an evening session for performance art.

When registering for the Gathering, participants interested in offering something beautiful will be asked to answer some questions to help us properly prepare for the sharing of beautiful things.

To register for the Summer Gathering, go to www.ekkesiaproject.org