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New Learnings in Animating a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa Today

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When systematic formation of Small Christian Communities became the key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa in 1976¹ the now deceased Bishop Christopher Mwoleka² of Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania stated: "There is no blueprint in building Small Christian Communities." This insight is just as valid today in the year 2008 (32 years later). If SCCs are a "New Way of Being Church," a "New Model of Church" from below and from the grassroots, they grow, develop, and evolve in different ways always depending on the local context and fresh readings of, and responses to, the contemporary signs of the times. In the past six months (January to June, 2008) our SCC Team³ has had many new experiences of SCCs especially during the post election crisis period in Kenya. We have done new research on SCCs in Africa and collected new Case Studies. Here are some of our "New Learnings" in animating a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa today.

We have a new language, a new terminology to describe this SCC Model of Church:

- New Attitude of Church
- New Idea of Church
- New Meaning of Church
- New Mentality of Church
- New Method of Teaching/Learning
- New Model of Church
- New Theology of Church
- New Thinking of Church
- New Vision of Church
- New Way of Being Church.
- New Way of Living/Doing Church

This "newness," of course, applies to the SCC, to the outstation, to the sub-parish, to the parish and to the diocese. Whatever the country or language we try to think and be "community" or think and be a member of a Small Christian Community. We try to always "Think *Jumuiya*" (Swahili, Eastern Africa word for SCC) or "Think *Mwaki*" (Kikuyu, Kenya word for SCC) or "Think *Duol* or *Kidieny*" (Luo, Kenya and Tanzania words for SCC) or "Think *Kabondo* or *Ebibiina by'abasseekimu*" (the Luganda, Uganda words for SCC) and so on in other African countries.⁴ So the mantra is "Think/Plan/Act *Jumuiya*."

In various SCC Workshops in Kenya in 2008 we used a demonstration (role play) where three volunteers came to the blackboard and were asked to "Draw the Church" without seeing what the other two people beside them were drawing. Then the three drawings were

evaluated and discussed by all the participants in the workshop. The majority of drawings were of the church building alone, some of the church building with people inside. Very few participants drew the church as a Christian Community -- the "People of God" ("we are the church") using symbols of community and unity like the circle and linking signs. This led to a discussion of the People of God Ecclesiology from the Second Vatican Council, Communion Ecclesiology (the parish as a "communion of communities") and the Church-as-Family Ecclesiology from the First African Synod in Rome in April, 1994.⁵

For years we have tried to animate lay people to see the Catholic Church as a community, that indeed "we are the church," that the church is the Christian people in a given local area, that Africans are the church present in their own locality, that lay people (often ordinary people at the "base") take responsibility for *their* local church communities. But this is hard, ongoing work. Most of the time lay people continue to understand the Catholic Church as a building or as the bishops and priests, but not themselves.

Helping lay people especially to see the church in a new way requires creativity and repetition. In various SCCs Workshops in Kenya in 2008 we used the following demonstration (role play): A stranger comes up to you on the street in Nairobi (or whatever city you choose) and says: "I am a visitor here. Would you please tell me where is the nearest Catholic Church?" What would you tell the person? Usually there is a wide variety of answers from "The parish church is just across the street" to "The cathedral is downtown" to "I'll be glad to walk to the church with you." Participants are always surprised to hear that one important answer to the question "Where is the church" is to point to oneself and say: "I am the church." At a workshop in Nairobi in May, 2008 10 people pointed to the nearby parish church building before one participant finally said: "I would tell the visitor that I am the church and even take him to my SCC."

New Method of Teaching/Learning about SCCs

From January to March, 2008 I facilitated a course on "Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today" at Hekima College, the Jesuit School of Theology in Nairobi, Kenya.⁶ Hekima is a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). I say "facilitated" rather than "taught" because we tried a new method of teaching and learning to model Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a new way of being church.

First we sat in a circle to model a typical SCC in Africa. In three different classes we spent 20 minutes each in imitating a typical African SCC's Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection in small groups: once in the whole group, once in groups of six each and once in Buzz Groups of two each. We read and reflected on the Gospel of the following Sunday as thousands of lectionary-based SCCs do every week throughout Africa. Most important we tried to connect the Bible to our daily lives.

An important part of this new method at Hekima College and in various SCC Workshops⁷ was to begin with the participants' experience. It was "inductive" starting with the lived experience of the SCC members who shared the challenges, questions, weaknesses, problems and obstacles in their *jumuiyas*. We started by asking the basic question: "From your personal experience what are your burning issues, your burning questions about Small Christian Communities?"⁸ Then we wrote the most important questions on the blackboard

and they become the basic for the facilitators' input and the group discussion. Some common questions kept coming up again and again:

1. How to attract and involve men? Youth?
2. What is the difference and relationship between SCCs and the Traditional Parish Associations/Societies/Apostolic Groups/Devotional Groups in the parish?
3. How do we help the SCCs to choose and form the best leaders?
4. How do SCCs help its members who cannot receive the Eucharist to have church marriages?
5. How do we empower SCCs for economic self reliance and for the financial support of the parish?
6. Then in the context of the post December 2007 election crisis and violence in Kenya: Did you/your SCC prevent or promote the violence in Kenya?

Storytelling was an important part of our process. In starting with the participants' experience we used their stories, examples and Case Studies of SCCs in Africa. In the Hekima Course there were 21 first and second year theologians from nine African countries: Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia. Three students came from Mexico. We also used other stories of SCCs in both urban⁹ and rural¹⁰ areas in Africa.

Part of the SCC Course at Hekima College was a "Practicum." Instead of a regular class one week, the students participated in a gathering/activity of a SCC in a parish or in special interest group/apostolic group in Nairobi Archdiocese and wrote a short paper on the experience. Most of the papers were on the Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection in specific SCCs in parishes using the Gospel of the following Sunday. Three papers were on a special therapeutic group counseling session in St. Joseph the Worker SCC in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Adams Arcade. This was a psychological debriefing of the SCC members' feelings about the tribal and ethnic tensions during the post-election violence. Participants discussed their hurts and how they could live together better. Three papers were on training seminars of SCC leaders in Sacred Heart Parish, Dagoretti Corner.

Checklist of Activities in SCCs in Africa Today

A key factor is that SCCs in Africa are not just a program or a project, but a way of life. In Swahili we have the dynamic expression *jumuiya ni maisha, siyo kazi*. Based on new experiences and data we have updated the "Checklist of Activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today." In SCC workshops we ask: How many of the following activities are part of the **life** of your Small Christian Community (SCC)? How many of these activities have you actually participated in?

1. SCC as a Prayer Group only (without the Bible being used).
2. SCC as a Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection Group.
3. SCC as a Special Group for Study (Bible, Creed, the Sacraments, a Catholic Church Document, etc.), Counseling, etc.
4. Pastoral or Business Meeting of a SCC.
5. Practical action/service/pastoral and social outreach/specific evangelization and mission focus of a SCC.
6. Self-reliance projects of a SCC.

7. Mass (and other sacraments such as Baptism, Reconciliation, Marriage) in a SCC.
8. Celebration in a SCC (meals, entertainment, etc.).
9. Training workshops/seminars of SCC leaders and animators.
10. Retreats/Spiritual Renewal and Recollection Days/Pilgrimages of a SCC.

In the first half of 2008 we conducted a series of SCC workshops in Kenya.¹¹ During the one week Emmaus Program for Kenyan Diocesan Priests at Tangaza College in Nairobi in May, 2008 an interesting profile of the increasingly strong SCCs in Nairobi Archdiocese¹² emerged. Examples are St. John the Baptist (Riruta) Parish (urban Nairobi) with 112 SCCs and the Nativity of Our Lady (Kagwe) Parish (rural Kiambu) with 85 SCCs. Auxiliary Bishop David Kamau confirmed the importance of SCCs as "the pillar of the church in the archdiocese." It was noted that there are over 90,000 SCCs in the eight AMECEA¹³ countries today. Kenya alone has now over 35,000 SCCs.

Another new learning: An increasingly important part of the pastoral life of parishes in Africa are "*Jumuiya* Masses" (No. 7 above). These masses in the homes of SCC members are an important teaching moment for the priest- animator, but not the time for him to preach a homily as he would do in the parish or outstation church. Rather he facilitates a Shared Homily or Buzz Group Homily¹⁴ (sharing in groups of two) as part of the participatory model of the SCC. In some parishes these masses take place monthly. Often they occur once during Advent, once during Lent and on the Feast Day of the Patron/Patroness Saint of the small community.

Another type of "*Jumuiya* Mass" is the celebration of the Annual Small Christian Communities Day in a parish. This is a concrete actualization of Communion Ecclesiology (the parish as a "communion of communities") Model of Church. Various SCCs gather on the church compound for the whole day. Members of particular SCCs sit together during the mass that is prepared by the SCC members. After mass there are various reports, songs, plays, etc. presented by different SCCs. A short teaching seminar on a relevant theme may take place. Finally there is a meal for everyone together.

Then there are special parish-wide "*Jumuiya* Masses." One Case Study is Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Adams Arcade), Nairobi. To celebrate the official beginning of 18 new SCCs in the parish (increasing from 21 SCCs to 39 SCCs), all the outstation masses were cancelled and there was one large, outdoor mass of over 1000 people at the parish center on Pentecost Sunday, 11 May, 2008. A banner highlighted the theme of the day: "Holy Spirit Set Our Hearts on Fire." The plan of the mass emphasized the meaning of Pentecost in the context of the challenges of the present tribalism and ethnicity in Kenya today. A new learning was the mutual enrichment of the values of unity and diversity, that is, a both/and approach rather than an either/or approach. Unity is an important value in the worldwide Catholic Church and in African society. Diversity is an important value in the inculturation of the Catholic Church to become a genuine World Church and in the rich cultural heritage of the African people that is reflected in their many languages, customs and traditions.

The Penitential Rite invited the congregation to privately name some of the evil things that happened during the post-election violence, ask for forgiveness from God and commit oneself to help heal these situations. The homily was in buzz groups of two people each sharing on the question: "What gift of the Holy Spirit is most important to me?" In a ritual that took almost one half hour members of the congregation spontaneously offered 25 Prayers of the Faithful in their heart languages (not necessarily their mother tongues) including:

Gusii, Kamba, Kikuyu, Lingala, Luganda, Luhya (Bukusu, etc.), Luo, Rwanda, Swahili, Taita and Teso as well as English and French.

The *Our Father* was prayed twice. First, in different languages simultaneously to imitate the rich diversity of the first Pentecost and the rich cultural diversity of the languages spoken in Kenya. Second, everyone together in Swahili to model the unity in our church and in our country. The Exchange of Peace used the symbols of a single "clap" and then a handshake.

The lively mass filled with singing and processions was followed by a tour of the eight major ministries in the parish based in various parts of the parish offices, a PowerPoint Presentation on "The Structure of the Parish and the Strategic Plan of Evangelization 2007-2009," and a talk and questions and answers on the topic "A New Way of Being Church: From Prayer Groups to Genuine Small Christian Communities." A meal together in small groups outdoors concluded the day.¹⁵

In various SCCs Training Workshops (No. 9 above) we used a very simple, but effective demonstration (role play) on unity and cooperation.¹⁶ First, six volunteers walked in single file in one direction. The facilitator asked, "Who is in front?" and all of the workshop participants gave the name the person in the front of the line. The facilitator asked, "Who is last in the line?" and the participants gave the name of the last person. Then the facilitator asked the six people to turn around and walk in the opposite direction. The same two questions were asked but the names were reversed. Then the facilitator asked the six volunteers to join hands and stand in a circle. When asked, "Who is first?" the participants answered, "No one." When asked, "Who is last?" the participants answered, "No one." The teaching is clear. We are challenged to overcome our intense individualism, excessive competitiveness and exaggerated rivalries to work together in community building and peacebuilding.

Challenge of Tribalism and Ethnicity in SCCs in Kenya

Yet we were surprised, even shocked, to find so much tribalism and ethnicity in SCCs in Kenya especially in Nairobi where most of our research was done. This permeated and influenced our whole course at Hekima College and all our short SCC Workshops as well. One would have hoped that the deeper Gospel values in the SCCs could overcome these ethnic divisions. But this was not the case. We found that in certain SCCs the well known African proverb can sadly be rewritten to say: *The blood of tribalism is thicker than the water of baptism.*

We met a new "entity" – Cultural Associations: Catholics in a particular area of a parish who promote the cultural values of their own ethnic group (Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Kamba, etc.) through traditional meals, bereavement customs, and burial rites together rather than joining a multi-ethnic SCC in their neighborhood (geographic area). When asked about the reason for this discrimination and exclusivism, Julius Karanja, the catechist in Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish (Dagoretti Corner), Nairobi said: "The spirituality of the Christians is not deep enough." In other words, we are challenged to promote a deeper evangelization in the SCCs where the SCC members are not simply catechized but genuinely evangelized on a deeper level. The expression "deeper evangelization"¹⁷ has been translated into various African languages to challenge Christians on the local level. Pope John Paul II's Apostolic

Exhortation on the First African Synod said this forcefully in the statement on "Living Small Christian Communities:" "Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups."¹⁸

The trauma in the post election crisis period in Kenya affected many Catholics in SCCs and created the need for counseling sessions in the SCCs (No. 3 above. These included group sessions and one-on-one sessions in which one person would share a traumatic/painful/difficult experience (most frequently a personal experience) that took place after the 27 December, 2007 Kenyan elections. It was usually connected to the violence and ethnic tensions and raised questions such as "What did you feel?" "Try to get in touch with your feelings." The other person would listen very carefully ("be a good listener") without making comments or judgments. Then the roles were reversed. SCC Workshops have also been conducted on topics such as "In the Post Election Crisis Did You/Your SCC Prevent or Promote the Violence" and "Ethnic and Tribal Relationships/Tensions on the Jumuiya Level."

A concrete example was the "Term Papers" written in the course "Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today" at Hekima College. Students were encouraged to write on a topic of their choice. Examples: SCCs in a particular country in Africa (for example, where you come from or where you have done pastoral work). A particular challenge of SCCs in Africa today ("SCCs and Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace," "SCCs and Inculturation,"¹⁹ "SCCs and AIDS"). A clear "sign of the times" was that 19 of the 24 final papers were on the tribalism and ethnic tensions in SCCs in Africa especially in Kenya today and its ramifications such as Cultural Associations, Discrimination, Favoritism, Human Rights, Gender Issues, Land Reform, Nepotism, etc. One term paper focused on this critical incident:²⁰

The problems of the ethnic divisions especially between the Luyia and Kikuyu in the 20 SCCs of St. Francis of Assisi Outstation, Gatina in Sacred Heart Parish (Dagoretti Corner) dramatically surfaced during a SCC seminar on 10 February, 2008. There are 13 Luhya speaking SCCs and seven Kikuyu speaking SCCs. Over time they have moved away from their foundational identity of SCCs and evolved into Cultural Associations where the financial collections are used for funerals/bereavement customs along tribal/ethnic lines/affiliation and for celebrations including specific ethnic group food. There is strong disagreement over whether the Christians should be restructured (divided) into neighborhood (geographical) SCCs in the same locality that are made up of different ethnic groups. The representative of one SCC on the Parish Pastoral Council reported the restructuring plan back to his SCC without taking personal ownership for it. Certain Christians think the pastor is imposing this restructuring from the top down. The SCCs in the other two outstations don't seem to have this problem.

Yet during this period there were many positive examples of Christians promoting justice, reconciliation, healing and peacemaking in their SCCs.²¹ A Catholic woman at a St. Paul Chaplaincy Center (Nairobi) Prayer Group said: "I am a Christian first, a Kenyan second and a Kikuyu third." During the SCC Course at Hekima College Rose Musimba, a SCC Coordinator in Holy Trinity Parish (Buruburu), Nairobi, said: "My recommendation is that people should sit and air their views on the political situations and ethnic divisions expressing where they are hurting and letting it out in the open so that tensions can be reduced to foster

communication. There should be real dialog among SCC members." Putting this into practice, a three member mediation team of St. Augustine SCC in St. Joseph the Worker Parish (Kangemi), Nairobi visited other SCCs to promote the healing of their ethnic tensions, reconciliation and peace. They especially encouraged the SCC members to talk about their problems/feelings, etc.

During a meeting of the St. Jude South SCC near the main highway going to Uganda in Yala Parish in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya in March, 2008 the members reflected on the Gospel passage from *John 20:23*: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Speaking from the heart one Luo man emotionally asked the SCC members to pray for him to forgive President Mwai Kibaki. He said that every time he saw the Kikuyu president on TV he got upset and angry and so he needed healing. The other SCCs members were deeply touched and feelingly prayed for him.

We met another reality in animating SCC Workshops in places in Kenya especially in rural areas where there is only one ethnic group and only one local language spoken. During two SCC Workshops in Siaya Deanery in Kisumu Archdiocese in March, 2008 the main ethnic tension in the SCCs was among the clans of the Luo-speaking Christians. Nepotism (clanism) was frequently mentioned as a major problem. For example, an important family tries to keep the leadership of a SCC in its control by rotating the leaders among its own family members. Now the Parish Pastoral Councils have established "Guidelines" to ensure broader and more representational leadership in the SCCs.

Everyone is painfully aware of the terrible genocide in Rwanda in April, 1994. Ironically this happened at the same time that the First African Synod was taking place in Rome. Today base communities (another name for SCCs) are involved in the reconciliation and healing ministry in Rwanda. Jeffrey Odell Korgen documents this transformation in a powerful Rwandan Case Study called "Forgiving the Unforgivable: Peacemaking in Rwanda:"

Rwanda's jubilee commission proposed a Jubilee Synod to be held from the ground up in the 20,000 base communities that compose the church in Rwanda. Each group of 25 families would take up the question of the role of ethnicity in the Rwandan genocide, encouraging truth-telling at all levels of the population. The Jubilee Synod was the beginning of the healing.²²

Canstance Mukandanga is a Hutu Catholic woman who realized that she was as much a killer as anyone wielding a machete by informing on Tutsis and "standing aside" during the genocide. She informed on Domina Nyanzira's Tutsi husband that led to him being killed. Later Canstance said:

I was like a prisoner in my heart. They told us in our base community how we could reconcile. Because of those teachings and prayers and the way we were being trained, I approached Domina, the man's wife and asked for pardon. The one who died is not here, so I asked my God for pardon, and the survivors in front of the public. They pardoned me.²³

Canstance now travels with Domina throughout Kigali Archdiocese to encourage others to tell the truth and forgive. She has been asked to lead prayers in her base community in recognition of her courage.

In researching the many stories and examples in the process of justice and peacebuilding throughout Africa but especially during this January to June, 2008 period in Kenya the order of the steps seems to be: Dialogue, Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Healing.

Symbols to Promote Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in SCCs

Some of our SCC Workshops included talks, demonstrations and ceremonies on "The Role of Small Christian Communities in Reconciliation and Peacemaking" and "Using Symbols to Promote Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in SCCs." In this unique time in the history of Kenya and certain other African countries symbols are very important to heal the divisions between ethnic groups and within ethnic groups. Sometimes these symbols can be used in meetings and prayer services of SCCs. First are the universal symbols such as a white dove, olive branch, white flag, handshake, food and drink (especially beer). Second are the particular national symbols. In Kenya these include the national flag, the national anthem, a map of Kenya and the Swahili word *harambee* that means "let us pull together."

Third are the specific African cultural symbols of forgiveness, reconciliation and peacemaking of individual ethnic groups with their own local languages, customs and traditions:²⁴

1. Acholi, Uganda: drinking a bitter root and stepping on an egg (*Mato Oput* Ceremony).²⁵
2. Bemba, Zambia: blood and flour.
3. Chagga, Tanzania: green isale leaf itself; and isale tree, a special reconciliation tree.²⁶ The SCCs in Moshi Diocese, Tanzania have a special charism for mediating family disputes especially tensions and disagreements between husband and wife. Sometimes this is done by the whole local community. Other times the marriage counselor -- a specific ministry in the SCCs -- helps in the reconciliation. As a result of this SCC outreach, many broken and strained marriages have been healed and other conflicts resolved. Following the traditional Chagga Ethnic Group customs, the SCCs use special cultural symbols of reconciliation such as an isale leaf, a white goat and even a baby.
4. Maasai, Kenya and Tanzania and Samburu, Kenya: special green tuft of grass; spittle.
5. Marakwet, Kenya: green leaves; a belt of cowry shells.
6. Mende, Sierra Leone and ethnic groups in Sudan: simultaneously two people put their right hands on the other person's left shoulder while saying "Peace."
7. Pökot²⁷ and Turkana, Kenya: breaking a spear.
8. Sabaot, Kenya: breaking a stick.

Some of these symbols were explained by the participants in a Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Workshop²⁸ in Nakuru, Kenya from 12-14 June, 2008. The particular topic was "The Role of the Christian Churches and Community Leaders in National Healing: "Using Symbols to Promote Reconciliation and Peacebuilding." The workshop was sponsored by the Peace Support Programme of the Kenya Administration Police in the North and South Rift Region in cooperation with People for Peace in Africa and the Social Ministry Research Network Centre (SOMIRENEC).

Research shows that most African cultural symbols work best to promote forgiveness, reconciliation and peacemaking within a specific ethnic group where all the concerned parties

understand the deeper meaning of the symbols such as the Acholi and Chagga examples above. But some symbols cross ethnic lines as in the following example presented during the workshop.²⁹

When there is a serious conflict and big division between the Pokot and Turkana Ethnic Groups in the Rift Valley Province in Kenya, the persons involved break a spear and a razor blade that are buried in the ground together with ammunition (bullets). Each ethnic group then offers a bull that is slaughtered and given to the other ethnic group to eat during a lively celebration that includes singing and dancing.

A new learning is that SCCs are important agents and instruments of reconciliation and peacemaking on the local, grassroots level. This includes activities Numbers 1, 3, 5 and 6 listed under the "Checklist" above. Using symbols, symbolic acts and personal testimonies (witness talks) are very effective. From 3-10 February, 2008 the SCCs in Christ the King Parish (Kibera), Nairobi, instead of their weekly meeting of Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection, had a "Week of Prayers for Peace in Kibera." Every evening they met for 45 minutes in their subparishes. Each day the Christians make a commitment to some practical action of peacemaking such as: On one day -- Sunday, 3 February -- not speaking one's mother tongue; going to pray with the people affected by the ethnic clashes; and writing a letter of forgiveness that was presented during the evening prayers and burned in a reconciliation ceremony. This peace week culminated in the whole parish (the communion of the 35 Small Christian Communities in the five outstations/subparishes) celebrating a "Peace Mass" in the parish church on Sunday, 10 February.

*Blessed Are the Peacemakers*³⁰ is a 2008 video that highlights the efforts of some of the organizations working for peace in Kenya and beyond. It is very timely in light of the post election violence in Kenya and the pressing need for justice, reconciliation, and peace. In separate interviews both Archbishop Peter Kairo of Nyeri Archdiocese and Chairman of the Kenyan Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and Bishop Cornelius Korir, the Bishop of Eldoret emphasize the importance of SCCs in peacebuilding. Kairo stresses that "peace has to start from the families and has to be found in our Small Christian Communities." Korir says that there is no peace without justice and forgiveness and challenges "people to carry peace to homes and to the Small Christian Communities."

Pastoral Theological Reflection Process in SCCs

We are tracking the slow, gradual shift of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa from being small prayer groups that are inwardly focused to active small faith communities that are outwardly focused including justice and peace issues. This may be the number one challenge to SCCs in Eastern Africa. Many are still prayer groups and not concerned with the wider social issues. Many SCCs shy away from justice and peace concerns. The challenge of theologians Father John Waliggo from Uganda (who died in 2008) and Father Laurenti Magesa from Tanzania is to make the SCCs in Africa more involved in justice and peace and social action.

There is a need to use a Pastoral Theological Reflection Process such as the "Pastoral Circle" in SCCs to go deeper. This process uses the well known "See, Judge and Act" methodology starting from concrete experience. Now more and more SCCs in Africa are

using various reflection processes and methodologies to pastorally and theologically reflect on their experiences, often using the tools of social analysis. This includes both identifying the new signs of the times and creatively responding to them.

Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, a Missionary of Africa, was formerly the Bishop of Lilongwe, Malawi and one of the original architects of the SCC plan in Eastern Africa. He emphasizes that in the different stages of growth in SCCs the final stage is the "Transformation of Society." This includes going beyond superficial changes to tackle the structural and systemic changes in our society. As a contemporary example this includes facing the underlying tribal and ethnic group tensions in Kenya today. An example of this process is to reflect on concrete experiences in a SCC in three steps:

1. Describe in detail your personal, concrete, practical experience of the event/incident/happening. It is important to choose a "critical incident" (a special kind of story that is not merely an anecdote) that leads to a deeper, "thicker" analysis, to a *kairos* moment.
2. Evaluate/critique the event/incident/happening.
3. Present concrete, practical suggestions for future pastoral planning.

A very good resource in Kenya was the booklet in English and Swahili *Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2008* produced by the Kenyan Catholic Justice and Peace Commission.³¹ The theme was "With a New Heart and a New Spirit." The "See, Judge and Act" Process drew on the experience of SCCs on justice and peace-related themes/issues such as "Accountability and Transparency," "Youth Empowerment," "Climate Change," "Gender" and "Reconciliation." The proposed action steps directly involved SCCs. Sample questions were: "What is the role of youth in Small Christian Communities?" (p.13) and "Do we share our problems in our Small Christian Communities?" (p. 21).

Unfortunately most SCCs in Kenya did not use this booklet in their weekly meetings during Lent, 2008. But there were exceptions. I participated in St. Bakhita SCC in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Adams Arcade), Nairobi on Thursday, 14 February, 2008. Normally the SCC members had been reading and reflecting on two chapters of the Gospel of St. *Luke* each week as part of reading the whole gospel continuously. In this particular meeting they used the Second Week on "Youth Empowerment." of the *Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2008* booklet. They systematically read the commentary on the three step "See, Judge, Act" process of the Pastoral Circle and the six Scripture Texts, and then they answered all the questions. There was an excellent discussion. No youth were present, but the members put themselves in the shoes of the Kenyan youth in answering some of the questions. They discussed the present situation in Kenya especially the youth in the Kibera Slums in Nairobi. One practical suggestion during the Step Three ("Act"): Give more power, decision-making and money to the local level in Kenya so that each of the eight provinces has factory/factories that provide work to youth

A very valuable resource during the 2008 Lenten Campaign in Kenya was St. Francis of Assisi's Peace Prayer – "Lord (or God) Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace." Thousands of copies of this prayer were given to SCCs throughout Kenya for daily and weekly prayer. In *Jumuiya* Masses it was used during the Penitential Service and before the Exchange of Peace. Prayer Cards in English and Swahili of this prayer were distributed very effectively by the Hekima Lenten Peace Campaign 2008, People for Peace in Africa and other organizations.

A helpful book is *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: a Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation* edited by Frans Wijzen, Peter Henriot and Rodrigo Mejia.³² This book celebrates the 25th anniversary of the publication of the famous book *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*. It shows how the Pastoral Circle, in which social analysis plays a key role, has been implemented around the world. A good example is Chapter 4 by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Christine Bodewes that is a Case Study of Christ the King Parish in the Kibera Slums in Nairobi that describes how the use of the pastoral circle in SCCs can transform a parish. This is documented in her full length book *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums: Voices of Kibera, Kenya*.³³ During our SCC Course at Hekima College Dolores Wavinya, the coordinator of the 35 SCCs in the five outstations/subparishes in the parish, presented an update. She herself is a member of St. John's SCC in St. Jude (High Rise) Outstation. She was asked what was the influence of the Catholics and of the SCCs in Christ the King Parish during the post election crisis. She pointed out that in the Kibera area there are only 4,000 Catholics out of a total population of 700,000. They were overwhelmed by the violent events that took place. But now there is new life and hope.

22 Criteria to Evaluate a Typical Neighborhood Parish-Based SCC

We have updated the 22 criteria that have been established to evaluate a typical neighborhood parish-based Small Christian Community (SCC) in an urban or rural area in Eastern Africa. These criteria are drawn from official AMECEA documents as far back as the 1973, 1976 and 1979 AMECEA Plenary Study Conferences, the First African Synod in 1994, practical pastoral decisions based on experience during this 1973-2008 period, and an evolving vision, theology, and praxis of SCCs. The full list of these 22 criteria is posted on the Small Christian Community Global Collaborative Website.³⁴

Two key criteria relate to the Bible and Practical Action:

10. The SCC has some kind of Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection on a regular basis. Often the Gospel of the following Sunday is chosen (a lectionary-based SCC) with a clear step by step plan. Members try to integrate faith and life, the Bible and everyday experience. Regularly there are Prayers of the Faithful (General Intercessions).

12. The SCC has some kind of planned practical action, mutual aid, and social outreach. This outreach responds to local challenges and problems such as lax Catholics in the neighborhood, bereaved people, sick people, needy and poor people, people with HIV/AIDS,³⁵ street children, internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees, people with dependency on alcohol, drugs, etc., local tensions over ethnicity/tribalism, concern about Ecology and the Environment and so on.

SCCs in Africa are a pastoral model of church that distinguishes them from other parts of the world such as the predominantly social model of the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs) in Latin America that are known by the English translation Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs). Bishop Mwoleka presented the ideal in Africa when he said: "The entire pastoral work will be carried out by means of Small Christian Communities (SCCs)." This guideline is seen in these criteria:

15. The SCC has various pastoral responsibilities, decisions and activities in the parish especially related to its members' religious education and preparation for receiving the sacraments

21. The pastoral priority of SCCs is an integral part of the Parish and Diocesan Pastoral Plans. After a workshop on "The Challenges of Kenyan Diocesan Priests as Animators in Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" in Siaya Deanery in Kisumu Archdiocese in March 2008, Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth stated that now we must "strengthen our Small Christian Communities by including them in our strategic planning of the Archdiocese of Kisumu."

Finally there are the structural challenges of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa today. Two criteria:

18. The SCC officially participates in the parish structures. For example, the SCC (or a group of SCCs) has a representative on the Outstation or Parish Council. Leadership starts from below.

20. There is some kind of coordination and networking of the different SCCs on the parish, deanery and diocesan levels.

Today's challenge in Africa is to appreciate the creative, healthy tensions between the different models of church (using a both/and approach rather than an either/or approach):

1. Communitarian/ Participatory/Collaborative/Circular/Inductive/Bottom-up Model *vis-à-vis* Hierarchical/Institutional/Pyramid/Deductive/Top-down Model.

2. SCCs Pastoral Model of Church/Parish as a Communion of Communities Model of Church/Church-as-Family Model *vis-à-vis* Traditional Parish Organizations/Societies/Apostolic Groups/ Special Interest Group Model of Church *vis-à-vis* New Movements Model of Church.

After a lot of research we have found that perhaps the two most important characteristics (criteria) of mature and successful Small Christian Communities in Africa are:

1. The quality and depth of the Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection. This includes connecting the Gospel teaching to our daily lives. This is emphasized in Numbers 23 and 89 of Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa (Ecclesia in Africa)*: "The [Synod] Assembly described the characteristics of such communities as follows...they should moreover be communities which pray and listen to God's Word and reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel."³⁶ The importance of the Bible is also stressed in the various LUMKO materials (printed booklets and posters) from South Africa.

2. Commitment to regular practical action, service and outreach – what in Swahili we call *kazi ya kutenda*. A main focus should be on social involvement.

Survey of Catholic Major Seminaries and Institutes of Theology

The AMECEA Study Conference on "Deeper Evangelization in the Third Millennium" took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in July, 2002. Section 7 of the Pastoral Resolutions was on "Building the Church as a Family of God by Continuing to Foster and/or Revitalize the Small Christian Communities." No. 43 states: "We recommend that a programme on the theological and pastoral value of Small Christian Communities be included in the normal curriculum of the Major Seminaries and houses of formation of both men and women."

Now six years later, the AMECEA Office in Nairobi conducted a survey on how Catholic Major Seminaries and Institutes of Theology in the eight AMECEA Countries in Eastern Africa are implementing this resolution. The survey was sent to 22 major seminaries and institutes of theology and the AMECEA Office received 17 answers that represent a 78 % return -- well above the normal average for these kinds of surveys. Answers came from the following:

AMECEA Level (3):

1. Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Nairobi.
2. Blessed Bakanja AMECEA College, Nairobi.
3. AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba), Eldoret.

Kenya (6):

1. St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, Nairobi.
2. St. Mattias Mulumba Kalemba Seminary, Tindinyo, Kapsabet.
3. Apostles of Jesus Theologicum, Nairobi.
4. Hekima College, Nairobi.
5. Tangaza College, Nairobi
6. Lumko East Africa Pastoral Ministry Workshop, Nairobi.

Malawi (1):

1. St. Peter Seminary, Zomba.

Sudan (1):

1. St. Paul Seminary, Khartoum.

Tanzania (3):

1. St. Charles Lwanga Seminary, Segerea, Dar es Salaam
2. St. Paul Seminary, Kipalapala, Tabora.
3. Salvatorian Institute, Morogoro.

Uganda (2):

1. St. Mary's Seminary, Ggaba, Kampala.
2. Alokolum Seminary, Gulu.

Zambia (1):

1. St. Dominic's Seminary, Lusaka.

We are now awaiting the results of the "Survey" from Eritrea and Ethiopia to complete the statistical findings on all eight AMECEA countries.

Meanwhile it is clear that in most of the seminaries and institutes the importance of Small Christian Communities is taught in the courses on Ecclesiology and Pastoral Theology. Some places have specific courses on SCCs. Some courses have individual lectures and talks on SCCs such as "The Role of Small Christian Communities in Promoting Justice and Peace." There are also a variety of seminars and workshops on SCCs. A new development is the Postgraduate Diploma in Small Christian Communities that will begin at CUEA in August, 2008. This is a nine month programme after the B.A and the first academic programme on SCCs of its kind in Africa.

Many seminarians get good pastoral experience in the life and practice of SCCs in parishes during their seminary training especially through their weekend pastoral activities. The religious congregations and societies of Tangaza College in Nairobi have particularly good programmes. Other seminarians experience SCCs during their Pastoral Year. Many seminarians live in some kind of Small Christian Community structure/set-up in the Residence Halls/Dormitories of the seminaries and institutes that includes regular prayer, masses and shared reflections.³⁷

It is important to put into practice the challenge of Bishop Kalilombe who said that **every** bishop, priest, brother, seminarian and sister should participate in a particular SCC – not as a leader but as a regular/ordinary member. . This can work easily if the priest, etc. becomes a member of the SCC in his or her specific neighborhood/geographical area (that is, where he or she is actually living).³⁸

SCCs are mainly composed of lay people who are the foundation of this new model of church. During a World Synod of Bishops in Rome Bishop Mwoleka reminded his brother bishops that "98% of the members of the Catholic Church are lay people." When it comes to Small Christian Communities in Africa the priests are not the experts, not the specialists. No, they are the students, the learners. The African lay people who meet every week in their SCCs are the experts and the specialists. They are at the heart of the SCCs.

During a workshop for priests in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, Tanzania Auxiliary Bishop Method Kilaini (who himself belongs to a SCC of lay people in the Oyster Bay Section of St Peter's Parish) emphasized the importance of priests getting involved in SCCs. He said that there is a danger that priests can live apart from the people, but through visiting SCCs they can experience ("taste") the daily life of their parishioners and thus know better the true condition of the everyday life of their parishes. During a SCC Workshop in Siaya Deanery in Kisumu Archdiocese in March, 2008 a priest named Father Thaddeus Oluoch mentioned that the Catholics in his parish who belonged to St. Jude Thaddeus SCC had been continually inviting him to join their SCC. At the end of the workshop he announced he was going to join this SCC as soon as he got back to his parish.

Animators of Small Christian Communities, Not Leaders or Bosses

Priests, brothers, sisters and lay leaders such as catechists are called to be animators of Small Christian Communities, not the leaders or bosses. This is a key part of SCCs as a new way of being church. *Mkolezaji* in Swahili was the name proposed for "animator" by Bishop Mwoleka who was one of the founders of SCCs in Tanzania. Other names for the different roles and responsibilities are servant-animator, promoter, facilitator, coordinator, and sign of unity of SCCs. I met a lay person in Immaculate Conception Parish (Upanga), Dar es Salaam. He said that it is very important for the priest to teach about SCCs and to visit the SCCs. He said that if the priest says nothing about SCCs, this communicates to the lay people that SCCs are not important, that they are optional, that they are just another organization in the parish.

A concrete example of the priest, etc. as animator is helping SCC members to appreciate the meaning and value of silence after the Gospel is read during the Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection in a SCC. During this weekly gathering many SCCs leave out the period of silence or shorten it. Lay people find it very hard to know what to "do" during this three or four minute silent period. One lay woman in Iramba Parish, Musoma, Tanzania told

me: "Oh, Father, during the silence I begin thinking about what I am going to cook for supper." But the silence is a special moment when we can stop, quiet ourselves down and listen to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us through the Gospel reading. It has been suggested that African religious, especially sisters, with their training and experience in prayer can help lay people in the SCCs to use and value silence more.

It might surprise people to hear that it "easy" to preach on Sunday if we use the SCC process. That is, during the week the priest, catechist or homilist participates in various SCC meetings in his parish that reflect on the gospel of the following Sunday. Then the Sunday parish or outstation liturgy becomes a "communion of the SCCs." During the homily the priest and catechist reflects back the experiences, insights and applications he learned from the Bible reflections that took place in the individual SCC meetings. A concrete personal example. During the Bible Reflection in St. Bruno Sserunkuuma Small Christian Community in Morogoro, Tanzania one member suggested a practical action based on the following Sunday's Gospel Reading from *Luke 6: 27-38* about Jesus Christ's teaching that we should love our enemy: A particular SCC should invite someone the members do not know/do not like/an outsider/a stranger to next week's meeting of the SCC. I then used this example in my homily at St. Mary's Parish (Modeko), Morogoro the following Sunday.

Over the years I have had lively conversations (and differences!) with African sisters about their involvement/lack of involvement in SCCs. Often they say that they already live in a SCC, that is, their local convent so they don't have to get involved in the SCCs in their parish. But following Bishop Kalilombe's challenge, a scenario might look like this: In a particular convent one sister teaches in the primary school, one sister works in the local dispensary, one sister does pastoral work in the parish and one sister takes responsibility for the needs of the convent itself. But all four of these sisters are regular members of one of the parish-based SCCs to express their commitment to this new model of church and to better experience the ordinary life of lay Catholics in the parish. Recently in Kenya we have conducted specific workshops on SCCs for African Sisters.³⁹ So slowly the tide is turning.

Another new learning has been the importance of starting specific Youth SCCs. At every SCC Workshop the question comes up: How do we attract African youth to join the SCCs? In most SCCs in Eastern Africa the majority are women. There are some men and almost no youth. Following African culture and traditions it is very difficult for youth to speak in a mixed group of adults. During the past two years in Dar es Salaam we have had a major breakthrough. Various "Mama *Jumuiyas*" started Youth Branches. The Youth SCCs meet on a different day of the week and along with the Bible Sharing/Reflection they discuss their own issues and concerns like boy-girl relationships and the use of leisure time. They also have special activities like music, singing, jiving, drama and football matches.⁴⁰

An example in Nairobi is St. Stephen Youth SCC that meets every Tuesday and Friday in St. Joseph the Worker Parish (Kangemi). One day is for prayer and Bible Sharing/Reflection and the other day is for other discussions and activities. With youth it is important to be creative and "think outside of the box."

At a SCC Workshop at the Apostles of Jesus Theologicum in Nairobi in February, 2008⁴¹ two small groups discussed the topic: "As a missionary animator of Small Christian Communities what practical actions would you suggest to facilitate Youth SCCs?" The recommendations included:

1. "The annual and monthly programs of the communities should include some activities that favor the youth's interests like parties, picnics, sports, drama, etc. both within the Small Christian Communities and outside to widen their scope of interaction."

2. "The use of audio (new generation songs), visual and audio-visual means of communication should be encouraged among youth in line with the signs of the time."

A major challenge today is to involve youth in general, and Youth SCCs in particular, more in reconciliation and peacemaking activities in Kenya. Kenyan youth are now using drama, music, sayings and slogans to promote harmony and reconciliation among different ethnic groups in Kenya. Our research in Nairobi during the months of January and February, 2008 uncovered 40 sayings and slogans used by youth on peace, peacemaking, reconciliation and justice. These include examples of their street language of Sheng.⁴²

A good example of the SCC Model of Church from below is the planning for the African participation in the World Youth Days that take place every three years. Youth in Tanzania who applied to their diocese to go to World Youth Day in Sidney, Australia in July, 2008 first had to get a recommendation letter from their SCC.

How SCCs in Africa Can Participate in Larger Events of Catholic Church

An ongoing challenge is how SCCs in Africa can participate in larger events, concerns and issues of the Catholic Church such as the preparations for the World Synod of Bishops to take place in Rome in October, 2008 and the Second African Synod to take place in Rome in October, 2009. How is the voice of the church heard from below, from the grassroots, from laypeople especially?

The Bible is at the heart of SCCs in Africa. Yet how many SCC members know about the World Synod of Bishops on "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church?" How many have read the *Lineamenta* ("Guidelines")?⁴³ One good sign is that special Bible Study Groups are increasing in places like Nairobi. There is a hunger for the Word of God. In addition to their weekly SCC Meetings some leaders of SCCs and other parishioners in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Nairobi) have a special Bible Study Group after Mass on Sunday. The *Instrumentum Laboris* ("Working Document")⁴⁴ was published on 12 June, 2008. It promotes *lectio divina*, that is, a deeper meditation on the Word of God adapted to different circumstances. This challenges the Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection (No. 2 in the "Checklist" above) of the SCCs in Africa to be more prayerful and reflective.

In the SCC Course at Hekima College Jesuit Seminarian Peter Chidolue told the story of the day when he carrying the *Lineamenta* of the Second African Synod. A fervent Catholic lay woman met him on the street near Adam's Arcade, Nairobi, saw the booklet and asked: "Was there a First African Synod?" The harsh reality is that many lay people do not know about the results and recommendations of the First African Synod. The content has not filtered down or trickled down to the local level.

The *Lineamenta* of the Second African Synod on the theme of "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace"⁴⁵ has been available since 2006. A Swahili translation was published in 2007. There is worldwide interest in the topic -- both reconciliation, justice and peace in the Catholic Church itself and in the wider society in Africa. The theme is very timely and challenging for the continent of Africa. Of the 53

African countries 19 countries are presently in some kind of civil war, internal unrest and tribalism. But many Catholics do not know about the synod. Some SCC members say that they have not been sufficiently informed and consulted about the synod. Some lay people in SCCs in Nairobi find that parts of the document are abstract and not rooted in daily life. Of the 79 footnotes only seven are from specifically African sources.

In the document SCCs are called "living ecclesial communities." The Church as Family of God Model is a new ecclesial option that focuses on building families and building SCCs that are involved in reconciliation, justice and peace in the Catholic Church and in the wider society. One question to be discussed is: "What is the role and mission of Small Christian Communities?" Only a few SCCs have studied the *Lineamenta* and sent in their answers to the 32 questions.

A Bible Discussion Group composed of around eight to 10 people (laymen, lay woman and one priest) meets every Monday at Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi. Rather than reflecting on the readings of the coming Sunday, the group read and reflected on the *Lineamenta* over a period of a few months. Their observations include:

1. More education on the Bible is needed in SCCs. The Protestants have study opportunities like Bible Study Fellowship. We need similar opportunities to study the Bible from a Catholic viewpoint.
2. Our group misses the Catholic Church equivalent of rites of passages that are found in African Traditional Religions.
3. Our Catholic Church should try to dialogue and seek unity with the evangelistic sects.
4. Sometimes our priests come across not as servants but as bosses.
5. Every effort should be made to strengthen our families.
6. The Catholic Church has a major voice in human rights.
7. Our schools should be proactive in combating tribalism.⁴⁶

AMECEA will discuss this same theme during its 16th Plenary Meeting in Lusaka, Zambia from 27 June to 7 July, 2008. This gives the bishops from Eastern Africa a special opportunity to prepare for the Second African Synod to take place the following year. The AMECEA Office is compiling the responses to the questions from the eight countries in Eastern Africa to be sent to Rome by October, 2008. Some of the answers are related to Small Christian Communities.

An important new book that is related to these meetings is *Communities for the Kingdom: A Handbook for Small Christian Community Leaders* by Kieran Flynn.⁴⁷ It explains how SCCs are a concrete expression of, and realization of, the Church-as-Family Model of Church in Africa, a key insight of the First African Synod in 1994 and how SCCs have the task of working to transform society.

While most of the stories, examples and Case Studies in this article come from Kenya and Tanzania, our SCC Team feel these "new learnings" are applicable to all eight of the AMECEA countries and even to the whole of Africa. Since some of this material has been reprinted in publications and websites around the world, we are happy that our African experience of SCCs can be shared with the whole world.⁴⁸

I end with three African Proverbs that describe the ongoing importance of SCCs in Africa.⁴⁹ A Ganda (Uganda) proverb says: *One who sees something good must narrate it.* A Sukuma (Tanzania) proverb says: *That which is good is never finished.* An Igbo (Nigeria) proverb says: *When a road is good you walk on it twice.* We continue to learn about SCCs and make them our good road, our new way of being church in Africa.

Endnotes

¹ Small Christian Communities (SCCs) developed as a result of putting the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) into practice. Latin America, Africa and Asia (especially the Philippines) all pioneered the development of a SCC Model of Church or a BCC Model of Church. After considerable research and debate, many specialists feel that quite independently of one another these three areas of the Catholic Church in the Global South *simultaneously* experienced the extraordinary growth of SCCs. Thus the African experience did not come from Latin America but developed on its own.

² Mwoleka's pastoral vision and planning are described in Joseph Healey, *Kuishi Injili* (Swahili for "Living the Gospel") (Ndanda-Peramiho: Benedictine Publications), 2006.

³ This SCC Team is an informal group of SCC animators (priests, brothers, sisters, laymen and laywomen) who facilitate courses, workshops, and other training sessions on SCCs and promote various SCC activities. Some of our workshops in 2008 have been in collaboration with Father Joachim Omolo Ouko, A.J. who is responsible for media campaigns and networking in the People for Peace in Africa Office in Nairobi.

⁴ For further research on African names for SCCs see Joseph G. Healey, "Twelve Case Studies of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" in Agatha Radoli, ed., *How Local is the Local Church: Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa* (Eldoret: Spearhead No. 126-28, 1993), pp: 59-103.

⁵ John Paul II posed an interesting challenge to the Catholic Church in Africa under the section "The Church as God's Family:" "It is earnestly to be hoped that theologians in Africa will work out the theology of the Church as Family with all the riches contained in this concept, showing its complementarity with other images of the Church." John Paul II, *The Church in Africa (Ecclesia in Africa): Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), No. 63.

⁶ See Joseph G. Healey, "Window into the Present African Reality." Retrieved 10 June, 2008 from the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website: <http://smallchristiancommunities.org/content/view/37/52/#window>

⁷ We prefer to use the term "workshop" rather than "seminar" to emphasize that it is a hands on, participatory experience. In the workshop there are many opportunities for the participants to share their local experiences, tell their stories, interact with each other and actually model being a SCC.

⁸ An interactive question and answer format is used in Stefano Kaombe, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo: Changamoto Kuelekea Ukomavu* (Swahili for "Small Christian

Communities: The Challenge to Head towards Maturity") (Dar es Salaam: Privately Printed, 2006).

⁹ For an urban SCC story in Tanzania see "Visiting St. Charles Lwanga SCC" in Joseph G. Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005 and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006), pp. 100-101. For an urban SCC story in Zambia see "On the Way to Bauleni" in Joseph G. Healey, *African Stories for Preachers and Teachers* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), p. 20. All these stories are contained in the online, searchable "African Stories Database." Retrieved 10 June, 2008 from the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website: <http://www.afriprov.org/story/searchstory.htm>

¹⁰ For a rural SCC story in Tanzania see "Theresa's Old, Plastic Armless Crucifix" in Joseph G. Healey, *Once Upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 118.

¹¹ An amazing resource is the *Kenya Catholic Directory 2006* (Nairobi: KCD Datacentre, 2006). The NOTES state: "Small Christian Communities: We have listed over 3,300 SCCs in this Directory from the data collected in a good number of dioceses. SCCs are the choice of the [Catholic] Church in the AMECEA region. With this 'census' we wanted to give some visibility to this reality so entrenched in the life of our church" (p. xvi). This directory states that there are 3,106 SCCs in Machakos Diocese and 2,284 SCCs in Nairobi Archdiocese. This data research is explained further: "Not all the parishes have given an answer, only 389 out of 747, a good number anyway. In these parishes there are 17, 587 SCCs (4,270 listed by name in the *KCD*). This allows us to estimate that there is an average of 45 SCCs per parish, and therefore over 33,000 of them in the country." Aloysius, "Discovering God's Marvels: Facts & Curiosities about the Kenya Catholic Directory 2006," *Seed* 18:7-8 (July-August, 2006), pp. 10-11.

¹² An important Case Study of the SCCs in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, Tanzania is Christopher Cieslikiewicz, "Pastoral Involvement of Parish-based SCCs in Dar es Salaam" in Healey and Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, pp. 99-105. Cieslikiewicz likes to tell this story. When he arrived in Rome, Italy to do his doctoral studies the first question he was asked was "What football [soccer] team do you root for?" He discovered that Italians are very passionate about their teams such as Roma, Juventus and AC Milan. When he went to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania to do his doctorate research, the first question he was asked was "What *Jumuiya* (Swahili for SCC) do you belong to?" He discovered that Catholics in Dar es Salaam are also very passionate about their Small Christian Communities.

¹³ AMECEA is an acronym for "Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa." It is a service organization for the National Episcopal Conferences of the eight countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961). Somalia (1995) and Djibouti (2002) are Affiliate Members. The AMECEA Study Conference in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 1976 on the theme "Building Small Christian Communities" stated: "Systematic formation of Small Christian Communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come in Eastern Africa." See the AMECEA Website: <http://www.amecea.org>

¹⁴ Buzz Groups are a very effective participatory model of church. It was popularized in SCCs by the LUMKO Institute in South Africa. The SCC animators noticed that in the weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection the women were not talking; they were not sharing their reflections in the full group (15 to 20 people). Perhaps they were shy and not used to speaking in a mixed group including men. So immediately after the Gospel reading the full SCC divides into groups of two members each (or three members) to share their reflections. The women found it easy to share with their partner. When Buzz Groups are used in a weekly SCC gathering or in the occasional *Jumuiya* Mass instead of the normal homily, they can be followed by the best ideas and insights being then shared in the full group. An example: During a workshop to train SCC Leaders in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Adams Arcade) at Hekima College we had a *Jumuiya* Mass on the feast of the Holy Eucharist (Body and Blood of Christ) on 25 May, 2008. During my three persons Buzz Group a Kenyan lay woman said: "During this workshop I have learned so much about the importance of the Bible in SCCs. I feel that I am now nourished and strengthened by two kinds of spiritual food: The Word of God and the Eucharist."

¹⁵ A constant question that I get everywhere in Eastern Africa related to SCC celebrations and workshops is about the expense of the food with the accompanying comments such as: "It isn't a real celebration without food." "We can't afford food for all the participants." "We have to shorten the workshop so the participants can go back home to eat." A workshop to train SCC Leaders in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, (Adams Arcade) at Hekima College on 25 May, 2008 had the best plan that I have ever experienced. There was a user-friendly, efficient and simple lunch for 120 people. Plastic plates and spoons. One huge metal cooking pot of brown rice and one huge metal cooking pot of chicken stew. Each person got one scoop of each plus a soda. Serving staff of only four.

¹⁶ I first saw this role play performed by five-year-old children in the Montessori School on the grounds of Assumption of Mary Parish (Umoja) in Nairobi. I have used this demonstration many times including during an international meeting of professors of mission in the USA in 2004.

¹⁷ The AMECEA Study Conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in July, 2002 was on the theme "Deeper Evangelization in the Third Millennium."

¹⁸ John Paul II, *The Church in Africa*, No. 89.

¹⁹ An example of inculturation in SCCs in Africa is the course paper "Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at the Small Christian Community (SCC) Level in Malawi" by Samuel Satiele. Retrieved 10 June, 2008 from the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website: <http://smallchristiancommunities.org/content/view/40/56>

²⁰ Summarized from the class discussion on 5 March, 2008.

²¹ Many people have emphasized the importance of having inspiring, uplifting and positive witness/testimony stories after the December, 2007 post-election violence in Kenya. However, these stories must be real, that is, having a sacrifice/struggle/vulnerability/overcoming adversity and odds "reality edge" to them. One book already published is: *After the Vote: Five Dispatches from the Coalition of Concerned Kenyan Writers* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kwanini? Series, 2008). See also the Special Issue of *Wajibu: A Journal of Social and*

Ethical Concern, 23, 1-2 (2008). The theme is "Kenya: Redefining Ourselves" and contains stories by members of the Coalition of Concerned Kenyan Writers.

²² Jeffrey Odell Korgen, *Solidarity Will Transform the World: Stories of Hope from Catholic Relief Services* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), p. 101.

²³ Ibid, p.106.

²⁴ See Healey, Joseph and Donald Sybertz. *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa and Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 286.

²⁵ For a full explanation of the *Mato Oput* Ceremony see "Ethnical Foundations for Africa Traditional Reconciliation Mechanisms: A Case Study of the Uganda *Mato Oput* Process" by Menanga Kizito Yves in *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: In the Light of the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* (Nairobi, Kenya, CUEA Publications, 2008), pp. 158-176.

²⁶ See "Searching for a Symbol of Reconciliation," Healey, *Once Upon a Time in Africa*, p.101.

²⁷ See the very interesting field research carried out for six months (March – August, 2002) in nine SCCs, one in each of the nine parishes in Kitale Diocese within the West Pökot District in the northwestern part of Kenya. *Biblical Hermeneutics as a Tool for Inculturation in Africa: A Case Study of the Pökot People of Kenya*. David J. Ndegwah (Nairobi, Kenya: Creation Enterprises, 2007).

²⁸ One interesting follow-up to the workshop is that one participant, Jackson Roti Lemaletian, is writing an explanation of a Samburu, Kenya Proverb on reconciliation and peacebuilding to be used as a future "African Proverb of the Month" on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website.

²⁹ Presented by Pastor John Nambair of the African Inland Church on 14 June, 2008.

³⁰ Produced by Ukweli Video Productions, Nairobi, Kenya. 27 minutes. DVD and VHS. PAL and NTSC. Released June, 2008.

³¹ See also *Kenya's Good Governance, My Responsibility* (Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2007) (Nairobi: Kenyan Catholic Justice and Peace Commission Publication, 2007).

³² Wijssen, Frans, Peter Henriot and Rodrigo Mejia (eds.). *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation* (Maryknoll: N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005 and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006).

³³ Published by Paulines Publications Africa in Nairobi, 2005.

³⁴ Retrieved 10 June, 2008 from the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website: <http://smallchristiancommunities.org/content/view/37/52/#22>

³⁵ Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator documents the SCCs' outreach to people with HIV/AIDS in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees and Poverty* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), pp. 86-142.

³⁶ John Paul II, *The Church in Africa*. No. 89.

³⁷ We celebrated a *Jumuiya* Mass in *Kwetu Kwenu* ("For Us and You Too") Hostel at Hekima College in Nairobi on Easter Monday, 24 March, 2008. This is part of the regular Monday and Thursday masses in the college's small communities of eight to 10 students. For this mass the Jesuit seminarians came from Burundi, Cameroun, DRC, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia. The Shared Homily was linked to the Prayers of the Faithful. I mentioned some Sukuma, Tanzania cultural examples that illuminate and enrich our Easter faith such as the Sukuma name for Jesus Christ – "Victor over Death."

³⁸ Since moving from Dar es Salaam to Nairobi in February, 2007 I have been a member of St. Kizito SCC (Waruku) in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese. Fortunately this SCC is in the same geographical area as the Maryknoll Society House where I live. I have participated occasionally in the weekly meetings of Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection, *Jumuiya* Masses and other pastoral activities such as the outdoor "Way of the Cross" with members of my St. Kizito SCC and the other six SCCs in the parish on Good Friday, 21 March, 2008. At present my SCC is experiencing tensions between members who belong to different ethnic groups. The SCC leaders are accused of favoring members of their own ethnic groups

³⁹ We had a day and a half workshop at the Assumption Sisters Novitiate in Thika, Kenya on 25-26 March, 2007. The theme was: "African Sisters as Animators of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa." A total of 18 people participated: 5 Novices, 8 Postulates, 4 Staff and one Resource Person (an Assumption Sister who does pastoral work in Kitui Diocese). Among the different topics we discussed was the importance of the Gikuyu word *mwaki* that means "fire" (fireplace/hearth) and is the widespread name for SCC in this area.

⁴⁰ The most successful parish in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese with Youth SCCs is the Uganda Martyrs Parish (Magomeni).

⁴¹ See the full report on the "Apostles of Jesus Theologium Workshop on 21-22 February, 2008 in Nairobi." Retrieved 10 June, 2008 from the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website: <http://smallchristiancommunities.org/content/view/37/52/#apostles>

⁴² See the "African Sayings of the Month" for March, 2008. Retrieved 10 June, 2008 from the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website: <http://www.afriprov.org/resources/explain2008.htm>

⁴³ *Lineamenta* for the Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly. *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2007).

⁴⁴ *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly. *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. Retrieved 17 June, 2008 from the ZENIT (International News Agency) Website: www.zenit.org/article-22878?l=english

⁴⁵ *Lineamenta* for the Synod of Bishops Second Special Assembly for Africa. *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006).

⁴⁶ Based on notes provided by Father John Lange, M.M. in March, 2008.

⁴⁷ Published by AMECEA Gaba Publications in Eldoret as a Double *Spearhead* Nos. 181-182, 2007.

⁴⁸ When three visitors from Melbourne, Australia met Cardinal Polycarp Pengo at Msimbazi Parish in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in March, 2005 they explained that they had come from Australia to observe and learn about the way that the parishes of Dar es Salaam connect the SCCs and the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (what we call the RCIA or the adult catechumenate). Cardinal Pengo beamed. His response was immediate: "It is good that we can be missionaries from Africa to the world!"

⁴⁹ Many African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories related to SCCs can be found by searching the full website and the online, searchable "African Stories Database" in the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website: <http://www.afriprov.org>

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