

A REPORT FOR THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP IN MALAWI



VENUE: BETHANY HOUSE-ARCHDIOCESE OF LILONGWE

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Introduction

In 1979 the African Bishops reiterated that Small Christian Communities are the Church in the neighborhood which the following AMECEA Plenary made the Small Christian Communities a key pastoral priority. This report will clearly give the progress of the Small Christian Communities over the past years. The workshop was organized by the AMECEA headquarters under the pastoral department with the support from a United States of America Catholic Foundation based in the state of Delaware to a tune of \$ 4,000. This was the second workshop the first was conducted in Zambia. This report will only cover what was shared in Malawi with reference from the findings by Rev Fr. Joseph Healey's evaluation.

Background of the workshops

The workshops are one way of evaluating one of the most important pastoral initiatives in the AMECEA region as the Archbishop of Lilongwe Archdiocese said that "the Small Christian Communities are dear to my heart". Since 1970 to now the AMECEA Bishops have really worked towards realizing the vision on Small Christian Communities. During the 17th AMECEA Plenary in Kenya 2011, it was recommended that there should be on going evaluation in order to bring forth the challenges and successes of Small Christian Communities over the past 51 years. The workshops are part of that evaluation process.

Objectives of the Workshop

The workshop in Malawi had different objectives which aimed at achieving one goal of bringing a new way of being Church in embracing the Small Christian Communities with the use of the social media. The following were the objectives of the workshop;

- To reflect and evaluate on Small Christian Communities in Malawi in order to propose ways of making them vibrant, renewing and embracing all into one body of Christ.
- To involve the lay faith to use the social media in uplifting their participation in Small Christian Communities activities.
- To provide a forum to share and reflect on resource materials on Small Christian Communities in order to help participants to go back and share in parishes.

Day one Sessions

The first day was highlighted with the following activities which appeared on the program for the workshop however some of the activities which were supposed to be conducted on the day of arrival were shifted to the first day after looking at the attendance of the participants who were trekking from distant parts of the country.

Official opening ceremony



Captured in the picture is the Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Lilongwe-His grace Tarcisius G. Ziyaye during the opening ceremony

It was organized that the workshop should be opened by the Archbishop of Lilongwe Archdiocese who happens to be the bishop chair of the Catholic Secretariat of Malawi and coincidentally the president of AMECEA. At exactly 08:50 am, the Archbishop officially opened the workshop and wished the participants a successful time.

The Speech of the Archbishop

In his speech the Archbishop zeroed in on the following thematic areas which were the focal points to be treated in the workshop.

He started by thanking God for the workshop and the gift of Small Christian Communities and the wonderful participation. He reminded the participants of the history of Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA region and declarations of the AMECEA bishops that Small Christian Communities should be the key pastoral priority. He turned technical to the workshop by urging everyone to carefully evaluate how Small Christian Communities have helped deepen evangelization in the AMECEA region. He also urged everyone to bring the vision of the pioneers of Small Christian Communities to reality in coming up with an objective assessment. In his final remarks he thanked the organizers of the workshop (AMECEA Secretariat), the participants and finally the benefactors.

Touchdown session

This was a session whereby the participants were to know each other for a good number of them came late at night. This was an important moment of the workshop because it eased the tension of the participants to each other and it was an ice breaker to the hardcore business of the day.

Creation of Small Christian Communities

This was an interactive workshop whereby the workshop was to involve the participants to physically learn by doing. In order to effectively achieve the objective of the workshop, there was need to create model Small Christian Communities to practice the skills being imparted to the participants. The following were the Small Christian Communities which were created;

- St. Peter the Apostle
- St. Monica

- St. Maria Goretti
- St. Jude Thaddeus

Experiences and expectations of the participants

This was a process workshop which sought to engage and cross fertilize ideas on the possible ways of improving the Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA region in coming up with the common way of combating the challenges being experienced in the member countries. There was need to get from each individual participant his/ her experience for the workshop gathered participants from different geographical regions of Malawi with different ways of organizing their Small Christian Communities. Below are the experiences which were given by the participants;

- Family life in Small Christian Communities
- Sharing the word of God
- Increases our sense of belonging/participation of lay faithful in Church activities
- Self reliance of the Church
- Capacity building/leadership roles
- Awakening the in active Christian/Small Christian community members
- Knowing each other well
- Deepening of faith
- Empowering the faithful

Below are the expectations of the participants to the workshop

- Improvement on what is being done now
- Attaining the skills in Small Christian Communities planning
- Learning positive outcomes from participants
- Guidelines on how best to facilitate and organize Small Christian Communities
- Inclusiveness in Small Christian Communities
- Negative impact of Small Christian Communities
- Involvement of the Youth in Small Christian Communities
- Building strong walls on the present weaknesses (renewal of Small Christian Communities)

Topic 1: Small Christian Communities challenges in Malawi

The methodology employed was focus group discussions of about 7 to 8 members on each group to promote participation. In this session the below categorized challenges were brought forward to the whole group at large when each group had a presenter who ably presented with elaborate examples.

General challenges

- Poor participation of members because of lack of orientation.
- Women dominate Small Christian Communities while men are not present.
- Lack of dedication by many Christians because of laziness or socio-economic status.
- Lack of understanding the real meaning importance of Small Christian Communities in the parish.
- No clear understanding about the size of a Small Communities Community.
- Failure to make the bible readings relevant to the community.

Process of conducting Small Christian Communities Meetings

- Doing routine things (saying the rosary all times) and lack of creativity.
- Some members are reluctant to make financial contributions when need arises.
- Difference in social status.
- Pastoral leadership
- There is a gap between priests/religious in the activities of Small Christian Communities.
- Most of the clergy do not participate or show interest in Small Christian Communities.
- Lack of parish strategic plan and there are no clear guidelines for Small Christian Communities.
- Lack of useful material for the conducting Small Christian Communities- e.g. bibles
- Poor leadership in Small Christian Communities and illiteracy.
- Some leaders are not good models.
- Lack of on-going formation on Small Christian Communities in the parishes
- Selective attendance when need arises i.e. to baptize their children, to bless their marriage.

Youth and Children in Small Christian Communities

- Limited participation of the youth in Small Christian Communities because they are not motivated.
- The youth are indifferent to Small Christian Communities, how to get them interested.
- Children do not take part in Small Christian Communities because there is no place for them.

N.B. For the responses to the above challenges; find them in the annex named "A logical framework for the workshop"

Topic 2: Introduction to the Bible

"It is good that pastoral activity also favour the growth of small communities,"formed by families or based in parishes which can promote formation, prayer and knowledge of the Bible in accordance with the Church's faith 1(Verbum Domini No.73)"

Reading from the above illustration by the Pope Emeritus in his Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini, it clearly shows that the Bible should always be at the center of the Small Christian Communities in every pastoral initiative to be undertaken. At this number the pope urges the Church to animate priests and lay faithful in bible formation to help the lay faithful to understand and interpret the bible in accordance with the Catholic exegesis.

The topic above was very vital looking at how difficult it is most of the times with the lay faithful to understand the bible more especially today with the problem of different biblical hermeneutics. The topic centered on the following thematic areas of the bible;

- The meaning of the bible
- Books of the bible (according to the Catholic canon)
- The bible month in Malawi with its background
- Sacred tradition Vs Sola scriptura
- Contents of the writings of the Old Testament
- Main divisions of the Old Testament
- Deuterocanonical books
- Why the Old Testament is significant to Christianity
- The New Testament

➤ Contents of the New Testament writings

Topic 3: Lectionary based faith sharing in Small Christian Communities

This was a process session where the Small Christian Communities created were tasked to follow the readings of the 4th Sunday of Advent. The reading was taken from the gospel according to Mathew 1: 18-24. This is a way of bible sharing which based its reading on the word of the day in the lectionary in order to be in solidarity with the universal Church. Below are the 13 steps which were used by the model Small Christian Communities at the workshop. Steps 1 to 9 were used. **Note:** for a full version of the steps see the appended 13 steps for Bible sharing.

13 Steps in the Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Life Connections Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa

1. Opening prayer or song.
2. Brief reports on the members' lives during the past week (called a "touchdown period" that can also serve as an "icebreaker" for the gathering). Includes a report on the SCC's actions/tasks (community response) carried out during the previous week.
3. Brief introduction of the liturgical theme.
4. Read the Gospel of the following Sunday (first time).
5. Mention a word, phrase or image in the Gospel that strikes you the most/resonates with you the most/stands out to you the most.
6. Read the Gospel of the following Sunday (second time).
7. Silence. Listening to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us.
8. **Bible** Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Life Connections. Connect, relate and apply the Bible (Gospel) to our daily lives and experience (on both personal and society-wide levels). Sometimes the SCC uses a Daily Life-*Bible* Connections method. Start with special themes and topics as well as our experiences and events of daily life and then go to the *Bible*.
9. Closing prayer or song.

Topic 4: An exposure session on how Small Christian Communities operate in the AMECEA region-DVD

The day was full of the Malawian context of Small Christian Communities which needed some exposure to other countries' experiences on how Small Christian Communities are organized. There was a DVD which was watched as one way of being exposed to other AMECEA countries. The DVD was entitled the Church in the neighborhood the definition given by the AMECEA bishops. It was capturing the experience of Rev Fr. Rodrigo Mejia S.J a situation in Ethiopia. It has two parts where the first part stresses on the following;

- Basis and formation of Small Christian Communities
- Instructions on how to develop and animate Small Christian Communities within the Parish.
- The second part hinges on the different services rendered by the Small Christian Communities.

Lessons learnt

Being the first day, it was a full and packed day with lots of participatory activities. The most notable lessons which were learnt were as follows;

- The spirit of active participation among the Small Christian Communities
- The new things being imparted like the Lumko method of Bible sharing, the challenges brought to light by the participants.
- The experience of the facilitator when he gave his insights to the group on how Small Christian Communities are being organized in the AMECEA region since 1970's to date.
- The possible ways of fostering participation when most members are passive during Bible sharing.

Day two sessions

Topic 1: In process evaluation



Captured in the picture is Rev Fr. Joseph Healey MM, the fascinating facilitator for the workshop, *"a youth from a long time ago"*

This was a recapitulation of the work covered the previous day where comments, lessons and questions were asked to the general group in order to solicit common answers and feelings for the work done previously.

General Comments

There was a general comment on how the sessions were conducted; it was surprising to many participants how the beauty of sharing could bring Small Christian Communities life. Another milestone of the sessions was the new solutions commonly found to solve the many challenges hampering the progress of Small Christian Communities.

Lessons

There was a great paradigm shift in the way Small Christian Communities were viewed by many participants. The new coined phrases "Small Christian Communities are anew way of being Church and Small Christian Communities are not a movement in the Church but are the Church in movement" helped the participants to realize how strong Small Christian Communities should be now than before.

Questions

There was one question which was posed by Rev Fr. Simwaka saying that a priest should he be contributing money to his Small Christian Community if he has chosen one for him to belong to? Rev Fr. Joseph Healey responded by giving an example of a bishop in Tanzania who happens to belong to a Small Christian Community which is near to the Cathedral, saying that he gives a little something and not much and he avails himself to work at the Church when it is time for his Small Christian Community to help at the Church. He continued by challenging the clerics and the religious in Malawi to emulate this good example in their respective parishes.

Topic 2: See-Judge-Act method in Small Christian Communities bible sharing

This was the most practical session on how best to pray the bible in order for God to be felt in our midst. Rev Fr Healey started by explaining how the method works like. In his presentation he carefully drew the difference of this method to the Lumko (South Africa). This method starts by reflecting the worldly events in light with the gospel. He explained the steps to follow in order to come up the action to take to the worldly event(s) in light with the gospel. To facilitate the in depth learning; the model Small Christian communities were supposed to come up with one general society problem and one Church problem which they were supposed to pray on. The following were the problems;

Small Christian Community	General society problem	Church problem
St Maria Goretti	Poverty	Limited participation of the youth.
St. Peter	Environmental degradation	Children not part of Small Christian Communities
St. Monica	Corruption	Shallow faith
St. Jude Thaddeus	Corruption	Poor leadership in Small Christian Communities

The following time was allotted to the above exercise

Part of the Method	Time allotted
See	15 minutes
Judge/interpret/evaluate	30 minutes
Act	10 minutes

Note: the time allotment can be timed as above or in any way to suit the local situation.

Topic 3: Centrality of the word of God in Small Christian Communities



Rev Fr. Pikiti-the Pastoral Secretary for AMECEA facilitating the workshop

This topic was handled concurrently with an experience of Bible sharing in Small Christian Communities with a special focus on the texts from proto Isaiah. A guiding paper was prepared by the facilitator which depicted readings from Isaiah 1:1-2, 10-11. Below are the requirements for Bible/Gospel sharing: R.O.S.E

- A copy of the Bible. It is preferable that each one has the same version. (The Catholic Edition Bible)
- Proper attitude for a meaningful and fruitful Bible sharing:

Respect- listening attentively and not judging others.

Openness- willingness to share insights on Gods Word and readiness to be enriched

Sincerity- honesty and prudence

Empathy- participating, understanding feelings

- A facilitator assigned or chosen by the group not necessarily a Bible expert but one who knows how to lead properly with the chosen method
- The Bible sharing method(s)

During the plenary session of this topic, Rev Fr Mtapanga urged the group to clearly know the distinction between preaching and faith sharing. Below is a good guide on the same;

Faith sharing is not.

- A scripture study or discussion
- A show and tell of how much I know about scripture, theology, e.t.c
- A time to resolve my problems and those for others
- A time to tell my whole life story (public confession)
- Preaching to the group
- Complaining and debating

Different Gospel Sharing Methods/Approaches

There are many kinds of approaches to Bible sharing which fits different situations. Below are the common approaches which have being in practice in the biblical apostolate.

- Lumko
- Vigan Method

Lumko Method

This has been dealt with extensively during the earlier topics. Refer to the above given steps. The Lumko method has several other aspects which can enrich bible sharing in Small Christian Communities like; Look-Listen-Love (L-L-L Lumko), Life-Bible-Notes (L-B-N-Lumko), Group Response (GR-Lumko). This report will not explain these aspects of Lumko.

Aims

- To experience the presence of the Risen Lord
- To allow each member of the group to be touched personally by the Word
- To deepen the personal bonds among the members of the group
- To encourage mutual deepening in faith by personal sharing

Vigan Method

Aim

Sharing in a prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture in a small group to better understand, pray and live the Word of God.

Steps

1. Short opening prayer or Song
2. First round reading. Contact with the text
Reading of the Text. A member reads it aloud: the others participate by listening and reading silently.
Silence. After the reading, all observe silence for about three minutes. They choose the word(s) phrase(s) that strike them.
Sharing. After the silence, the members share the word(s) phrase(s) that strike the most.
3. Second round reading. God's personal Word/message
Reading of text same text. The text is read for the second and likewise the members participate silently.
Silence. The same silence is accorded to second reading as it was in the first reading.
Sharing. After about five minutes, the facilitator invites the group members to share GOD'S PERSONAL MESSAGE to them.

4. Third round reading. God Word/Message calls for a Response

Reading of the text. After the sharing, one member reads the same text for the third time.

Silence. Once again, there is a deep silence whereby the members pray in their hearts. They will now answer the personal message of God to them.

Sharing. After praying in silence, each member shares his/her personal prayer, as a response to God's personal message.

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¹ *The above fully explained methods are the ones which are very common in the AMECEA region by Small Christian Communities. The other aspects/ ways of the Lumko method and Vigan Method were sourced from the GOOD NEWS BIBLE TODAY'S ENGLISH VERSION with Deuterocanonical Books- under the title **Gospel Sharing Methods (GSM)**- Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines(CBCP)*

Topic 4: importance of Social media in Small Christian Communities

Life is moving so fast in the world of technology. It is becoming easier and easier to reach out to millions of people within a second by just a click of a button. The AMECEA bishops in one of the Plenary emphasized on modern ways of spreading the good news of Christ. It is an impeccable fact that now technology has driven the attention of man to the extent of derailing him from God. Popular in the technological circles is the Social Media which has taken the world by storm. This topic was an important part of the workshop where participants were involved in the discovery of the wonders of the Social Media being a useful tool in evangelization.

For it was a process workshop, participants were calmed of their fears of technology especially the older generations. The session introduced the participants to the E-resources and webliography.

First to be treated was the website for Small Christian Communities in the world (www.smallchristiancommunities.org). Participants were told how a website operates and how to navigate/ surf/ browse through the website. A practical session was launched where a participant volunteered to surf through the different pages of the website. To be down to earth, the ECM website was opened whereby the participants had a look at how resourceful the church can be. There was a problem in launching the AMECEA website on the computer which was used; however in iPads of some participants it was possible.

The last thing and most exiting was to be on the facebook page of Small Christian Communities where the participants were interacting with a whole million people who have liked the facebook page. It was very physical and live because they saw an uploaded group photo which was posted by one of them. They felt involved because some of the volunteers posted their comments right on the page which was beamed on an LCD projector.

Lessons learnt

- The fruits of faith sharing in a community of Christians
- The different ways of sharing the Word of God
- How it is imperative now to use the social media in Small Christian Communities' activities

Evaluation

The evaluation process was very participatory in nature where the whole group was involved. The day one challenges were now being synthesized by the respective Small Christian Communities with evaluation spectacles. After thorough deliberations secretaries from all the Small Christian Communities convened their special vetting sessions on their evaluation and giving the possible solutions. This platform helped the participants to see and chart the way forward having being given a master logical framework. Refer to the appended logical framework.

Conclusion

The workshop was a success looking at the content being covered just for two days. The facilitation was very good and moving more especially on the part of social media being a powerful tool of evangelization and a fertile ground to meet the young and ignite in them the spirit of prayer and participating in Small Christian Communities. This is the only ground that the young and the old can come to terms. The ball has been set by the AMECEA Secretariat but the onus is left in the hands of the Church in Malawi down to our respective Small Christian Communities. Small Christian Community is a new way of being Church, this can be a challenge but a shift of the mind can change the whole way of doing things in our Small Christian Communities.

Attendance list

NO.	NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
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Future Challenge²s, Priorities and Actions for SCCs in the AMECEA Region

That SCCs are very important in the future of the AMECEA Region is clear. The main goals of the "Mission of AMECEA" include "revitalizing and continued emphasis on the role of the Small Christian Communities in evangelization.

1. Choose good leaders in SCCs in Eastern Africa.
2. Form SCC leaders/animators/facilitators/coordinators in a deeper evangelization that integrates African values and Christian values ("Truly African, Truly Christian") as part of an overall pastoral strategy of forming and training pastoral agents.
3. Train SCC leaders/animators/facilitators/coordinators in animation, facilitation and coordination skills. Set up SCC Training Teams on the national, diocesan, deanery, parish and outstation levels.⁵⁷⁰ Use the mass media like the internet, radio, and TV for SCCs training programs.
4. Ongoing formation and training of all SCC members with special focus on the meaning and importance of SCC, *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection, family catechesis, justice and peace, social awareness, Jesus Christ's methods of evangelizing and mission outreach.
5. Encourage more courses and workshops on SCCs in the normal curriculum of the major seminaries, theological institutes, universities and houses of formation of both men and women that include some kind of planned practical action and social outreach.
6. Encourage more support and commitment from bishops and other ecclesial leadership across the board.
7. Encourage more quality participation of priests in animating, facilitating and coordinating SCCs.
8. Promote the use of the "See," "Judge" and "Act" (Pastoral Spiral) process/methodology in SCCs (including Bible sharing/Bible reflection and social/cultural analysis) to reflect on the deeper issues of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa leading to concrete action so that this process becomes a central part of the life and ministry of SCCs. A key part is implementing the recommendations of *Africa's Commitment*, the Apostolic Exhortation on the Second African Synod.
9. Challenge SCC members on the grassroots to face the "diseases" of tribalism, negative ethnicity, nepotism, excessive nationalism, classism (prejudice or discrimination on the basis of social class), sexism and excessive individualism/privacy in their SCCs. This includes facilitating healing and reconciliation services, rituals and ceremonies that are integrated into SCC masses, Bible Services and meetings.
10. Encourage youth adults, youth and children to form their own inculturated SCCs.

² Sourced from an Ebook as 27 November 2013, entitled "Building the Church as Family of God, Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa by Joseph G. Healey M.M, pp 248.

11. Promote strategies of self-reliance and sustainability in SCCs. This includes financial support of SCC activities and parish activities and developing self-reliance projects.
12. Encourage SCC members to be more active in the New Evangelization and deeper-evangelization following the contemporary signs of the times in Africa.
13. Use the social media/new media more to promote SCCs especially in involving youth. Encourage SCC members to use the new media/social media more in pastoral and missionary activities. Continue to use the mass media like radio for formation, information and training.
14. Continue to explore in depth how the praxis and theology of SCCs are an integral part of a relevant and credible African ecclesiology based on the Church as Family of God. This is within the context of the AMECEA priority of developing a theological framework of addressing key issues and challenges of 'New Evangelization in Solidarity in the AMECEA countries.'"
15. Produce and circulate more relevant, African-related resource materials for SCC members including simple booklets and leaflets on the Bible (including lectionary-based faith sharing/faith reflection resources⁵⁸⁴), Small Apostolic Group faith
16. Promote better communications and sharing of SCC experiences, information and resources between the AMECEA Region and the IMBISA (Southern Africa) Region, English-speaking West Africa, and French-speaking Africa (both Central Africa such as DRC and West Africa).
17. Emphasize ongoing evaluation of the life and activities of SCCs that includes realistic assessment, honest self-criticism, critical reflection and openness to new actions especially in applying the last step ("Pastoral Planning") of the Pastoral Spiral.

Checklist of 14 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today

1. Informal gathering/meeting of a SCC. The social aspects in an African context are very important. The SCC promotes friendships and relationships. It is the place of social activities. It can be a significant support group.

2. SCC as a Prayer Group only (without the *Bible* being used). This may include the

Morning and Evening Prayers, Eucharistic Adoration, Contemplative Prayer, the Rosary, Novenas, Stations of the Cross, Prayers for the Sick and Deceased and other devotional prayers and practices.

3. SCC as a Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible-Daily Life Connections Group.

Starting with the Bible. Can be part of a physical meeting of a SCC or an online SCC.

4. SCC as a Daily Life-Bible Connections Group. Starting with special themes and

topics as well as our experiences and events of daily life. Using the Three Steps of the Pastoral Circle/Cycle/Spiral: "See," "Judge" and "Act."

5. SCC as a Special Group for Faith Sharing, Formation, Study (*Bible*, Creed, the

Sacraments, a Catholic Church Document, *Constitutions* of a Religious Community, Religious Book, Film/Movie, DVD, Video, Audio Tape, etc.), Counseling, etc.

6. Pastoral or Business Meeting of a SCC.

7. Practical action/service and social, pastoral and mission outreach. Includes justice and peace actions, different types of evangelization (first or primary evangelization, new evangelization, deeper evangelization) and the mission focus of a SCC.

8. Projects of a SCC such as self-reliance projects (self-generating activities) and fund-raisers.

St. Joseph SCC of the Holy Family Basilica, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya has a Catering Service Project that both provides a service to the local community and raises money for the SCC's treasury.

9. The SCC is responsible for assisting (called "animating") in the Sunday Mass in the parish, subparish or out-station on a rotation basis. Cleaning the church, supplying the readers, taking the collection, bringing up the gifts at the Offertory including a special collection/donation from the SCC members for the self-reliance of the parish including material goods for the rectory (priests' house) and for the poor and needy. Depending on the specific place and context SCC members can have other responsibilities: Specific SCCs (sometimes with their own SCC choirs) are responsible for the music and the songs. Specific SCCs are responsible for the "Prayer of the Faithful" ("General Intercessions").

Specific SCCs encourage the youth participate in the small plays or dramas/role plays that take place during mass. Representatives of specific SCCs count the Sunday collection.

10. Sacraments such as Eucharist (including first Communion), Baptism, Reconciliation, Marriage and Anointing of the Sick celebrated in a SCC. The SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass) includes a Shared Homily. Communion (a designated Eucharist Minister covers a group of SCCs) is brought to sick members in the SCC.

11. Celebration in a SCC (food and drink, meals, entertainment, singing, dancing, storytelling, plays and other cultural activities, etc.). Some parishes have an Annual SCC Day.

12. Regular meetings of SCC leaders, coordinators and animators.

Many parishes have monthly meetings of SCC leaders, coordinators and animators.

Many dioceses and parishes in Eastern Africa systematically elect new leaders in the SCCs every three years. Some parishes organize formation and training workshops for the new SCC leaders.

There is an "SCC way" of having a Recollection Day. The emphasis is on praying, listening, reflecting and sharing together in a small community context or setting.

13. Formation and training workshops/seminars of SCC leaders and animators.

14. Retreats/Spiritual Renewal Formation Days/Recollection Days⁶⁰²/Spiritual Renewal Formation Days Pilgrimages of a SCC.

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³ *Ibid*, pp 259

13 Steps in the Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Life Connections Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa

1. Opening prayer or song.
2. Brief reports on the members' lives during the past week (called a "touchdown period that can also serve as an "icebreaker" for the gathering). Includes a report on the SCC's actions/tasks (community response) carried out during the previous week. **NOTE:** This step can also take place at the end of the meeting when it can serve to answer the questions: What have I learned from this meeting? What is my take away? What is my follow-up/follow-down?
3. Brief introduction of the liturgical theme. Gives the theme/themes of the Scripture readings and the liturgical season in the context of our life situation and local reality.
4. Read the Gospel of the following Sunday (first time).
5. Mention a word, phrase or image in the Gospel that strikes you the most/resonates with you the most/stands out to you the most.
6. Read the Gospel of the following Sunday (second time).
7. Silence. Listening to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us.
8. **Bible** Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Life Connections. Connect, relate and apply the Bible (Gospel) to our daily lives.
9. Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions or Bidding Prayers).
10. Collection.
11. Choose a concrete practical action/task (ideally a community response) to be carried out during the next week.
12. Closing prayer or song.
13. Exchange a Sign of Peace.⁴

⁴ *Ibid pp 262*

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<http://www.alexa.com>

Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com>

AMECEA (including the *AMECEA News Blog* and *AMECEA Online Newsletter*)

<http://www.amecea.org>

AMECEA Gaba Publications

<http://www.gabapublications.org>

Attracta Search Visibility Technology

www.attracta.com

BibleGateway (32 searchable versions of the Bible in English)

<http://www.Biblegateway.com>

Bing

www.bing.com

Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) News Africa

<http://www.cisanewsafrika.org>

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC)

<http://www.cjpkenya.org>

Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA)

(under construction)

Catholic Search Engine

<http://catholicsearch.net>

Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) including Library E-Resources

<http://www.cuea.edu>

Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University, Kenya

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<http://dailygospel.org>

Facebook

<http://facebook.com> including:

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St. Gonzaga Gonza SCC Youth Group Facebook Page

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<http://www.hekima.ac.ke>

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<http://www.jctr.org.zm>

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Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God
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Yahoo

<http://www.yahoo.com>

YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com>

You Version of the *Bible* (hundreds of versions of the *Bible* in different languages) – through the United Bible Society

<https://www.bible.com>

⁵Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

ZENIT

<http://www.zenit.org>

⁵ *Ibid* pgs 339-342

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE WORKSHOP ON SCCs IN MALAWI

TOPIC: SCCs A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

OBJECTIVE:

1. TO REFLECT AND EVALUATE ON SCCs IN MALAWI IN ORDER TO PROPOSE WAYS OF MAKING THEM VIBRANT, RENEWING AND EMBRACING ALL INTO THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST.
2. TO PROVIDE A FORUM TO SHARE AND REFLECT ON RESOURCE MATERIALS ON SCCs IN ORDER TO HELP PARTICIPANTS TO GO BACK AND SHARE IN PARISHES.

PRELIMINARY SHARING ON EXPERIENCES IN SCCs:

1. The strong sense of family life in SCCs.
2. The value of sharing the word of God.
3. SCCs have increased our sense of belonging and participation of lay faithful in Church activities.
4. SCCs have built a strong sense of ownership and self-reliance of the Church
5. The SCC offers a good and clear communication channel from the Universal Church, Diocese, Parish up to the grassroots level.
6. The SCCs are a good forum for sharing of knowledge.
7. In some parishes the SCCs have been helpful to promote capacity building and leadership formation.
8. The SCCs have contributed to awaken the active Christian participation of the faithful in the life of the parish and the Church.
9. The SCCs have been the good and suitable environment for people to know and support one another well.
10. Many have been helped to deepen their Christian faith and responsibility to share the faith.
11. Most SCCs have helped to empower the faithful in their participation in the life of the Church.

EXPECTATIONS:

1. Improvement on what is being done now.
2. Attaining the skills in SCC strategic planning.
3. Learning positive outcomes from participants.
4. Guidelines on SCC.
5. Inclusiveness in SCCs.
6. Clearly defining SCC beyond the numbers of members.
7. Negative impact of SCCs.
8. Involvement of the youth in SCCs.
9. Building strong walls on the present weakness.
10. Is SCC a pressure group?

How SCC can come-up with new ways of evangelization

CHALLENGES			
GENERAL	RESPONSE	OBJECTIVE/GOAL	RESOURCE
GENERAL	RESPONSE	OBJECTIVE/GOAL	RESOURCE
Poor participation of members because of the lack of proper orientation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan orientation and trainings of SCC leaders at parish level. These should take this knowledge to the SCCs level (i.e. on the meaning, spirituality of SCCs, how to conduct SCC etc). - Then SCC leaders to orient their fellow members (where possible invite higher pastoral agents to assist eg, catechists, priests). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To improve participation in SCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human resource (Priests, Catechists at parish level, and leaders of SCCs at SCCs level) - Money (fundraise for this at parish level and SCC level). - Take advantage of other already planned/well funded meetings to orient the involved people in SCC.
Personal misunderstandings among Christians lead to low turn-out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parishes to establish pastoral counselling as a serious office - SCCs to involve higher pastoral agents to mediate - Proper orientation on the purpose and spirituality of SCCs to members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To improve on low turn out - Reduce personal misunderstandings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human resource (Priests, Catechists at parish level, and leaders of SCCs at SCCs level). - Exemplary families at Parish or SCCs level to be mediators.
Women dominate SCCs meetings while men are not present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage praying together in families with hope that men will also appreciate praying together in SCCs. - Those men who are active to sensitize their friends. - Men to be given clear roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To improve male participation in SCCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human resource is about the men and women who have the task to encourage the 'weak' men to participate in SCCs - Use other church groups that easily reach out to families (e.g. C.F.M)
Lack of understanding the real meaning, importance and spirituality of SCCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making the guidelines on SCCs available during the process of orientation and trainings of leaders at parish level on the importance of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To enhance proper understanding of the real meaning, importance and spirituality of SCCs in the Parish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human resource - Money (fundraise for this at parish level and

in the Parish.	<p>SCCs and spirituality of SCCs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These should take this knowledge to the SCCs level (i.e. on the meaning, spirituality of SCCs, how to conduct SCC etc). - Then SCC leaders to orient their fellow members (where possible invite higher pastoral agents to assist eg, catechists, parish priests. 		<p>SCC level).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take advantage of other already planned/well funded meetings to orient the involved people in SCCs.
Lack of dedication by many Christians because of laziness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan orientation and trainings of leaders at Parish level on the importance of SCCs and spirituality of SCCs. These should take this knowledge to the SCCs level (i.e. on the meaning, spirituality of SCCs, how to conduct SCC etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To enhance active participation in SCCs - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human resource - Money (fundraise for this at parish level and SCC level). - Take advantage of other already planned/well funded meetings to orient the involved people in SCC.
Lack of dedication by many Christians because of socio-economic status.	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To make SCCs more inclusive; to be for people of all status 	-
No clear understanding about the size of the SCCs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To use the Pastoral guidelines on the formation, size and geographical definition of the SCCs. - To train leaders at parish level on the importance of SCCs and spirituality of SCCs. These should take this knowledge to the SCCs level (i.e. on the meaning, spirituality of SCCs, how to conduct SCC etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To equip people with knowledge on the recommended size for SCCs 	The National Pastoral Secretary, Diocesan Pastoral Secretaries, Parish Priests and Parish Leaders.
MEETING PROCESS	RESPONSE	OBJECTIVE/GOAL	RESOURCE
Doing routine things (e.g, saying rosary all the time) and lack of creativity.	Program of the month that will clearly outline the different activities. Relate SCCs meetings to daily life.	To motivate Christians to attend and actively participate in the SCCs.	Material: Bibles, Bible Booklets. Human: catechists, priest, ourselves as trainers.

Some members are reluctant to make financial contributions when there is need.	Having fundraising once every three or four months. Creating proper accounting methods.	To promote transparency and accountability.	Parish finance team, accounting resources from the community.
Difference in social status where there is a gap between the poor and the rich. The working class not participating in SCCs.	As Christians we should break the social barrier by pastoral agents to teach people to follow the example of Jesus Christ.	To make SCCs a place where everybody is accepted and loved.	Inclusivity when electing leaders. Priest (pastoral agents)
Failure to understand the Bible/Word of God and connect to daily way of life.	We need to have bible lesson for Christians to understand the bible and priest should take lead in order to understand the word of God. Christians should have interest in reading bible.	As SCCs we should be doing all our activities inspired by word of God	Human resources Biblical materials
Too much focus on self-reliance and fund-raising.			
PASTORAL LEADERSHIP	RESPONSE	OBJECTIVE/GOAL	RESOURCE
There is a gap between priests/religious and the activities of SCCs.	Formation of priest on the importance of SCCs.	To narrow the gap. To include the Sccs in the Curriculum in all religious Institutions (eg, seminary and novitiates)	The Pastoral Secretariat and the Formators.
Most of the clergy do not participate or show interest in SCCs.	Priests or sisters should be appointed chaplains of SCCs.	To have well coordinated system of SCCs from national level. To monitor all activities of SCCs at all levels, national and parish.	The National Pastoral Secretary.
Lack of Parish Strategic Plan and there are no clear guidelines for SCCs.	SCCs to have strategic plan and there should be guidelines from Parishes on how to conduct SCCs.	To have a well organized system of conducting activities in the SCCs.	The Pastoral Team in each Parish.

Lack of useful materials for conducting SCCs such as the Bible.	“One Family One Bible” slogan be promoted through fundraising activities.	To improve the reading culture and to deepen the faith of all members of the SCCs.	SCCs leaders and families. The National Pastoral Secretary.
Poor Leadership in SCCs and illiteracy of members.	Most of the clergy do not participate or show interest in SCCs.	To improve member participation. To improve leadership skills.	The Parish Pastoral Team.
Some leaders are not good models	Electing leaders on merit not social economic status.	To uplift the good image of the Church. To improve attendance and participation in SCCs.	Members of the SCCs.
Lack of on-going formation on SCCs in the Parishes.	Newly appointed leaders should be properly oriented.	To have vibrant SCCs in our Parishes.	The Parish Pastoral Team.
Some people only come to SCCs when they want certain favours, e.g. to baptize their children	Need to know membership in all SCCs through weekly attendance registers, Mutulo, Masika and SCCs activities.	To help members to attend SCCs meeting with genuine motives.	SCCs Leaders.
YOUTH AND CHILDREN IN SCCs	RESPONSE	OBJECTIVE/GOAL	RESOURCE
Youth do not participant in SCCs because they are not motivated.	Assign youth different responsibilities in SCCs. Assign youth to lead in SCCs (prayer etc). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization of the youth on their roles and responsibilities • Assign them with responsibilities • Focus group discussions • Assign youth to lead in SCCs (prayer etc 	Goal: Make sure that all the youth actively participate in SCCs To increase awareness on the roles and responsibilities of the youth in SCCs	Youth Chaplain; Pastoral Team
Youth are indifferent to SCCs, how can we get them interested?	Be creative enough to come up with activities that will involve the youth, eg, sport.	Goal: Make sure that all the youth actively participate in SCCs	Youth Patrons/matrons; Coordinators;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form youth clubs • Encourage exchange visits among SCCs • Retreats 	To increase awareness on the roles and responsibilities of the youth in SCCs	
Children do not take part in SCCs because there is no place for them	<p>Encourage parents to bring children to SCCs. Children: organize competitions among children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation of parents on their responsibilities and roles • Retreats • Special trips or events for children 	To promote spiritual growth of children	Pastoral Team;

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⁶ *The above Logical framework was adopted by the participants that gives solutions and a road map to the actions necessary to build and foster the growth of Small Christian Communities in Malawi.*

Workshop Photo Gallery



In the two pictures are the participants to the workshop doing an energizer



The first photo captures Rev. Fr. Pikiti (Pastoral Secretary-AMCEA) and the second photo captures Rev. Fr. Chimombo (Pastoral Secretary-ECM)



A cross section of the participants during the workshop.

Program for Bible lessons in the next 4 years-ECM Pastoral Commission

Year	Theme	Topics from OT	Topics from the NT	Special themes
2011	<i>"and the Word became flesh"(John 1:14a)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General introduction to the Holy Bible (definition, composition & division of Books in the Old Testament) 	Composition, division of books in the New Testament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satanism & witchcraft - Charismatic Renewal - Environmental degradation - Political environment
2012	<i>"Faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes from the Word of Christ"(Rom 10:17 & Verbum Domini)</i>	<p>The Pentateuch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Genesis ▶ Exodus ▶ Leviticus ▶ Numbers ▶ Deuteronomy <p>■ Briefly explain composition and major theological themes in each of the five books of the Pentateuch</p>	<p>The Gospels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Matthew ▶ Mark ▶ Luke ▶ John <p>■ Briefly explain composition and major theological themes of the Gospels (synoptic & John)</p>	
2013	Proposed theme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8) 	Pre-exilic prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amos, Hosea, Isaiah of Jerusalem, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, 	The Acts of Apostles	

		Habakkuk, Jeremiah.		
2014		Post-exilic prophets	The Pastoral Letters and the Catholic Letters.	
2015		Wisdom and Poetic books Job, Psalms, Proverbs e.t.c	Revelation and 3 year liturgical Cycle.	

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⁷ This is the programme for the next 4 years which was introduced in Malawi by the Pastoral Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi under its arm of Bible Apostolate where there Bible Lesson Booklets that follow the same program and are a very useful tool to the lay faithful in their Small Christian Communities in understanding the Bible better than before just by following the programme. The booklets are found at the Catholic Secretariat and in all the Parish book stores. They are in English and Chichewa; every family should have them in order to use them when praying as a family and in forming their children in Bible. They are divided in three books, I, II, III, where each booklet has special books to be treated in that year.