



COMMUNIQUE OF THE 3RD PAN-AFRICAN WORKSHOP ON THE FOUNDING OF A NETWORK OF SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA HELD IN NAIROBI, KENYA 21 to 25 OCTOBER, 2016.

PREAMBLE

We, participants of the *Pan-African Workshop on the Founding of a Network of Small Christian Communities in Africa* assembled at “Des Places House” (Provincial House of the Spiritans) in Nairobi, Kenya, from 21 to 25 October 2016, to share our experiences and evaluate the situation of the Small Christian Communities as a pastoral priority in Africa and beyond.

Sixteen participants from seven countries attended the workshop. These included Rt. Rev. Bishop Method Kilaini (Auxiliary Bishop of Bukoba Diocese-Tanzania), Michael Meyer (Missio-Germany), Fr. Emmanuel Chimombo (AMECEA-Pastoral Department), Fr. Charles Odira (KCCB-Commission for Pastoral and Lay Apostolate), Ronald Sunguti (Nakuru-Kenya), Michael Orondo (Nairobi-Kenya), Fr. Stephen Mukami (Spiritans-Kenya), Fr. Vincent M. Elimah (Spiritans-Kenya), Fr. Noel Mpati (DRC), Sr. Josée Ngalula (DRC), Sam Yacinthe (Burkina Faso), Bernadette Konfe (Burkina Faso), Fr. Alfred Chaima (Blantyre-Malawi), Fr. Justin Matepa (ZCCB-Zambia), Fr. Stefano Kaombe (Tanzania) and Fr. Joseph Healey (Maryknoll-Kenya).

The following were the presentations at the Seminar:

- Keynote Address by Right Reverend Bishop Method Kilaini
- Background of the Pan African Workshop Network of Small Christian Communities by Mr Michael Meyer
- Progress of the Network of Small Christian Communities since its launch in 2014 in Accra, Ghana by Fr. Joseph Healey
- Experiences of Small Christian Communities from each member country
- Experiences from St. Kizito Small Christian Community of St. Austin’s Parish, Nairobi, Kenya by Mr Michael Orondo.

The aims of this workshop were:

- to evaluate the situation of the Small Christian Communities in Africa and to look for ways of promoting them in the continent and beyond
- to share best practices while learning from our challenges
- to form a Pan-African Network of Small Christian Communities in Africa

OBSERVATIONS

On the basis of the various presentations and general discussions participants observed both fruits and challenges:

Some Fruits of Small Christian Communities:

1. They represent the Church as a communion of faith, hope, love and unity among the people of God
2. They are vital cells of evangelization, a field of *inculturation* and *localization* of the church
3. SCCs have improved means of communication within the church structure
4. They have deepened knowledge of Scripture for Christ's faithful
5. They have reinforced the role of the laity in decision making
6. They actualized self-reliance by promoting a self-propagating, self-ministering and self-supporting church at grassroots
7. They are venues for building strong leadership of the laity
8. They are an easy and authentic way of promoting sacramental life of the people of God
9. They provide a wider base for active participation of the laity in church
10. They promote good relations with other religions and denominations

Some Challenges of Small Christian Communities:

1. **Size of the SCCs:** Most SCCs are too big to deserve the name Small Christian Community. Consequently, there is no adequate mutual support given the members
2. **Illiteracy:** Rural areas are largely non-literate. Such people are at the mercy of their literate neighbors
3. **Ignorance of the Social Teaching of the Church** renders the faithful vulnerable to Pentecostalism
4. **Indifference by some priests:** Some priests do not show any interest in SCCs, hence activities in such SCCs go unmonitored and the faithful become demotivated
5. **Monotony of programs** makes SCCs boring, leading to loss of enthusiasm and interest
6. **Money demanding:** Some Small Christian Communities have become money-collecting centers for the parish. With time the faithful get fed up and start shunning the meetings
7. **Exclusion of Children and the Youth:** Most activities laid out for SCCs do not address the needs of children and the youth
8. **Male Absenteeism:** Men are less active than women and rarely attend SCC meetings
9. **Social status, ethnicity and geographical setting** are impediments for regular attendance of some members in SCCs
10. **Differences in eligibility** for sacraments and Christian burial breed divisions in SCCs

COMMITMENTS

On the basis of the challenges outlined above, participants made the following commitments:

- To form a Pan–African Network of Small Christian Communities
- To promote Small Christian Communities in our countries and bring more members on board

- To support a steering committee that has been selected and mandated to coordinate the networking
- To meet annually on a rotational manner in different countries of Africa
- To share the best practices through social media and internet

RECOMMENDATIONS

With due respect to the recommendations of the previous meetings held in Accra, Ghana and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in 2014 and 2015 respectively, the participants agreed:

- To start an independent African SCCs Networking Website with its own domain name. The internet address is: www.africansccsnetworking.org. It should include the Missio SCCs Network **logo**. The website will have dialogue/discussion pages in English, French and Portuguese. This will be a revised and updated version of the “original, temporary” African SCCs Networking Website (what we call the trial or Beta version) created in April, 2016 that has the internet address (URL): http://www.topsoftchoice.com/secam_scc/
- To mandate the AMECEA Pastoral Department to manage this newly created website on SCCs Networking
- To encourage people from all 54 countries in Africa to send articles on SCCs
- To form a steering committee of a sizeable number to spearhead the network on SCCs
- To encourage conferences to develop guidelines on SCCs
- To involve institutions of higher learning in research and promotion of SCCs
- To make theological appraisal of SCCs in the modern world
- To emphasize on statistical data as an authentic tool for pastoral planning.

CONCLUSION

In all these we recognize the blessing of God in the fruitful work realized during the workshop. We are grateful to the Superior and the entire community of the Holy Ghost Fathers at "Des Places House" for according us a conducive environment to hold our workshop.

We also wish to express our gratitude and appreciation to our Partner Agency *Pontifical Mission Society-Missio Aachen*, the Local Organizing Committee, the presenters and the various groups and individuals for their invaluable contributions. We are indebted to bishops, superiors and families for responding positively to the invitations we sent by sending participants to this workshop.

We finally thank the participants for coming and for their active participation.

We entrust the fruits, commitments and recommendations of this workshop to the Blessed Mary "*Mother of God's Word*" and "*Mother of Faith*", "*the one in whom the interplay between the word of God and faith was brought to perfection*". ([*Verbum Domini* 27](#)).

Signed by:

Fr Emmanuel CHIMOMBO
AMECEA PASTORAL COORDINATOR

Given at "Des Places House," Nairobi, Kenya, Tuesday, 25 October, 2016