

Report on the Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) at Kenyatta University Christ the Teacher Catholic Parish in Nairobi, Kenya

By Alloys Nyakundi

Kenyatta University Catholic Church in Nairobi, Kenya has nine Small Christian Communities¹ in which the students are the main stake holders followed by Kenyatta University staff. It is also an example of school-based or campus-based Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs). Our Chaplain is Father Lance Nadeau, MM who is an American Maryknoll priest.

The nine Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) are:

1. St Dominic
2. St Patrick
3. St Francis
4. St Catherine of Siena
5. St Michael
6. St Augustine
7. Cardinal Otunga
8. St Perpetual of Felicity
9. St Ann

All the YSCCs meet weekly on Wednesday as from 6:45 pm to 8:45 pm inside the campus in various lecture halls that are booked at the start of the semester except St Ann's which meets on Thursday. St Dominic comprises students who stay outside the campus. St Patrick and St Ann comprise students who study at the Ruiru Campus which is a branch of Kenyatta University. St Francis, St Catherine of Siena, St Perpetual, Felicity and St Michael are for students who stay inside the campus. Cardinal Otunga is for the alumni and lastly St Augustine is for those who are not students.

These YSCCs are really "large" communities of up to 100 students.

YSCC LEADERSHIP HIERACHY

- 1: Coordinator
- 2: Vice Coordinator
- 3: Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) Representative
- 4: Treasurer

¹ See a write-up and photos of the activities of these nine YSCCs on the Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University Website, <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke>.

- 5: Secretary
- 6: Publicity Secretary

SCCs are also divided into smaller groups called “families” of 20 to 30 students or Family SCCs. The larger YSCCs meet once in a week. The smaller families also meet once in a week on a day of their choice that doesn’t collide with the day of the YSCC meeting. I want to use an example of St Dominic that has four families: St Jude, St Patrick, St John and St Maria Goretti. St Patrick meets on Monday evening, St John meets on Thursday evening, St Jude and St Maria Goretti meet on Sunday evening. In the Family SCCs we also share and reflect on the gospel of the coming Sunday. We do more sharing and solving problems facing us as students. Families also meet at different hostels where the students stay.



St Francis YSCC

FAMILY LEADERSHIP HIERACHY

- 1: Father
- 2: Mother
- 3: Secretary
- 4: Treasurer

PROGRAM OF THE WEEKLY YSCCs

6:45 pm to 7:10 pm Rosary prayer

7:10 pm to 7:20 pm	Song session
7:20 pm to 7:50 pm	Reading of the gospel of the coming Sunday
7:50 pm to 8:20 pm	Topic of discussion or a debate
8:20 pm to 8:30 pm	Announcements
8:30 pm to 8:45 pm	AOBs, final prayers and departure to our rooms.

YSCCs ACTIVITIES

Our *jumuiyas* carry various activities throughout the semester that bond us together both to the community and to our fellow students. For example:

1: Charity work

As YSCCs we conduct various charitable activities, for example visiting the children's homes, visiting prisoners, visiting the sick in hospitals and visiting the physically challenged, i.e. the blind.



St. Dominic YSCC members from Kenyatta University washing clothes while doing charity work at the House of Mercy Children's Home in Nairobi, Kenya on Saturday, 15 October, 2016.

2: Animation of mass

Every YSCC is given a chance to animate mass every new semester through various ways for example, dancing, prepare for the prayers of the faithful and arranging chairs in the church. Through this the YSCCs are involved fully in preparation of mass and church activities.

3: Fun day and end of semester bash

YSCCs organize get togethers which breaks the monotony of the status quo. Once or twice they organize for fun activities for example, dance, play football and have a meal together.

They finally end the semester with a bash where they share about their challenges and their strengths. They also cook food which they eat together and even give some awards to their leaders.

4: Visiting and helping fellow YSCCs members.

All YSCCs have organized a way in which we visit some of our friends who have problems. If a friend is sick, we choose some YSCC members to go on behalf of the YSCC to see him or her. We make some little contribution which is given to that person. Sometimes we also organize fundraising to help some of our members who are unable to clear their fees, their rent and even buy food for those who don't have food as some of us come from different backgrounds and the majority from poor homes.

COMMUNICATION

The YSCCs in Kenyatta University use various ways to continue sharing even after our YSCC and family meetings. Bearing in mind that the majority have embraced technology, we try to use social media in spreading the gospel such as the daily readings. There are Facebook Pages and every YSCC has its own WhatsApp.

FINANCES

Kenyatta University carries many activities throughout the semester and they all need money. Most of our finances come from the student contributions. Then friends and people of good will, for example Mwanajumuiya Father Joseph Healey a Maryknoll priest, once in a while support our activities in terms of financing some of them. We ensure there is accountability, transparency and openness in handling our finances by writing a report to the Parish Pastoral Council on how we spent our finances.

CHALLENGES FACING YSCCS

1. Mixing of the YSCCs model of church and other small apostolic groups of the church, for example, the Charismatic Group, Evangelizers of the Word, dance troop, choir, Legion of Mary and many others. Sometimes people confuse these small groups with YSCCs. Since they feel comfortable belonging to one of these small apostolic groups, they don't see the importance of the YSCCs. Also, the two models sometimes collide.

2. Some students see YSCCs as a waste of time. They don't set aside time for attending the YSCCs and keep themselves busy elsewhere -- sometimes doing nothing.

3. Poverty, i.e. most of the students come from poor humble families whereby meeting the demands of daily living is a challenge. This hinders them from contributing to the activities of the YSCCs.

WHAT MOST YOUTH WANT ADDRESSED IN THE YSCCS

1. Sex (especially boy-girl relationships)
2. Job opportunities.
3. Use of free time.
4. Justice and peace.
5. Gambling, i.e., sports betting.

Finally, I am grateful to God who enabled me to meet Father Joseph Healey a Maryknoll priest. He is a renowned member of Small Christian Communities and a prolific writer of many books and articles about SCCs. He introduced me to SCCs and cultivated in me the spirit of SCCs and YSCCs. I wish to challenge the priests in the AMECEA region to support the YSCCs since most of the young people need to be involved in church activities so that they don't feel left out.

My name is Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi, a student at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya taking a degree in Bachelor of Education Arts. I am a member of the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team. Currently I am working with Mwanajumuiya Father Joseph Healey in carrying out workshops and training people on the importance of the SCCs and YSCCs.

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