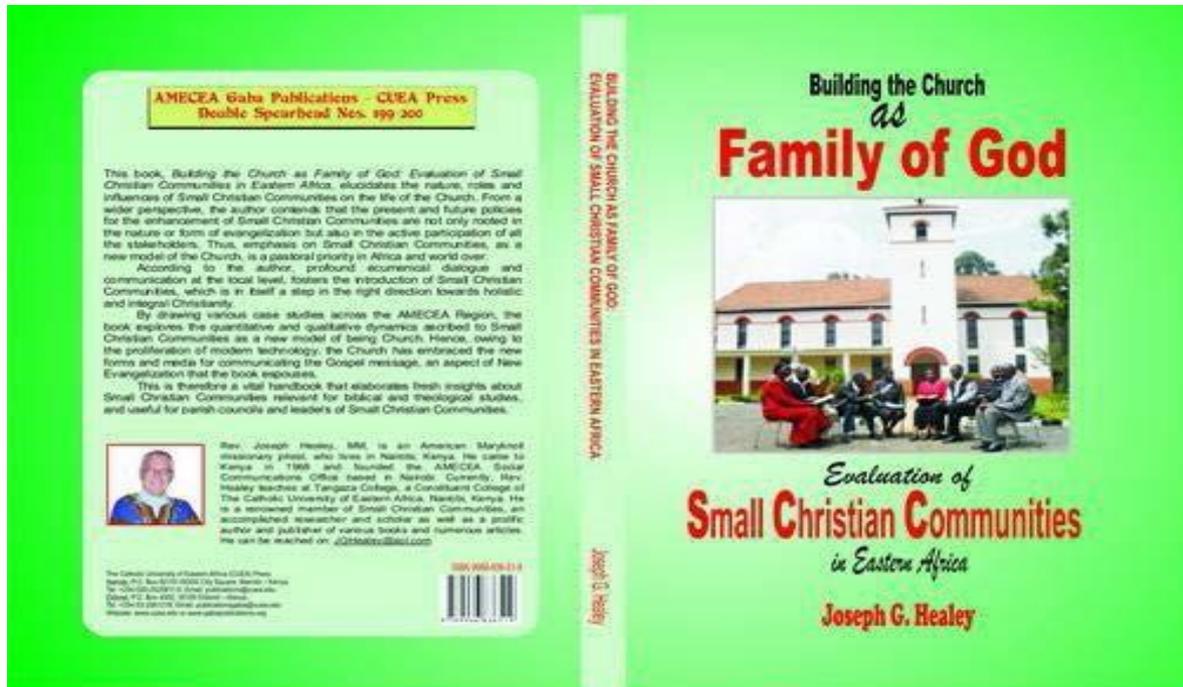


# Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa

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Map of the Nine AMECEA Countries



## Dedication

To the founders and visionaries who created the [AMECEA](#)<sup>1</sup> Small Christian Communities (SCCs)<sup>2</sup> Key Pastoral Priority especially the Catholic bishops and other participants in the 1973, 1976 and 1979 AMECEA Plenary Meetings. Two of these bishops are Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr, the Bishop of Lilongwe Diocese in Malawi who died in 2012 and Bishop Christopher Mwoleka, the Bishop of Rulenge Diocese in Tanzania who died in 2002.<sup>3</sup>

To the hundreds of thousands of lay people in Eastern Africa who faithfully and joyfully participate in the weekly meetings and various activities of their Small Christian Communities.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 nine English-speaking countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), South Sudan (2011), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961). The Republic of South Sudan became independent on 9 July, 2011, but the two Sudans remain part of one Episcopal Conference. Somalia (1995) and Djibouti (2002) are Affiliate Members. AMECEA is one of the eight Regional Episcopal Conferences of [SECAM](#) (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar).

<sup>2</sup> In Eastern Africa we capitalize the terms "Small Christian Community" (SCC) and "Small Christian Communities" (SCCs) because it is a key pastoral priority in our parishes and dioceses and the official pastoral policy of the Catholic bishops.

<sup>3</sup> Other bishops who are among the founding fathers of SCCs in the AMECEA countries were Bishop Joseph Blomjous, MAfr of Mwanza Diocese, Tanzania (who died in 1992), Bishop Vincent McCauley, CSC (the Bishop Fort Portal, Uganda and both the Chairperson of AMECEA 1964-1973 and Secretary General of AMECEA who died in 1982), Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki the retired archbishop of Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya, Bishop Colin Davies, MHM, the retired bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya and Archbishop James Odongo, the retired archbishop of Tororo Archdiocese, Uganda and Chairperson of AMECEA from 1973-1979. Bishops of recent years who have been deeply committed to SCCs include Bishop Joseph Mukwaya of Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese, Uganda (who died in 2008), Cardinal Medardo Mazombwe of Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia (who died in 2013), Bishop Rodrigo Mejia, SJ, the retired bishop of the Soddo Apostolic Vicariate, Ethiopia, Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Bishop Method Kilaini, the Auxiliary Bishop of Bukoba Diocese, Tanzania.

## Acknowledgements

This book is a team effort, a community effort. Many, many people have contributed anecdotes, case studies, data, documents, examples, experiences, ideas, insights, quotations, resources, statistics, stories and suggestions as seen in the extensive list of names in the “Bibliography” and “Index.” I mention:

- The Catholic Bishops in the nine AMECEA countries who have taken ownership of this AMECEA Small Christian Communities Key Pastoral Priority during this 43 year (1973-2016) period.
- The African theologians who have articulated the theological framework for this new model of church from the bottom up.
- The teams of SCC animators, facilitators, trainers and coordinators who have developed a Training of Trainers (TOT)<sup>4</sup> style of training and leadership.
- The members of the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team,<sup>5</sup> the [Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) Global Collaborative Website Coordinating Team](#)<sup>6</sup> and the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Email Mailing List<sup>7</sup> and their collaborators who continue to evaluate the past, celebrate the present and explore the future.<sup>8</sup>
- And especially the SCC members themselves who have shared with us and taught us so much about this new way of being (becoming) church.

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<sup>4</sup> Also called Training of Facilitators (TOF), a term that can be less daunting or threatening to people. We use the principal in the famous proverb, *give a person a fish and you feed the person for a day; teach a person to fish and you feed the person for a lifetime*. We provide people with SCCs resources and tools.

<sup>5</sup> Presently the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team has eight members: seven Africans (four from Kenya, one from Tanzania and two from Zambia) and one expatriate missionary based in Eastern Africa. There are three laymen, two laywomen, two priests and one sister). NOTE: In the ever shifting landscape of politically correct and inclusive language, “expatriate,” the common British word, or “international” is preferred to “foreign.”

<sup>6</sup> Presently the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website Coordinating Team has 13 members: women and men, different nationalities, different religious denominations, different ethnic groups and different ages.

<sup>7</sup> Presently the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Email Mailing List has 40 members.

<sup>8</sup> The complete list of SCCs Email Mailing Lists/SCCs Networks are:

- a. Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team.
- b. Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website Coordinating Team (names on the SCCs website plus key people).
- c. Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Email Mailing List.

## Foreword

If Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are a “New Way of Being/Becoming Church,” then it is appropriate that this is a new way of writing a “Foreword.” We are not well-known people (important leaders or celebrities). We are seven ordinary Kenyan Catholic lay members of [St. Kizito SCC](#) located in Waruku, an informal settlement area (lower class housing) in Nairobi, Kenya. We are one of the nine<sup>9</sup> neighborhood, parish-based SCCs in [St. Austin’s Parish](#)<sup>10</sup> in [Nairobi Archdiocese](#). We are five men and two women representing five ethnic groups<sup>11</sup> in Kenya. We have a variety of professions: three cooks, a farmer, a freelance photographer, a salesperson and a secretary. Our small group ranges from the chairperson to an ordinary member. One afternoon the seven of us got together to discuss the importance of SCCs and this book. Here is the fruit of our conversation.

Our St. Kizito SCC started in 2003 having branched off from the first and founding SCC in the parish. We chose [St. Kizito](#) as our Patron Saint because he is an African martyr who was young and active. He was baptized shortly before his death. We want to follow in his footsteps – innocent and courageous. Our SCC is linked to families and concerned about family life. We believe that the Catholic Church is part of the Family of God in Africa. We learn about the culture and traditions of our different ethnic groups in Kenya. We are sensitive to people’s rights. We encourage unity among Christians.

Spirituality is important to us. The *Bible* is essential and we share the Word of God every week. We strengthen and transform our community through prayer and retreats. Each SCC member becomes comfortable and confident in praying out loud and in leading our community prayers. One year we made a pilgrimage to the Namugongo Shrine in Uganda to celebrate our Patron Saint.

Our SCC is active in pastoral work in our parish. We encourage young couples to get married in church. One of our favorite activities is following the Outdoor Stations of the Cross with other SCCs on Good Friday. We are involved in the annual [Kenya Lenten Campaign](#). In 2011 we emphasized Week One on “Human Trafficking.” In 2012 and 2013 we studied civic education while preparing for the General Elections. We are concerned about our environment so tree planting and collecting garbage and trash have been part of our action projects. We try to have a missionary spirit and visit other SCCs in our parish.

We are honored that one of our members, [Father Joseph Healey, MM](#), whom we call *Mwanajumuiya Padri Joseph* (“SCC member Father Joseph” in Swahili) has written this

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<sup>9</sup> SCCs of Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Boniface, Charles Lwanga, John, Josephine Bakhita, Jude Thaddeus, Kizito and Petro Mwamba.

<sup>10</sup> The website refers to outreach through small group ministries and St. Austin's Youth Community's teams of 15 members such as one interested in sports and one interested in dancing and singing.

<sup>11</sup> In the ever shifting landscape of politically correct and inclusive language, “ethnic group” is preferred today over “tribe” that can have a pejorative and negative meaning, even to being called “endemic tribalism.” Other terms used today are “ethnic community” and “people group.”

important book and shared the life and experiences of SCCs. It tells the history of 180,000 SCCs in nine countries in Eastern Africa. 45,000 of these SCCs are here in Kenya. SCCs are the Catholic Church itself. Other groups in the parish are specialized like the Catholic Men, Catholic Women, Choir, Legion of Mary and Pontifical Missionary Childhood. But our SCCs are mixed and open to everyone – men, women and children – and to all social, economic and educational backgrounds.

This book of SCC experiences in the AMECEA Region Africa is our gift to you, the reader. We hope that you will learn a lot from this Ebook. Read about SCCs in all the countries in Eastern Africa and how they are a new model of church for Africa today. Enjoy this book. Feel at home. We invite you to share your own SCCs experiences with us and other readers. You can communicate with us through email ([info@smallchristiancommunities.org](mailto:info@smallchristiancommunities.org)) and our Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website ([www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)) and “[Facebook Page](#).”<sup>12</sup>

*Ubarikiwe* (“May you all be blessed”).

Catherine Katumbi  
Joseph Kihara  
Conrad Kimori  
Josphat Mulinya  
Sammy Ngunga  
Michael Orondo  
Annastasia Syombua

Members of St. Kizito SCC, Waruku  
22 October, 2011 (day before World Mission Sunday)  
and updated on 13 May, 2013  
Nairobi, Kenya

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<sup>12</sup> Our SCCs Facebook Page started on 2 February, 2010. It is mentioned 24 times in different forms in this Ebook as of 30 June, 2015.

In 2015 Facebook has opened its first headquarters in Africa as it looks to add to its existing 120 million users on the continent. The new office in Johannesburg will focus on growing markets in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. About one in five people in Africa have internet access, but almost double that figure are expected to have mobile internet connections by 2020. About 80% of those who use Facebook in Africa access the site by mobile phone.

## General Introduction

This book has gone through various editions or versions. The “First Version” was given as a paper on “Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA Region: An Evaluation of their Growth and Impact” at the 13th Interdisciplinary Theological Session on the theme “The Faculty of Theology of [CUEA](#) Celebrates the Golden Jubilee of AMECEA” at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi, Kenya on 3 March, 2011. Many papers were presented at this conference covering the 50 years of AMECEA under three headings: Part I: “Deeper Evangelization. Part II: “Formation and Education.” Part III: “Church Life, Organization and Structures.”

I specifically treated the topic of “Small Christian Communities” under Part III. Many pastoral leaders including the AMECEA bishops recommended the importance of a thorough critical evaluation<sup>13</sup> and assessment of SCCs to learn from the past and to help plan for the future.<sup>14</sup> We should not feel threatened by the term “evaluation” as though we are going to be criticized or held under a microscope. The overall purpose is to how to improve our SCCs, how make our SCCs better in the future. The key is to first recognize our mistakes and failures.<sup>15</sup> Second to learn from our mistakes and failures and especially not to repeat our mistakes and failures. It is also very important to overcome/bounce back from our mistakes and failures.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In many evaluations of AMECEA meetings and conferences it has been emphasized that the preparation stage gets an A rating, the meetings and conferences themselves get an A rating, but the implementation stage and follow-up/follow-down get only a C rating, and even at times a D+ rating. For SCC meetings and conferences this challenges us in include in the ongoing strategic plan concrete step-by-step implementation, timelines, capacity building, benchmarks, accountability and ongoing financial support.

Fritz Lobinger commented on one of our AMECEA papers with many practical examples and implementation steps by saying: “I read the whole text and admire the great work of reporting the many details. The paper contrasts favourably with many theoretical essays which state the principles but makes you wonder how much these principles are implemented. I hope many agencies in Africa and elsewhere study the paper.”

<sup>14</sup> This evaluation uses many methods and techniques such as the **SWOT Analysis** that is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats** involved in any venture.

Another evaluation tool is to compare and contrast the “Real” and the “Ideal” or “Theory” and “Practice” or “Plan” and “Action.” Often a SCC project or activity looks very good on paper, but is very different in reality.

<sup>15</sup> We should not be afraid to “wash our dirty laundry/linen in public” (British and Australian) or “air our dirty laundry/linen in public” (American and Australian) - -- meaning to reveal our mistakes and failures in public.

It was published as “Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA Region: An Evaluation of Their Growth and Impact” in *The Faculty of Theology of CUEA Celebrates the Golden Jubilee of AMECEA*. General Editor: John Lukwata. 13th Interdisciplinary Theological Session (2011). Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2013.

The “Second Version” was updated based on new research and given to the bishops and other delegates at the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of AMECEA on the theme of “AMECEA Family of God Celebrating a Golden Jubilee of Evangelization in Solidarity” that took place at CUEA in Nairobi, Kenya from 27 June to 6 July, 2011.

The “Third Version” was updated based on the discussion and final resolutions of the AMECEA Study Session that recommended that an on-going evaluation be included in the revitalization of SCCs in Eastern Africa. It included new interviews with a number of bishops and other pastoral agents in the AMECEA Region. It was published in September, 2011 as a photocopied booklet of 95 pages for the staff and students of the Catholic universities in Kenya.

The “Fourth Version” was updated and revised based on further research and a detailed analysis and commentary on Pope Benedict XVI’s 2011 Apostolic Exhortation *Africa’s Commitment*. In Number 136 this document states:

The Catholic Universities and Higher Institutes in Africa have a prominent role to play in the proclamation of the salvific Word of God. They are a sign of the growth of the Church insofar as their research integrates the truths and experiences of the faith and helps to internalize them. They serve the Church by providing trained personnel, by studying important theological and social questions for the benefit of the Church, by developing an African theology, by promoting the work of inculturation, by publishing books.

This “Fifth and Latest Version” is a free online Digital Edition (that is also called an “Ebook” or an “Electronic Book”).<sup>17</sup> It includes further research in 2012--2016 to implement the Apostolic Exhortation *Africa’s Commitment* and the priority of the New Evangelization, the 2013 Year of Faith, the 2014-2015 Year of the Family and Marriage and the 2015-2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy on the regional, national and local levels down to the SCCs on the grassroots level. It includes applying the Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* to Eastern African SCCs. This includes new interviews with pastoral agents in Eastern Africa on all levels and new Case Studies of SCCs. The underlying principle is ongoing evaluation to make the SCCs in Eastern Africa better.

This free Digital Ebook is regularly updated online on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>

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<sup>16</sup> A study was made of famous and successful business people. When asked what made them so successful the most common answers were: “We learned from our mistakes.” “We bounced back from failures.”

<sup>17</sup> The writing style, formatting, footnoting and bibliography follows a “user friendly” method of the author.

Today there are over 180,000<sup>18</sup> Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church<sup>19</sup> in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa.<sup>20</sup> This book treats the following 16 headings:

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<sup>18</sup> Our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team has done exhaustive research to arrive at this figure. We decided to include “prayer groups” in their many forms and varieties if they have the intention of transitioning and evolving into SCCs. Thus we began using a new talk in Eastern Uganda in May, 2015 called “From Small Neighborhood Prayer and Activities Groups (commonly called Basic Christian Communities in Uganda) Transitioning Into/Moving To/Evolving into Small Christian Communities (SCCs).”

<sup>19</sup> This book systematically evaluates SCCs in the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa only. There are many varieties of small groups, small communities and church small groups/small group churches in the Christian Churches in Eastern Africa that can be classified as follows:

- *Bible* Study Groups, Café Churches, Fellowship Groups, House Cell Fellowships and House Churches in the Anglican (Episcopalian) Church.
- Home Group Fellowships Small Groups that operate like Fraternal Communities in the Baptist Church.
- Small Cell Groups in the Mormon Church and Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church.
- Cell Churches, Cell Groups, Devotional Groups, Fellowship (called *Ushirika* in Swahili) Groups, Home Cells, Home Churches, House Church (*Eglise de maison* in French) and Spiritual Growth Groups in the Pentecostal Churches.
- District Groups and Fellowship Groups in the Presbyterian Church.
- Cells in the Methodist Church.
- Church Homes in the United Church of Christ.

The cornerstone of most of these small groups or small prayer groups is the *Bible*. Most common is weekly *Bible* Study following an organised reading and study plan. At times there is *Bible* Sharing and *Bible* Reflection. Devotional small groups are increasing. Fellowship is very important especially in the African context including emphasis on community building, singing and socialising together.

One study tracks the small group explosion especially church small groups/small group churches in the 20th century:

1900-40 – setting up of study groups following the “1919 report.”

1940-70 – house groups (added a pastoral dimension to the study groups).

1960-2000 – small groups for mission and discipleship (influence of Latin America’s Base Christian Communities and South Korea’s Cell Church.) In this study in NE England over a third of churches identified themselves as having cells or seeking to be cell churches. See Cell UK and the 4ws. The Charismatic Movement and new churches also adopted small groups.

2001 survey -- found that 37% of English churchgoers said they belonged to a small group for prayer and *Bible* study, and only 1% said there is no opportunity in their church to join a small group.

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September, 2014 notes of Alison Morgan on Roger Walton, *Disciples Together – Discipleship, Formation and Small Groups*, London: SCM Press 2014, retrieved on 27 February, 2015, <http://www.alisonmorgan.co.uk/Walton2014.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> There are also important distinctions in the Catholic Church worldwide between:

Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

Basic Christian Communities (BCCs).

Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).

Base Communities (BCs) – small neighborhood groups that meet weekly. Sometimes written as *Comunidades de Base*.

Base Ecclesial Community (BEC). Sometimes written as Ecclesial Base Community.

In Spanish: *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs).

In Portuguese-speaking Brazil: *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*.

In Portuguese-speaking Africa: *Pequenas Comunidades Cristãs*.

In French: *Communautés Ecclésiales de Base* (CEBs) or simply *Communautés de Base* or *Petite Communautés Chrétiennes*.

Also written in Spanish: *Pequeñas Comunidades Cristo*.

**NOTE:** The word “base” indicates “from the grassroots” or in sociological terms the “base” of the society (the economically poor and marginated). Base refers to the foundations, the roots of the social scale where people power can shake/influence the structures and established order from below. It highlights the preferential option for the poor that so characterizes these communities. It has a different meaning than “basic.” Base communities is especially the name used in Latin America for small neighborhood groups in economically poor areas that meet weekly. They live and minister in conjunction with the “ecclesial centers” explained below.

The word “ecclesial” emphasizes that these communities are in themselves “church” – church at the most local level. They are the first and fundamental nucleus of the church and the initial cell of the ecclesial structures. It is constituted of members as one cell of the greater community. In some Latin American countries and the Philippines they are like ecclesial chapels or ecclesial centers where the sacraments are celebrated. They go by names such as Mass Center, Chapel, Missionary Center and Zone (that refers to the physical building as well as the geographical area/location).

For example, in Santiago, Chile a distinction is made between the weekly neighborhood BC meeting in a home (see my experience in Puente Alto Parish in 1980) and the CEB (Zone Base Ecclesial Community) meeting in a church building where the sacraments are celebrated (see my experience in San Alberto Parish in 1980).

Basic Human Communities (BHCs)

*Bible Study Groups* (BSGs)

Cell Churches (CCs)

Cell Groups (CGs).

Christian Base Communities (CBCs).

Christian Life Communities (CLCs).

Grassroots Christian Communities (GCCs).

Home-based Communities (HBCs)

- SCCs in the Historical Perspective of 55 Years (1961 to 2016) in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Quantitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Qualitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Four Case Studies of SCCs in Eastern Africa.”
- “How SCCs Promote Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa.”

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Intentional Communities (ICs).

Interfaith Groups (IGs).

Neighborhood Church Communities (NCCs).

Neighborhood Gospel Groups (NGGs).

Little Faith Sharing Communities (LFSCs).

Living Base Ecclesial Communities. In French: *Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base* (CEVBs). Also referred to as Basic Living Church Communities (BLCCs).

Living Christian Communities (LCCs).

Local Faith Communities (LFCs)

Popular Christian Communities (PCCs).

Small Apostolic Groups (SAGs)

Small Base Communities (SBCs).

Small *Bible* Sharing Groups (SBSGs).

Small Bible Study Groups (SBSGs).

Small Catholic Communities (SCCs).

Small Christian Faith Sharing Communities (SCFSCs).

Small Christian Groups (SCGs).

Small Church Communities (SCCs).

Small Communities (SCCs).

Small Ecclesial Communities (SECs).

Small Ecumenical Communities (SECs).

Small Faith Communities (SFCs). In Spanish: *Pequeñas Comunidades de Fe*.

Small Faith Groups (SFGs).

Small Faith Sharing Communities (SFSCs).

Small Faith Sharing Groups (SFSGs) or Small Groups of Faith Sharing.

Small Human Communities (SHCs).

Small Interfaith Communities (SICs).

Small Local Church Communities (SLCCs).

Small Mission Communities (SMCs)

Small Neighborhood Communities (SNCs).

Small Reading Groups (SRGs)

Small Sharing Groups (SSGs)

Small Study Groups (SSGs)

With help from Argentinian diocesan priest and Maryknoll Priest Associate of the Latin America Region Father Alejandro Marina, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 17 May, 2014 and American Maryknoll priest Father Tom Henihan, conversations over many years.

Aside from this official Catholic Church vocabulary there are many terms and expressions used in the secular media, for example: “Small Christian Community – a cell group of faithful living in the same vicinity” (*The Nairobi*, 8-14 August, 2014, p. 4).

- “SCCs’ Contribution to the Praxis and Theology of the Church as Family of God in Eastern Africa.”
- “Evaluation of the Impact of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Evaluation of the Influence of AMECEA’s SCCs in Africa and Around the World.”
- “The Future is Now: Using the Internet to Promote SCCs in Africa and Around the World.”
- “Promoting the Missionary Outreach of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “SCCs’ Involvement in the New Evangelization in Eastern Africa.”
- “SCCs Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa.”
- “How SCCs Are a New Way of Being/Becoming Church in Eastern Africa.”
- ”How SCCs Are a New Pastoral Model of Church in Eastern Africa.”
- “Future Challenges, Priorities and Actions for SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “General Conclusions: The Way Forward.”

There is an important Appendix on “Online Resource Materials on On-going Formation and Training of SCC Members” that can be used in workshops, seminars, meetings and talks. Presently there are 25 Resources ranging from “Checklist of 15 Common Activities” to “13 Steps in the SCCs Weekly *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Daily Life Connections Service”<sup>21</sup> to “Choices in the SCCs POLL” to “Examples of SCCs Demonstrations, Role Plays, Questions and Exercises” to “Sample of the Program/Timetable of a SCCs Workshop” to “Two Sample Constitutions of SCCs.” There are seven methods of *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection, two of which have been translated into Swahili.

In this book I describe the ministry of the eight-member Eastern African Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team (two priests, one Religious Sister, three laymen and two laywomen) and an informal SCCs Research Team that helps on research, evaluation and assessment. I draw on my long experience in Africa. I came to serve in the [AMECEA](#) Office in Nairobi, Kenya in 1968 as the first Social Communications Secretary of AMECEA from 1968 to 1974. Over the years I have served at various AMECEA activities, meetings and events in official and unofficial capacities. I have been privileged to serve the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa for 48 years of AMECEA’s history (1968-2016). If someone has done something for a long time, the extended meaning of a Swahili idiom says that *the person has eaten a lot of salt*. So I am happy to have eaten a lot of salt in serving AMECEA and the development of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa.

To be faithful to this new way of being church my main credibility is that I am an ordinary and regular member of St. Kizito Small Christian Community in the Waruku Section of St. Austin’s Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya. The lay people are the leaders of our SCC. I am happy to be a student, a learner. As we say in Swahili: “*Mimi ni mwanafunzi*” (“I am a student”).

It is very timely that this critical evaluation and assessment first started in the same year as the 17<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly (Golden Jubilee) of AMECEA on the theme of “AMECEA Family of God Celebrating a Golden Jubilee of Evangelization in Solidarity” that took place at the [Catholic University of Eastern Africa \(CUEA\)](#) in Nairobi, Kenya from 27 June to 6

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<sup>21</sup> After a great deal of research we distinguish between *Bible* Sharing and *Bible* Reflection – the latter does not necessitate group sharing and usually is a deeper experience that connects the *Bible* to daily life and includes faith sharing.

July, 2011. There has also been additional ongoing evaluation and assessment in 2012-2016. The continuing growth of SCCs as a key pastoral priority is a concrete way of continuing the AMECEA jubilee celebrations at the beginning of its second 50 years.

We have a saying in the nine AMECEA countries: "SCCs are not a program or project, but a way of life."<sup>22</sup> That is why we resist giving a definition of a SCC. It is better to describe SCCs in a variety of ways in relation to their local contexts in Eastern Africa. Here are some helpful "descriptions"<sup>23</sup> gathered over the years:

- A SCC is a small neighborhood, parish-based group in an urban or rural area in Eastern Africa that is a pastoral model of church that transforms the parish into a communion of communities and an instrument of evangelization.
- A SCC is a small group of around 10-15 people who meet weekly usually in their homes (but sometimes in a parish, a school or another institution), to reflect on the *Bible* especially the Gospel of the following Sunday, and connect it to their daily lives in Eastern Africa.
- A SCC is the church in the neighborhood in Eastern Africa where Christians share the same local situation with other neighbors not only during weekly meetings but on a day-to-day basis.
- A SCC is a caring, sharing, faith-reflecting, praying and serving community in Eastern Africa in which ongoing Christian formation and pastoral outreach takes place.
- A SCC is a small group that focuses on Scripture, faith sharing and prayer and service to the greater community in Eastern Africa.
- A SCC is a small group of people who come together in the most basic and personal unit of the parish in Eastern Africa. The community gathers in the available homes of its members to discuss their lives in the light of the gospel and share their Christian faith through prayer and service to others.

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<sup>22</sup> This is illustrated in a story told by Polish theologian Father Christopher Cieslikiewicz, OFM Conv when he was writing his doctorate thesis on SCCs in Africa at the Lateran University in Rome. When he arrived in Rome, Italy to start 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, Lazio, 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.

<sup>23</sup> Some commentators distinguish between SCCs ("a face-to-face gathering of six to 12 people who invest time with one another for the common purpose of applying gospel values to every aspect of their lives"), seasonal small groups and ministerial communities. See Kleissler, Thomas A, Margo A. Lebert and Mary C. McGuinness, *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st Century*, Mahweh: Paulist Press, 2002, p. 66.

- A SCC is a small community that engages in evangelizing its members so that subsequently they can bring the Good News to others; prays and listens to God's Word; encourages its members themselves to take on responsibility, learns to live an ecclesial life; and reflects on different human problems in the light of the Gospel.

To celebrate this key pastoral priority we have a slogan or cheer that is inculturated in different African languages. We will use Swahili. We say “*Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo, Oyee!*”<sup>24</sup> That means “Small Christian Communities, Hooray!” Let’s try it. “*Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo...Oyee!*” Again. “*Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo...Oyee!*”

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<sup>24</sup> Another popular cheer or greeting is: One person says “Small Christian Communities... The other person responds: “The instrument of evangelization.” The Swahili is: *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo...chombo cha uinjilishaji.*

## 1. SCCs in the Historical Perspective of 55 Years (1961 to 2016) in the AMECEA Region<sup>25</sup>

When we look through the window of our 1961 to 2011 50-year jubilee period in AMECEA, and now five years beyond, surprisingly, Small Christian Communities (SCCs)<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> A good historical overview and commentary is found in Zambian diocesan priest Febian Pikiti, “Small Christian Communities: A Key Pastoral Priority for the Church in the AMECEA Region.” Mwanza: Printed Paper, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is an umbrella term used in this book and is the common expression for this new way of being church in Eastern Africa. Different terms are used in English on the continent of Africa. BCC means “Basic Christian Community” and BEC means “Base [Basic] Ecclesial Community” and is sometimes written “Ecclesial Base [Basic] Community.” Even some writers in French prefer the term SCC because it indicates the “scale” of the communities. A variety of names are used in the USA. I have visited parishes and institutions in the USA where the specific name “Small Christian Communities” is not known or used, that is, it has very little “Name Recognition.” Yet people would immediately recognize “small groups” or “small prayer groups” or “Small Church Communities” or “Small Faith Communities” or “Small Bible Study Groups.” The challenge is to create successful “branding.” For example, “*jumuiya*” (the short form of Small Christian Communities in Swahili) is immediately known in East Africa.

A background paper for the “International Consultation on Rediscovering Community” at Notre Dame, Indiana in the USA in December, 1991 compiled over 3,500 different names, titles, terms and expressions for SCCs/BCCs worldwide:

Joseph Healey, “Evolving A World Church From the Bottom Up: An Analysis and Interpretation of 3,500 Different Names, Titles, Terms, Expressions, Descriptions and Meanings for and about Small Christian Communities/Basic Christian Communities in the World with 11 Case Studies From Six Continents,” Background Paper for the International Consultation on “Rediscovering Community -- International Perspectives,” University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA, 8-12 December, 1991, Notre Dame: Photocopied Paper, 33 pages. Sections of this paper were published in Agatha Radoli, (ed.), *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* 126-128, 1993. pp. 59-103 and the *Newsletter of Latin American/North American Church Concerns (LANACC)*.

New research carried out in 2015 brings the total to over 5,000 names to express the rich diversity of this new way of being/becoming church.

Research shows that the names vary due to different histories, contexts and pastoral situations. What is important is the best name for the local situation, the local context. A useful distinction is: “**Basic Communities** usually emphasize social change by the power of Christ's gospel. **Church Homes** are focused on building up marriage and family life. **Cell Groups** are designed to evangelize the world by multiplying new groups.” Presentation Ministries Website, retrieved on 19 March, 2012.

<http://www.presentationministries.com/brochures/IntroCommunity.asp>

in Africa fill this entire historical window.<sup>27</sup> An interesting “Timeline” in the history and development of SCCs emerges.<sup>28</sup> At its 6th Plenary Assembly from 20 November to 2 December, 1961 the Zaire Episcopal Conference (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo or DRC that is a neighbor to Eastern Africa) approved a pastoral plan to promote “Living Base Ecclesial Communities” (also called “Living Christian Communities”). Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base (CEVB) is the full French term for SCCs. The bishops opted for these communities to be more important than the well-known mission structures (church buildings, schools, hospitals). These Living Base Ecclesial Communities were said to be the

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<sup>27</sup> An important historical context is how African Christianity has developed in the past two centuries on three parallel tracks: The first group is the Western denominations brought to Africa by the expatriate missionaries: Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, among others. The second group comprises what has been called the African Independent Churches or the African Initiated Churches. The third group are the Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian Churches. They are distinguished by the experience of the Holy Spirit as normative in church life and worship and belief in world evangelization. They maintain a strong sense of Africanness and are independent in their work, but they maximize their network connections with the global evangelical community. The word and importance of “Evangelical” cuts across all three groups. See Harvey Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014 especially the section “African Missions in History” (pp. 51-80).

<sup>28</sup> Irish SCCs animator and writer Father James O’Halloran, SDB makes the interesting observation:” I feel it was a pity that our [expatriate] missionaries did not go to Africa with a communitarian model of church in the first instance, because traditionally there was a great sense of family and community there even before we arrived. Indeed their strong sense of family and community is a special gift of the African groups to the rest of the world.” *Living Cells: Vision and Practicalities of Small Christian Communities and Groups*, Dublin: Columba Press, 2010, p. 206. NOTE: In this Ebook the term “missionaries” will always be qualified with a descriptive adjective such as “expatriate missionary” and “African missionary.”

only way to make the church more "African"<sup>29</sup> and close to the people.<sup>30</sup> Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Scripture Scholar Father André Kabasele Mukenge states that "a firm decision was made to align pastoral care by setting up vibrant Christian Communities."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> In a symposium in Germany in 2013 Democratic Republic of the Congo Sister José Ngalula, RSA stated that the Basic Christian Communities were a response to basic African intuitions and a desire to root Christianity in an African reality. She traced the origins of BCCs in Africa to the Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) Bishops Conference in Africa in 1961 and to the initiatives of Maryknoll missionaries in northwestern Tanzania starting in 1966. "History, Development and Statu Quo of Basic Christian Community (BCC) in Africa" in Moerschbacher, Marco (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium on In the World of Today? The Church on Her Way in Basic Christian Communities*, Tübingen, Germany, 17-20 January, 2012, pp. 1-2, posted on the University of Tübingen Website at <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/en/faculties/catholic-theology/lehrstuehle/religionspaedagogik/basisgemeinden-symposium/presentationen-der-vortraege.html> Also found on the Academia.edu Website, retrieved 20 August, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/6456909/HISTORY\\_DEVELOPMENT\\_AND\\_STATU\\_QUO\\_OF\\_BASIC\\_CHRISTIAN](https://www.academia.edu/6456909/HISTORY_DEVELOPMENT_AND_STATU_QUO_OF_BASIC_CHRISTIAN)

At this same symposium Marco Moerschbacher made this striking observation: "Neither from the time of the Second Vatican Council nor from Latin America comes the oldest option of a local church for what is called today Christian Base Community (see HK, December 2012, 609 ff and March 2012, 128 ff.) The oldest is rather the option of the Congolese Episcopal Conference at its plenary meeting in 1961 -- historically between the independence (1960) of the former Belgian colony and the opening of the Second Vatican Council (1962). The Brazilian church's pastoral plan with such an option dates back to 1962." "For Fifty Years on the Road: The Importance of the Base Communities in Africa's Local Churches," from the German Version in *Herder Korrespondenz*, 4/2013, pps. 200-204. Retrieved on 14 February, 2016, webmaster's own, not authorized translation. <http://www.con-spiration.de/texte/english/2013/moerschbacher-e.html>

<sup>30</sup>The actual launching of SCCs in DRC goes back to the period 1971-1972 when there was a confrontation between President Mobutu Sese Seko and the Catholic Church. Mobutu's "authenticity" campaign suppressed the missionary institutes and associations. To meet the crisis the church established the priority of the creation and organization of SCCs. The pioneering and visionary Cardinal Joseph Malula of Kinshasa Archdiocese, DRC stated: "The Living Ecclesial Communities are slowly becoming the ordinary place of Christian life with the parish as the communion of the Living Ecclesial Communities." This included emphasizing lay ministries and implementing Vatican II's theology of laity, "the People of God." In his characteristic humor, Malula described his initiative as an effort to "bomb the existing parishes to make them explode in small communities." Quoted in Jean-Marc Éla, "Les Communautés de Base dans les Églises Africaines," in J. M. Éla and R. Luneau, *Voici le Temps des Héritiers: Églises d'Afrique et Voies Nouvelles*, Paris: Karthala, 1982, p. 161.

<sup>31</sup> André Kabasele Mukenge, "The Biblical Approach of Basic Ecclesial Communities: Aspects of Their Fundamental Principles" in Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus*, p. 3.

So the very first Small Christian Communities<sup>32</sup> in Africa started in the then Zaire in 1961, the very year that AMECEA started.<sup>33</sup>

Then came the historic Second Vatican Council (1962-65).<sup>34</sup> Small Christian Communities developed as a result of putting the communion ecclesiology and teachings of Vatican II into practice.<sup>35</sup> Small Christian Communities make real the vision of Vatican II that calls on the Church to be (shine forth as) “a people made one with the unity (brought into unity) from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (No. 4 of *Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church of the Church*).

No. 9 says that we are even saved “not as individuals... but rather to make them into a people.” We are most whom we are when we gather as an assembly for prayer and worship. Living this kind of Christian life reflects our deepest identity, that we are created in the image and likeness of God. This identity manifests itself in our deepest needs for love, happiness, community and family.

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<sup>32</sup> We continue to do research on the first recorded use of the name “Small Christian Community/ies” (SCCs) in English and “Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo ya/za Kikristo” (JNNK) in Swahili.

<sup>33</sup> A good summary is found in the section “From African Dioceses to Small Christian Communities” in John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, Second Edition, 2009, pp. 389-392.

<sup>34</sup> 11 October, 2012 was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and a *Kairos* moment to deepen the vision, spirit and practice of the teachings of this historic meeting.

<sup>35</sup> Filipino laywoman Estela P. Padilla, the Pastoral Coordinator of Bukal ng Tipan – CICM, is presently carrying out very interesting research on “BECs in Africa, Latin America and Asia and their Reception of Vatican 2.”

No. 17 refers to the Trinitarian understanding of the church as “the People of God,<sup>36</sup> the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>37</sup>

No. 26 states:

This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called churches in the New Testament.<sup>38</sup> For in their locality these are the new People called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness...In these communities though frequently small and poor, or living far from one another, Christ is present. By virtue of Him the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church gathers together.

No. 10 of the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People* describes “Church Communities” including different types of ecclesial communities especially the parish.

The spirit and content of the Second Vatican Council mirror what St. John XXIII described as “reading the signs of the times”<sup>39</sup> when he originally called the council. The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (commonly known by the Latin title *Gaudium et Spes*) emphasized this explicit call: “The church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (No. 4).

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<sup>36</sup> Meaning of the “People of God.” Found in the *Old Testament*’s emphasis on the Jewish People as the Chosen People of God (Yahweh). In the *New Testament I Peter: 2:9-10* says of the newly baptized Christians:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

There are two interpretations depending on the context: First, wider and inclusive: all human beings are part of the People of God (we are all children of God). Second, narrow and exclusive: members of the Catholic Church only.

<sup>37</sup> Vatican Website, retrieved 30 September, 2011, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641122\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641122_lumen-gentium_en.html)

<sup>38</sup> Another translation of this sentence reads: “The Church of Christ is found in every group of the faithful in a given neighborhood or area who together with their pastors are also called the church in the writings of the *New Testament*.”

<sup>39</sup> Blessed Paul VI describe the importance of being constantly aware of the changes in society in this striking image: “You must continually stand the window, open to the world. You are obliged to study the facts, the events, the opinions, the current interests and the thought of the surrounding environment.”

For African SCCs this means reading the African signs of the times in the light of the Gospel and at the same time interpreting the Gospel in the light of the African signs of the times. This is an approach to doing theology that American theologian Father David Tracy describes as “mutually critical correlation.”<sup>40</sup>

In giving enthusiastic support to Base Ecclesial Communities Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, SDB,<sup>41</sup> Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras describes them as “the great fruit of Vatican II.”<sup>42</sup> The Kenyan book of prayers and songs, *Tumshangilie Bwana*, has this interesting description: “Small Christian Communities are one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council and an awakening of the church as the ‘Nation of God.’” A good explanation is found in “Vatican II’s Impact on Small Christian Communities,” in Chapter One in *Communities for the Kingdom: A Handbook for Small Christian Community Leaders* by Irish missionary and theologian Father Kieran Flynn, SPS.

Although the term SCCs is not mentioned specifically in the documents of Vatican II, some of the great theologians of the council emphasized them in their writings in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The French Dominican theologian Father Yves Congar, OP in *Lay People in the Church* wrote that SCCs are “little church cells wherein the mystery is lived directly and with great simplicity...“the church’s machinery, sometimes the very institution, is a barrier obscuring her deep and living mystery, which they can find, or find again, only from below.”<sup>43</sup>

The German Jesuit theologian Father Karl Rahner, SJ in the chapter on “Church from the Roots” in *The Shape of the Church to Come* wrote: “The church in the future will be one built from below by basic communities as a result of free initiative and association. We should make every effort not to hold up this development, but to promote it and direct it on the right lines.”<sup>44</sup>

The founding fathers of AMECEA had a vision of implementing Vatican II’s ecclesiology of communion in Eastern Africa that focused on the communion (*koinonia*) and service (*diakonia*) aspects. Tanzanian Scripture scholar Father Titus Amigu states: “After the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) doors were opened and the Spirit of God brought a new

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<sup>40</sup> “Theological Interpretation of the Bible Today” in David Tracy, *A Short History of the Theological Interpretation of the Bible Today*, Fortress Press, 1984.

<sup>41</sup> It is interesting that Rodriguez Maradiaga was appointed to be the coordinator of a group of nine cardinals worldwide established by Pope Francis to advise him and to study a plan for revising the *Apostolic Constitution* on the Roman Curia.

<sup>42</sup> In August, 2007 the Social Commission of the Brazilian Bishops Conference stated: “We wish to reaffirm decisively and give new impetus to the life and prophetic and sanctifying mission of the CEBs ... They have been one of the great manifestations of the Spirit in the Latin American and Caribbean Church since Vatican II.” “Base Communities ‘Edited Out’,” *Tablet*, 15 September, 2007, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, First published in 1953, (London: Geoffrey Chapman Revised Edition, 1985) p. 341.

<sup>44</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

Pentecost with the introduction of Small Christian Communities in Africa.”<sup>45</sup> Tanzanian theologian Father Nicholas Segeja states: AMECEA started laying emphasis “on developing SCCs as a concrete expression of, and realization of, the Church as Family Model of Church which reflects the ecclesiology of communion of Vatican II.”<sup>46</sup> In reflecting on the reception of Vatican II in Africa, Nigerian theologian Father Emmanuel Orobator, SJ comments:

AMECEA has developed an admirable profile in the African Church in the area of regional ecclesiastical collaboration. Arguably, the most concrete and best achievement of AMECEA is its pioneering role in developing Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a new way of being church.<sup>47</sup>

As a personal witness to visioning the Church as the People of God, American Maryknoll missionary priest Father Michael Snyder, MM states: “Throughout my years in pastoral work in Tanzania, parish leaders were always selected from the Small Christian Communities. SCCs were the core of parish life in the dioceses where we served. Vatican II has been extremely formative in shaping our generation’s pastoral approaches to mission.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Titus Amigu, “Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo Small Christian Communities in Tanzania,” *Bulletin Dei Verbum* 86/87, 2006, [http://www.c-b-f.org/documents/Gemeinschaften\\_e.pdf](http://www.c-b-f.org/documents/Gemeinschaften_e.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Segeja, “Summary Notes” on *The Development and Ecclesiology of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in AMECEA Countries*, Nairobi: Unpublished Course Notes, 2010, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, “After All, Africa is Largely a Non-literate Continent: The Reception of Vatican II in Africa,” *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), p. 299.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Snyder in an email message to the author dated 25 June, 2013.

Latin America,<sup>49</sup> Africa and Asia (especially the Philippines<sup>50</sup>) all pioneered the development of a SCC/BCC/BEC 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<sup>51</sup> *simultaneously* experienced the extraordinary growth of

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<sup>49</sup> It is generally agreed that this SCC/BCC/BEC/CEB Model of Church started with the CEBs in Barra do Pirai Diocese, Brazil in 1956. The language was Portuguese. O'Halloran states: "Leonardo Boff traces their beginning to the lament of a humble old lady [called the 'Rosa Parks of CEBs'] so her words may be among the most momentous uttered in church history. 'Christmas Eve,' she complained, 'all three Protestant Churches were lit up and full of people...and the Catholic Church closed and dark!...Because we can't get a priest.'

The question naturally arose why everything should come to a standstill simply because there was no priest. This led to an initiative by [Brazilian Bishop] Agnelo Rossi, Bishop of Barra do Pirai Diocese in the Metropolitan of Rio de Janeiro, to launch a community catechetical/evangelization movement in Barra do Parai, "out of which small communities eventually emerged." *Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Companion*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996. p. 18. See also Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiology: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*. Maryknoll, N. Y. Orbis Books, 1986, p. 3.

Rossi trained lay catechists as coordinators of the local communities. On Sundays the catechists led a liturgical service similar to the mass that was being celebrated by the pastor in the distant Mother Church in the parish. As American Holy Cross theologian Robert Pelton explains these liturgies were the forerunner of the "Sunday Services without Priests." Robert S. Pelton, CSC, *From Power to Communion: Toward a New Way of Being Church Based on the Latin American Experience*, Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, p. 64.

<sup>50</sup> Basic Ecclesial Communities started in Mindanao in the Philippines in 1967 and 1968. Conversation with American Maryknoll Missionary Father Jerry Burr, MM, 6 August, 2013. Officially their beginning was the first Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference in 1971. Filipino Bishop Francisco Claver, SJ states:

We in Mindanao-Sulu woke up one day and realized what we had been doing in the dioceses of the region all along since 1971 was actually what Latin Americans were calling *Comunidades de Base* – small basic (Christian) communities, In fact we also realized that any church community that tried making itself into a dialogic, participative and co-responsible community [traits that characterize an authentic Vatican II Church] was quite automatically forming itself into a Basic Ecclesial Community.

Francisco Claver, *Making of a Local Church*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008, p. 88.

<sup>51</sup> The nations of Africa, Central and Latin America, and most of Asia are collectively known as the "Global South" and include 157 recognized states in the world. This term is preferred to the terms "developing countries," "least developed countries," "emerging countries," and the "Third World" that are condescending and pejorative and are usually used in a narrow economic sense. Interestingly the first reference I saw to "the Christian Churches in the Global South" in 2003 was not in a religious journal or magazine but in a "secular" literary magazine – *The New Yorker*. Related terms are: "economically developing countries;"

SCCs.<sup>52</sup> Thus, contrary to some misinformed interpretations, the African experience did not come from Latin America, but developed on its own.<sup>53</sup> African SCCs developed mainly as a pastoral, parish-based model of church. O’Halloran confirms this by saying:

During the 1971 [World] Synod of Bishops the Africans present noted that Small Christian Communities already existed in Africa. And this quite independently of what had happened in Latin America. One cannot say for certain where the modern [SCCs] groups began. They sprang up spontaneously throughout the world at roughly the same historical period by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>54</sup>

Orobator explains:

Small Christian Communities are present in various forms in different parts of the world, but they gained a distinctive ecclesiological notoriety in Latin America. In this wider context the specificity or uniqueness of SCCs in Africa does not appear obvious. In some instances they have been compared to and confused with the Latin American model of *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*. The similarities between both models of SCCs are noticeable, but the distinctions are clear. The same can be said of the historical trajectory of the two models. On the evidence of history, they are contemporaries, albeit they developed on opposite ends of the globe. Their emergence is coterminous, such that ‘it would be hard to establish clearly whether one was prior to the

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“economically emerging countries;” “economically developing South;” “Global South countries” (geographical rather than economic); and “Southern Hemisphere.”

We try to avoid other stereotype and pejorative descriptions of Africa as the “dark continent” and the “forgotten continent.”

<sup>52</sup> Small Christian communities are a global phenomenon. They have developing on every continent. Scottish minister Ian Frazer has observed that “Small Christian Communities are the result of the spontaneous combustion of the Holy Spirit all over the world.” Confirmed in “Spread of SCCs across Continents,” Small Christian Communities in Mumbai Website, retrieved on 23 July, 2014, <http://www.mumbaiscc.in/spreadofscs.php> and “Development of SCCs in Different Regions of the World,” Small Christian Communities in India Website, retrieved on 23 July, 2014, <http://www.sccind.org/home/inner/22>

<sup>53</sup> Archbishop Jean-Marie Speich, the Apostolic Nuncio in Ghana, has an original interpretation. He says that the reality of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is an African invention and not a South American concept clarifying that the practice of gathering Christian believers in communities started when the first missionaries in Africa initiated contacts with local communities through catechists. “The Small Christian communities are not a South American invention as many believe that it is. Small Christian communities started in Africa 150 years ago with the arrival of the first missionaries and with the contacts of the local African catechists who were great witnesses” who experienced much suffering, some having suffered martyrdom.” Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA), 27 November, 2014.

<sup>54</sup> James O’Halloran, *Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Companion*, p. 23.

other in logic or historical development' [American theologian Father Roger Haight, SJ]."<sup>55</sup>

German Divine Word missiologist Father Paul Steffen, SVD adds:

Small Christian Communities were increasingly seen as an African way to contextualize the communio-ecclesiology of Vatican II. The SCCs are in line with the nature of Africans and are often the only way to combat the negative aspects of globalization, which means in practice to build Christian communities which support their members in their concrete or real life situations as extended families. The reality allows us to speak of a process of building Small Christian Communities in Africa which develop according to the traditions and customs of the culture of Africa and that, unlike Latin America, do not originate in a society of socio-political conflicts that often have influenced the movement of the Latin American Basic Ecclesial Communities. The SCC movement also expresses a reawakening of African traditions and a strengthening of the African identity as being authentically African and Christian.<sup>56</sup>

Other historical misconceptions: First, that Eastern Africa SCCs are a cell model of church with its communistic and socialistic overtones. This has resulted in unfounded fears of control, uniformity and politicizing. Second, that SCCs are a parallel church along the lines of the independent Christian sects. As a clear pastoral, parish-based mode, the experience of Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA Region is very Catholic and within ecclesial structures and guidelines. That the SCCs are closely linked to the parish and focus on pastoral priorities avoids the pitfalls of other parts of the world.<sup>57</sup>

Although Venerable Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Letter *Africae Terrarum* in 1967 does not specifically refer to SCCs it contains these statements: No. 1: "The fervor and vitality of the new Christian Communities, in particular, showed us clearly that Africa is opening itself to the Kingdom of God." No. 12: "As regards community life – which in African tradition was family life writ large – we note that participation in the life of the community, whether in the circle of one's kinsfolk or in public life, is considered a precious duty and the right of all."

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<sup>55</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects," in Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church*, Volume 2, "Theology of One World" series of Mission Aachen, Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2013, p. 115.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Steffen, *Centres of Formation and Evangelizing Ministry: Pastoral Institutes in Oceania and Africa*, Studia Instituti Missiologici Societatis Verbi Divini Nr. 102, Siegburg: Franz Schmitt Verlag, 2014, p. 99.

<sup>57</sup> Based on a conversation with Zambian Archbishop Thesphore George, the Archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia in Lusaka on 30 November, 2013.

Democratic Republic of the Congo Sister Josée Ngalula, RSA points out that these strong magisterial affirmations continued in Venerable Pope Paul VI's speech to the representatives of African Episcopal Conferences in Kampala, Uganda in 1969. "With two of his sentences, he gave a strong cry:

You, Africans, you are henceforth your own missionaries (...) To be your own missionaries means that you, Africans, you must continue to build up the Church on this continent." And: "An adaptation of Christian life in the pastoral, liturgical, catechetical and spiritual field is not only possible, but is encouraged by the Church (...) you can [may] and you must have an African Christianity.

These two strong affirmations were an important "pacemaker" for many African bishops. It is thus not amazing to see some bishops, from 1970 onwards, realize creative pastoral initiatives.<sup>58</sup> Paul VI's challenges pave the way for the Local Church<sup>59</sup> in Africa to develop its own local pastoral structures such as SCCs.

Although 1973 and 1976 are considered the official starting points for SCCs in the AMECEA countries, the seeds were sown earlier. Our research on the history of SCCs in Eastern Africa uses the metaphor of a trickle of water that grows into a small stream that grows into a narrow river that is fed by many tributaries and slowly grows into a mighty river that became the AMECEA SCCs Key Pastoral Priority. The tributaries are identified as articles, booklets, books, bulletins, conversations, conferences, discussions, DVDs, grassroots experiences, interviews, leaflets, sheets, cards, local experiments, meetings, minutes, newsletters, plans, printed handouts, radio programs, reports, research, seminars, sound-slide shows, speeches, synods, talks, TV programs, videos and workshops coming from the different AMECEA countries.

The very beginning of SCCs in Eastern Africa<sup>60</sup> (and the whole of English-speaking Africa) can be traced back to the joint pastoral and missionary efforts of the American

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<sup>58</sup> Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> The terms "Local Church" and "local priests" are used in this Ebook. The terms "Indigenous Church" and "indigenous priests" are frequently used. These terms have a generally positive meaning in Africa although they have a more critical and negative meaning in the West such as "those indigenous churches."

<sup>60</sup> This early history of SCCs in Tanzania was enriched by the author's discussions with Tanzanian bishop and Church Historian Bishop Method Kilaini in Mwanza, Tanzania on 20-23 May, 2014. See Kilaini, Method, "Small Christian Communities: Sharing the Tanzania Pastoral Experience," Mwanza: Printed Paper, 2014. 7 pages. The Swahili version of this paper is *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo (JNNK): Uzoefu wa Kichungaji wa Tanzania*. [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/small\\_christian.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/small_christian.pdf)

The historical significance of the Lake Victoria Zone in northwestern Tanzania was emphasized in our discussions. It now comprises eight dioceses (Mwanza Archdiocese and the dioceses of Bukoba, Bunda, Geita, Kayanga, Musoma, Rulenge-Ngara and Shinyanga): The first African Cardinal, Laurean Rugambwa, came from Bukoba. The first Tanzanian President, Servant of God Julius K. Nyerere, came from Musoma. The pioneering Dutch Bishop Joseph

Maryknoll missionaries in three rural parishes in the Luo-speaking Deanery (Nyarombo, Ingri and Kowak Parishes<sup>61</sup>) in North Mara in Musoma Diocese in northwestern Tanzania in 1966. Then these small communities spread to two other Luo-speaking parishes Masonga and Tatwe.

This new stage of evangelization began with research on the social structures and community values of the African Initiated Churches (AICs)<sup>62</sup> especially the Legio Maria<sup>63</sup> (Latin for “Legion of Mary),” a break away church among the Luo Ethnic Group, carried out by French cultural anthropologist laywoman Marie France Perrin Jassy.<sup>64</sup> The Catholic priest could not visit everywhere to provide the pastoral care. He did not want everything to wait until he came to a local village. It was important for the Catholic Luo communities to have their own small community identity where they could be more independent and self-sufficient in praying, reading the *Bible* and social activities. The first terms used were *chama* (Swahili

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Blomjous, MAfr, a visionary of the founding of AMECEA and an important voice at the Second Vatican Council, was the bishop of Mwanza. The founder of SCCs in Tanzania, Bishop Christopher Mwoleka, came from Bukoba and was the bishop of Rulenge-Ngara. The leading East African Catholic theologian Laurenti Magesa who writes a lot on the theology of SCCs comes from Musoma.

<sup>61</sup> Laurenti Magesa suggested to the author that a complete history of the origin of SCCs in these parishes should be written up as part of this important historical record. During a visit to North Mara on 8 July, 2014 I interviewed Tanzanian layman Francis Anthony Otieno, the retired catechist of Utegi Parish (originally founded in 1960 as an out-station of Kowak Parish that was founded in 1933). Francis was born in 1948. He has a remarkable memory of these historical events. His father Anthony was also a catechist. Francis knew Father Francis Murray, MM who was the Pastor of Kowak Parish in the 1960s and many Maryknollers who served in North Mara. He recalled that during this 1960s period the Maryknoll Sisters met with small neighborhood groups of Luos to pray the rosary and other prayers.

<sup>62</sup> Also called African Instituted Churches. African Independent Churches and African Indigenous Churches.

<sup>63</sup> “A Spirit Initiated Church (SIC) or new religious movement initially among the Luo people of western Kenya. By the early 1960s the movement had assembled a good number of catechists, acolytes, and believers in a spiritual return of Jesus Christ. The continuous expansion of this movement coupled with its belief in Simeo Ondetto as the returned Son of God led to theological tension, and eventual break with the lay Catholic movement, the Legion of Mary. This is the only example of an African Independent Church that broke away from the [Roman] Catholic Church. Legio Maria was legally registered in Kenya in 1966 as a church, expanded massively in the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and eventually spread to many countries in Africa, including Uganda, Tanzania, Congo, Zaire, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Nigeria. Based in entry for Legio Maria on the Wikipedia Website retrieved on 12 July, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legio\\_Maria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legio_Maria)

<sup>64</sup> A five-page typed history of Perrin Jassy’s stay and research in Tanzania is found in Daniel Zwack, *Nyarombo Mission Diary*, 27 March 1967. Joseph Carney documents her research and findings in *The History of the Functional Structure of the Maryknoll Mission in Musoma and Shinyanga, Tanzania*, New York: St John’s University Unpublished Dissertation, 1973.

for "small group" or "society;" the plural is *vyama*) and "small communities of Christians" (forerunner of SCCs).<sup>65</sup>

In his African Church History under the section "Small Christian Communities - the Basis of the Local Church in Africa" John Baur states:

The origin of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is sometimes wrongly attributed to the Latin American model only and their value solely judged according to their involvement in the fight for social justice. There was also an inspiring model of the small communities of the independent African churches as documented by the East African study of [Marie France] Perrin-Jassy, commissioned by the Maryknoll missionaries.<sup>66</sup>

The Maryknoll missionaries focused on the formation of small natural communities that were neighborhood groups of Luo-speaking people in the rural areas. By 1968 Nyarombo Parish had 28 small communities,<sup>67</sup> Ingri Parish had 22 small communities and Kowak Parish had 25 small communities. As many of 80% of the local Catholics participated.<sup>68</sup> American historian Joseph Carney reports:

The uniqueness of such a group was that it was not another church organization, the Legion of Mary, a sodality, etc. but rather it was the center of the community life based on geographical, material and social units and it was the growing center of the Christian life.<sup>69</sup>

Carney adds:

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<sup>65</sup> See Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *Forming Christian Communities*, Kampala: *Gaba Pastoral Paper* No. 12, 1970 and *Basic Communities in the African Churches*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973. Perrin Jassy's work is also found in: Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *La Communauté dans les Églises Africaines*, Bandundu, Kinshasa: Centre D'Etudes Ethnologiques, 1970; Marie-France Perrin Jassy, "Face au changement: Former des communautés de Base," *Ceeba* I, vol. 8, 1981; and Marie-France Perrin-Jassy, "La communauté de base dans les Églises Africaines," *Ceeba*, series II, vol. 3, 1970, wherein she specifically discusses Maryknoll.

<sup>66</sup> John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994, p. 459. See also Joseph Healey, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and the New Way of Being Maryknoll in Africa." Maryknoll Society of Fathers and Brothers Africa Regional Assembly, Arusha, Tanzania. May, 1999. Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 3 pages. Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Africa Region Website, retrieved 27 February, 2015, <http://www.maryknollafrica.org/ComHealeyDocs4.htm>

<sup>67</sup> See Daniel Zwack, *Nyarombo Mission Diary*, January, 1968.

<sup>68</sup> Some of this explanation is based on a conversation of Michael Kirwen, MM with the author in Nairobi on 30 April, 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Carney, *The History of the Functional Structure*, pps. 232-233.

The hinge point of the success of its group was the quality of the leadership. The focal point of a [small] Christian community was the sense of service of its leaders based on the gospel of Jesus. Perrin-Jassy, the Luo Deanery and head catechists thought it was important that the community leaders not be catechists. Rather the community had to elect at least six men or women as their community leaders...The catechist was on the other hand was to be the teacher and resource person.<sup>70</sup>

Magesa confirms this history from his personal experience:

American Maryknoll Bishop John Rudin, MM [of Musoma Diocese] was in his own way an exceptionally simple, humble, pastorally-minded person who encouraged pastoral initiatives. The idea of building Small Christian Communities (SCCs), which was officially sanctioned and endorsed in 1976 as the church's "pastoral priority" by all the bishops of the region (the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa, AMECEA), was born and nurtured in the 1960s in the Diocese of Musoma at Nyarombo Parish under Bishop Rudin's leadership and with his blessing. I was privileged to serve in that parish and to witness the roots of the initiative in the years 1974 and 1975.<sup>71</sup>

Jassy's research led to several pastoral innovations. The "Sunday Service Without a Priest" led by the catechist<sup>72</sup> was a meeting place and sign of unity for the members of these small neighborhood communities. The local leaders composed newly written hymns based on Luo rhythms, some related to community and unity. After the homily in the Sunday Mass the priest would lead a short "Health and Healing Service" for the sick in the community. This responded to the felt needs of the Luo people for more prayers for healing.

English diocesan priest Father Gerry Proctor points out that this "Catholic experience of SCCs was an African response to an African problem. It was not copying from another continent of a model of Church that might or might not prove pastorally useful here."<sup>73</sup>

Around the same time in the mid-1960s American Maryknoll missionary Father George Cotter, MM was one of the first pioneers in Sukumaland (the Catholic dioceses in Tanzania where the Sukuma Ethnic Group live) to facilitate small reflection groups of Sukuma people to use proverbs to get a deeper understanding of Scripture. This experience

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>71</sup> Laurenti Magesa, "Endless Quest: The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian" in Jesse Mugambi and Evaristi Magoti (ed.), *Endless Quest: The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian*, a *Festschrift* for Professor Laurenti Magesa, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Catechist is a very important lay ministry in Africa and includes many pastoral roles and responsibilities. In the USA catechist usually refers to a person who teaches religious education.

<sup>73</sup> Gerry Proctor, *A Commitment to Neighborhood: Base Ecclesial Communities in Global Perspective*, Liverpool: Unpublished MPhil Dissertation, 2012, p. 70.

helped the local Sukuma people appreciate more the wisdom of their Sukuma proverbs and the *Bible*. This can be called a “Sukuma Reading of the *Bible*.”<sup>74</sup>

During the Seminar Study Year (SSY)<sup>75</sup> in Tanzania in 1969 coordinated by the Bukumbi Pastoral Institute in the then Mwanza Diocese the concept and praxis of SCCs that were then called “local Church communities” were first articulated as a priority in both rural and later urban parishes. American Maryknoll missionary Father Daniel Zwack, MM presented the plan of the rural parish of Nyarombo in Musoma Diocese (see above).<sup>76</sup> American Spiritan missionary priest Father Joseph Kelly, CSSP points out:

This contribution by Fr. Zwack contained some of the salient facets of what was later to become Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa; however their hour had not yet come. This part of his Position Paper was hardly mentioned when the questions for discussion were drawn up in preparation for the National Seminar.<sup>77</sup>

Dutch Missionary of Africa Father J. Brouwer, MAfr presented the plan of the town parish of Tabora in Tabora Archdiocese that had six wards. Each ward had small groups of Christians that consisted of ten to 12 families. These SCCs met regularly to pray, read the *Bible*, discuss their problems and explore how they could best live their Christian lives.<sup>78</sup>

These Tanzanian case studies and examples were first documented in articles in the journal *Service* first published by the Bukumbi Pastoral Institute with headquarters in

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<sup>74</sup> Based on the author’s conversation with George Cotter, Maryknoll, New York, USA, 25 June, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> The driving force behind coordinating the SSY was American Maryknoll missionary Father Francis (“Ace”) Murray, MM, the Secretary of the Pastoral Department of the TEC and the Director of the Bukumbi Pastoral Institute. For an overview of the process, see F. Murray, “1969 -- A Study Year for the Church in Tanzania,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 12., No. 1 (January 1970): pp. 71-73 and F. Murray, “No End to SSY,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (April 1970), pp. 168-171.

Years later when the implementation of the 1994 First African Synod was going slowly in Tanzania, Archbishop Anthony Mayala of Mwanza Archdiocese, Tanzania told the author, “We need is another Frank Murray to animate us on the local level.” Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers Africa Region Website, retrieved on 13 June, 2014, <http://www.maryknollafrica.org/History8.htm>

<sup>76</sup> Daniel Zwack, “Problems and Possibilities in Rural Parishes of Tanzania,” Position Paper No. 9, 1969 National Seminar Study Year, Bukumbi: Printed Paper, 1969.

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Kelly, “The Coming of Small Christian Communities to Eastern Africa, in “Report on Consultation on Methods of Research to Find Out How the *Bible* is Being Used in Small Christian Communities in Africa,” sponsored and organized by BICAM, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 1989.

<sup>78</sup> J. Brouwer, “Problems and Possibilities in Towns and Cities of Tanzania,” Position Paper No. 10, 1969 National Seminar Study Year, Bukumbi: Printed Paper, 1969.

Mwanza and now called TAPRI (Tanzanian Pastoral and Research Institute) that is part of St Augustine University (SAUT) with headquarters in Mwanza. Gradually the names Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and in Swahili *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo* (JNNK) became commonly used.

In 1969 Small Christian Communities started in St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Church, Regiment Parish in an urban area of Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia. German Missionary of Africa Father Andreas Edele, MAfr explains the process of starting SCCs in the parish through a three year visitation of parishioners in their homes beginning in 1968. He adds, "We got valuable hints on how to form BCCs from Europe and South America." But he was keen to improve on what he had heard by including "every Catholic family... not just a small percentage of the Catholic population."<sup>79</sup>

Edele writes:

At the beginning of 1969, sitting together with Sr. Simone Marceau, MSOLA, who meanwhile had joined the Parish Team, and Catechist "Seba," we planned a new strategy, borrowing ideas from South America, namely establishing "Small Christian Communities". To start with, we chose an area of twenty to thirty Catholic families. We visited each one of them and invited them for an initial meeting in one of the houses. We explained our intention and asked them to attend eight sessions, at the end of which they were asked to choose leaders for the different services needed in the community. Then we celebrated the Eucharist in the community as a sign that "the Small Christian Community" had been established.

Amazingly, other areas within the parish pleaded with us (like St. Paul) to start similar communities in their place. Therefore we trained leaders to help us in the work of establishing new communities. Within a couple of years, the whole area of Libala, New Chilenje, Chilenje South and practically the whole parish was covered with SCCs. Soon afterwards, they were adopted as pastoral priority in other parishes of Lusaka. Therefore Regiment Parish can be truly considered as the cradle of the SCCs in Zambia.

I often asked myself, why this pastoral policy was much more effective in town than in rural areas. A possible answer is that as a church, we succeeded to present the SCCs as a "family". City dwellers miss the natural family.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the African family consists not only of the living but also the living dead (ancestors). When we introduced "Patron Saints" it gave to the people an additional identification. In town the SCC gives the family security and solidarity which still exists in rural areas especially in times of

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<sup>79</sup> Andrew Edele, MAfr, "Establishing Basic Christian Communities in Lusaka, Zambia," *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin* 81 (1980), p. 22.

<sup>80</sup> "Natural family" is a term used in Africa. It is the fundamental social unit, inscribed in human nature, and centered around the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage. "Natural" is not "nuclear," which would limit its scope, nor is it "traditional," which would burden its utility in public discourse.

misfortune like accidents or deaths. During the whole process, I received more of theological insight from the people, than I was able to give them.<sup>81</sup>

In 2013 this parish is still going strong with 29 active SCCs in five geographical zones. On Saturday, 30 November, 2013 I participated in the Patron Saint's Day Mass of St. Andrew SCC in St. Charles Lwanga Parish. Of the 30 SCC members there were 4 men, 12 women, six youth and eight children. It was a joyous occasion celebrating SCCs as a "communion of families," one of the choices in our SCCs Poll for November-December, 2013. The SCC members wore their St Andrew's T Shirts and the women dressed in *chitenge* cloth that had the title "St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Parish, Regiment Church Lusaka, Zambia" with a drawing of St. Charles Lwanga and the names of all the SCCs in the parish. Recently the parish started Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) as seen in the poster "Our Way of Being Church."



In 1970 Small Christian Communities started in Iten Parish in Eldoret Diocese, Kenya. They were called *Kokwet*, the natural local unit meaning "neighborhood" in the language of the Kalenjin people. The Christian *Kokwet* "met about twice a month in the evening after work with the catechist, read selected passages from the *Bible* and discussed together what it meant to be a Christian. The emphasis was on service."<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Andrew Edele, "The Beginning of Small Christian Communities in Zambia: Some Versions," in Marc Nsanzurwimo, *Here We Are: 70 Years of Evangelization and Social Concern. Regiment Parish: St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Church (1939-2009)*, Ndola, Mission Press, 2013, pp. 6-7.

<sup>82</sup> Irish Kiltegan priest Fintan McDonald, "Pastoral Experiment in Kalenjin," *Mirror*, February, 1972, p. 2.

The AMECEA Pastoral Institute of Eastern Africa at Gaba, Kampala, Uganda pioneered study and reflections on new models of church. At a seminar in 1971 there was a discussion on the need and purpose of local Christian communities. One paper stated:

A need has been felt all over the world to create small living Christian communities either within or to replace the parish which is often merely an arbitrary geographical area based on a legalistic and administrative concept. The present situation in the traditional Christian Churches demands a change in structure and a reformation or renewal of local communities... A Christian community has to be a natural community of life, such as a neighborhood, and not an abstract entity as the parish. The actual parishes should be decentralized and divided into small local communities called to be visible expression of the Local Church...

A Christian community has to be a natural community of life such as a neighborhood and not an abstract entity as the parish. The actual parishes should be decentralized and divided into small local communities called to be the visible expression of the Local Church. A type of such communities developed in a few parishes in northern Tanzania shows a way in which they can be formed. The local existing community has the lineage or extended family as its basis; a basis upon which is built the Christian community – the family of God’s children in which Christian ties transcend or replace those of kinship.<sup>83</sup>

During the World Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1971 the African delegates present noted that SCCs already existed in Africa.

In the early 1970s Tanzanian Bishop Christopher Mwoleka (who died in 2002), the Bishop of Rulenge Diocese in northwestern Tanzania, began to develop his vision and praxis of small communities based on *Bible* Sharing and practical action. He is considered the founder of SCCs in Tanzania. Mwoleka visited the *vyama* in North Mara in Musoma Diocese and other community experiments.

He started lectionary-based small groups in Rulenge called *Vikundi vya Injili* (Swahili for “Gospel Groups”). Gradually they become known in Swahili as *Jumuyia Ndogo Ndogo za Kristo*. They were neighborhood groups of families that would come together for prayer, *Bible* Sharing and practical activities. They paralleled the *Nyumba Kumi Kumi* (Swahili for Ten Houses), the socialistic plan of President Julius Nyerere and the Tanzanian Government to group houses/homes/families together in the same geographical area. This was part of the policy of *Ujamaa* (Swahili for “Familyhood”). Mwoleka emphasized:

Providentially, the Small Christian Communities, developed on the right lines, will eventually replace the traditional African extended family or the clan. Just as Baptism transforms a natural baby into a child of God, a small

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<sup>83</sup> “The Christian Community – Basis for Liturgical Celebration,” *Liturgy and Life in Rural Africa*, Kampala: Gaba Pastoral Papers No. 20, 1971, pp. 1-2.

Christian community is nothing else but a baptized clan. The clan with all its culture, ethos, relationships and institutions is not destroyed but purified and transformed.<sup>84</sup>

Malawian Missionary of Africa Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr (who died in 2012) was a great visionary of SCCs. He became the bishop of Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi in 1972. He understood the cultural importance of *Mphakati/Miphakati* (the Chewa, Malawi word for “small family” or “in the midst of/among the people”—referring to the wider family but smaller than a clan) and how they could be inculturated into Catholic pastoral practice. He envisioned these groups as being responsible for Christian formation and helping to raise children in the Catholic faith. Being a biblical scholar Kalilombe valued reading and reflecting on the *Bible*. So in 1972 he encouraged Catholic small family groups to regularly reflect on the Gospel. So SCCs were born in Malawi and *Mphakati* became the common name. He also hoped these SCCs would become eucharistic communities where the Eucharist would be celebrated on the grassroots level on a regular basis.

In 1973-1975 Kalilombe held a Mini-Synod in Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi. He was the first bishop in Eastern Africa to start a diocesan pastoral plan of Small Christian Communities on the grassroots level. His “Biography” states:

In 1973 he wrote his first Pastoral Letter for Lilongwe Diocese entitled *Christ’s Church in Lilongwe, Today and Tomorrow*. The letter focused on building a self-reliant church. His intention was to build Lilongwe Diocese into a church that is self-ministering, self-supporting and self-propagating. To materialize this vision Bishop Kalilombe called upon all the laity to be actively involved in the whole life and mission of the Church. He thought that this would be possible if there could be small groups in various places where ideas of how to improve and develop the Church could be suggested and implemented at a higher level. Such small groups were to be called *Miphakati* (Small Christian Communities). Consequently a mini-synod was, later on, called where such ideas were to be discussed by the Christians at all levels; diocese, deanery, parish and outstation. The bishop had in mind that if *Miphakati* would be established, discussions would not only be spiritual but also involve the integral life of a human being such as socio-political aspects of life involving human rights, justice and peace, education and health, employment in line with its conditions and public morality.<sup>85</sup>

The AMECEA Catechetical Congress on “Towards Adult Christian Community” in Nairobi, Kenya in April, 1973 was one of the first AMECEA-wide meetings to reflect on SCCs. The results are contained in *Gaba Pastoral Paper* No. 29 (presently called *Spearhead*). German Fidei Donum missionary Father Max Stetter presented a slide show on SCCs in Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese in Uganda. He points out: “The new way of adult learning

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<sup>84</sup> Christopher Mwoleka in Joseph Healey, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Back Christian Values*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press, 1981, p. 109.

<sup>85</sup> “Biography Of Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, Missionaries of Africa (MAfr),” Episcopal Conference of Malawi Website, retrieved on 10 December, 2013, [http://www.ecmmw.org/news\\_updates/kalilombe\\_BIOGRAPHY.html](http://www.ecmmw.org/news_updates/kalilombe_BIOGRAPHY.html)

we discussed in the congress was an important step in seeing the community as subject and no longer just an object of catechetical and pastoral growth.”<sup>86</sup>

This historical research is very enlightening. It shows that already in the five AMECEA countries – Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia – experiences of SCCs on the grassroots existed in both rural and urban areas before the famous AMECEA Study Conference on “Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s” in Nairobi, Kenya in December, 1973.<sup>87</sup> This conference stated: “We have to insist on building church life and work on Basic Christian Communities in both rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work take place: those basic and manageable social groups whose members can experience real inter-personal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working.”<sup>88</sup> This pastoral policy was in the context of the statement: “We are convinced that in these countries of Eastern Africa it is time for the Church to become truly local, that is, self-ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting.”<sup>89</sup>

At this conference Bishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana’a Nzeki of Nakuru Diocese, Kenya presented a sound-slide show on “Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s.” Two sections were on “Church as Community” and “Biblical Background.” The two slides on Christian Community had this commentary:

Our objective is to develop more Basic Christian Communities. To achieve this in Eastern Africa we have to take into account the existence of many other Christian Churches, other communities, religious organizations, African Independent Churches and [African] traditional religions.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Max Stetter in an email message to the author dated 3 August, 2011.

<sup>87</sup> Bishop (later Archbishop) James Odongo was the chairman of AMECEA between 1973 and 1979 when SCCs were established as the key pastoral priority. See Joseph Healey, “A Journey with Archbishop James Odongo: Celebrating Our Living AMECEA History,” *CANA Online Newsletter*, 29 January, 2015, retrieved on 31 January, 2015, <http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php/home/16-latestnews/175ugandan-retired-archbishop-to-celebrate-his-episcopal-golde-jubilee> and the *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, Issue 078 (January 30, 2015), retrieved on 31 January, 2015, [http://amecea.blogspot.com/2015/01/amecea-journey-with-archbishop-james.html?utm\\_source=AMECEA+Joseph+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=92ea633749-AMECEA\\_Online\\_Newsletter\\_6\\_5\\_2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_85fa866553-92ea633749-6746297](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2015/01/amecea-journey-with-archbishop-james.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Joseph+Newsletter&utm_campaign=92ea633749-AMECEA_Online_Newsletter_6_5_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-92ea633749-6746297)

Also as “Celebrating Our Living AMECEA History” in Emeritus Archbishop of Tororo James Odongo, *50 Episcopal Golden Jubilee 1965-2015 – February 21, 2015*, Kampala, Uganda, 2015.

<sup>88</sup> “Guidelines for the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 16, No 1 & 2 (1974), p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

Looking back we see the importance of putting into practice the challenge of Kalilombe. During this 1973 AMECEA Meeting he said that *every* bishop,<sup>91</sup> priest, brother, and sister (and as a corollary, every Catholic) should participate in a particular SCC – not as a leader, but as an ordinary member.<sup>92</sup> This reinforces the key priority that ecclesologically all Catholics (priests, religious and lay people) participate in this new way of being church. Everyone by his or her Baptism is a potential SCC member.<sup>93</sup>

This is rooted in the theology that SCCs are not optional, but are the basic unit/basic cell/basic building block/basic foundation/pillar/most local expression of the Catholic Church. That is why ideally we should greet *all* people as Small Christian Community members. During a SCCs Workshop in Lilongwe, Malawi in December, 2013 we had a lively discussion in which some priests resisted this idea of belonging to one SCC saying that the priest serves all SCCs and show not show favoritism to one particular SCC. But it was pointed out that pastorally this can work easily. For example, a priest can become an ordinary member of the SCC in his specific neighborhood or geographical area (that is, where he is

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<sup>90</sup> Raphael Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki, "Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s," Text of Sound-Slide Show," Nairobi: AMECEA Office, Privately Printed, 16 December, 1973.

<sup>91</sup> It is often said that bishops are too busy, that they have no time to be with the local lay people, but consider this: There are 98 hours in a week (7 x 24). Participating in a one and one-half hour weekly meeting of a SCC as an ordinary member (with no leadership role) is only 1.53 % of the week. This is a unique opportunity for a bishop to visit the homes of African families and share their lives from the inside. Tanzanian Bishop Method Kilaini describes his participation as a simple member of a SCC in St. Peter's Parish in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, Tanzania: "This makes me feel at home in my home surroundings with my neighbors whom I would have otherwise not known. Through them I feel part of the local community. Each week I attend the meetings and participate in all the tasks." In Rita Ishengoma, *Akamwani: The Challenges of Bible Sharing in Small Christian Communities*, Dar es Salaam: Old East Africa Ltd, 2009, p. 7. After moving to Bukoba Diocese Kilaini is a member of his local SCC that consists of the priests and sisters living on the bishop's compound. He says in an email message dated 12 May, 2014: "I love and believe in Small Christian Communities."

<sup>92</sup> See South Sudanese Bishop Paride Taban's "Holy Trinity Peace Village" in Torit Diocese, South Sudan, a communal Christian experiment dedicated to reconciling local peoples across ethnic and religious lines.

<sup>93</sup> St. Monica Parish in Palatka, Florida, USA has an interesting approach. Parishioners who do not participate in a Small Christian Community are invited to be extended members. Each SCC invites, welcomes, prays for and connects with them without any coercion. Shannon Scruby Henderson, "Small Christian Communities: Big Results," *St. Augustine Catholic*, July-August, 2013, retrieved on 30 July, 2013, <http://faithcatholicdigital.com/publication/?i=165210&pre=1>

actually living). He is a member because he is a Christian, not because he is a priest. Then he serves all the SCCs in the parish in his pastoral role as a priest.<sup>94</sup>

Let us remember that the leaders of the SCCs are lay people. This is one reason why SCCs are a new way of being church.<sup>95</sup> Priests, brothers, sisters and seminarians are animators and formators, not bosses. An AMECEA Bishop speaking at a World Synod of Bishops in Rome reminded his brother bishops that priests, brothers and sisters are 1 % of the Catholic Church while laymen and laywomen are 99%. Tanzanian Bishop Christopher Mwoleka of Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania stated: “In today’s world there is a vocation to Small Christian Communities. The laity are the leaders in responding to this call.”<sup>96</sup>

At the October, 1974 World Synod of Bishops IV Ordinary General Assembly *On Evangelization in the Modern World* Tanzanian Bishop James Sangu of Mbeya Diocese, Tanzania (who died in 1998) was a General Relator. He presented the report on the continent of Africa called “Report on the Experiences of the Church in the Work of Evangelization in Africa” that was compiled from the answers to the questions of the *Lineamenta* (the Latin word for “Outlines” – the first document in the process of a meeting such as a synod) from the African National and Regional Episcopal Conferences. Section V on “Communication of Experiences of Evangelization” treats the 12 subjects related to evangelization in the second document, the *Instrumentum Laboris* (the Latin word for “Working Document”), but states: “The order of subjects has been changed to state better the priorities and concerns of evangelization in Africa.”<sup>97</sup>

After No. 1 (“Interior Life”) and ahead of No. 3 (“Liturgical Renewal”) and No. 4 (“Young Churches”), No. 2 on “Small Communities” stated:

The Church in Africa strongly emphasizes the creation of small local Christian communities. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work take place: those basic and manageable social

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<sup>94</sup> A full report, [Malawi Hosts National SCCs Workshop on the Theme “SCCs Embrace the Word of God”](#) is found on the SCCs Website and [MALAWI: ECM Hosts National SCCs Workshop](#) is found on the AMECEA Website. 

<sup>95</sup> Another way of understanding this “newness” is Brazilian Theologian Father José Marins’ valuable distinction that Basic Ecclesial Communities/Small Christian Communities “are not a Movement in the Catholic Church, but the “Church on the Move.”

<sup>96</sup> Christopher Mwoleka in Robert Pelton, *From Power to Communion: Toward a New Way of Being Church Based on the Latin American Experience*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.

<sup>97</sup> James Sangu, “Report on the Experiences of the Church in the Work of Evangelization in Africa,” Fourth Synod of Bishops on “On Evangelization in the Modern World,” in Raymond Hickey (ed.), *Modern Missionary Documents and Africa*, Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1982, p. 215.

groups whose members can experience real inter-personal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working.<sup>98</sup> Christian communities at this level will be best suited to develop real intense vitality and become effective witnesses in their natural environment. In such authentic communities it will be easier to develop a sense of community whereby the church can exist in Christ's Body, consisting of many parts (clergy, religious, laity) with many charisms, but making one Body in one Spirit.<sup>99</sup>

African bishops present at the 1974 Fourth Synod, after examining the specifically African problems related to evangelization, published a famous "Declaration of the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar Present at the Fourth Synod of Bishops on Communion and Co-responsibility in the Church." The section on "Living Christian Communities" stated.

In the spirit of ecclesial communion so clearly proclaimed by Vatican II, the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar emphasize the essential and fundamental role of Living Christian Communities: priests, religious and laity united in mind and action with their Bishop. It is the clear task of these communities, rooted and integrated as they are in the life of their peoples, to search deeper into the Gospel, to set the priorities of pastoral planning and activity, to take the initiative called for by the mission of the Church, to discern, in a spirit of faith where there can be continuity between culture and Christian life and where cleavage is necessary in all aspects of life that hinder the penetration of the Gospel. Every activity in the process of building up our Churches must operate in constant reference to the life of our communities. Starting off from these communities we must bring to our Catholic faith, not only those cultural and artistic experiences which are part of our heritage – real even though as yet modest Africanization – but also a theology which enables us to tackle the challenges arising out of our historical background and the ongoing evolution of our society.

During the synod itself the seven AMECEA Delegates divided the major themes with Kalilombe being responsible for "Basic Christian Communities." Ugandan Archbishop Emmanuel Nsubuga (who died in 1991) of Kampala Archdiocese in Uganda's intervention on "Formation of Christian Communities" stated:

Discussions about Small Christian Communities are going on nearly everywhere, but since the local situation is so different the conclusions show a wide variety. We want to stress in particular that these communities have to learn to be more outward-looking.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> This sentence is quoted directly from the 1973 AMECEA Plenary Meeting. This priority resulted from Sangu being responsible for the "Africa Continental Report" that was prepared by him and his AMECEA advisors in Dar es Salaam in 1974.

<sup>99</sup> James Sangu, "Report," p. 217.

<sup>100</sup> Emmanuel Nsubuga, "Three Archbishops from Africa Elected to Synod of Bishops Council," *AMECEA Information*, 24 October, 1974, p. 1.

At the end of the synod the seven delegates from the AMECEA countries issued eight *Messages to Eastern Africa*. The *Message to Laity* emphasized the catechists' role as "animators of small local communities" and that the responsibility of the laity "to coordinate Small Christian Communities at the grassroots lies on the shoulders of lay councilors in cooperation with the clergy."<sup>101</sup> So already the AMECEA SCC Key Pastoral Priority was beginning to take shape.

In 1974 the Masaka Diocesan Synod in Uganda decided to start SCCs throughout the diocese.

On developments in Tanzania Kilaini reports:

Mwoleka was the first bishop in Tanzania to make the Small Christian Communities the official pastoral priority of his diocese and as the basic means of evangelization. In 1974 he could boldly and proudly be able to tell the Tanzanian bishops of his choice. In fact he already made a governing structure with different functions for members of the SCCs. Much of this was copied by other dioceses and finally by the national directory of Small Christian Communities.<sup>102</sup>

In June, 1975<sup>103</sup> the Tanzania Episcopal Conference passed a resolution to promote SCCs throughout the dioceses. In November, 1975 Mwoleka and the Diocesan Directors of the Lay Apostolate implemented this resolution by developing a step-by-step plan for starting SCCs throughout Tanzania. He coined the saying: "There is no blueprint for building SCCs." SCCs grow, develop, evolve in different ways from below. If SCCs are a new way of being church from the local level up, a certain searching, experimentation and dying and rising will continue as the grassroots tries to evolve this new inculturated model of church and the seed of a new model of society. Mwoleka also stated that in his diocese "the entire pastoral work

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<sup>101</sup> "Messages to Eastern Africa Are Highlight of Synod of Bishops Follow-up," *AMECEA Information*, 13 November, 1974, p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> Method Kilaini, "Small Christian Communities," p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> Ngalula points out the similar development in French-speaking West Africa:

While celebrating the 75th anniversary of the evangelization of Burkina Faso in 1975, the Christians of this country manifested, through a survey made in 1976, their desire to live together in the church structures as a family; so the bishops opted for BCCs, where this spirit of family can really arise. This became an official pastoral option in 1977: to realize, both in the spirit and in the structures of dioceses, the church as family where the members are bound, active and responsible, meeting regularly to meditate and share the Word of God.

Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 6.

will be carried out by means of Small Christian Communities."<sup>104</sup> <sup>105</sup> Over the years this term “pastoral work” has evolved in a wider and more holistic sense to touch all of life including social development and justice and peace priorities.<sup>106</sup>

We have a rich history of SCCs in post-conciliar documents. The World Synod of Bishops took place in Rome in October, 1974 and Venerable Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *On Evangelization in the Modern World* was published in 1975. Section No. 58 on “Base Ecclesial Communities” distinguishes two types of *Communautés Ecclésiales de Base*: those within the structure of the Catholic Church and those outside (where the name is strictly a sociological name). A description of the former is:

In some regions they appear and develop, almost without exception, within the Church, having solidarity with her life, being nourished by her teaching and united with her pastors. In these cases, they spring from the need to live the Church's life more intensely, or from the desire and quest for a more human dimension such as larger ecclesial communities can only offer with difficulty, especially in the big modern cities which lend themselves both to life in the mass and to anonymity. Such communities can quite simply be in their own way an extension on the spiritual and religious level -- worship, deepening of faith, fraternal charity, prayer, contact with pastors -- of the small sociological community such as the village, etc. Or again their aim may be to bring together, for the purpose of listening to and meditating on the Word, for the sacraments and the bond of the agape, groups of people who are linked by age, culture, civil state or social situation: married couples, young people, professional people, etc.; people who already happen to be united in the struggle for justice, brotherly aid to the poor, human advancement. In still other cases they bring Christians together in places where the shortage of priests does not favor the normal life of a parish community. This is all presupposed within communities constituted by the Church, especially individual Churches and parishes.

These BECs are called “a place of evangelization for the benefit of the bigger communities especially the individual churches... a hope for the universal church ...and

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<sup>104</sup> This is documented in *Small Christian Communities in Tanzania*, Sound-slide show of 94 color slides converted into a video, Nairobi: SONOLUX Media, Africa Service, and Maryknoll: VIDCOM, 1978. The description reads: “The life of Christians in a small, rural village in Western Tanzania is a life of sharing in community. The video shows an example of how the pastoral priority of the Catholic bishops of Eastern Africa -- building Small Christian Communities -- is put into practice on the local, grassroots level.”

<sup>105</sup> This priority is emphasized in other parts of Africa. For example, St. Andrew Parish in Rwanda has the motto “Everything in Small Christian Communities.” Each SCC has its own structure, organization and program coordinated through the parish. Christians are brought together through the SCCs.

<sup>106</sup> The life, apostolic activities and vision of Mwoleka are described in John Joseph Rwechungura, *Mjue Askofu Christopher Mwoleka: Mtume wa Upendo Upeo wa Yesu*, Karagwe. Tanzania: Privately Printed, 2012.

proclaimers of the Gospel themselves.” This authoritative voice of the pope and the universal church confirmed the direction that the AMECEA countries were taking in building SCCs.

Another important text that can be applied to SCCs is Venerable Pope Paul VI's challenge in No. 63:

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life.

African SCC members have a unique opportunity to communicate the Word of God to people on the local, grassroots level. This is the heart of inculturation in Africa.

Another challenge is No. 41:

For the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses"... It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus -- the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity.

African SCC members are important witnesses of Jesus Christ and Christian values in their local communities, neighborhoods and parishes.

These ideas were reinforced by St. John Paul II. In his 1979 Apostolic Exhortation *On Catechesis in Our Time* Section 67 on “In the Parish” refers to “more pertinent and effective small communities” (see also the original stronger worded “Proposition”). In his 1988 Apostolic Exhortation on the *Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful* Section No. 26 on “The Parish” states: "So that all parishes may be truly communities of Christians, local ecclesial authorities ought to foster small, basic or so-called 'living' communities, where the faithful can communicate the Word of God and express it in service and love to one another; these communities are a true expression of ecclesial communion and centers of evangelization, in communion with their pastors."<sup>107</sup> In St. John Paul II's 1990 Encyclical Letter *The Mission of the Church* Section No. 51 on “Basic Ecclesial Communities” states that BECs are “a force for evangelization...good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach...a great hope of the church.”

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<sup>107</sup> John Paul II, “On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful” *Christifideles Laici* (Vatican: The Holy See, December 30, 1988), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html)

The AMECEA Study Conference on Building Small Christian Communities” took place in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 1976.<sup>108 109</sup> The key statement was: "Systematic formation of Small Christian Communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come in Eastern Africa."<sup>110</sup> This is the single most important statement made about SCCs.<sup>111</sup> Kalilombe stated that this decision

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<sup>108</sup> At this meeting in July, 1976 President Jomo Kenyatta made the now famous statement: "The Church is the conscience of society, and today a society needs a conscience. Do not be afraid to speak. If we are wrong and you keep quiet, one day you may have to answer for our mistakes." Quoted in the Kenya Bishops *Pastoral Letter* on "Family and Responsible Parenthood," 27 April, 1979 and in Rodrigo Mejia (ed.), *The Conscience of Society*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995, p. 50. At the AMECEA Study Conference in Nairobi, Kenya in June, 2011 President Mwai Kibaki said in a similar way: "I urge all Church leaders to freely speak out their concerns over issues affecting the lives of our people. As spiritual leaders in our society you shoulder the responsibility of pointing the right way forward, correcting us when we go wrong and ensuring that we remain God fearing men and women." *AMECEA News*, No. 44 (August 2011), p. 6. This section of his speech on 29 June, 2011 is also found in the DVD on *AMECEA Family of God: Celebrating a Golden Jubilee of Evangelization in Solidarity*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2011.

<sup>109</sup> It is interesting to note the similarity in time to Portuguese-speaking Africa. The First National Pastoral Assembly took place in Beira, Mozambique from 8-13 September, 1977 (two years after independence from Portugal) on the theme "The Ministerial Church and the Small Christian Communities." The importance of ministries/services in SCCs was emphasized. Mozambique diocesan priest Father Bernardo Suate explained:

The main concerns of this First Assembly were: to move from a triumphant church to a simple and poor one; a Church-Family with freely given reciprocal services; a church well in the heart of the people and well inserted in society; a church that adopts the SCCs to allow creativity and responsibility of all the People of God in building the Local Church; and a Ministerial Church where each member takes his or her responsibility in the church understood as a community of servants (from the "Conclusions").

A follow-up took place at the Second National Pastoral Assembly from 1-11 January, 1992 in Matola, Maputo on "Consolidating the Local Church" especially through formation starting in the SCCs. Suate explains: "The model of the SCCs was once more adopted as well as the one of a Ministerial Church, a church that is communion and family with active participation of each one of its members (from the "Conclusions").

See Bernardo Suate, email message to the author dated 9 May, 2014.

Mozambique is one of the nine countries in Southern Africa that belongs to Inter-Regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) with headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe. It includes six episcopal conferences.

<sup>110</sup> AMECEA Study Conference on "Building Small Christian Communities," "Conclusions," *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, 18, 5 (October, 1976), p. 250.

<sup>111</sup> In SCCs Courses and Workshops today one or more classes is devoted to: "The AMECEA Key Pastoral Priority of Building Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa." For

is a basic commitment, a serious shift in pastoral emphasis. It is deliberately intended to modify deeply our pastoral system, policy, and practice...We need to adopt a new system, where the basic units of the church are those smaller communities where the ordinary life of the people takes place. If we want the church to live and function actually as a community, then we must go down to that smaller level at which people live and interact in their daily lives. It is in these smaller communities that the church can express itself in a meaningful Christian communion. Such a basic community would be the only realistic base for the church's existence and effectiveness. Here is where the church can exist in an authentic communion. The wider dimensions of the church are not one community, but a communion of communities. The parish is a communion of basic communities within the parish area.<sup>112</sup>

Thus Kalilombe emphasized that the setting up of Small Christian Communities formed a “decisive turning point”<sup>113</sup> in the pastoral strategy of Eastern Africa. This renewal of pastoral method and structure was a logical consequence of a whole trend in pastoral thinking, planning and experimentation. This renewal understood profoundly the difference between breaking the Catholic Church *down* into small communities and building the church *up* out of small communities. There is a pastoral power in building up the church *up* out of SCCs.

The meeting went on to affirm the essential ecclesial character and characteristics of Small Christian Communities by stating: “The [Small] Christian Communities we are trying to build are simply the most local incarnations of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

The Catholic bishops in Eastern Africa chose this SCC key pastoral priority as the best way to build up the Local Churches to be truly self-ministering (self-governing), self-propagating (self-spreading), and self-supporting (self-reliant and self-sustainable). The three selfs are essential characteristics of SCCs as the base/basic level of the church, and by extension, of the Local Church. This is a real self-actualization of the church. The family, the SCC, the outstation, the subparish, the parish, the deanery and the diocese reflect a “Communion of Communities Model of Church” starting from below, from the grassroots.

An important challenge was for the bishops themselves to take “ownership” of this pastoral priority and to make it their very own – not only to support it intellectually (from

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example, see: Annotated Syllabus of Two Credit Course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today,” Nairobi: Hekima College and Tangaza University College, 2013.

<sup>112</sup> Patrick Kalilombe, "An Overall Review of Building Small Christian Communities," 1976 AMECEA Study Conference, pp. 266-67. For a further explanation of this pastoral shift see Patrick Kalilombe, *From Outstation to Small Christian Communities: A Comparison of Two Pastoral Methods in Lilongwe Diocese*, Berkeley: University of California Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, 1983. An abridged version appears as *From Outstation to Small Christian Communities*, *Spearhead* Nos. 82-85 (June--October, 1984).

<sup>113</sup> Patrick Kalilombe, *ibid.* p. 266.

their head), but to internalize it so that it comes from their pastoral heart and is the source of their pastoral planning. In his "Introduction" to the Plenary Conclusions McCauley stated:

The fruit of the Study Conference, it was generally agreed, was the clarification of ideas and the deepening of convictions that the building of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa is a practical policy, and in the case of primary evangelization, a necessity. The participants pledged themselves to work for the conference's aims and spirit among their associates in their home areas.<sup>114</sup>

During this meeting the word "small"<sup>115</sup> was specifically chosen to avoid certain undertones of the word "basic." Ndingi stated that to call our grassroots communities "small" instead of "basic" is another indication that the movement in Africa was growing on its own, quite independent of what was happening along the same lines in other places such as Latin America.<sup>116</sup>

Blomjous was an influential observer at this meeting. Magesa points out:

Blomjous remarked that "the growing awareness of the presence of Christ and of the Spirit in an authentic community" among the bishops was an encouraging sign. Blomjous concurred with the assertion that the AMECEA bishops themselves had made in 1973 concerning the ecclesiological requirement for the growth of a healthy and mature church, that of "basing the life of the church on Small Christian Communities..." He proposed again that SCCs be made into an integral dimension of the vision and structure of the church in the region.<sup>117</sup>

During this time some theologians in Eastern Africa especially the staff of the AMECEA Pastoral Institute in Gaba, Kampala in Uganda were articulating how SCCs are the groundwork for the structure of the whole church. In the "Theology and the Church" section

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<sup>114</sup> Vincent McCauley, "Introduction," 1976 AMECEA Study Conference.

<sup>115</sup> Years later Pius Rutechura said: "Why do we say **SMALL** Christian Communities? Because *small* is beautiful, *small* is visible, *small* makes you feel like you belong."

<sup>116</sup> Raphael Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki, "Basic Communities: the African Experience" in *A New Missionary Era*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982, p. 100. Jay Carney points out: "It should be noted that AMECEA intentionally adopted the term 'Small Christian Communities' in 1976 to distinguish the African movement from its Latin American cousin." J. J. Carney, "The People Bonded Together by Love: Eucharistic Ecclesiology and Small Christian Communities in Africa," *Modern Theology* 30: 2, April, 2014, p. 303. Academia Website, retrieved 10 June, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/8361392/The\\_People\\_Bonded\\_Together\\_by\\_Love\\_Eucharistic\\_Ecclesiology\\_and\\_Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_in\\_Africa](https://www.academia.edu/8361392/The_People_Bonded_Together_by_Love_Eucharistic_Ecclesiology_and_Small_Christian_Communities_in_Africa)

<sup>117</sup> Based on Laurenti Magesa, "The Church in Eastern Africa: Retrospect and Prospect" in, Agatha Radoli (ed.), *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* 126-128, 1993. p. 6.

of the book *The Community Called Church* the chapter on SCCs is significantly entitled "The Small Christian Community as Basic Cell of the Church." The book explains "how the policy of building small communities as the most local cells of the church is solidly based on a vision of the church that is both new and old."<sup>118</sup> The pastoral institute modified its nine month residence course at Gaba to include the theory and practice of SCCs.

Kalilombe explained further:

The SCC is the smallest cell of the Church through which the Universal Church lives and breathes. It is the incarnation of the Church of the New Testament at the most basic level of people's lives. Through the SCCs, the Church, like Christ, becomes incarnated in the life of the people. She is led by the local people, meets and answers local needs and problems, and finds within herself resources needed for her life. This must be our goal if the SCCs in our parishes are to be dynamic, vibrant, self-reliant and self-ministering.<sup>119</sup>

American theologian Maryknoll Father Michael Kirwen, MM stresses the importance of one's theology of church. The SCC only becomes vital and the nucleus if the theology of church operative in the parish sees it as the foundation of the church, the basic building block of the church, the "little church." Otherwise the SCC is just another traditional society, apostolic group or parish organization like the Legion of Mary. I think most pastors still in fact deal with and conceptualize the SCC as a club, even though they might give a verbal acknowledgement of their building block nature.<sup>120</sup> Another distinction is that these traditional societies, apostolic groups and parish organizations have their own special charisms in the church while SCCs are part of the very nature of the church.

The well-known Brazilian theologian Father José Marins states: "The BCC is the whole church in a concentrated form. Or to put it another way, it is a germ or a seed which has within itself all the essential elements of the Church of Jesus." Marins also points out that one of the main differences between SCCs and traditional societies/apostolic groups/parish organizations/movements is that the former inculturate from the bottom up (emerge and evolve according to local situations and needs), while the latter normally follow a universal plan from the top down, for example, the *International Constitution* of the Legion of Mary that is applied everywhere.

O'Halloran adds:

There is a helpful analogy regarding the small community possessing all the characteristics of the universal church. In a loaf of bread we find a variety of ingredients: flour, salt, water, yeast. Now if we break off a tiny piece, we find the same ingredients in the piece as in the entire loaf. Just so the

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<sup>118</sup> *The Community Called Church*. Volume 5 of an Experimental Source-book for Religious Education, *Spearhead* No. 60 (December, 1979), p. ii.

<sup>119</sup> Patrick Kalilombe, "Biblical Background of Christian Communities," *AFER*, 1976, p. 12.

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<sup>120</sup> Michael Kirwen in an interview with the author in Nairobi in September, 1983.

Small Christian Community has all the ingredients – characteristics – of the universal church.<sup>121</sup>

Claver's comment about the Philippines fits the Eastern Africa situation:

The hardest obstacle to overcome concerned the nature of BECs. Repeatedly it had to be said that it is not just another movement like the Cursillo or the Charismatic. Nor was it just another movement like the Knights of Columbus or the Catholic Women's League and hence in competition with these more established bodies. It had to be clearly shown it *is* church itself, the exemplar of a church of communion at the lowest levels of the church. And because it is such, members of any movement or organization must themselves belong to BECs, and help advance them with whatever special contribution to its life that their movement or organization can provide.<sup>122</sup>

Tanzanian theologian Father Laurenti Magesa sums up this theological analysis by saying:

But what is the difference between SCCs and other sociological groupings in the [AMECEA] Region and in the world, even if these latter also espouse joy, justice, reconciliation and peace as their goal? The theological core of SCCs has to do with this question. The issue revolves around what values the different types of communities are based on. This determines their quality and status in the eyes of the church. Mere sociological groupings with this orientation are important and must be encouraged by the church, but they do not hold the same theological implications as SCCs.

SCCs are groupings of a drastically different, much deeper order: they are formed not only to achieve a goal, whatever that may be, but theologically *they are themselves the goal*. This is because they are the church; they constitute the root from which the wider church emerges. Without them the broader, or "catholic," church cannot be realized in the manner that Pope Francis describes it in his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*. At least, it cannot endure. Authentic love, joy, peace, justice, and the common good as illustrated in the Gospels grow as a result of *communion*, the theological element that is the essence of SCCs. SCCs are therefore not only "communities" in the usual sense of the word. Each is a communion analogous to a body of Christ that St. Paul elaborates on (1 *Corinthians* 12). Although there are other analogies of church, such as People of God or Family of God, this image of body is still unsurpassable to describe the reality, nature, and even organization of the church.

Any genuine SCC should be the incarnation of the universal church. The characteristics, qualities and functions or ministries of the church catholic

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<sup>121</sup> James O'Halloran, *Small Christian Communities*, p. **ADD**

<sup>122</sup> Claver, *Making*, p. 103.

must be incorporated in it at the same time as the church catholic reflects the characteristics, qualities, and functions found in SCCs. Arising out of the spirit of SCCs, the universal church becomes also a communion, a body with different parts and different functions, but each in harmony with the rest of the others and respectful of them.<sup>123</sup>

This Small Christian Community Model of Church is based on the church as communion (*koinonia*). In terms of contemporary theology this is part of Trinitarian Communion Ecclesiology and a “communion of communities” ecclesiology. There is an African saying *If God lives as a community, we must do the same*. SCC members are called to a life of sharing modeled on the Trinity. This communion also fits into the idea of the World or Global Church mentioned earlier. Starting from the bottom up:

- a SCC is a communion of families.<sup>124 125</sup>
- an outstation (also called a chapel, prayer house, outchurch and sub-center) is a communion of SCCs.
- a subparish (also called a Sunday Mass Center) is a communion of outstations.
- a parish is a communion of subparishes.
- a deanery is a communion of parishes.
- a diocese is a communion of deaneries.
- a metropolitan (ecclesiastical province of one archdiocese and suffragan dioceses) is a communion of dioceses.
- a country (for example, the national bishops' conference) is a communion of dioceses and archdioceses.
- A regional bishops' conference (such as AMECEA) is a communion of national bishops' conferences.
- A continental bishops' conference (such as SECAM) is a communion of regional bishops' conferences.
- the World Church or Global Church is a communion of national and continental bishops' conferences.

Important new ideas and initiatives need a voice, a forum, a literature. Over the next two decades especially, the growth of SCCs was documented and fostered by many articles

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<sup>123</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “The Joy of Community in Small Christian Communities,” *New People*, No. 149, March-April, 2014, pp. 22, 24.

<sup>124</sup> Below the parish level Vatican documents and Pope Francis himself use the term “family communities” that can be understood in different senses including SCCs.

<sup>125</sup> “Catholic Women Association (CWA), they all agree, is an organization whose main objective is to empower and give a voice to all Catholic women...While women benefit principally, the whole family benefits eventually. When women are empowered, their husbands get the benefit of partnering with a wife who is aware of her responsibilities and does them with joy. The children also benefit by having responsible mothers who can bring them up well. When such an empowered family gets to the Small Christian Community, the church is powerfully built.” Archdiocese of Nairobi Website, retrieved on 4 September, 2014,  
<http://www.archdioceseofnairobi.or.ke/index.php?where=articles&category=About%20Main>

and reports in the *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, *AMECEA Documentation Service (ADS)*, *AMECEA Information*, the *Spearhead Series* (formerly *Gaba Pastoral Papers*) of monographs, *Service* and other publications and communications media. There was a constant description of, and commentary on, the Small Christian Communities. Between 1973 and 1983, for example, 48 bulletins about SCCs were published by the *AMECEA Documentation Service*. A good summary of the 1970s period is found in the section “Towards Small Christian Communities” in the chapter on “Structural Localization” in Dutch missionary and historian Father Albert De Jong, CSSp’s book *The Challenge of Vatican II in East Africa*.

At the 1977 Synod in Rome on “Catechesis in Our Time” most of the interventions made by the African bishops revolved around the experience of the Small Christian Communities and their importance in catechetical formation of new converts and seasoned Christians.<sup>126</sup>

1978 saw the birth of *Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing* at the Lumko Missiological Institute in South Africa. Excellent SCC training manuals were published that popularized the Lumko “Seven Steps” Method of *Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing*. German Fidei Donum Bishop Oswald Hirmer (who died in 2011) states:

The Seven Steps were developed by the Lumko Pastoral Institute in South Africa and have spread all over the world. They constitute a kind of “agenda” for Small Christian Communities as they bring Christ into the center and encourage active participation in the mission of the church in the neighborhood.<sup>127</sup>

Altogether there are eight Gospel sharing methods that can be adapted to the local context and situation. These excellent training manuals have been used throughout the AMECEA Region. Lumko Courses have been conducted in Eastern African countries annually from 1992 to the present.<sup>128</sup> The facilitators of these courses are Kenyan Loreto Sister Ephigenia Gachiri, IBVM based in Nairobi and Ugandan layman Mr. Joseph Wasswa based in Busia Parish, Tororo Archdiocese, Uganda who are both passionate about the “Lumko Way of Being Church.” Wasswa is catechist who coordinates six outstations in his parish following the “Lumko Model of Church.”

Gachiri gives the example of the Italian Consolata priest Father Thomas Babero, IMC who after completing the Lumko Course for seven years animated SCCs in Kahawa West

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<sup>126</sup> The bishops’ interventions appear in the entire issue of “The African Bishops Speak,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (February, 1978).

<sup>127</sup> Oswald Hirmer, *Our Joy in Being Catholic: Our Catholic Customs and Beliefs*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2007, p. 87.

<sup>128</sup> See the “2013 Lumko East Africa Workshop Report” at Tabor Hill Spiritual Center, Nyahururu, Kenya from 9 September to 5 October 2013 by Kenyan diocesan priest Joseph Odongo at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/lumko.pdf>

Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese. He said it would take nine years to implement fully the Lumko Way of Being Church.<sup>129</sup>

It is disappointing that these training manuals have not been revised and updated with contemporary examples, stories and references to newer church documents such as the two African Synods.<sup>130</sup> There are serious gaps in the content. Our evaluation indicates that new SCC manuals should be written on (alphabetically): Addiction, Ecology/Environment, Family, Human Trafficking, Marriage, Social Media and Youth/Adolescence.

A challenge to dioceses in the AMECEA Region came from Blomfontein Archdiocese in South Africa that went a step further in the pastoral planning and coordination that emphasizes SCCs by establishing this guideline: "If the pastor in a parish with active SCCs is transferred, there is an archdiocesan policy that his successor should also be committed to SCCs."<sup>131</sup>

The AMECEA Study Conference on "The Implementation of the AMECEA Bishops' Pastoral Priority of Building Small Christian Communities: An Evaluation"<sup>132</sup> took place in Zomba, Malawi in 1979.<sup>133</sup> There were case studies of "Christian Communities in Mbarara

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<sup>129</sup> Ephigenia Gachiri conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 5 March, 2015.

<sup>130</sup> After years of discernment and study "the August 2013 Plenary Assembly of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference resolved to 'park' [put on hold/suspend/stop] the Lumko Pastoral Institute for about two years. The process has begun to ensure that the operations of the Institute cease in December, 2013. However, the conference center will continue to operate. All are encouraged to make use of this facility for retreats, conferences, workshops." See the Newsletter of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference *eKhanya*, Vol. 4: 6 (September, 2013). This decision has already seen negative effects. One commentator writes: "SCCs are fewer than twenty years ago, but they still exist. There is no longer a central place from where they are promoted and developed since Lumko has stopped working."

<sup>131</sup> One comment heard from lay people is, "We are the victims of the next parish priest that comes along." A similar comment: "We lay people are held hostage by the priorities of the next pastor." Practically this means that in the hierarchical-style of Catholic Church, a parish can have an effective pastoral plan of active SCCs, but a new pastor can come in and change this overnight.

<sup>132</sup> Ghanaian Scripture scholar and Missionary of Africa Father Richard Baawobr, MAfr points out: "It might be good to establish five year plans with one or two points to implement during a definite period, with tools and formation in that line. The way you [AMECEA] promoted the Small Christian Communities in the 70s shows that when there is focus and a common drive, things move forward." "AMECEA Golden Jubilee Celebration 2011: Congratulatory Message of the Missionaries of Africa," *AMECEA 50 Years of Evangelization in Solidarity: 1961 -- 2011*. Nairobi: AMECEA Secretariat, 2011, p.112.

<sup>133</sup> During a visit to Mombasa Archdiocese in August, 2011 I learned an interesting footnote in SCC history. Kenyan Father Ernest Mutua, one of the founders of SCCs in the archdiocese, explained that when Kenyan Bishop (later Archbishop) Nicodemus Kirima (who died in 2007) was appointed as Bishop of Mombasa in 1978 he was initially against SCCs. He saw them as an offshoot of Protestant sects in Kenya. But then he went to the 1979 AMECEA

Diocese, Uganda” by Ugandan Bishop John Kakubi, “Small Christian Communities in Kigoma Diocese, Tanzania” by Tanzanian Bishop Alphonse Nsabi and “Community Building in an Urban Area in Zambia” by Zambian Bishop Dennis de Jong. The plenary said:

Small Christian Communities are the means by which the church is brought down to the daily life and concerns of the people to where they actually live. In them the church takes on flesh and blood in life-situations of people. In them people are enabled to recognize the mystery of Christ among them.<sup>134</sup>

The meeting emphasized that SCCs are the neighborhood church that is the embodiment of the One, Holy and Catholic and Apostolic Church and are the best way to renew the church and said: “Structurally the Small Christian Community is the most local unit of the Church...of its very nature it (the family) has to reach out to other families, and the Small Christian Community is made up of several family groups.” So the AMECEA Bishops actually went beyond the theology accepted by the Second Vatican Council.

Then the delegates clarified exactly what these SCCs were not:

The Small Christian Communities should not be understood as a fringe group, nor a group for a few elite people,<sup>135</sup> nor a group formed for a particular purpose, such as a prayer group, a sodality, a Catholic Action group, a development group, a study group, though these are legitimate and valuable: it is precisely the means by which the one Church is present in each locality, touching the whole life of its members.

One pastoral resolution stated: “SCCs are an effective way of developing the mission dimension of the church at the most local level, and of making people feel that they are really part of the church's evangelizing work.”

With SCCs highlighted and emphasized in three consecutive AMECEA Plenary Meetings the focus in the decade of the 1980s was on the implementation of SCCs as the key pastoral priority in the AMECEA Region. The results were uneven. Some dioceses and

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meeting in Malawi and met and talked with dedicated animators of SCCs such as Mwoleka. Kirima was converted and came back and began to support SCCs starting in his diocese in 1979. This is a good testimony of the learning process that takes place during AMECEA meetings. Ernest Matua in a conversation with the author on 24 August, 2011.

In a subsequent conversation with the now Kenyan Archbishop Martin Kivuva of Mombasa Archdiocese, he explained that in 1979 Father Matua started SCCs in St. Anne Parish, Mgange Nyika in Taita and the then Father Kivuva started SCCs in Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Kongowea. Martin Kivuva in a conversation with the author on 29 August, 2012.

<sup>134</sup> AMECEA, Conclusions of the Study Conference of the AMECEA Plenary 1979: *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 21 (1979), p. 266.

<sup>135</sup> The leading CEB theologian in Latin America, José Marins, warns against elitism in SCCs, that is, SCCs members feel they are superior and better than the other Catholics in the parish.

countries forged ahead. Others lagged behind. The reasons included church-centered reasons such as the reality that some bishops promoted SCCs, others did not and vast amounts of time, energy and money were devoted to various church events such as papal visits to Eastern Africa, jubilees and anniversary celebrations. Other reasons were political, social and economic such as ongoing civil wars and internal unrest in the region and widespread poverty.

A “Consultation on Methods of Research to Find Out How the Bible is Being Used in Small Christian Communities in Africa” took place in Karen, Nairobi, Kenya in January, 1989. **CHECK**

In 1990 English Bishop James Holmes-Siedle, MAfr (who died in 1995) who spent many years animating SCCs in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda was commissioned to do an evaluation of SCCs in the AMECEA Region that was published as “A Look at 17 Years of SCCs in Eastern Africa.”<sup>136</sup> He recommended the introduction of mobile training teams to organize workshops and seminars on SCCs as was being done in Malawi.

The AMECEA Study Conference on “Evangelization with its Central Issues: Inculturation, Small Christian Communities and Priestly, Religious and Christian Formation” in Lusaka, Zambia in 1992 focused on an “Evaluation of AMECEA.” The research findings identified four AMECEA priorities that included “Promotion of SCCs” and recommended in-service training for animators of SCCs. This conference reiterated the SCC pastoral commitment by stating: “So we repeat that SCCs are not optional<sup>137</sup> in our churches; they are central to the life of faith and the ministry of evangelization.”

A major step was the First African Synod<sup>138</sup> in Rome in April, 1994 on the theme “The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission to the Year 2000” with five main topics: “Proclamation of the Good News of Salvation”, “Inculturation,” “Dialog”, “Justice and Peace” and the “Means of Social Communications.” Irish theologian Father Cecil McGarry, SJ (who died in 2009) emphasizes

the growing centrality of Small Christian Communities in the minds of the [synod] fathers and in the documents of the synod. As was seen, they only featured in passing in the Outline [*Lineamenta*]. By the end of the synod they were understood to be essential if the synod is to take root in the Local Churches and thus be effective and produce fruit.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> James Holmes-Siedle, “A Look at 17 Years of SCCs in Eastern Africa,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 32, No. 6 (December, 1990), pp. 359-362.

<sup>137</sup> The English word “option” (or “optional”) is easily misunderstood and is often used in a pastoral context as one choice among many, that is, not obligatory or necessary. If used to describe SCCs, the better meaning or expression is “preferential option.”

<sup>138</sup> The full official title is the “First Special Assembly of the Synod of African Bishops.”

<sup>139</sup> Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened at the African Synod?*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995, p. 146.

Of the 211 interventions during the first two weeks of the First African Synod, there were 29 interventions on SCCs (the fourth highest number after the topics of justice, inculturation and laity). Bishops from the AMECEA countries were in the forefront in making these interventions. Tanzanian Archbishop Anthony Mayala (who died in 2009) of Mwanza Archdiocese, Tanzania said that "Small Christian Communities seem to be the best way for us of being a church in our African countries."<sup>140</sup> Kenyan Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth of Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya said that "Small Christian Communities help implement the ecclesiology of communion... It is of paramount importance that the Synod on Africa recommends the establishment of Small Christian Communities in the parishes, so that the new model of the parish for the year 2000 will be the one of a community of communities."<sup>141</sup>

Regarding the "Ecclesiology of the Church-as-Family" the *Final Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God* in Section 28 on "The Church-as-Family and Small Christian Communities" states: "The Church, the Family of God, implies the creation of small communities at the human level, living or basic ecclesial communities... These individual Churches-as-Families have the task of working to transform society." This is an inculturated African ecclesiology.

1995 saw the publication and promulgation of St. John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa* in Yaounde, Cameroon, Johannesburg, South Africa and in Nairobi, Kenya between 14-20 September, 1995. Numbers 23 and 89 treat SCCs:

Number 23 under "The Family of God in the Synodal Process:" "If this Synod is prepared well, it will be able to involve all levels of the Christian Community: individuals, small communities, parishes, Dioceses, and local, national and international bodies."

Number 89 under "Living (or Vital) Christian Communities:" "Right from the beginning, the Synod Fathers recognized that the Church as Family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships. The Assembly described the characteristics of such communities as follows: primarily they should be places engaged in evangelizing themselves, so that subsequently they can bring the Good News to others; they should moreover be communities which pray and listen to God's Word, encourage the members themselves to take on responsibility, learn to live an ecclesial life, and reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel.<sup>142</sup> 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."

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<sup>140</sup> Anthony Mayala, "Ninth General Congregation," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 18, 1339 (May 4, 1994), p. 10.

<sup>141</sup> Zacchaeus Okoth, "Eighth General Congregation," *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6. Afrika World Website, retrieved on 24 August, 2012, <http://www.afrikaworld.net/synod/okoth.htm>

<sup>142</sup> Another wording is: "To look at the reality of life around us in the LIGHT OF CHRIST through the reading of the *Bible*." "SCCs Prayer Card," Queen of Peace Parish South B, Nairobi, Kenya.

Democratic Republic of the Congo theologian François Kabasele Lumbala points out:

The conception of the church as Family of God has its roots deep in Holy Scripture, but it also has anthropological roots in African and Malagasy cultures. This does not push aside the conciliar idea of the church as People of God, but it does emphasize the reality of the family for the African continent as the place where models of ecclesial experience lived out in Africa emerge... This church is lived out at its base as a domestic church, and is given different names: Christian Base Communities, Living Ecclesial Communities, Small Christian Base Communities.<sup>143</sup>

### COMMENTARY:

English theologian Philip Knights comments:

Certainly the idea of Basic Ecclesial Communities as the foundational unit of ecclesiology in the Church-as-Family is not promoted... *Ecclesia in Africa* acknowledges SCCs but dilutes somewhat the "Message of the Synod." No. 21. It does not present the SCCs as a "new way of being Church" or give them a prominent place in discussions. ... The Synod has encouraged debate on the meaning of Church as Family. In these, and other areas, the African Church should seize the moment. The ball is now in the court of the people of Africa: theologians and others may help, but the lasting consequences of the synod now must take place amongst the people, and perhaps particularly amongst the Small Christian Communities.<sup>144</sup>

SCCs became an important part of the *National Plans for the Implementation of the African Synod* in the AMECEA countries. *The African Synod Comes Home -- A Simplified Text* (Pauline Publications Africa, 1995) and other post-synodal documents stressed the importance of SCCs in the follow-up<sup>145</sup> and implementation of the recommendations of the First African Synod. This included developing SCCs as a concrete expression of, and realization of, the Church-as-Family Model of Church. This SCC Pastoral Priority was clear in Ndola Diocese, Zambia. The *Ndola Diocesan Guidelines* states: "We share in the universal Church's mission... This is achieved through the establishment of active and fully involved Small Christian Communities."

A key turning point for the growth of SCCs in Tanzania was promoting a model of church from the bottom up. "The implementation of the new *Constitution of the National Lay Council* in 1998 required that the election of lay leaders in parishes throughout Tanzania start at the level of SCCs and move upwards. This insured that the Parish Council and Parish

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<sup>143</sup> François Kabasele Lumbala, "The Church as Family in Africa," *Concilium* 1995/4, p. 93.

<sup>144</sup> Philip Knights, "The African Synod in Rome, 1994: Consequences for Catholicism Consequences for Catholicism," Talk at the Henry Martyn Seminar on 20 May 1999, retrieved on 11 November, 2015 <http://www.afrikaworld.net/synod/knights.htm>

<sup>145</sup> A more accurate word is "follow-down" because the natural process is to get the recommendations down (that is, carried out) to the local, grassroots level.

Pastoral Council<sup>146</sup> leaders would be chosen from those who were already leaders in their SCCs – thus true representation from below. Such decisions gave full confidence to the faithful and opened new possibilities for the laity in the Local Church.”<sup>147</sup> This can also be seen in diocesan synods on the local level. The booklet for the Synod of Mwanza Archdiocese in Tanzania in 2002 contains 105 references to *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo* (JNNK), the Swahili expression for SCCs.

The year 2000 witnessed the active involvement of SCCs in the Jubilee Year. In Tanzania and other countries the Jubilee Cross was carried from SCC to SCC and then from home to home within a SCC. There were other related pastoral and liturgical activities spearheaded by choirs in the SCCs.

Next was the AMECEA Study Conference on “Deeper Evangelization in the Third Millennium” in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2002.”<sup>148</sup> Section 7 of the Pastoral Resolutions is 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 program on the theological and pastoral value of Small Christian Communities be included in the normal curriculum<sup>149</sup> of the Major Seminaries and houses of formation of both men and women.”

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<sup>146</sup> Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) is a popular term used to emphasize that the council should have a pastoral focus. See the *1983 Code of Canon Law*, No. 536: “A pastoral council is to be established in each parish, over which the pastor presides and in which the Christian faithful, together with those who share in pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish, assist in fostering pastoral activity.” This council can have commissions on faith formation, finance, liturgy, etc. More and more of these PPCs in Eastern Africa include official representatives of SCCs.

<sup>147</sup> Christopher Cieslikiewicz, “Pastoral Involvement of Parish-based SCCs in Dar es Salaam,” in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 and Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, pp. 99-105.

<sup>148</sup> The colorful blue *khanga* commemorating the meeting has a map of the AMECEA countries and a drawing of a group of Christians (men, women and children) sitting around a table with a *Bible* in the middle with the words:

AMECEA – *Mzazi wa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo. Karibu Tanzania 2002.*

AMECEA – Parent of Small Christian Communities. Welcome to Tanzania 2002.

AMECEA Celebrations 40<sup>th</sup> Welcome to Tanzania 40<sup>th</sup>

A *khanga* is a rectangle of pure cotton cloth with a border all around it and printed in bold designs and bright colors.

<sup>149</sup> A variety of SCCs courses and workshops are offered in the major seminaries, theological institutes, universities and houses of formation of both men and women in the AMECEA Region. The most recent example is the Salesian Major Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya that started a required course on SCCs in the combined Second Year/Third of Theology in August, 2011. In an interview with the author on 17 May, 2011 Tanzanian theologian Father Laurenti Magesa emphasized that if SCCs have been a key pastoral priority (not just an

This and other recommendations were made in the context of a document on the vision of the association: *AMECEA 2002: A Holy Spirit Filled Family of God Committed to Holistic Evangelization and Integral Development.*"

December, 2002 marked the publication of *The Church We Want to Be: Elements for a Common Vision of the Pastoral Action of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia* – a Pastoral Letter of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia. No 31 states:

The Church we want to be is a church distributed in **parishes that are a communion of communities**. A church determined to evaluate and revitalize its religious associations and lay movements and open to the new ways of building up Christian communities at a human size in the line of the AMECEA pastoral priority.

The AMECEA Study Conference in Mukono, Uganda in 2005 on "Responding to the Challenges of HIV/AIDS within the AMECEA Region" has one pastoral resolution that emphasizes: "Active involvement of SCCs in reaching out to people with HIV/AIDS. SCC members as caregivers, counselors, etc." This can be extended to SCC members reaching out to refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), people traumatized by civil war, violence and tribalism/ethnicity, street children, sick people, bereaved people and other needy people.<sup>150</sup>

The pattern is clear. As AMECEA meetings were held every three years in different countries in Eastern Africa, the importance of SCCs was emphasized again and again. There has been an on-going momentum for continuing this SCC pastoral priority – a kind of march through AMECEA's 54 year history. Holmes-Siedle's evaluation of SCCs in the AMECEA Region after 17 years, the AMECEA Pastoral Department's survey after 20 years<sup>151</sup> and Colombian Bishop Rodrigo Mejia, SJ, the retired bishop of the Soddo Apostolic Vicariate, Ethiopia's evaluation after 26 years set the stage for this present evaluation that now officially covers 42 years (1973-2015).

Many events were happening in individual AMECEA countries. To promote the AMECEA Pastoral Priority of SCCs and to focus on on-going spiritual and pastoral formation a "Year of Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" was celebrated in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, Tanzania in 2006-2007. Later this was extended to a "National Year of Small

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option) in the AMECEA Region since 1976 they should have more prominence in the curriculum of seminaries and theological institutes.

<sup>150</sup> Nigerian theologian Father Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, SJ documents the SCCs' outreach to people with HIV/AIDS and to refugees 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. 86-179.

<sup>151</sup> Rereading this survey after 20 years in 2015 one notes this insightful comment: "With all this labor and through many ups and downs. SCCs have become part and parcel of the [Catholic] Church's landscape in Eastern Africa." AMECEA Pastoral Department, "Small Christian Communities 20 Years Later: Insights from an AMECEA Survey and Workshop on Small Christian Communities," *AMECEA Documentation Service (ADS) 10-11/No. 472/1997 (June/July, 1997)*, p. 1.

Christian Communities (SCCs)" for the whole of Tanzania. Some parishes had their own "Year of Small Christian Communities."

Annual campaigns such as the Kenya Lenten Campaign focused more and more on the involvement of SCCs in justice and peace issues on the local level. Thousands of booklets in both English and Swahili are used in the weekly SCC meetings in Kenya during the five weeks of Lent. The "See," "Judge" and "Act" process draws on the experience of SCCs on justice and peace related themes. The questions and proposed action steps directly involve SCCs.

In 2008 the AMECEA Office in Nairobi conducted a survey on how Catholic Major Seminaries and Institutes of Theology in the nine 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.

The survey shows most of the seminaries and institutes in Eastern Africa do not have a specific course on SCCs. But the importance of Small Christian Communities is taught in a variety of courses including Bible, Church History, Ecclesiology and Pastoral (Practical) Theology. 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 workshops and seminars on SCCs. A new development is seen in the context of SCCs being an official pastoral structure in the parish and diocese.<sup>152</sup> SCCs are treated in some of the new courses such as "Church Management and Administration," "The Internal Ordering on Parishes (Parish Structures)" "Parish Administration," "Introduction to Pastoral Communication,"<sup>153</sup> "Pastoral Ministry and Management," "Pastoral Planning and Organization" and "Social Media/New Media"<sup>154</sup> in Pastoral Work and Evangelization." These are being offered as both Electives, Seminars and Short Courses.

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<sup>152</sup> Fritz Lobinger, in commenting on the World Church, and particularly the Global South, states: "The priestless communities of the South have already developed a ministry structure of their own. We just have to build on it." Letter to the author dated 28 September, 2013.

<sup>153</sup> The importance of parish-based SCCs was treated in this course at Tangaza University College, Nairobi in 2014 and was part of the exam question: "Imagine a parish setting and discuss how the media may be used more effectively in Pastoral Ministry."

<sup>154</sup> "New media" is more generic. "New media" refers to on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, and creative participation. Most technologies described as "new media" are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, and interactive. Some examples may be the internet, websites, computer multimedia, video games, CD-ROMS, and DVDs. "New media" does not include television programs, feature films, magazines, books, or paper-based publications – unless they contain technologies that enable digital interactivity. "Social media" is the interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. "Social media" technologies take on many different forms including magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Technologies include blogging, picture-sharing, vlogs, wall-posting, music-sharing, crowdsourcing and voice over IP, to name a few. Social network aggregation can integrate many of the platforms in use. Examples are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. The boundaries between the different types have become

The AMECEA Study Conference in Lusaka, Zambia in 2008 was on "Reconciliation through Justice and Peace." It was the 16<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly. The role and mission of Small Christian Communities is seen in Action Plan A4: "Revisiting the Small Christian Communities Pastoral Option as a means of responding to the ministry of reconciliation through justice and peace. The theology of the Church Family of God must be further explored in view of enhancing reconciliation and peace building."

The AMECEA Synod Delegates Workshop in Nairobi in March, 2009 reflected on the responses to the 2006 *Lineamenta* of the Second African Synod. Delegates emphasized the revitalization of Small Christian Communities through: the importance of Bible Reflection in SCCs; deeper evangelization for reconciliation, justice and peace through SCCs; fostering reconciliation in the SCCs themselves; and evangelization to family and youth through SCCs.

On 19 March, 2009 in Yaounde, Cameroon Pope Benedict XVI promulgated the *Instrumentum Laboris* ("Working Document")<sup>155</sup> of the 2009 Second African Synod. While the English text of the *Lineamenta* published in 2006 uses the term "living ecclesial communities," the English text of the *Instrumentum Laboris* published in 2009 uses the more common term "Small Christian Communities" (note the capitals). The French text uses "Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes."

SCCs are mentioned 12 times in the *Instrumentum Laboris* and twice in the footnotes. This is significantly more than in the *Lineamenta* in which "living ecclesial communities" are mentioned three times in the document and twice in the questionnaire. This increase in the importance given to SCCs is clearly due to the many responses from the Episcopal Conferences in Africa and to other answers to the 32 questions of the original questionnaire.

This conference, workshop and documentation helped to prepare the AMECEA Bishops who attended the Second Africa Synod in 2009. At their 29 September, 2009 preparatory meeting the "Statement from Bishops of AMECEA Who Are Delegates to the Synod of Bishops' Second Special Assembly for Africa (in Rome in October, 2009)" said under B. Our Serious Pastoral Concerns and Challenges, No. 3: "Centrality of Small Christian Community (SCC): we have experienced that a properly trained and led SCC adds great value to the promotion of reconciliation. This is because deeper biblical reflection and more regular use of the Pastoral Circle empower our Christians to engage effectively in the social life around them. Here formation in Catholic Social Teaching (CST) at all levels must be a priority."

*AMECEA Consolidated Reports of Member Episcopal Conferences 2008 – 2011* documents how the eight national episcopal conferences of AMECEA implemented the 16<sup>th</sup>

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increasingly blurred. In general this book uses the term "social media" because of its link to social networking. See Wikipedia Website, retrieved on 13 April, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_media) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media)

<sup>155</sup> Of the 79 footnotes in the 2006 *Lineamenta* only seven are from specifically African sources. Of the 67 footnotes in the 2009 *Instrumentum Laboris* only nine are from specifically African sources.

Plenary Assembly resolutions. Kenya published a series of booklets on topics of Christian values for SCCs connected to themes of the 2009 Second African Synod such as conscience, reconciliation and unity. The National Biblical Commission in Zambia is preparing small booklets on prayer and reflections on reconciliation, justice and peace for use in SCCs.

The Second African Synod itself took place in Rome from 4-25 October, 2009 on the theme: "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace." No. 22 of the *Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God* states: "Here we would like to reiterate the recommendation of *Ecclesia in Africa* about the importance of Small Christian Communities (cf. *EIA*, 89). Beyond prayer, you must also arm yourself with sufficient knowledge of the Christian faith to be able to "give a proof of the hope that you bear" (1 *Peter* 3:15) in the marketplaces of ideas... We strongly recommend the basic sources of Catholic faith: the *Holy Bible*, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and most relevant to the theme of the Synod, *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*." Retired English Bishop Colin Davies, MHM, of Ngong Diocese, Kenya sees these resources as "a very complete list of what would be required of SCCs"<sup>156</sup> in their pastoral activities and evangelization.

Small Christian Communities are mentioned seven times in the "Final List of [57] Propositions"<sup>157</sup> including:

Proposition 35 on "Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" states: "The Synod renews its support for the promotion of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) that firmly build up the Church-Family of God in Africa. The SCCs are based on Gospel-sharing, where Christians gather to celebrate the presence of the Lord in their lives and in their midst, through the celebration of the Eucharist, the reading of the Word of God and witnessing to their faith in loving service to each other and their communities. Under the guidance of their pastors and catechists, they seek to deepen their faith and mature in Christian witness, as they live concrete experiences of fatherhood, motherhood, relationships, open fellowship, where each takes care of the other. This Family of God extends beyond the bonds of blood, ethnicity, tribe, culture and race. In this way SCCs open paths to reconciliation with extended families/multigenerational families that have the tendency to impose on Christian nuclear families their syncretistic ways and customs."

Proposition 36 on "The Challenges Posed by the New Religious Movements" states: "Parishes are to promote in their Small Christian Communities a fraternal life of solidarity."

Proposition 37 on "The Laity" states: "Small Christian Communities are to offer assistance in the formation of the People of God and serve as a place for concretely living out reconciliation, justice and peace."

Proposition 44 on "Catechists" states: "Permanent catechists or those who act as catechists on occasion are the vital heralds of the Gospel for our Small Christian

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<sup>156</sup> Colon Davies, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop: Memoirs and Reflections of 53 Years of Missionary Life in Kenya*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2014, p. 114.

<sup>157</sup> It is interesting to analyze the changes in the references to SCCs (both the wording and the emphasis) from the *Linamenta* to the *Instrumentum Laboris* to the "Propositions" to the actual *Apostolic Exhortation*.

Communities, where they exercise various roles: leaders of prayer, counselors and mediators. They require a solid formation and material support which is necessary for them effectively to assume their role as spiritual guides. They also need to be encouraged and supported in their zeal for service within these communities, especially their service to reconciliation, justice and peace.”

Proposition 54 on “Concern for Prisoners” states: “Prison pastoral care be organized and supported under the Commission of Justice and Peace, with a desk at the regional, national, diocesan and parish levels, in which Small Christian Communities take part.”

A cornerstone of the AMECEA key pastoral priority of building SCCs is *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* that is closely connected to faith sharing and faith reflection. Thousands of Lectionary-based<sup>158</sup> SCCs in the nine AMECEA countries meet in the middle of the week to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday following the three-year lectionary cycle.<sup>159</sup> *Hebrews* 4:12 says:

For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.

St. Jerome said, “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”

Historically Protestants have emphasized the *Bible* more than Catholics in Africa as well as in the rest of the world. This has been changing slowly but steadily.<sup>160</sup> Now African

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<sup>158</sup> Some community of religious sisters and other groups meet together daily, especially in the evening, to read and reflect on the Scripture Readings of the following day following the daily lectionary cycle.

<sup>159</sup> To many Catholic lay people the expressions “lectionary-based” and “lectionary cycle” are churchy “in” words, even jargon that is difficult to understand. Officially the reader of the *Bible* or Scripture readings at mass or a “Sunday Service without a Priest” is a Lector and he or she reads from a book of *Bible* Readings called the *Lectionary*. We follow a three-year cycle for the Sunday Readings and a two-year cycle for the Daily Readings. The challenge is to communicate this fundamental liturgical plan in simple, user-friendly language. Another expression for Lectionary-based Faith Sharing is Faith Sharing Based on Scripture.

<sup>160</sup> During a visit of 22 German teachers and students of pastoral theology and their collaborators to Kenya in March, 2015 to experience the Catholic Church in Kenya including SCCs, German layman Mr. Michael Huhn, a representative of Adveniat, said that German Catholics have crossed two thresholds. First, the stereotype that the *Bible* is a book for Protestants. Now the *Bible* is an essential part of the life of the Catholic Church in Germany including the laity. Second, that it is the priest who teaches the meaning of the *Bible*. By reading and reflecting on next Sunday’s lectionary readings in the middle of the week in small groups such as SCCs, German lay Catholics are becoming more *Bible* literate and not just waiting for the interpretation of the scriptures in priest’s homily on Sunday.

Catholics are much more at home with the *Bible*. A key factor is has been the emphasis of the *Bible* in SCCs, other apostolic groups and *Bible* Study Groups.

Our Eastern Africa SCC Training Team continues to do research on the use of the *Bible*. The reports are mixed. Recent research in 2014 is based on a random sample and not specific quantitative research. Some examples: Three religious sisters in Monze, Zambia were interviewed on a Saturday afternoon. None of them had read the Gospel of the following Sunday (the next day) either individually or in a group. A lay woman in St. Matthias Mulumba SCC in Don Bosco Parish, Makuyu, Nairobi Archdiocese said that “reflecting on the Gospel before hearing it proclaimed at Mass enables her to experience the Word of God more deeply and more personally.” A lay woman in Kenya said that she always reads the daily Scripture Reading on her Smart Phone. Members of the online Skype SCC said they individually prepare the Gospel text before their weekly *Bible* Sharing. A Catholic evangelist in Kenya said he wants to read the Gospel of the following Sunday ahead of time, but “never seems to get around to it.” For many conscientious Catholics in Eastern Africa daily *Bible* reading is still not a regular way of life.

American theologian Father Tom Reese, SJ states emphatically: “Lectionary-based Catholics can change the world.” In other words, Catholics who individually, in their families or in their SCCs in the middle of the week seriously reflect on the readings of the following Sunday and their application to our lives can transform themselves and their world. Reese adds:

The [Catholic] Church needs a massive *Bible* education program. The church needs to acknowledge that understanding the *Bible* is more important than memorizing the catechism. If we could get Catholics to read the Sunday Scripture readings each week before they come to Mass, it would be

revolutionary.<sup>161</sup> If you do not read and pray the Scriptures, you are not an adult Christian. Catholics who become evangelicals understand this.<sup>162</sup>

In another place he writes:

The Scripture readings during Advent are full of hope. They are an antidote to the cynicism and despair so prevalent in our age. They are worth reading and reflection. Decades ago, I wrote a column in which I encouraged people to "steal a missalette" so that they could read the Scripture readings at home. Today, that is not necessary. The daily readings are [available online](#), through apps (iBreviary), and as podcasts (Daily Readings from the *New American Bible*).<sup>163</sup> Reading the daily Scripture readings is a wonderful way to nourish your spirit at any time of the year, but especially during Advent.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Retired American Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles Archdiocese, describes an imaginary parish in the future in Los Angeles Archdiocese, California, USA:

The readings for the coming Sunday are reflected upon in all groups and meetings in the parish, as well as in the 25 Small Christian Communities scattered throughout the many blocks which make up St. Leo Parish... Scripture study and faith sharing takes place in various groups throughout the parish during the week and strengthens the identity of St. Leo's as a communion of communities. Thus the people called together by the Word come to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday having already reflected at length on the readings. They are prepared for the liturgy and more deeply bonded with other members of the community who have likewise been washed in the Word throughout the week.

*As I Have Done for You: A Pastoral Letter on Ministry*, 20 April, 2000, retrieved on the Los Angeles Archdiocese Website on 15 July, 2013, <http://www.la-archdiocese.org/cardinal/Pages/letters.aspx>

**NOTE:** The word "block" has many meanings in English. A city block is the smallest area that is surrounded by streets. A Block Party or a Street Party is a secular/civic social event of neighbors that is very similar to a neighborhood SCC party. It expresses neighborliness and fellowship. In the Catholic context it is the "Church in the Neighborhood."

<sup>162</sup> Thomas Reese, "The Hidden Exodus: Catholics Becoming Protestants," *National Catholic Reporter*, 18 April, 2011. National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved on 5 February, 2012, <http://ncronline.org/news/hidden-exodus-catholics-becoming-protestants>

<sup>163</sup> For many years in Eastern Africa I have struggled with helping lectors, especially lay people, prepare the readings of the following Sunday or the scripture readings for a SCCs Meeting. For many "preparation" means finding the right page in the *Lectionary* or the *Missal*. I strongly recommend to practice the reading out loud ahead of time. A wonderful resource is the Daily Readings podcast from USCCB.org. A lector can listen to an expert read the passage out loud to get the proper pronunciation, pace, inflection, cadence, style, etc.

<sup>164</sup> Thomas Reese, "Advent Hope," *National Catholic Reporter*, 18 April, 2011. National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved on 4 December, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/advent-hope>

Magesa explains this challenge in an Eastern Africa context:

The life of SCCs must be rooted in Scripture – in studying it, seriously reflecting on it, internalizing it, and acting upon it. To spend only a few minutes casually reading and commenting on this or that passage of Scripture once a week, as is the custom in many SCCs, is totally inadequate. SCCs are *theological* communities and as such they must be scriptural communities. If “the study of the sacred page is ... the soul of sacred theology,” as Vatican II tells us in the *Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum, DV 23)*, then it must form the center of the life of SCCs as well.

Where does the SCC get sustenance for its growth and flourishing. Looking at the example of Jesus himself, we do come up with some essential requirements: they include listening to the Word of God, reflection on it, prayer, and action. The four conditions form a single movement in the dance of inculturation as evangelization in SCCs. All are necessary for the evangelization of the self (or, in this case, evangelization *ad intra*, within one’s heart to change personal perceptions and attitudes), and that of the neighbor (*ad extra*, or building up communion, the Reign of God on earth).<sup>165</sup>

Thus reading the *Bible* meditatively every day is a good way to discover God’s will. The liturgical book resource, *At Home with the Word*, is an excellent guide to a deeper understanding of the Sunday Scriptures with insights from Scripture scholars and action steps. It has additional questions, prayers, citations for weekday readings, and other resources for Scripture study. Whether this resource is used alone or in a group, it deepens our experience of the liturgy and helps one to feel ever more “at home” with the Word of God. It recommends: “Whether you use the book for quiet meditation or vigorous study it will nourish you all week long to act on God’s Word in the world as you prepare to hear the Scripture proclaimed on Sunday liturgy.” It can be used in families with children, parish households, RCIA (the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults or the adult catechumenate), Cursillo, Scripture study groups, adult formation groups and other types of small faith groups.<sup>166</sup>

One characteristic of being a lectionary-based Catholic is to choose a particular word or phrase or verse from the daily readings to use as a *Bible* mantra or prayer mantra during the day. Such a particular word or phrase or verse from the Gospel of the following Sunday can nourish and sustain a person or a small group all during the week. Some examples: “after he had suffered,” “all that is mine is yours,” “all things are possible for God,” “bad and good alike,” “be compassionate as your heavenly father is compassionate,” “be opened!” “be vigilant at all times,” “but to serve,” “by prayer and petition with thanksgiving,” “care for orphans and widows in their affliction,” “clothing the naked,” “Come, blessed of my Father,” “cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it,” “do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid,” “do not worry,” “follow me,” “for the life of the world,” “for the sake of the gospel” “gives life to the world,” “glorify,” “great mercy,” “have no anxiety at all,” “he had to rise from the dead,” “he was amazed,” “Holy Spirit and fire,” “household of God,” “hurl him down

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<sup>165</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “The Joy of Community,” p. 26.

<sup>166</sup> See *At Home with the Word 2013, Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2013.*

headlong,” “I am the bread of life,” “I face daily the pressure/burden of my concern for all the churches,” “I myself shall give you a wisdom,” “in secret,” “I want to see,” “just have faith,” “listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches,” “memorial feast, “must deny himself,” “my sheep hear my voice,” “one child/one little one,” “only the Father,” “proclaim justice,” “put out into deep water,” “sharing your bread with the hungry,” “the sign he had done,” “testify to the truth,” “they departed for their country by another way,” “they made him carry it [cross] behind him,” “to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord,” “they will be called children of God,” “you are witnesses of these things,” “you have the words of eternal life,” “you ought to wash one another’s feet,” “what you have seen and heard,” “witness” and “will of my Father.”

Reflecting on SCCs in Africa, O’Halloran states: “Once the members take the *Bible* in their hands, reflect on the Word of God and take responsibility to act upon it, things can never be the same again.”<sup>167</sup>

A similar approach is to use a liturgical mantra, for example, in Advent season “Why purple” and “Remember the meaning of purple.” Or a devotional mantra: “Jesus,” “Jesus, have mercy,” “My Lord and my God, and “pray for me a sinner.” Some paper and online resources have a Daily *Bible* Verse. Smartphones have an audio reading of the *Bible* passages.

The World Synod of Bishops on the "Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church" took place in Rome in October, 2008. *The Word of the Lord*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI was published in 2010. No. 73 on “Letting the *Bible* Inspire Pastoral Activity” states:

It is good that pastoral activity also favors the growth of *small communities*, ‘formed by families or based in parishes or linked to the different ecclesial movements and new communities’ (*Proposition 21*) which can help to promote formation, prayer and knowledge of the *Bible* in accordance with the Church’s faith.

No. 85 on “The Word of God, Marriage and the Family” states: “The Synod also recommended the formation of small communities of families, where common prayer and meditation on passages of Scripture can be cultivated.” This includes a prayerful, meditative reading of the *Bible* called *Lectio Divina* (also called “Dwelling in the Word”) and emphasis on a communal reading of the *Bible*. Again this authoritative voice of the pope and the universal church confirmed the direction that the AMECEA countries are taking in building SCCs that are solidly rooted in the *Bible*.

Already in the *Instrumentum Laboris* of this synod the experience of *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection in Africa was recognized and affirmed:

The newness of *Lectio Divina* among the People of God requires an appropriate pedagogy of initiation which leads to a good understanding of what is treated and provides clear teaching on the meaning of each of its steps and their application to life in both faithful and creatively wise manner.

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<sup>167</sup> James O’Halloran, *Living Cells*, p. 207.

Various programs, such as the Seven Steps,<sup>168</sup> are already being practiced by many Particular Churches (Local Churches)<sup>169</sup> on the African continent. This form of *Lectio Divina* receives its name from the seven moments of encounter with the *Bible* (acknowledging the presence of God, reading the text, dwelling on the text, being still, sharing insights, searching together and praying together) in which meditation, prayer and sharing the Word of God are central.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> This refers to the Seven-Step Gospel Sharing of Lumko (South Africa).

<sup>169</sup> The term Particular Church is enshrined in the documents of Vatican II and the new *Code of Canon Law*. But it is undergoing new meanings in new contexts as explained by Laurenti Magesa:

Perhaps the most important inspiration of Vatican II as far as Africa is concerned has been the need to construct an African Local Church or African Local Churches. The council used the term “Particular Churches” because many in the council, following curial conviction, argued that in the diocese structure we already have local churches. But this is not how the idea has been understood and developed in Africa since then. The need for a Local Church is seen in a new, different light.

The term “Particular Church” is seen in Africa to be a juridical-structural [administrative] term; it identifies the church with the diocese. The notion of “Local Church,” however, is favored in Africa because it is perceived as going beyond that geographical and juridical circumspection by taking into account theological-pastoral implications. It emphasizes the necessity of culture and inculturation in catechesis, preaching and the celebration of the liturgy. It accepts the reality of the faith at any level: continental, regional, diocesan, parochial, Small Christian Community, and even family levels as contextual.

Laurenti Magesa, “EXPANDING HORIZONS: The Church in Africa Beyond 50 Years of Vatican II,” *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*, 2012/2, p. 33. Tangaza University College Website, retrieved 6 June 2014, <http://www.tangaza.org/theology/Tangaza%20Journal%202012-2.pdf>

It is interesting that official Vatican documents are using the term “Local Churches” more. For example, Pope Francis’s “Message for 2014 World Mission Day” (19 October, 2014) stated: “On this World Mission Day my thoughts turn to all the Local Churches. Let us not be robbed of the joy of evangelization! I invite you to immerse yourself in the joy of the Gospel.”

This Ebook prefers to use the term Local Church/Local Churches. The Local Churches challenge and enrich each other. The Local Churches in Africa can challenge and enrich the World Church/Global Church/Universal Church.

<sup>170</sup> *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly, *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*, Vatican: Vatican Press, 2008, No. 38.

In 2010-2011 the AMECEA Office in Nairobi conducted research on an “Evaluation of AMECEA Pastoral Mission of Evangelization in Solidarity 1961-2011.” The questionnaire was straight forward: “In what ways are you involved in promoting unity and solidarity in the parish and diocese, promoting/participation in Small Christian Communities?” The design of the study emphasized that the decision to start AMECEA and its original constitution as well as the establishment of Small Christian Communities were original and foundational initiatives. In the “Executive Summary” Conclusion 3 under “The key priority challenges facing AMECEA dioceses today continue to be” states: “Promotion of Christian families and Small Christian Communities as means of deepening and consolidating the achievements gained in the last 50 years of evangelization.” De Jong put it this way: “A new missionary period has definitely set in, in which Small Christian Communities play a pivotal role in the evangelization and pastoral system.”<sup>171</sup>

The Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of the Congo under the patronage of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo sponsored the 27<sup>th</sup> Theological Week of Kinshasa in Kinshasa, DRC from 21 to 25 February, 2011 on the theme “The Experience of Basic Living Ecclesial Communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Theological and Pastoral Perspectives after 50 Years” (“L’expérience des CEVB en RD Congo: Perspectives théologiques et pastorales 50 ans après”). This conference commemorated the 50th Anniversary of “Living Ecclesial Communities” in DRC (1961-2011). As a sign of unity and conscious solidarity with Eastern Africa, in the day devoted to “Other Experiences of CEVB in DRC and Elsewhere,” Msgr. Pius Rutechura, the then Secretary General of AMECEA (and now the Vice Chancellor of CUEA), gave a paper under the heading “Echoes of English-speaking Africa: AMECEA” entitled “The Experience of the AMECEA Region with Small Christian Communities, Pastoral Priority since the 1970s.”

Gulu Archdiocese in Uganda held its Second Archdiocesan Synod on the theme “Called to Build the Church Rooted in Christ’s Love and Truth” from 8-20 May, 2011 with the specific purpose of developing a five-year Pastoral Plan. Decree 10 under “Lay Apostolate (Adults, Youth and Children)” states: “The Parish Priests and Catechists shall immediately ensure that Small Christian Communities are created and strengthened to model the life of Christians.” In his letter to promulgate the Synod Acts Ugandan Archbishop John Baptist Odama called on Christians at all levels from the diocese down to the family and including the SCCs to implement the deliberations “so that we may grow in our faith and own our Church.”

The 17<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya took place from 27 June to 6 July, 2011. It included a celebration of the successes of SCCs and a reflection on the challenges of SCCs in Eastern Africa especially during the 1973-2011 period. The booklet *AMECEA 50 Years Evangelization in Solidarity: 1961 – 2011* presents a “Timeline” of the history of SCCs in the AMECEA Region. The 40 minute DVD documentary *AMECEA*

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<sup>171</sup> Albert De Jong, *Father Michael Witte of Kabaa High School Missionary and Educationalist: A Study in Mission Strategy*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2011, p. 222.

*Family of God: Celebrating a Golden Jubilee of Evangelization in Solidarity*<sup>172</sup> focuses on the AMECEA Founding Fathers and stresses the importance of SCCs. It is based on interviews with AMECEA bishops and staff and is produced by Ukweli Video Productions in Nairobi, Kenya. In the section on “Recommendations for the Future” Bishop Rodrigo Mejia has these prophetic words. “AMECEA should try as a kind of strategy for the future to reach countries of the periphery such as Ethiopia that has a very particular Local Church ...using the structures of the Local Church.”

The 28 minute DVD documentary *50 Years of AMECEA* narrates the beginnings of AMECEA and its growth including the development of the pastoral priority of SCCs. It is also based on interviews with AMECEA bishops and staff and is produced by Catholic Media Services in Lusaka, Zambia.

The AMECEA Study Session has four resolutions about SCCs in the context of Resolution No. 1: “Developing a Comprehensive Ten Year Pastoral Plan comprised of recommendations on the various issues and concerns. The plan must include a theological framework of addressing key issues and challenges of ‘New Evangelization in Solidarity in the AMECEA countries:’”

Resolution No. 3: “Enhance Initial and Ongoing Quality Formation of Pastoral Agents at All Levels.” This resolution came from discussion on pastoral concerns or problems that prevent deeper evangelization. This wide-ranging resolution applies to the following pastoral agents who are involved in SCCs:

- a. Lay people who are leaders of SCCs (called by many names such as animator or coordinator).
- b. Catechists.<sup>173</sup>
- c. Religious men and women.
- d. Priests.<sup>174</sup>
- e. Seminarians.
- f. Youth.

Resolution No. 5: “Evaluating and Revitalizing the AMECEA Pastoral Option of

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<sup>172</sup> While the DV has been well received, it has been pointed out that all the interviews are with bishops and priests. No lay people, women or youth are interviewed. One wonders how they will feature in a DVD produced in 2061 on the Second 50 Years of AMECEA.

<sup>173</sup>In the original plan of SCCs catechists were not the leaders of SCCs, but rather the animators just as the priests and religious men and women. Today they can play a big role such as in Machakos Diocese where they receive special training in the Diocesan Catechist School and are significant promoters of the SCCs. Martin Kivuva in a conversation with the author on 3 October, 2013.

<sup>174</sup> Recent workshops for priests include these titles: “The Challenge to Kenyan Diocesan Priests to Be Animators in Small Christian Communities (SCCs).” “Priests Animating the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Kenya Today.” For sisters: “African Sisters as Animators of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa.”

Establishing Small Christian Communities.”<sup>175</sup>

Resolution No. 17: “Enhancing participation in liturgy, holy sacraments and the Word of God and fight against devil worship and witchcraft diligently and systematically by living and witnessing the Catholic Faith. Building capacities of the faithful to respond to these challenges by utilizing Scripture and values from the Social Teachings of the Church.”

What is new here is to mobilize SCCs in the fight against witchcraft. SCCs in Zambia have been involved in this campaign for many years.

Resolution No. 19. “Revisiting self-reliance and self-sustainability strategies by exploring and sharing opportunities within the region. Developing Catholic value-based investment policies involving lay professionals and Christians right from Small Christian Community levels in ownership and management at appropriate levels.”

There were many references to the AMECEA pastoral priority of SCCs in the talks and discussions. One report stated: “Among the major achievements of the organization is the creation of Small Christian Communities.” Another recommendation emphasized to strengthen SCCs by ensuring priests’ participation. SCCs were stressed as one of the important African Models of Church. The Missio Aachen and Missio Munich delegates from Germany praised the African Church for three special gifts that can help the Catholic Church in Europe: first, optimism, combined with joy and emotion at liturgical services; second, SCCs that help solve the situation of the declining numbers of priests and also strengthen the personal witness and knowledge of the faithful; and third, methods of *Bible Reflection*. One African delegate stated: “Small Christian Communities (SCC), with their spirit of neighborliness is another big achievement for AMECEA. Joining SCCs is no longer voluntary but a mandate of every Catholic in the AMECEA region. Other regions are following in the footsteps of AMECEA on SCCs.”

Pope Benedict XVI promulgated the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africa’s Commitment (Africae Munus)*<sup>176</sup> in Ouidah, Benin in West Africa on 19 November, 2011. Sections related to SCCs are:

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<sup>175</sup>A good example of follow-up/implementation is the November, 2012 research questionnaire designed by Ugandan diocesan priest Father Benedict Mayindwe of Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese, Uganda on “A Pastoral Approach towards the Reawakening of Small Christian Communities in St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Parish, Lwangiri, Uganda.”

<sup>176</sup> It is a document with 177 numbers and 226 footnotes. There are no footnotes related to specifically African sources such as documents, statements and meetings of national, regional and continental episcopal conferences in Africa. The *literary genre* of recent Papal documents such as the last three Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations does not use explicit quotations of local or regional experiences or theological works. A *Simplified Text of Africa’s Commitment* edited by the AMECEA Pastoral Department was published in July, 2012 and translations were made in various local African languages as was done after the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation of the First African Synod in 1995.

Pope Francis reminds us: “Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way’ So his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si (Praise Be to You)* is different and quotes from local sources in his effort to be

Number 42 under “The Family:” “The family is the ‘sanctuary of life’ and a vital cell of society and of the Church. It is here that the features of a people take shape; it is here that its members acquire basic teachings.”

**COMMENTARY:** In communion ecclesiology the family is the Domestic Church (or Miniature Church) and the SCC is a communion of families.

Number 92 under “Traditional African Religions:” “The Church lives daily alongside the followers of traditional African religions. With their reference to ancestors and to a form of mediation between man and Immanence, these religions are the cultural and spiritual soil from which most Christian converts spring and with which they continue to have daily contact. It is worth singling out knowledgeable individual converts, who could provide the Church with guidance in gaining a deeper and more accurate knowledge of the traditions, the culture and the [practices] of the traditional religions.”

**COMMENTARY:** SCC members on the grassroots have a special opportunity to dialog with members of African Religion. Magesa points out: “It remains to be seen, however, whether this important recommendation will be seriously implemented in the African dioceses, parishes and Small Christian Communities.”<sup>177</sup>

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more collegial and more decentralized. More than 10 percent of the footnotes – 21 out of 172 – contain citations of documents from bishops’ conferences around the world. Francis quotes bishops from 15 nations including South Africa. Francis also cites two regional bodies of bishops – the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) and the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) – both of which represent regions of the world where the perceived consequences of global warming and climate change are most keenly felt. Thus most of his references are drawn from bishops in the Global South. John Allen comments: “With *Laudato Si* Francis effectively has pioneered a new model for the development of official Catholic teaching, one in which the church’s center takes its peripheries seriously indeed.”

John Allen, “The Encyclical’s Footnotes Say a Lot About This Pope,” *CRUX’s Website*, retrieved on 23 June, 2015, [http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/06/20/the-encyclicals-footnotes-say-a-lot-about-this-pope/?s\\_campaign=crux:email:daily](http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/06/20/the-encyclicals-footnotes-say-a-lot-about-this-pope/?s_campaign=crux:email:daily)

An Editorial in *Tablet* comments:

Equally novel is the Pope’s willingness to quote from the statements of a very large number of national and regional bishops’ conferences. It is an impressive consensus, and shows a welcome willingness to allow bishops’ conferences to feed into the development of the papal Magisterium.

*Tablet*, 269/9105 (20 June, 2015), p. 2., *Tablet Website*, retrieved on 20 June, 2015, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/200615issue.pdf>

<sup>177</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “Translating Theology into Pastoral Action, *New People*, No. 137, March-April, 2012, p. 19.

Number 111 under “Priests:” “Build up the Christian communities by your example... Devote yourselves intensely to putting into practice the diocesan pastoral plan for reconciliation, justice and peace, especially through the celebration of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, catechesis, the formation of lay people and on-going dialog with those holding positions of responsibility in society.”

**COMMENTARY:** The 2011 AMECEA Plenary Assembly emphasized the important role of priests in the formation of lay pastoral agents such as SCC animators and coordinators.

Number 131 under “Lay People:” It can be helpful for you to form associations in order to continue shaping your Christian conscience and supporting one another in the struggle for justice and peace. The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and the ‘new communities’ are fundamental structures for fanning the flame of your Baptism.”

**COMMENTARY:** In most official documents of the Catholic Church the traditional parish is the basic juridical unit of the Church. It is significant that SCCs are now called fundamental structures. SCCs are the ideal place for shaping Christian consciences.

To participants in the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) in Rome in 2015 Pope Francis' described its identity as “a living experience of communion and service, especially to the poorest,” adding:

It is necessary to maintain simple ecclesial experiences within the reach of all, as well as simple pastoral structures. Experience teaches that large bureaucratic structures analyse the problems abstractly and run the risk of having the church far from the people. And, because of this, concreteness is important: the concreteness, that the reality can be touched.<sup>178</sup>

SCCs in Eastern Africa are a simple pastoral structure on the grassroots.

Number 63 under “Young People:” “I encourage you to place Jesus Christ at the center of your lives through prayer, but also through the study of sacred Scripture, frequent recourse to the sacraments, formation in the Church’s social teaching, and your active and enthusiastic participation in ecclesial groups and movements.

**COMMENTARY:** This reference to ecclesial groups and movements is an opening to form Youth SCCs.

Number 133 under “The Church as the Presence of Christ:” “The Church is ‘in Christ, a sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race.’ As the community of Christ’s disciples, we are able to make visible and share the love of God. Love ‘is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and grant us the courage needed to keep living and working.’

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<sup>178</sup> “Pope's Address to Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM),” *Zenit: The World Seen from Rome Daily Dispatch*, 9 February 2015.

This is clearly seen in the universal Church, in dioceses and parishes, in the SCCs, in movements and associations, and even in the Christian family itself, which is ‘called to be a ‘Domestic Church’, a place of faith, of prayer and of loving concern for the true and enduring good of each of its members,” a community which lives the sign of peace. Together with the parish, the SCCs and the movements and associations can be helpful places for accepting and living the gift of reconciliation offered by Christ our peace. Each member of the community must become a ‘guardian and host’ to the other: this is the meaning of the sign of peace in the celebration of the Eucharist.”

**COMMENTARY:** SCCs are places to live Christ’s gift of reconciliation and peace. SCC members exchange a sign of Christ’s peace with each other and with others in the spirit of solidarity, unity and commitment/responsibility to each other. Footnote 186 states that this section draws on *Proposition 35* of the Second African Synod.

Number 150 under “The Sacred Scriptures: “I recommend that the biblical apostolate be promoted in each [Small] Christian community, in the family and in ecclesial movements.”

**COMMENTARY:** The Biblical Center for Africa and Madagascar, commonly known as BICAM that is located in the SECAM Headquarters in Accra, Ghana and other networks have a unique opportunity to promote the biblical apostolate on the African continent by encouraging national and diocesan organizations, offices and centers and organizing workshops and seminars.

Number 151 under “The Sacred Scriptures:” “Each member of Christ’s faithful should grow accustomed to reading the Bible daily! An attentive reading of the recent Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* can provide some useful pastoral indications. Care should be taken to initiate the faithful into the ancient and fruitful tradition of *Lectio Divina*.<sup>179</sup> The Word of God can lead to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and bring about conversions which produce reconciliation, since it is able to sift “the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (*Hebrews 4:12*). The Synod Fathers encouraged Christian parish communities, SCCs, families and associations and ecclesial movements to set aside times for sharing the Word of God. In this way, they will increasingly become places where God’s word, which builds up the community of Christ’s disciples, is read, meditated on and celebrated. This word constantly enlivens fraternal communion (cf. *1 Peter 1:22-25*).”

**NOTE:** Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the *Bible* in Numbers 174-175 under “Centered on the Word of God” in *The Joy of the Gospel*. “All evangelization is based on the Word of God listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to.” He affirms the importance of the practice of *Lectio Divina* in Numbers 152-153 under “Spiritual Reading.”

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<sup>179</sup> “As we celebrate the Feast of St. Benedict today we are reminded of the importance of *Lectio Divina* (prayerful, meditative reading of the *Bible*) in our SCCs and applying the daily Scripture readings to our everyday lives.” Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, retrieved on 11 July, 2012, <https://www.face-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>.

The AMECEA Pastoral Department states:

The promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* by Pope Francis, has challenged us to reflect on ways of proclaiming the Word of God joyfully to all. SCCs provide one of the most effective ways of proclaiming the Word of God through *Bible* sharing. This document “Logical Framework” is aimed at strengthening and promoting the AMECEA model of building the Local Church around SCCs. It provides a systematic structure for on-going formation, evaluation and capacity building in order to make the SCCs at various levels of the life of the Church to be very effective places for evangelization.<sup>180</sup>

**COMMENTARY:** This confirms the central place of *Bible* sharing and *Bible* reflection in the life and ministry of SCCs. Lectionary-based faith sharing SCCs can be places of brotherly and sisterly communion that foster reconciliation and deeper sharing.

Number 169 under “Missionaries in the Footsteps of Christ:” In the context of the new evangelization “all Christians are admonished to be reconciled to God. In this way you will become agents of reconciliation within the ecclesial and social communities in which you live and work.”

**COMMENTARY:** This echoes many synod documents that encourage SCC members to become agents of reconciliation in their own faith communities on the local, grassroots level, in their natural, human communities and in the wider society.<sup>181</sup>

A related section is Number 14 of the document where the pope states:

The Synod made it possible to discern the principal parameters of mission for an Africa that seeks reconciliation, justice and peace. It falls to the Particular Churches (Local Churches) to translate these parameters into “resolutions and guidelines for action.” For it is “in the Local Churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in [African] society and culture.”

**COMMENTARY:** SCCs are an essential as part of the Local Churches in Africa where concrete pastoral activities that promote reconciliation, justice and peace can be carried out such as molding communities of living faith.

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<sup>180</sup> “The Logical Strategic Framework for the Revitalization and Strengthening of SCCs as a Way of Being Church as Family in the AMECEA Region (April, 2014 – March, 2017),” Nairobi: AMECEA Secretariat, 2014, p. 5.

<sup>181</sup> Bukina Faso Scripture Scholar Father Paul Bere, SJ helped me very much to interpret the original French text of this Apostolic Exhortation.

After promulgating the Apostolic Exhortation in Benin, Pope Benedict XVI made this important statement:

I am deeply convinced that Africa is a land of hope. Here are found authentic values which have much to teach our world; they need only to spread and blossom with God's help and the determination of Africans themselves. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* can greatly assist in this, for it opens up pastoral horizons and will lead to creative initiatives. I entrust it to the faithful of Africa as a whole, to study carefully and to translate into concrete actions in daily life.<sup>182</sup>

The SCCs have a special call and challenge to translate the main pastoral goals of the Apostolic Exhortation *Africa's Commitment* into concrete actions in daily life on the local, grassroots level. This vision is seen in Number 10 that “calls for ‘transforming theology into pastoral care, namely into a very concrete pastoral ministry.’” A concrete example is how SCCs can participate in reconciliation on the grassroots as the pope recommends in Number 157:

In order to encourage reconciliation in communities, I heartily recommend, as did the Synod Fathers, that each country celebrate yearly “a day or week of reconciliation, particularly during Advent or Lent”. SECAM will be able to help bring this about and, in accord with the Holy See, promote a continent-wide *Year of Reconciliation* to beg of God special forgiveness for all the evils and injuries mutually inflicted in Africa, and for the reconciliation of persons and groups who have been hurt in the Church and in the whole of society. This would be an extraordinary Jubilee Year “during which the Church in Africa and in the neighboring islands gives thanks with the universal Church and implores the gifts of the Holy Spirit,” especially the gift of reconciliation, justice and peace.

One of the first critiques of *Africa's Commitment* came from American missionary and writer Father Peter Henriot, SJ presently serving in Malawi:

From my own pastoral experience in Africa during the past two decades, I would have expected more discussion of the role of Small Christian Communities (SCCs), and both local and national Justice and Peace Commissions. The SCCs are mentioned in passing in four places and Justice and Peace Commissions only once in relationship to civic education and electoral process. Yet surely these two bodies are of critical importance to the specific promotion of reconciliation, justice and peace.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> *Vatican Information Service*, Number 203, 20 November, 2011, Vatican Information Service Website, retrieved on 21 November, 2011, <http://www.visnews-en.blogspot.com>.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Henriot, “Steps Forward and Back,” *Tablet*, 3 December 2011, pp. 11-12.

My own evaluation is that these five references to SCCs in *Africae Munus* are significant, but do not convey the richness and depth of the seven references to SCCs in the *Propositions* that are cited earlier. The Apostolic Exhortation is “lighter” compared to the meatier, more substantive *Propositions* on SCCs.

Still there are many opportunities for the African SCCs to take the initiative in implementing the recommendations of the Second African Synod on the local level in the year 2013 and beyond. This implementation includes drawing on all the official documents of the synod including the very specific *Propositions*. This includes working closely with Justice and Peace Commissions on the regional, national and parish levels.<sup>184</sup>

One example is the growing influence of Protestant fundamentalists and Pentecostals<sup>185</sup> especially through aggressive sects that has been discussed during various AMECEA-level Meetings in the past three years. Number 157 of *Africa's Commitment* states:

Various syncretistic movements and sects have sprung up in Africa in recent decades. Sometimes it is hard to discern whether they are of authentically Christian inspiration or whether they are simply the fruit of sudden infatuation with a leader claiming to have exceptional gifts. Their nomenclature and vocabulary easily give rise to confusion, and they can lead people in good faith astray. These many sects take advantage of an incomplete social infrastructure, the erosion of traditional family solidarity and inadequate catechesis in order to exploit people's credulity, and they offer a religious veneer to a variety of heterodox, non-Christian<sup>186</sup> beliefs. They shatter the peace of couples and families through false prophecies and visions. They even seduce political leaders. The Church's theology and pastoral care must determine the causes of this phenomenon, not only in order to stem the

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<sup>184</sup> One example from Nigeria in West Africa is this report: “23 parishes and over 200 leaders and facilitators were in attendance during yesterday's Lagos Archdiocesan SCC Workshop at Holy Cross Cathedral, Lagos. Issues of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation were examined based on *Africae Munus*. The mid-year evaluation of SCC activities also came up.” Nigerian layman Raphael Okusaga in a post on the SCCs Facebook Page dated 8 July, 2012.

<sup>185</sup> The Pentecostal Churches in Africa have gone through various historical stages. Thus the use of terms such as “Classical Pentecostalism” and “Neo-Pentecostalism” (that is dramatically increasing in Eastern Africa today).

<sup>186</sup> As we move toward more inclusive, ecumenical, neutral and even politically correct language, terms that begin with “non” should to be avoided. “Those who are not Christian” is better than “non-Christian.” “Those who are not Catholic” is better than “non-Catholic.” Referring to a member of a Protestant denomination like Episcopalian (Anglican), Lutheran or Presbyterian as “A baptized person who is not a Catholic” is better than “A baptized person who is a non-Catholic.” Certainly Catholics do not like to be called “non” anything: Non-Muslim. Non-Jewish. We should extend this courtesy to others. Also we should not make the Catholic Church the reference point for describing everyone else. Similar expression such as non-Western should be avoided too. More and more we realize that language and semantics carries a lot of baggage.

hemorrhage of the faithful from the parishes to the sects, but also in order to lay the foundations of a suitable pastoral response to the attraction that these movements and sects exert. Once again, this points to the need for a profound evangelization of the African soul.

It is hoped that strong SCCs can counter the influence of these sects. Committed SCCs can give an ecclesial identity and communal support system to African Catholics to withstand the attraction of the sects. Scripture based SCCs can give African Catholics the confidence and experience to present a Catholic interpretation of the Bible. Recent research indicates that SCC members are more pro-active in using the *Bible* and quoting the *Bible* with their Pentecostal and Evangelical counterparts on the local level.<sup>187</sup>

A SCCs Workshop on “How Small Christian Communities in Africa Receive<sup>188</sup> and Implement Magisterial Documents with a Special Emphasis on *Africae Munus* and its Themes of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace” took place in Karen, Nairobi, Kenya on 24-30 September, 2012. It was organized by SECAM in collaboration with AMECEA and sponsored by Missio, Aachen, Germany.

It was the first inclusive and comprehensive African continental SCCs Meeting ever held<sup>189</sup> and included 45 participants (priests, religious and laity) from English-speaking, French-speaking and Portuguese speaking Africa. There were 20 delegates from the AMECEA Region, 14 men and six women. Participants formed seven small groups (similar

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<sup>187</sup> There is a similar, and even more dramatic, situation in Latin America where the influence of Protestant fundamentalists and Pentecostals including aggressive sects is much greater. *Tablet* reports: “A DEBATE has flared in the Brazilian Church over how to respond to the increasing popularity of Pentecostal churches in the mainly Catholic country, writes Francis McDonagh. At the April [2013] meeting of the bishops’ conference it was suggested that base communities, small church groups in poor communities that try to relate the Gospel to day-to-day problems, might be the best way of countering the drift of Catholics to Pentecostalism.

One of Brazil’s most famous priests, Fr. Marcello Rossi, a successful gospel singer whose masses draw huge congregations, told the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*: “I think the base communities are important, but these days our people need big spaces. The Protestants are building big centers because that brings people in. If you stay locked up in a base community, you forget about prayer and just do politics.” 4 May, 2013, p. 25.

<sup>188</sup> For a full explanation of the meaning of “Reception” see Footnote 169.

<sup>189</sup> After living 43 years in Africa I feel the greatest challenge and hardest task is to get an idea, project, activity, etc. working successfully, self-reliantly and permanently on the local, grassroots level – without it being just a “pilot project” or “experimental.” Related to this is coordinate meetings and workshops on the national and continental levels in which SCC members from the local, grassroots level actively participate. This requires huge amounts of time, energy and creativity regarding different languages, customs, travel arrangements, currencies, etc. For people who have not traveled outside their home area there is a wonderful African proverb *A coconut shell filled with water is like an ocean to an ant.*

to SCCs) for prayer, *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* and discussion: four English-speaking SCCs, two French-speaking SCCs and one Portuguese speaking SCC.

In his opening address Ugandan Archbishop Emmanuel Obbo of Tororo Archdiocese Diocese, Uganda and Vice Chairman of AMECEA, urged the Catholic Church in Africa to prioritize the pastoral program of Small Christian Communities (SCCs). He said that this would assist the Local Church to receive and implement official church documents effectively. He said:

It is therefore not a surprise that two special assemblies for Africa of the Synod of Bishops and their post-Synodal Exhortations, namely: *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995) and *Africae Munus* (2011) challenged SCCs to be in the forefront – SCC members to be agents of reconciliation, justice and peace and the SCCs themselves to be both paths to reconciliation and places of reconciliation.<sup>190</sup>

Bishop Obbo pointed that some of the SCCs were simply prayer groups. “The time has come for SCCs to be elevated to serious *forums* for serious Church discourses such as interpreting and implementing church documents,”<sup>191</sup> he emphasized. He added that SCCs have been hailed as a new way of being the Church in Africa.

On the “Historical Backgrounds of SCCs” the official workshop report stated:

In groups based on their home regions, the delegates discussed and presented historical backgrounds, structures, challenges, success and level of participation of their SCCs. They all appreciated and acknowledged the uniqueness and particularity of the origins and historical backgrounds of SCCs in all the regions. Similarly various regions have variant SCCs structures that are determined by locations, issues and the particular people. From the presentations, it clearly came out that SCCs structures are also different and they should be determined by the Episcopal Conferences of particular countries.<sup>192</sup>

On the question of the place of the Word of God in the life and mission of these communities, Father Yves-Lucien Evaga Ndjana, Director of BICAM, proposed a paradigm shift of the primitive community of the apostolic era (*Acts 2: 42-47*). He emphasized the

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<sup>190</sup> “AFRICA: Prioritize SCCs Bishop Urges Church,” *Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 76, Friday, 28 September, 2012. Available in email message dated 28 September, 2012 and online on the CISA Website, retrieved on 12 October, 2012, <http://a4a0g.s18.it/f/rnl.aspx/?fgc=wvsrxf.dh=n5dd0=tw25a1cc=008&x=pv&7:8j&x=cc&0f:33idNCLM>

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> “Post Workshop Report: Workshop on How Small Christian Communities in Africa Receive and Implement Magisterial Documents,” St. Joseph’s Spiritual Center, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya, 24-30 September, 2012. Supported by Missio, SECAM and AMECEA, Accra and Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2014, p. 7.

desire for unity, love in the Lord, Jesus Christ's prayer life and fraternal charity and his mission in the Gospel. The Word of God thus appeared as the essence, the heart and the dynamics of the whole ecclesial basic constitution: it is the Word of God that is born, lives and feeds. A Small Christian Community without the Word of God is only a human association, pretence among many others!<sup>193</sup>

Recommendations of the workshop were:

- Create a permanent consultative structure for Regional Pastoral Coordinators at the continental level who would help animate SCCs.
- Learn how to integrate SCCs in church movements like the International Young Catholic Students ((IYCS).

One creative idea is to encourage SCCs as Fellowship Groups in the workplace and business establishments. These SCCs can be for Catholics only or can be ecumenical. For example, Catholics in the Bank of Uganda in Lusaka, Zambia have a SCC for prayer, rosary and *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* that meets weekly during the lunch break.<sup>194</sup>

SCCs continue to be an important part of the "Pastoral Guidelines" of dioceses in Eastern Africa.

The 2013 guidelines of Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya contain eight chapters. Chapter 2 is on SCCs with sections on "Introduction," "Description of Terms," "Composition," "Function of SCCs Leaders," "Recommendations," and "Qualities of Lay Leaders." It states: "All Christian faithful in the Archdiocese of Nairobi should be members of SCCs."<sup>195</sup>

Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia has the overall pastoral theme "Called to Be Family of God" in its Five Year Plan (2012-2016). The Year Three (2014) Goal is: "A Year of Re-commitment to the Service of the Church and Adherence to Her Teachings at All Levels." Objective 2 is: "Ongoing formation at all levels of the church structure on Catholic doctrine and the role/purpose of SCCs in the mission of the church."

The Catholic Church in Eastern Africa continues to respond to the contemporary signs of the times. This includes establishing SCCs in Refugee Camps and camps of Internal Displaced People (IDP). Often the SCCs are part of a parish established in the camps.

The first Case Study is Ngara District in Kagera Region that hosted two refugee settlements (mainly refugees of the Hutu Ethnic Group from Burundi) known as Lukole A and B in northwestern Tanzania. Orobator explains:

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<sup>193</sup> BICAM -- CEBAM Webiste, retrived on 26 February, 2015, <http://www.bicam-cebam.org/newsinfo.php?id=58&lang=en>

<sup>194</sup> Febian Pikititi in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 18 January, 2013.

<sup>195</sup> *Pastoral Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Nairobi 2013*, Nairobi: Archdiocese of Nairobi, 2013, page 17.

The Christian community is organized into seven outstations located in different sections of the camp. Together the outstations make up the refugee “parish.” These outstations are further divided into Small Christian Communities. Each community is run by a team of four people (a man, a woman, a boy and a girl). A total of forty refugee catechists collaborate with the team. According to the chief catechist, Juvenal Niboye, “the SCCs are responsible for the growth and development of the church in the camps”... The SCCs of Lukole regularly identified needier refugees, to whom they offered food and wood for fuel.<sup>196</sup>

A second Case Study is the Rhino Camp in Uganda where the Refugee Christian Community “regularly teamed up to cultivate the farms belonging to refugees who had become incapacitated or were elderly.”<sup>197</sup>

A third Case Study is Lodwar Diocese in northwestern Kenya that opened Holy Cross Parish in Kakuma Refugee Camp. It treats the parish and its pastoral team as any one of the 17 other parishes in the diocese as described as follows:

The 10 major chapels (like outstations) in the parish are divided into 26 Small Christian Communities. This makes pastoral administration, prayer, charitable activities and conflict resolutions easy for the pastors and all commissions involved in the pastoral work in the Camp. Daily services are held in these SCCs... A system has been created whereby needy refugees approach the leaders of the SCCs of the chapels. They are then referred to somebody in the Justice and Peace Commission. A lot of problems can be solved at this level. Others are referred to existing NGOs in the Camp, i.e. Lutheran World Federation, World Vision or the Jesuit Refugee Service. The Catholic faithful are refugees from Sudan, DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia.<sup>198</sup>

Another contemporary response is the pastoral concern and care of single Catholic mothers through the SCCs. Their number has increased dramatically especially in big cities such as Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. When these mothers ask for Baptism of their infants, some SCCs first choose a responsible wife and mother in the SCC to “accompany” the single mother – to explain her responsibilities in raising a child a Catholic and other formation and education issues. The SCC member is called the accompanier/the person who accompanies in this Ministry of Pastoral Accompaniment.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>196</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos*, pp., 149, 196.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>198</sup> Report of Father Frans Thoolen, SMA, Official of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Vatican Website, retrieved on 7 March, 2013, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/migrants/pom2003\\_91/rc\\_pc\\_migrants\\_pom91\\_Thoolen.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/pom2003_91/rc_pc_migrants_pom91_Thoolen.html)

<sup>199</sup> There are many varieties and forms of Accompaniment. Spiritual Accompaniment is common in spiritual direction, spiritual guidance and spiritual discernment. Mission as accompaniment: “While the use of the term ‘accompaniment’ as a model of missionary practice is relatively new... the spirituality and practice of accompaniment, ‘walking with,’

Then the endorsement of the SCC is sent to the parish before the child is accepted for Baptism. Many of these single mothers are fervent Catholics. Especially in the economically poor areas of big cities such as Nairobi (slums, shanty towns, informal settlements, etc.) they are the leaders of their SCCs.<sup>200</sup>

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can affect a transformation...the lived spirituality of accompaniment is grounded in the very life of Jesus.” Claude Barbour and Eleanor Doidge, “Mission as Accompaniment” in Stephen Bevens, (ed.), *A Century of Catholic Mission*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock. 2013.

Qualities of Accompaniment/Accompanying include:

- Walking with/Walking along side of
- Start where people are at
- Listening
- Asking questions
- Supporting/Affirming
- Loving presence
- Solidarity
- Compassion
- Advanced Empathy
- Advising/Guiding
- Challenging
- Empowering/Empowerment
- Transforming

<sup>200</sup> The 17 August, 2013 issue of the *Tablet* has a powerful article by Paul Vallely: “How Life in the Slums Changed the Pope.” “As leader of Argentina’s Jesuits, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was a staunch conservative. Now, as Pope Francis, he has put caring for the poor at the heart of his ministry. Here, in a second extract from a new book, the writer traces Bergoglio’s spiritual transformation.” <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/article/164557>

The description of the slums in Buenos Aires is similar to Nairobi and other big African cities: “Regular contact with the poorest of the poor in the Buenos Aires slums played a part. There, Bergoglio learned to see the world differently, said Fr. Augusto Zampini, a diocesan priest from Greater Buenos Aires who has taught at the Colegio Maximo. ‘When you’re working in a shanty town, 90 per cent of your congregation are single or divorced. You have to learn to deal with that Communion for the divorced and remarried is not an issue. Everyone takes Communion’” (page 6).

The Argentinian experience of CEBs has many parallels to Eastern Africa SCCs. “What shines through all this change is that Bergoglio is a pragmatist rather than an ideologue. As provincial in the 1970s, he was severe in his instructions to his Jesuits that they must serve only in parishes and not in Liberation Theology’s smaller, bottom-up base communities, where laymen and women took the place of priests and the poor learned to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. Yet, as archbishop, he reversed this attitude, giving the exact opposite instructions. ‘If you can, rent a garage and find some willing layman, let him go there, do a little catechesis, and even give Communion,’ he told his priests. ‘He was also concerned with getting the laity active,’ said his aide Federico Wals, ‘and letting them take

Davies provides an interesting summary of this 1961 to 2012 period. Along with retired Ugandan Archbishop James Odongo, formerly of Tororo Archdiocese, Uganda and retired Tanzanian Bishop Gervase Nkalanga, formerly of Bukoba Diocese, Tanzania, Davies is one of the three living bishops in the AMECEA Region who participated in the Second Vatican Council in Rome. In a wide ranging interview<sup>201</sup> he recalled how SCCs are the fruit of Vatican II ecclesiology. The discovery of Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA countries in the 1970s “was a marvelous novelty that has made the church grow.” He singled out the vibrant church at the SCC level as the greatest mark of ecclesial development on the African continent. Davies also participated in the First African Synod in Rome in 1994 and has witnessed how SCCs have developed as an inculturated model of church from the grassroots.

Magesa adds:

It is in the Eastern African ecclesiastical region (known as AMECEA, acronym for the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa), perhaps more than anywhere else in the Catholic world, where, for close to half-century now, there has been a formal, conscious, deliberate, and extensive ecclesial and ecclesiological effort to promote and sustain SCCs as a foundation of evangelization. Which means that, in Africa, SCCs have not only been a theoretical idea but a practical mission of the church; here SCCs have enjoyed not only theological elaboration and endorsement, but concrete pastoral application.

What, therefore, has come from Africa in the form of SCCs is a blessing of the Holy Spirit to and for the church worldwide. The full potential of community called church in its evangelizing or liberating role can only be realizable if evangelization takes place in SCCs. This is where the pragmatic work of justice, reconciliation, and peace can be fashioned, informed by that supreme joy that can be found only in the Gospel, the good news, of Jesus our Ancestor. SCCs are the way of being church.<sup>202</sup>

Pope Francis promulgated *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)* in Rome on 26 November, 2013 to close the Year of Faith. This is the Apostolic Exhortation on the meeting of the Synod of Bishops on *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* in October, 2012. SCCs are emphasized in relation to the parish in Nos. 29-30 with the key sections in **bold**:

The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and **missionary creativity of the pastor and the community**.

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charge.’ He wanted it to become a permanent feature of the Church that its mission should not depend on whoever happened to be in charge at any given time” (page 7).

<sup>201</sup> Colin Davies in an interview with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 24 March, 2012.

<sup>202</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “The Joy of Community,” p. 22.

While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if it proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed cluster made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration.<sup>203</sup> In all its activities **the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers**. It is a **community of communities**, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a **center of constant missionary outreach**. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them **completely mission-oriented**.

Other Church institutions, **basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervor and a new capacity for dialogue with the world** whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the Particular Church.<sup>204</sup> This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.

Msgr. Hubertus van Megen, the then Charge D’affaires to Malawi, said that is striking that the pope devotes a lot of space in the apostolic exhortation to the important of the parish in pastoral ministry, evangelization and mission.<sup>205</sup> This “community of communities” (or “communion of communities”) ecclesiology is fundamental to how SCCs are a new model of church in Eastern Africa today. The parish is indeed a communion of SCCs. It is significant that the pope distinguishes “basic communities” that are best known in Latin American with the more widely used name “small communities.” They actively participate in evangelization.

The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) prepared the AMECEA 18<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly on the theme “New Evangelization through True Conversion and Witnessing to Christian Faith” that took place in Lilongwe, Malawi from 16 to 26 July, 2014. In terms of fund raising, Malawian ECM Secretary General Father George Buleya explained that all were

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<sup>203</sup> Footnote 27 states that this section draws on *Proposition 26* on “Parishes and Other Ecclesial Realities” under “Pastoral Responses to the Circumstances of Our Day” of the 2011 World Synod of Bishops on “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.

<sup>204</sup> Footnote 29, *ibid*.

<sup>205</sup> Hubertus van Megen in a conversation with the author, Lilongwe, Malawi on 16 December, 2013.

involved from diocesan level to the parish level to Small Christian Community level down to the family level and a lot of enthusiasm was shown. “Our Christians were highly involved; they felt the ownership of the event and were willing to support it the best they can.”<sup>206</sup>

During a meeting of 31 SCCs leaders (18 woman and 11 men) in Kachebere Parish in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi on 12 December, 2013 I experienced this enthusiasm myself. These simple farmers and housewives in a rural parish were well aware of the coming AMECEA Meeting. They explained that each Catholic contributes 50 Malawian Kwacha to his or her SCC treasurer. This money is forwarded to the Parish Finance Committee and then to the Lilongwe Archdiocese Account for the preparations of the meeting.

One of the topics of reflection during the study session of the AMECEA Plenary was: “New Evangelization as an Opportunity to Work towards True Conversion and Witness to Christian Faith (Emphasis on the Role of Family Life and Small Christian Communities).”

In preparation for the plenary the AMECEA Pastoral Department prepared “The Logical Strategic Framework for the Revitalization and Strengthening of SCCs as a Way of Being Church as Family in the AMECEA Region” (April, 2014 – March, 2017). It provides a kind of road map for the implementation of this important area of pastoral priority as enshrined in the Ten-Year AMECEA Strategic Plan (2014 – 2024). It emphasizes four main activities:

1. Promoting SCCs Formation Teams.
2. Promoting Youth SCCs (Parish/Learning Institutions)
3. Promoting Resource Material for Sharing in SCCs.
4. Promoting SCCs and Faith Sharing Interactions using the Electronic Media.<sup>207</sup>

Kenyan diocesan priest Father Ferdinand Lugonzo, the Secretary General of AMECEA, said: “When you look at the broader theme for this AMECEA Plenary, two institutions are crucial: the apostolate of family and its contribution to the work of evangelization and the Small Christian Communities which is a brain child of AMECEA.” He said that the delegates reviewed and reflected on Small Christian Communities to see how effective they are and what gaps and challenges they are facing and proposed what can be done to make them [more] effective means of evangelization.

A special feature of the plenary was on Sunday, 20 July 2014 when the AMECEA delegates took a break from their study sessions and made pastoral solidarity visits to various parish communities in Lilongwe. For example at St. Francis Parish (Kanengo), the 25 Tanzanian delegates comprised of 21 Bishops, two priests and 2 lay faithful were warmly received by thousands of Christians. The liturgy, animated with traditional Malawian hymns

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<sup>206</sup> George Buleya in “MALAWI: ECM is Set for the 18<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly,” *AMECEA Latest News*, 25 October, 2013, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 27 October, 2013 [http://amecea.blogspot.com/2013/10/malawi-ecm-is-set-for-18thamecea.html?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+AmceceNews+%28AMECEA+NEWS+BLOG%29](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2013/10/malawi-ecm-is-set-for-18thamecea.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+AmceceNews+%28AMECEA+NEWS+BLOG%29)

<sup>207</sup> “The Logical Strategic Framework for the Revitalization and Strengthening of SCCs as a Way of Being Church as Family in the AMECEA Region (April, 2014 – March, 2017),” Nairobi: AMECEA Secretariat, Unpublished Article, 2014, pp. 2-4.

and dances, was presided over by Tanzanian Bishop Tarcisius Ngalalekumtwa, Bishop of Iringa and President of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference. In his homily the Archbishop of Arusha, Tanzanian Archbishop Josephat Lebulu said that the Risen Christ through the Holy Spirit is working with the AMECEA Church all the time and that is why the inspiration made by the AMECEA Church in instituting the Small Christian Communities is desired by churches in other parts of the world as an effective strategy for evangelization.<sup>208</sup>

The “Communiqué of the 18<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Lilongwe, Malawi (16<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2014)” under “New Evangelization to Address New Challenges” stated:

We endeavour to deepen evangelization and employ various methodologies to ensure true catechesis, true conversion, true spirituality and true witness to Christian faith in AMECEA region and beyond. We encourage all Catholics to participate actively in Small Christian Communities. As shepherds we commit ourselves to ensuring that Small Christian Communities continue being places for the true experience of faith.

“Place” is a key word here. Over the past 10 years Catholic Church documents at all levels have emphasized that the SCC (the church in the local neighborhood) is the actual place or physical location/setting where the following happen (in alphabetical order): *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection, communion, conversion, counselling, deeper evangelization, family catechesis, family life apostolate, formation, friendships, healing, justice and peace, marriage catechesis, mercy, mutual support, new evangelization, pastoral care, prayer, reconciliation, relationships, religious education, school of faith, service, shaping Christian consciences, training, transformation, unity and witness.

The AMECEA Countries prepared for the III Extraordinary World Synod of Bishops on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization," that took place in Rome from 5-19 October, 2014. This October, 2014 III Extraordinary World Synod of Bishops “defined” the “*status quaestionis*” (Latin for “state of the question”) of the topic of the family and marriage. Then the next synod – officially called the Synod of Bishops XIV Ordinary General Assembly -- to take place in Rome in October, 2015 -- will “seek working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family.”

This connects with many AMECEA dioceses that are celebrating 2014 as “The Year of the Family.” This flows into the World Meeting of Families on the theme “Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive” to take place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA from 22-27 September, 2015.

Hopefully Eastern African SCCs can be involved in this whole process. More information and examples can be found in Chapter 12 on “SCCs Promote Family Ministry in Eastern Africa.”

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<sup>208</sup> Adapted from Philip Odii, "Malawi: AMECEA Delegates Visit Parish Communities in Lilongwe Archdiocese," *AMECEA Online Newsletter* Special Plenary Assembly Issue 005, 21 July, 2014, retrieved on 24 July, 2014, [http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/07/malawi-amecea-delegates-visit-parish.html?utm\\_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=a6dbdddb43-AMECEA\\_Online\\_Newsletter\\_6\\_5\\_2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_85fa866553-a6dbdddb43-67462977](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/07/malawi-amecea-delegates-visit-parish.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=a6dbdddb43-AMECEA_Online_Newsletter_6_5_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-a6dbdddb43-67462977)

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council is on 8 December, 2015. With many books and articles being written and conferences held, the “Reception of Vatican II” is being widely discussed.<sup>209</sup> This is an opportunity to revisit Catholic Church history and learn from the past 50 years. From the perspective of SCCs in Eastern Africa we are rediscovering the importance of the two founders Kalilombe and Mwoleka. Their vision of the theology and praxis of Vatican II’s communion ecclesiology helped create the path for the establishment and development of Eastern African SCCs.

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<sup>209</sup> “Reception” of a document or teaching in the Catholic Church is a rich and meaningful word in term of its theological and pastoral implications. "Reception" has been understood as one of the *munera*, or gifts, of the church from its beginning. This gift is exercised by the People of God who constitute the church and is given to the everyday Catholics who express the *sensus fidei fidelium* and the *sensus fidei*. Reception is a gift through which the sense of the faith of the faithful is authoritatively expressed. Reception is the foundation of the sense of the faith and of the faithful community. Recognition by reception is a form of consensus formation in a church that understands itself as a community of Local Churches. While we may have many good ideas and intentions in the communications process, ultimately it is the “receiver” who decides what is received and how it is acted upon. Some meanings/responses (alphabetically):

acceptance  
 adherence  
 agreement  
 assent  
 attentiveness  
 deny assent  
 disagreement  
 endorsement  
 indifference  
 irrelevance  
 obedience  
 rejection

Summary of Eugene Cullen Kennedy, “Can Catholics Disagree Only When They Agree With the Church?” *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 30 July 2014, National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved 15 August, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/bulletins-human-side/new-sensus-fidei-document-can-catholics-disagree-only-when-they-agree>

## 2. Quantitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region

We have a good overall picture. Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa. But there is a gap. Five countries (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) have extensive statistics. For example, Tanzania alone has over 60,000 SCCs and Kenya alone has over 45,000 SCCs. Many dioceses and parishes in Eastern Africa have detailed statistics on the names and number of SCCs. The best source are the detailed annual statistics that each diocese sends to the Vatican. For example, in the report Archdiocese of Nairobi Annual Returns from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013 one question under “Total Parish” is: “Number of *Jumuiyas*: \_\_\_\_\_. These statistics are also used as part of the bishop’s every five-year report during his *Ad Limina* visit.

The Pastoral Department of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC)<sup>210</sup> has compiled statistics on the number of SCCs in 22 of the 34 dioceses in the country as of 2013. The total is 45,491 SCCs with the leading dioceses as follows:

- 5,837 SCCs: Moshi Diocese.
- 5,823 SCCs: Morogoro Diocese.
- 3,682 SCCs: Shinyanga Diocese.
- 3,040 SCCs: Dar es Salaam Archdiocese.
- 2,860 SCCs: Rulenge-Ngara Diocese.
- 2,738 SCCs: Njombe Diocese.
- 2,731 SCCs: Iringa Diocese.
- 2,700 SCCs: Mbulu Diocese.

If all the dioceses are included it is estimated that there are over 60,000 SCCs in the whole of Tanzania.

As of 31 December, 2011 Dar es Salaam Archdiocese had 3,040 SCCs in its 67 parishes. The number is higher if you include SCCs in schools. As of 15 June, 2012 Nairobi Archdiocese had 4,537 SCCs in its 103 parishes and 12 chaplaincies.<sup>211</sup> As of 15 June, 2012 Homa Bay Diocese, Kenya had 3,200 SCCs. As of 31 December, 2013 Ngong Diocese, Kenya had “at least” 1,080 SCCs.

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<sup>210</sup> Each of the national episcopal conferences in the AMECEA Region has its own structure depending on the number of dioceses. Normally SCCs fall under the Pastoral Department that includes the Lay Apostolate, Youth Apostolate and Family Life Apostolate. TEC with 34 dioceses has separate departments for these apostolates. In actual practice SCCs link to all of them.

<sup>211</sup> “Today there are 2,891,359 Catholics in the Archdiocese of Nairobi with ever increasing vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Small Christian Communities and Schools of Evangelization for the training of clergy and laity are springing up everywhere.” *There is Nothing I Cannot Do in Christ Who Strengths Me (Philippians 4:13). This is the Time for Faith and Self-Reliance*. Pastoral Letter of H.E. John Cardinal Njue, Archdiocese of Nairobi Family Day 2012, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2012, p. 12.

Another useful source are the Catholic Directories that are published on the AMECEA Level, the national level and the diocesan level. The *Kenya Catholic Directory 2006* is a goldmine of statistics. "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."<sup>212</sup>

A Case Study of one diocese shows the evolving pattern. It was estimated that in 2006 Machakos Diocese had over 4,000 SCCs, the most SCCs in Kenya followed by Nairobi Archdiocese. Our new research and statistics shows this has increased to over 5,000 SCCs. Kenyan Apostle of Jesus Father Patrick Nzao,<sup>213</sup> the Pastor of Our Lady of Calvary Parish, Kibwezi, said the number has risen because of the increase of SCCs in the subparishes and outstations. In a meeting on 4 October, 2011 near Kibwezi nine SCC members of St. Cecilia SCC in St. Peter's Parish, Makindu (that has 96 SCCs) said that two of the reasons for the high numbers are the foundation of the Catholic faith is very strong in the diocese and hardships such as famine and little rainfall have strengthened the local Catholic people's resolve and commitment. Kenyan layman Alphonse Omolo, one of the guest participants in the meeting, emphasized: "SCCs are the vehicles for peace and reconciliation in the Catholic Church and the entire society. We all need to work for reconciliation and peace starting in our families so that we can inspire the ripple effect or radiation of such peace and reconciliation throughout our neighborhood and the wider society."

More and more up-to-date statistics are available on the internet without being printed in book or booklet form. This includes online directories such as the *AMECEA Directory* <http://www.amecea.org/index.php/amecea-directory-main>.

The other four countries (Eritrea,<sup>214</sup> Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan) have few statistics. The AMECEA Secretariat in Nairobi welcomes up-to-date statistics from all nine AMECEA countries especially Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan.<sup>215</sup>

These statistics have to be seen against the background of the growth of the Catholic Church in Africa, and in Eastern Africa in particular, and the terrific expansion of Christianity in Africa – the fastest growing continent in history. It is clear from the available data that the center of gravity of Christianity is shifting dramatically from north to south, that is, from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia and Latin America." According to American religious sociologist Philip Jenkins, there will be one billion Christians in Africa by 2050.

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<sup>212</sup> In Aloysius, "Discovering God's Marvels: Facts & Curiosities about the *Kenya Catholic Directory 2006*," *Seed* 18:7-8 (July-August, 2006), pp. 10-11.

<sup>213</sup> Patrick Nzao in a conversation with the author in Kibwezi, Kenya on 2 June, 2012.

<sup>214</sup> I asked the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) representative in Eritrea how the SCC pastoral priority is being carried out. He answered with the grim words: "In Eritrea our only priority is survival."

<sup>215</sup> It is noteworthy that no AMECEA Plenary Assembly has yet taken place in any of these four countries. The main reason is that there are communications and travel problems between Ethiopia and Eritrea and between South Sudan and Sudan. Perhaps the Chairman of AMECEA can be elected from one of these four countries.

In 1900 just twenty-five percent of the 266 million Catholics in the world lived in Africa, Asia and Latin America; by 2000, sixty-six percent of 1.1 billion Catholics lived in the Global South, and by 2050, the Southern share is projected to be seventy-five percent, or three quarters of all the Catholics on the planet. That's perhaps the most rapid, most sweeping, transformation of the Catholic population in more than 2,000 years of history.

American journalist Barb Frazee reports:

The Catholic Church is growing by leaps and bounds in and Tanzania, as it is throughout the continent of Africa. Since Pope John Paul II became pope in 1978, the number of Catholics in Africa has increased by nearly 150 percent to 137.5 million. Some church leaders attribute the growth to development of the concept of Small Christian Communities, parish-based groups that meet to pray, study Scripture and help others.<sup>216</sup>

Estimates on the number of Catholics in Africa vary. Wikipedia says that there are 135 million Catholics in Africa and 40 million Catholics in the nine countries of Eastern Africa.<sup>217</sup> Other estimates go up to 185 million.

Based on the *Church Book of Statistics* updated 31 December, 2011 Kenyan diocesan priest Father Don Bosco Ochieng Onyalla describes the “steadily growing Catholic presence [in Africa]

Global Population: 6.9 billion  
 Catholic Global Population: 1.2 billion  
 African Population: 1.1 billion  
 Catholic African Population: 193 million

The number of African Catholics has risen from 13.8% Catholics in Africa in 2005 to 16.2% in 2012. Africa recorded a growth of 0.35% more than the previous year compared to the world wide Catholic growth of 0.4%.<sup>218</sup>

According to the *2012 World Population Review* Africa has the youngest population in the world with an average age of 18 years. Forty percent of Africans (416 million people) are 14 years old or less. More than 70% of the population of East Africa is below the age of 30 with the majority being between 15 and 25 years of age. The average age in the region is

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<sup>216</sup> Barb Frazee, “Small Christian Communities Contribute to Growth of Church in Africa,” *Catholic News Service*, 24 January, 2004, retrieved on the Catholic News Service Website at <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0403501.htm> on 9 March, 2012.

<sup>217</sup> “Catholic Church by Country,” retrieved on Wikipedia on 17 August, 2012, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic\\_Church\\_by\\_country#Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_by_country#Africa)

<sup>218</sup> “Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA) Strategic Plan 2014-2017,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2014.

19 years. By 2050 one in every three children in the world will be born in Sub Saharan Africa.<sup>219</sup>

A United Nations forecast shows:

As of 29 July 2015 there are around 7.3 billion inhabitants on the planet. By 2030 this is expected to increase to 8.5bn and by 2050 it should be 9.7bn. The medium-variant projection for 2100 puts the world's population at 11.2bn. Africa is expected to account for more than half of the world's population growth between 2015 and 2050. Worldwide the average number of children per woman is at 2.5. In Africa, however, the number is at 4.7. Africa's share of global population is projected to grow to 25% in 2050 and 39% by 2100.<sup>220</sup>

Orobator summarizes:

American *aficionado* of the Vatican John Allen, Jr., once remarked that "if I were asked to offer a history of Roman Catholicism in the twentieth century in one sentence, I would reply: 'The center of gravity shifted from North to South'."<sup>221</sup> Such shift or incontrovertible evidence of religious growth in Africa is interpreted by Benedict XVI as a sign of hope for the rest of the world. Africa holds a significant piece of the future of Christianity or, crucially, the future of Christianity passes through Africa. And statistics don't lie! Take, as one example, statistics of the growth of Christianity in Africa:

- One-in-five of all the Christians in the world (21%) now lives in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>222</sup>
- Over a period of one hundred years Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa has recorded an astronomical 70-fold increase in membership, from 7 million to 470 million.<sup>223</sup>
- Sub-Saharan Africa has more than 500 million Christians, which makes it the region with the third-largest number of Christians worldwide. Collectively, the region's 51 countries and territories are home to nearly a quarter of the world's Christians (24%).<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> 2012 *World Population Review*, retrieved on 28 August, 2014, <http://www.worldreview.info/content/africas-population-boom>

<sup>220</sup> "Analysis: Latest Population Forecasts," *Zenit: The World Seen from Rome Daily Dispatch* Email, 9 August, 2015.

<sup>221</sup> John L. Allen, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*, New York: Doubleday, 2009, p. 17.

<sup>222</sup> The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa" (April 2010), <http://www.pewforum.org>.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

Within the wider context of religious growth in Africa, Catholicism has recorded significant proportionate demographic expansion over the last one hundred years, climbing from 1,220,000, or less than 1% of the total global population of Catholics in 1910, to 171.48 million, or 16% of Catholics worldwide, in 2010.<sup>225</sup> These figures show the rapid growth of Catholicism on the continent in the span of a century, a fact that recently prompted an imaginative Spanish journalist to nickname Africa “a factory of Catholic souls.”<sup>226</sup>

Of the spiritual riches of Africa Pope Benedict XVI stated:

When we speak of the treasures of Africa... The Word of God, instead, makes us look at another inheritance: the spiritual and cultural one of which humanity has even greater need than it does of raw materials. As Jesus said, “What gain, then, is it for anyone to win the whole world and forfeit his life?” (*Mark* 8:36). From this point of view, Africa represents an enormous spiritual “lung” for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope.<sup>227</sup>

This present evaluation relies on the [28 Criteria to Evaluate a Typical Small Christian Community \(SCC\) in Eastern Africa](#) (found as Appendix No. 2 on page 270) that are explained as follows:

Our SCCs Research Team has established 29 criteria for evaluating<sup>228</sup> a typical neighborhood parish-based Small Christian Community (SCC) in an urban, urban-rural

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<sup>225</sup> World Christian Database (<http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>) and The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population” (December 2011; corrected February 2013), <http://www.pewforum.org>.

<sup>226</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, “A Billion Reasons to Believe in Africa – The Long March from ‘The Hopeless Continent’ to the ‘Spiritual Lung’ of Humanity,” *2013 Cafod Lecture*, 18 October 2013, *Tablet* Website, retrieved on 20 October, 2013, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/images/A%20billion%20reasons%20to%20believe%20in%20Africa%20Full%20Text%2018%20October%202013.pdf>

<sup>227</sup> Benedict XVI, “Homily by the Holy Father,” “Solemn Inauguration of the II Special Assembly for Africa of Bishops, 4 October, 2009, retrieved from the Vatican Website on 8 May, 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino\\_23\\_ii\\_speciale-africa-2009/02\\_inglese/b03\\_02.html#SOLEMN\\_INAUGURATION\\_OF\\_THE\\_II\\_SPECIAL\\_ASSEMBLY\\_FOR\\_AFRICA\\_OF\\_BISHOPS](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_23_ii_speciale-africa-2009/02_inglese/b03_02.html#SOLEMN_INAUGURATION_OF_THE_II_SPECIAL_ASSEMBLY_FOR_AFRICA_OF_BISHOPS)

<sup>228</sup> A helpful evaluation tool or measurement tool are the six characteristics of Vital/Small Christian Communities described in Section No. 89 in Blessed John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa*.

(called peri-urban in Zambia), rural-urban or rural area in Eastern Africa.<sup>229</sup> These criteria are drawn from official AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) documents as far back as the 1973, 1976 and 1979 AMECEA Plenary Study Conferences, the First African Synod in 1994, the Second African Synod in 2009, practical pastoral decisions based on experience during this 1973-2014 period, and an evolving praxis, theology and vision of SCCs.

The first criterion has been the hardest to explain and the easiest to misunderstand: “The SCC is small -- usually not more than 15 to 25 regularly participating/attending adults (with a varying number of children).” For years many priests and other pastoral agents in Eastern Africa thought that “small” means “local.” So they equated a SCC with the local outstation (or “mission chapel” to use the language of many years ago). This could be 50-100 people and even more. This was a challenge for the Kuria Ethnic Group in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania who usually found their identity in larger groups. Over time they came to see that the outstation is the “Local Christian Community” that is composed of small groups of Christians called SCCs.

Even now in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi the Christians are used to larger groups of 100 or 200 people especially in some rural areas that are popularly called *miphakati* (SCCs). In our evaluation we found that the key questions to ask are: Do these SCCs meet outside the Sunday Morning Mass and the “Sunday Service Without a Priest?” Is the group small enough that *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* can be done in a manageable circle where everyone can participate. Following the guideline that “there is no blueprint for building SCCs,” creativity and flexibility are needed. Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia still has large numbers in some of their SCCs, but the members go into small groups for the *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*. Then they all come together in one large community for the pastoral meeting or business meeting.

Now after many years of experience the meaning of a SCC is clearer. It is a small group of committed Christians most often living in the same geographical area, that is, the church in the neighborhood. A recent trend is that the number of SCC members in one particular SCC is larger to insure that enough people volunteer for the different ministries/services (described elsewhere).

Rutechura expands the meaning of neighborhood, neighborhoodness and neighborliness in the context of SCCs:

In this line of thought, Titus Amigu makes an important point that SCCs within the pastoral option of the AMECEA Bishops squared with the vision of extension or perfection of neighborliness. This neighborhood is the immediate context and field which can be rightly termed nurturing the “Church in (or of) the Neighborhood.” Witnessing to Christ’s love through SCCs is meant to be an act of living the Christian commitment of love and

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<sup>229</sup> Our research has identified two new contexts or geographical locations: First, in Lodwar and Marsabit Dioceses in Northern Kenya the places of the meetings of the SCCs of the nomadic ethnic groups change dramatically according to the climate such during the dry season and during times of famine. Second, in parts of large metropolitan dioceses such as Nairobi the locations of SCCs are also classified as urban-rural and rural-urban.

cementing the bonds of belonging and togetherness (See Titus Amigu, “Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo -- Small Christian Communities in Tanzania” at <http://www.c-b-t.org>).

This interplay of broadening and deepening Christian neighborhoodness and belonging within SCCs is equally emphasized in *A Catholic Catechism* (East African Version) whereby it is stated that within the African communities, the sense of community is crucial. One is understood to find fulfillment only in relation with others. There is no room for loners. This sense of belonging, if not limited to one’s own small group only, can be very beneficial in building our communion with God and with each other as a celebrating community, especially with its stress on community living and responsibility (*Catechism*, 182)...

It is this *koinonia* perspective within SCCs that has provided space of opening up gates to welcome the neighbor, bridging differences and social strata in the day to day social living, sometimes even in economic status and varied cultural backgrounds. Both ordained ministers and the religious who are practitioners of Small Christian Communities are primarily seekers of communion rather than resolving to be leaders who impose their will and authority...

In a summarized manner, SCCs have led to new ways of building Christian identity with a special touch of a new sense of belonging and bonding. We can rightly call Small Christian communities “Christian care in (or of) the neighborhood environment.”<sup>230</sup>

Each country in the AMECEA Region has to be evaluated historically and contextually. The secession of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011 is only viewed by the Catholic Church as a political separation while the Catholic Church remains as one. To show this unity and inclusiveness, the Sudan Catholic Bishop Conference (SCBC) in August, 2013 became known as SCBC-SSS that basically translates as the Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference -- for Sudan and South Sudan.

The present two countries of South Sudan<sup>231</sup> and Sudan have had a unique history due to the many years of war, violence, political turmoil, tribalism and uprootedness. But research

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<sup>230</sup> Pius Rutechura, “Church and Authority -- Lessons and Challenges of Small Christian Communities: Focus on Dimensions of Leadership, Lay Participation, Priestly Ministry and Common Priesthood of the Faithful” in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium* pp. 3-4.

<sup>231</sup> Although the Protestant Churches are not part of this research, it is interesting to note that as of September, 2011 the [Catholic] Paulines Book and Media Center in Juba in South Sudan was selling hundreds of Bibles in local African languages to leaders of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church and the Mormon Church to use in their small cell groups in Juba.

shows that even in heavily Muslim<sup>232</sup> countries like Sudan, SCCs can have a special presence. Writing about the places in Africa where Missionaries of Africa serve, Richard Baawobr, M.Afr states:

Even when the community is small, as happens when Christians are in a minority, it is possible, and even desirable to make use of the dynamism of Small Christian Communities in order to give vitality to the local church. I know confreres who travelled more than 600 km to go to a meeting of a Small Christian Community in a Muslim milieu. This little community radiated energy around it in spite of or maybe because of their small numbers because they were the Family of God in their locality.<sup>233</sup>

In the 1980s and early 1990s SCCs were numerous especially due to the outreach programs, resource materials and animation of the National and Diocesan Palica (Pastoral and Liturgical Research Center) Centers. But gradually parishes closed due to the civil war and many Christians moved to safer areas. Most pastoral programs and SCCs stopped due to the upheaval and uncertainty.

After the independence of South Sudan on 9 July, 2011 SCCs training programs made a fresh start. This meant training a new generation of Catholics in the importance, meaning and activities of SCCs. A good process used throughout the AMECEA Region in building SCCs is three stages: First, to start or set up SCCs. Second, to make the SCCs strong. Third, is to make the SCC permanent and ongoing.<sup>234</sup>

Already significant shifts were taking place in South Sudan. For example, at one time there were many SCCs in Sacred Heart Parish in Port Sudan in Khartoum Archdiocese in the present Republic of Sudan (the north). As thousands of Sudanese Catholics moved back to South Sudan the demographics changed dramatically. Now there are only seven SCCs in Sacred Heart Parish. These Catholic lay people used mainly Arabic in their SCCs in the north. A new challenge is to adapt to the more local ethnic group languages in the south such as Dinka, Nuer and Bari.

On 24 September, 2011 I gave a talk on “SCCs: a New Beginning in South Sudan in Real Time” during the Monthly Reflection Day for Religious and Church Personnel in Juba Archdiocese at the Comboni Missionaries House.” “Real Time” was a metaphor for starting now/today in the rebuilding and revitalization process of a newly independent South Sudan after years of an interim or transitional period. South Sudan diocesan priest Nicholas Kiri, the

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<sup>232</sup> The words Muslim, Islam, Islamic, etc. have to be used very carefully without generalizations and stereotypes. Using clarifying adjectives such as “Fundamentalist Muslims” is important and necessary.

<sup>233</sup> Richard Baawobr, “The Origins and Reasons for Small Christian Communities,” Missionaries of Africa in West Africa Website, retrieved 24 July, 2014, <http://www.mafrwestafrica.net/content/view/648/71/lang,en>

<sup>234</sup> The Swahili language spoken in Eastern and Central Africa uses very effective wording for these three stages: *kuunda*, *kuimarisha* and *kudumisha*.

Director of the Palica Center in Juba Archdiocese, said: “SCCs are the most appealing pastoral approach to the new way of being church in South Sudan today.” As a gesture of conscious solidarity he gave copies of the “Republic of South Sudan: One Nation from Every Tribe, Tongue and People” Prayer Card to members of my St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi.

At a symposium on the “Role of the Church in the Independence of South Sudan” in Juba, South Sudan from 13--16 October, 2011 South Sudanese Bishop Daniel Adwok Marko Kur, the Auxiliary Bishop of Khartoum Archdiocese, Sudan, emphasized:

Any pastoral assessment is to be carried out within the Small Christian Communities, interactive and interdependent with the leadership of the church. [Small] Christian Communities are the privileged place where the church can ask and respond to the most pertinent questions of the time. Who are we? What is moving us? What are we here for? Where are we heading to?<sup>235</sup>

As a concrete sign of this rebuilding and revitalization process the Palica Center in Wau Diocese, South Sudan gave a one day workshop on “Building Christian Community” for priests and other pastoral workers on 28 February, 2012.<sup>236</sup> Highlights included talks on “The Origins, Establishment and Growth of SCCs,” the reflection method of the “Seven Steps of Gospel Sharing” and the “Nine Differences between SCCs and Associations.”<sup>237</sup>

2014 reports from Tombura--Yambio Diocese are encouraging. South Sudanese diocesan priest Father Mark Kumbonyaki Soro is the Pastoral Coordinator of Tombura-Yambio Diocese. He reports that SCCs are strong in the Ave Maria Parish and Nsara Center.<sup>238</sup> American Maryknoll missionary priest Father Jim Noonan, MM reports:

The Small Christian Communities Movement has begun in a few parishes, but much fertile ground for transforming individuals and Christian Communities is ripe for the harvest. The People of God in Yambio are able and ready to be witnesses, a new light to many other churches way beyond their borders.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Daniel Adwok Marko Kur, “Pastoral Challenges for the Church in the New Divided Sudan: A New Era of Evangelization Has Dawned” in *One Church from Every Tribe, Tongue and People: Symposium on the Role of the Church in the Independence of South Sudan*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2012, p. 175.

<sup>236</sup> This workshop was mentioned in connection with how SCCs are participating in the proposed pastoral project: “Liturgical Formation Program and Pastoral and Spiritual Formation Program for the Pastoral Parish Councils for the Triennium 2013 – 2015 at PALICA Center, Diocese of Wau, South Sudan.”

<sup>237</sup> Palica Team, “Building Christian Community,” Wau: Privately Duplicated, 2012.

<sup>238</sup> Mark Kumbonyaki Soro, conversation with the author in Nairobi, 7 May, 2014.

<sup>239</sup> James Noonan, “Informative Pastoral Visit to Yambio 11-23/04/2014,” Juba: Unpublished Paper, 2014.

Two AMECEA countries have a variety of small communities that do not fit the normal description of a SCC in Eastern Africa. Ethiopia has 12 dioceses: one archdiocese (that includes a Pastoral Territory), two eparchies, eight apostolic vicariates and one apostolic prefecture. Nine dioceses follow the Latin Rite so can easily follow the AMECEA Model of SCCs that are neighborhood, parish-based Small Christian Communities.

Three dioceses of Ethiopia and all four dioceses of Eritrea follow the Geez Rite<sup>240</sup> (also called the Ethiopian Rite and the Oriental Rite). This rite came from the Coptic Orthodox Church (commonly referred to as part of the Uniate Eastern Church – the 22 Eastern Catholic churches that are in union with Rome), not the Roman (Western) Catholic Church. It follows the model of the early Christian Church and uses names of the early Christian Church.<sup>241</sup>

SCCs are coordinated through the Ethiopian Pastoral Activities Commission of the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (ECS). The Pastoral Coordination on the national level is described as follows:

Each year there has been at least one [national] pastoral seminar for priests, sisters, catechists, laity and youth leaders on different themes. These seminars enabled all pastoral agents to deepen their knowledge in Biblical, Spiritual, Social, Catechesis, Sacraments, Christian Doctrine, family, dignity and role of women, youth ministry, etc. and also the methods of spreading the Good News of the Lord to different categories of people as a whole. More than 1000 people have been capacitated by short term seminars/workshops on different areas of pastoral fields.<sup>242</sup>

Diocesan seminars are described as follows:

One of the major areas in which the diocesan seminars focused was on the Pastoral Letter of the Ethiopian Catholic Bishops *The Church We Want to Be*. The message was discussed in depth at the parochial level and also in the Small Christian Communities for its implementation. The faithful together with their pastors have shown their readiness to implement and act according to the given guidance.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> How many SCC members in the other AMECEA countries understand the Geez liturgies (the rite in Ethiopia)? For those familiar with Latin or Roman Rite in the Western Church, it is like a sung High Mass in Latin. One challenge is to be open and supportive of inculturation in all parts of Eastern Africa.

<sup>241</sup> Based on two conversations: With Ethiopian Deacon Abrha Tesfay Teare, MAfr in Nairobi on 1 March, 2012, He finished his fourth year of theology at Tangaza University College in May, 2012 and is presently serving in Uganda. With Abba Hailemariam Worako, OFM Cap in Addis Abba, Ethiopia on 16 February, 2014.

<sup>242</sup> Described on the Ethiopian Catholic Church (ECC) Website, <http://www.ecs.org.et>, retrieved 30 December, 2013.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

In 1976 when the AMECEA Bishops established SCCs as the key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa, the Ethiopian and Eritrean Bishops opted for the traditional devotional small community or association called *Mahber*.<sup>244</sup> It is a devotional group with a long history and significance. Ethiopian Abba Kibera Tseggai states:

According to the Ethio/Eritrean Geez Rite Church, *Mahber* is a spiritual Christian community or association – of the Small Christian Communities type – being now experimented and recommended by the First African Synod as described by [St.] John Paul II in *The Church in Africa*. *Mahber* is a Basic Christian Community already well established from the apostolic period and better revived in the Geez Rite Church particularly from 1400 AD. Usually it is constituted of 12 families recalling the community of Christ with his 12 disciples.<sup>245</sup>

*Mahber* offers importance social support in the Ethiopian family system. Eritrean Abune [Bishop] Kidane Yebio of the Catholic Eparchy of Keren, Eritrea explains:

The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Geez Rite in the Church in Eritrea and Ethiopia [also called the Ethiopian Rite] are called *Mahber* (plural *Mahberat*). These groups consist of 12 families and are formed according to popular devotions to Our Lady, Holy Savior, Holy Trinity, Archangel Gabriel, Archangel Michael, St. George and St. Joseph. These *Mahberat* imitate the 12 Apostles who formed the first community of disciples around Jesus. They meet every month for a Recollection Day on the patron/patroness saint's feast day that includes: Eucharist, rosary, a reflection by the parish priest and an *agape*. Works of mercy and charity are carried out between the monthly meetings. These devotional small communities have a big role in the re-evangelization of our people. These groups enable the lay people to be propagators of the faith in places where the church is not present.<sup>246</sup>

The explanation of *Mahber* as a traditional small community or association of the Geez Christians especially the importance of the *agape*, the communal meal is explained as follows:

Every month all the members gather in the house of a family who is a member of the *Mahber* or near a church. This means every family has one day in a year to prepare the *agape*. All eat from one *meadi* (plate) and drink together from one cup to express their unity, communion and love. They are called the brothers or sisters of the *meadi* or cup. Eating together is a very

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<sup>244</sup> Some Ethiopian students and students with pastoral experience in Ethiopia in our SCCs Courses have written interesting and challenging course papers on *Mahber*.

<sup>245</sup> Kibera Tseggai, "Mahber," "Small Christian Communities in the Light of the African Synod," AMECEA *Documentation Service* (ADS), 7/No. 453/1996 (1 April, 1996), p. 6.

<sup>246</sup> Abune [Bishop] Kidane Yebio in an email message to the author dated 14 July, 2011.

serious business according to the Cushite culture. This *meadi* and cup have nothing to do with filling the stomach or quenching the thirst. It is elevating the profane to the level of sacred using the African value as an expression of Christianity. This socialization is transformed into a community under God's sovereignty (1 *Timothy* 4:4-5). The fact of eating together makes the community more pure. The eating together is an acknowledgement of peace, friendship, trust of each other, love, charity and reconciliation. The family is built especially at the common meal. This eating together is a very strong symbolic saying that the members of the *Mahber* make use of.<sup>247</sup>

This communal meal is a very good example and model for the meals and celebrations in the SCCs in other parts of Eastern Africa.

As a Case Study a *Mahber* called the Sacred Heart Association met on Friday, 14 February, 2014 (the first Friday of the Month following the Ethiopian Calendar) in Holy Savior Church in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. There were 43 participants: 28 women and 15 men.<sup>248</sup> After participating in the Geez Mass in the main church, people gathered in one of the parish halls for a talk on the Gospel by the parish priest and discussion and planning led by the *Mahber* leaders. This was followed by a simple meal (*agape*). In the afternoon there was eucharistic adoration in the main church.

Activities of this small community or association include some *Bible* Sharing and Faith Sharing at some of their monthly meetings; its own choir that sings at some of the big parish liturgies; visiting the sick and offering financial help; and a Community Treasury for special needs.<sup>249</sup>

Some of the activities of other *Mahberat* in Ethiopia are:

- The small community reconciles members who have disputes through special ceremonies. When every member does not drink from the ceremonial pot (cup), the leaders immediately know something is wrong and try to reconcile the disputing parties. Once reconciled, both parties drink together.
- Helping at marriages, anniversaries and funerals. This includes encouraging young people in the association to get married in the Catholic Church, providing the choir at different events and organizing and serving at the social events.
- Offering economic support to needy members of the small community itself and in the neighborhood.

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<sup>247</sup> Alazar Abraha, "Building a Christian Community and Communion," *New People*, 145 (July-August, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>248</sup> Normally the *Mahber* consists of separate men and women groups such as Gabriel for men and Mary for women.

<sup>249</sup> Interview with Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Mengesha Toma, OFM Cap, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 15 February, 2014 and Ethiopian layman Abel Musse, 17 February, 2014.

While the term SCCs is not well known in Ethiopia, some of the activities of SCCs in other AMECEA countries take place in the *Mahber*. Yet Ethiopian Missionaries of Africa Deacon Abrha Tesfay Teare, MAfr points out that “the Ethiopians’ understanding of Small Christian Communities and their perception on women’s participation in SCCs as well as in the church are different.”<sup>250</sup> Mejia states that “Mahber has a different DNA than SCC.”<sup>251</sup>

Ethiopian Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, CM of Addis Ababa Archdiocese, Ethiopia states: “The Ethiopian Catholic Church that belongs to the Oriental Churches prepares its agents of evangelization both in the traditional ways and also in the modern ways. We start first with Christian families, the home, the small church from where they get their formation. Then to the parishes.”<sup>252</sup>

After the 2011 AMECEA Plenary Assembly it was suggested that the Catholic Church in Eritrea and Ethiopia further explore their own inculturated small community SCC models. These models would be different than the common SCCs models present in the predominantly Latin Rite of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa.

During a visit to Ethiopia in February, 2014 I visited different places and interviewed a number of people to better understand small communities and Small Christian Communities in the Ethiopian context.<sup>253</sup> I discovered that “Small Christian Communities” as they are experienced in other parts of the AMECEA Region are not well known and understood in Ethiopia. I heard eight different terms (alphabetically) with their different meanings and interpretations:

- Bible Sharing Group
- Bible Study Group
- Extended Family Together
- *Mahber*
- Small Apostolic Group
- Small Christian Community
- Small Prayer Group
- Small Village Prayer Group

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<sup>250</sup> Abrha Tesfay Teare, *Women’s Role in Small Christian Communities in Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, South B, Nairobi: Challenges and Opportunities*, Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Tangaza University College (CUEA), 2012, p. 4.

<sup>251</sup> Rodrigo Mejia, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 7 August, 2014.

<sup>252</sup> Berhaneyesus Souraphiel in a video interview in the DVD *50 Years of AMECEA*. Lusaka: Catholic Media Services, 2011.

<sup>253</sup> Four people who were very helpful were: Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, Abel Muse, Ethiopian Vincentian Abba Hagos Hayish, CM, Secretary General of the Ethiopian Catholic Bishops Conference and Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Hailegabriel Meleku, OFM Cap, National Pastoral Coordinator of the Ethiopian Catholic Bishops Conference.

*Mahber* is particularly important. But it should not be seen in conflict with or opposition to a SCC. In fact Muse states: “I am very much impressed by the ministry of building SCCs. The Catholic Church needs to be empowered and built on a solid foundation so the establishment of SCCs is the best strategy.”<sup>254</sup>

The local context in Ethiopia has some striking statistics. The overall population is 90 million people. 63% of the population is under 25 years old. The Christian population including all churches and denominations is 62% that includes: Orthodox – 44%, Protestants (Mainline Churches and Pentecostal Churches) – 17%. At present there are 1,116 Pentecostal Churches registered with the Ethiopian Government. There are 700,000 Catholics. A disturbing factor is that the overall Catholic population has decreased from 1.0% to 0.7%. 80% belong to the Latin (Roman) Rite) and 20% to the Geez Rite. Several Catholic leaders told me that the pastoral activities of some forms of small communities on the local level could help reverse this trend.

Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Gabriel Meskel Magino, OFM Cap explained the plan of his St. Anthony Parish, Ashira in Hosanna Diocese. The parish has eight zones with 28 chapels (similar to outstations). The SCCs called *Bete Tsellote* (“prayer house” in the national language Amharic) meet every week in the geographical area of its chapel on Tuesday, Thursday or Friday depending on the availability of the catechist. The meeting includes a teaching by the catechist and *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*. The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) has 20 members. The SCCs are represented through the zonal representatives.

A significant local problem in St. Anthony’s Parish is that the Catholic Choirs are influenced by the aggressive, evangelistic choirs of the Pentecostal Churches both in the style of the songs (for example, moving from drums to keyboards) and the content. Catholic youth are attracted to the more lively and entertainment-oriented Pentecostal services.<sup>255</sup> Abune (Bishop) Tsegaye Keneni, the Bishop of Soddo Diocese, said that in Soddo town the aggressive Pentecostal Churches rent other Protestant Churches and various halls for their lively daily prayer services during the week.<sup>256</sup> One of the main challenges discussed during our February, 2014 National SCCs Workshop was: “Migration of young people from the Catholic Church.” One can ask: Will the Catholic youth in Ethiopia continue to attend the traditional Geez liturgies? Can some form of Youth SCC help to reverse this migration (including economic migration) trend?

Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Gabrielyesus, OFM Cap, Director of the Capuchin Posulancy in Soddo Diocese explained how various *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* methods are used in various formation houses and formation programs in Ethiopia. For example, every Saturday evening in the Capuchin Posulancy there is *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* and faith sharing on the three scripture readings of the following Sunday. Sometimes *Lectio Divina* is

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<sup>254</sup> Abel Muse, email message to the author dated 18 April, 2014.

<sup>255</sup> Interview with Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Gabriel Meskel Magino, OFM Cap, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 15 February, 2014.

<sup>256</sup> Conversation with Tsegaye Keneni, Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, 20 February, 2014.

used. This method is continued in the Capuchin Novitiate in Emidebir Diocese and the Capuchin Franciscan Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Addis Ababa Archdiocese.<sup>257</sup>

Ethiopian Bishop Lesanu-Chrostos Matheos, the Auxiliary Bishop of Addis Ababa Archdiocese, Ethiopia asks how we can create a new interest in SCCs. In critiquing the *Mahber* he points out that at present they are not based on the neighborhood and they do not emphasize *Bible* Sharing. These characteristics are important in developing SCCs in Ethiopia today. A special challenge is to respond creatively to the changing sociological patterns in the neighborhoods in urban areas in Ethiopia. A new style of SCCs is needed for Catholics who are scattered and move frequently in cities such as Addis Abba. Lesanu-Chrostos Matheos states: “We have a difficulty in setting up SCCs in urban areas -- people are a minority, scattered and not neighbors.”<sup>258</sup>

A Case Study is Hawassa Vicariate whose pastoral activities are well documented. SCCs are located in the 513 rural chapels that are part of the 19 parishes. The *Five Year (2013-2018) Strategic Plan* provides a broad vision and plan of action. In an evaluation of the vicariate the SWOT Pastoral Program states: “The faithful and youth are not well organized in small communities at vicariate level such as Catholic professionals, university members, etc.” Under “Pastoral Ministry Revitalization” Strategy 3 states: “Promotion of lay ministries: Faithful will be encouraged to actively participate in church leadership and have opportunities for training.” The short courses (five days) offered to lay leaders include: “Exercise of different ministries at the service of the Small Christian Communities.” Strategy 4 on “Restructuring the Parishes and the Method of Parish Ministry” states that “zonal chapels can be created by grouping 5-10 chapels together” while “the individual chapels would still remain a local Small Christian Community.”<sup>259</sup>

Evaluation of the presence and activities of SCCs in other dioceses in Ethiopia is uneven. The “Strategic Pastoral Plan 2014-2018” of the Ethiopian Catholic Church Pastoral Coordinating Office of Meki [Vicariate] (ECC-PACOM) under the section on “Strengthening of Small Christian Communities in the Parish” states: “Various Small Christian Communities will be encouraged to be strengthened in each parish. The priest will encourage the faithful to be organized in various groups. All Small Christian Communities will be strengthened. The groups will have a leader, secretary and cashier.” Other dioceses in Ethiopia do not promote small communities.

The draft document (in booklet form) from the 2013 Addis Ababa Archdiocesan Synod included a recommendation for an “Ecclesiastical Associations Coordinating Unit.” There is a need for such a unit to coordinate spiritual associations in the archdiocese. But

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<sup>257</sup> Interview with Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Gabrielyesus, OFM Cap, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 14 February, 2014.

<sup>258</sup> Lesanu-Chrostos Matheos’s comment during the Second Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA II), Theme: “The Church We Want: Theological Voices From Within and Outside the Church at the Service of Ecclesia in Africa,” Hekima College Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, Nairobi, Kenya, 7 August, 2014.

<sup>259</sup> *Hawassa Catholic Secretariat: Five Year (2013-2018) Strategic Plan*. Hawassa: Hawassa Catholic Secretariat, 2013, pp. 24-43.

neither *Mahber* nor small communities were specifically mentioned in this booklet. So participants from Addis Ababa Archdiocese at the February, 2014 Small Communities Workshop in Debre Zeit agreed to bring to the implementation of the archdiocesan synod two specific tasks: first, the need to establish Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the archdiocese and second, to evaluate and revitalize the *Mahber* in the archdiocese.

Many people have participated in the Lumko Workshops held annually at the Galilee Center, Debre Zeit. The various methods of Gospel Sharing such as the 7–step method are used for private prayer, family prayer, formation programs and in a variety of small communities and small groups. Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Joseph Jacob, OFM Cap, the Pastor of Gassa Parish in Soddo Diocese, has participated in three 15-day Lumko courses. His bishop wanted him to get additional experience and training so he could facilitate Training of the Trainor (TOT) Workshops in his parish that has 46 SCCs that move from house to house on Sunday afternoon.<sup>260</sup>

35 people participated in a National SCCs Workshop on the theme “Promoting Small Communities in Ethiopia in the Light of Pope Francis’ *The Joy of the Gospel* at the Galilee Centre in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia from 17 to 19 February, 2014. Participants included representatives from ten dioceses and various departments and movements including Pastoral Coordinators and CARITAS: 20 priests, 6 religious sisters, seven laymen and two laywomen. It focused on Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*. The workshop stressed integral holistic development and joint pastoral planning in the Ethiopian context.

Ethiopian layman Aman Desalegn reports on the follow-down:

After the workshop the group from Meki Diocese took immediate action. We translated *The Joy of the Gospel* in Amharic and gave a Powerpoint Presentation at a diocesan workshop at the Gighesa Catechetical Center. This TOT Workshop was given to catechists, youth and parish council members who were certified to teach in their respective parishes. Then workshops were given in the parishes to train the parishioners in different ways. The youth especially agree to implement the teaching of Pope Francis.

The Catholic Church in Eritrea has had a particularly painful recent history. In the 1990s Peter Lwaminda and Wolfgang Schonecke of the AMECEA Office helped to promote Lumko SCCs training courses in Eritrea. With the change of political winds it was harder to have workshop facilitators enter the country and Eritreans had more difficulty getting permission to leave the country to participate in workshops in other parts of Eastern Africa.

The “Evaluation of AMECEA Pastoral Mission of Evangelization in Solidarity 1961-2011” asked: “How the Promotion of Small Christian Communities Inspired by the Vision of AMECEA Has Been Carried out Under the Bishops’ Jurisdiction.” 52.6 % responded that “parishes have active Small Christian Communities.”

Neighborhood (geographical/territorial), parish-based SCCs are an official ecclesial structure in the Eastern African pastoral model of church and an instrument/vehicle/tool of evangelization. This is the type of small community that the AMECEA Plenary Meetings of

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<sup>260</sup> Interview with Joseph Jacob, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 16 February, 2014.

1973, 1976 and 1979 envisioned. They are not simply small prayer groups or Small Apostolic Groups<sup>261</sup> (also called parish associations/sodalities/organizations) or the traditional outstation/village church. They comprise approximately 90% of the SCCs in the AMECEA Region. Alphonse Omolo, a Kenyan lay leader and animator of SCCs in a meeting in October, 2011 emphasized: “SCCs are not just one of the groups in the Catholic Church, but it is the Church.”<sup>262</sup>

The DVD *50 Years of AMECEA* portrays St. Lawrence SCC of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Lusaka, Zambia with this commentary: “Small Christian Communities are, in fact, an extension of good neighborliness intended to share Scripture, pray together, care for the sick and show concern on issues of justice and peace. A SCC member describes their life and ministry in these words: “Small Christian Communities are interesting. We strengthen each other in our faith. Every strong Christian has to start from a Small Christian Community. If there is an illness we support each other.”

Ugandan theologian Father Paulino Mondo, MCCJ points out:

Within active Small Christian Communities, people find a safe place to talk about their lives and their faith. Somehow, coming together regularly to reflect strengthens people. It is a mysterious process not easy to understand, but I have seen its fruits time and time again...[SCC members] come to know the Lord in a more personal way and become accountable to one another for growing in their relationships with the Lord.<sup>263</sup>

Other types are called Specialized SCCs or Communities of Interest that comprise approximately 10% of the SCCs in the AMECEA Region and are growing fast. Many of these SCCs have emerged from reading the contemporary signs of the times in Africa and responding to today’s reality. They respond to the spirit of the Spanish proverb popular with the Base or Basic Christian Communities in Latin America: *We create the path by walking.*<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> James O’Halloran describes the considerable sociological differences between small communities and small groups (whether religious or secular), *Living Cells*, pp. 77-79.

Some of the fastest growing small groups in the USA include the religious small groups of the Evangelical Churches, the 12-Step Self-Help Support Groups, a wide variety of other Self-help Groups and various Secular Small Groups. In visits to Catholic dioceses in the USA I hear references to the importance of small groups in many different contexts, but this is significantly different than SCCs as a new model of church and a new way of being church.

In a conversation in Boston, Massachusetts, USA on 24 November, 2015 American Catholic layman Dennis Taylor referred to the various Secular Small Groups that he belongs to or is familiar with: Book Club, Library Group, Literary Group, Mens’ Group and Psychiatrists. Club and Sharing Group. These are often mixed groups and intercultural groups that focus on the dialog of different views.

<sup>262</sup> Alphonse Omolo in an email message to the author dated 5 October, 2011.

<sup>263</sup> Paulino Mondo, *Small Christian Communities: An Ideal Means for Renewing the Church Within AMECEA Countries*, Eldoret: Unpublished Paper, 2009, p. 2-3.

<sup>264</sup> Based on the words “make the road by walking it” of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado.

Cieslikiewicz points out:

The first SCCs were based on the traditional rural neighborhood communities and were suited to rural pastoral activities. The AMECEA Bishops did not offer any model for SCCs in the urban context; and that is why pastoral activities in the urban areas of that time were insignificant. With the passing of years, however, towns have undergone profound changes “in organization and style of social and ecclesial life induced especially by increasing mobility (spatial, social and cognitive). As consequence of these changes community of place has now been joined, though not superseded, by community of interest”<sup>265</sup> ...

In the past the principal model of SCCs reflected the characteristic of the model of the pastoral option accepted by the Church in Eastern Africa. If we speak of the model of SCCs proposed by the AMECEA Bishops in the 1970s, social or political problems were almost totally lacking during that time. These communities, therefore, were concerned mostly with the internal problems, of the parish, community, family or individual member...

At present it is unthinkable to resign from the idea of SCCs in the Church of Eastern Africa. Today nobody questions the need for SCCs in the life of the Local Church and of the faithful. The question that needs to be asked is: what kind of SCCs do we need today in the new and challenging socio-cultural context.<sup>266</sup>

There are many types, categories and models with the one common feature being they are *not* neighborhood (geographical) small communities in the parish. Sometimes the difference between a genuine SCC and a Small Apostolic Group is blurred. Some types and categories:

1. Extraterritorial (not a neighborhood group) or floating SCCs. The first kind is interested people who live outside the parish boundaries, want to stay connected and meet weekly as a SCC. In some parishes in Nairobi Archdiocese these SCCs meet on the parish compound before or after participating in the Sunday Mass. The Cathedral Parish in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi has specific “International SCCs” that are composed of people of different nationalities (especially expatriates) and use English as the common language. They come from all over the city of Lilongwe and meet in the middle of the week in their homes. For some SCC members this requires a lot of driving.<sup>267</sup> The second kind is

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<sup>265</sup> Patrick, Kalilombe, *From Outstation to Small Christian Communities: A Comparison of Two Pastoral Methods in Lilongwe Diocese*, Doctorate Dissertation, Berkeley: University of California, 1983, p. 189.

<sup>266</sup> Christopher Cieslikiewicz, “Urban Small Christian Communities and Formation for the New Vision of the Church: Tanzanian Study Case,” *Africa Tomorrow*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (June, 2006), pp. 89-92.

<sup>267</sup> Vincent Mwachwawa in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 11 January, 2012.

interested people who live throughout the diocese and meet weekly at a downtown parish during the lunch break. An example is Mombasa Archdiocese.

2. SCCs connected to educational institutions including seminaries, houses of religious formation, universities (both student groups and alumni/alumnae groups), high school boarding schools (called secondary schools in Eastern Africa)<sup>268</sup> and training centers. These are called school-based SCCs. SCCs connected to institutions such as hospitals, military camps and prisons.<sup>269</sup> Specialized and professional groups<sup>270</sup> (doctors, lawyers, medical students, nurses, teachers, youth, deaf people, handicapped people).

3. Catholics who form a peer support group coming from a felt need for sharing personal experiences, companionship, support, common cultural interests and ministry preparation. Examples:

- Confirmation Communities: young people in small groups who are preparing themselves for the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- Catechumen Communities (as part of the RCIA Program):<sup>271</sup> a specific type of Small Christian Community where the adult catechumens in a parish, subparish or outstation form their own SCC to reflect on the *Bible*, talk about the Catholic faith and journey together as a community. This small community can include: the adult catechumens themselves, their Pastoral Accompaniers in their own SCCs, their sponsors for Baptism and Confirmation, catechists and other interested baptized Catholics in the local parish or outstation community who want to renew/deepen their faith and share their faith experiences. Sometimes after the Holy Saturday Easter Vigil Service, a new

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<sup>268</sup> Kilaini emphasizes that every Catholic Boarding School in Tanzania should have a plan of SCCs.

<sup>269</sup> Kenyan layman Geoffrey Kamau, the Kenya Government Catholic prison chaplain in Kamiti Prison in Nairobi, states: “We form SCCs in the prison blocks for prisoners to come together for prayer and in order to create a ‘human face.’” There are 12 SCCs in their respective blocks that come together for prayer and *Bible* Sharing. He prepares them for the reception of the sacraments. The prisoners receive both pastoral and psychological counseling.

<sup>270</sup> The Knights (and Ladies) of St. Charles Lwanga in Kampala Archdiocese, Uganda is like an online YSCC on LinkedIn that unites 15 young Catholic Professionals and encourages them after tertiary education to continue in the evangelizing mission of the church. It is a network that serves as an open discussion group on topics like the Catholic Saints, Lent, relationships and entrepreneurship. They also have mass, recollection days and other spiritual activities.

<sup>271</sup> Described in Oswald Hirmer, *Our Journey Together: 47 Catechetical Sessions for Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, St. Paul Publications Africa (later Paulines Publications Africa), 1998, 2006.

SCC is started of newly baptized adults in the RCIA Program who want to remain together as a small community.<sup>272 273</sup>

- Other examples: priests, deacons, catechists who meet weekly to prepare their Sunday homilies together (sometimes in a parish team with lay involvement); retired people; single mothers; young single Catholics, widows/widowers, people suffering the loss of a loved one (bereavement),<sup>274</sup> spouses of depressed people, parents with children who have disabilities, etc.<sup>275</sup>
- Cultural Associations that are critiqued on page 231.

4. Small faith sharing/faith reflection groups connected to international church movements (including the New Ecclesial Movements) in the Catholic Church and other organizations. Small faith sharing/faith reflection groups connected to the charisms of various religious congregations, societies and organizations. Some of these Small Apostolic Groups are in parishes, but are mainly not parish-based. Some examples in Eastern Africa: Christian Life Communities (CLCs) [formerly called Sodalties],<sup>276</sup> Communion and Liberation, Focolare, Grail Movement, International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), Jesus Caritas Fraternities, Magis, Marianists, Neo-Catechumenal Way,<sup>277</sup> Opus Dei, Pioneers,

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<sup>272</sup> Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi Archdiocese has formed four such SCCs from successive newly baptized groups at the Easter Vigil: St. Dominic, St. Joseph, St. Augustine and St. Paul.

<sup>273</sup> This confirms the experience of American catechetical specialist Father Jim Dunning who emphasized “the connection between Small Christian Communities and the catechumenate *before, during and after* initiation.” See Robert Moriarty, SM, “Imaging Initiation (RCIA) in Small Christian Communities” in Healey and Jeanne Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today*, p. 55.

<sup>274</sup> A recent example is parents or grandparents forming a support group after a child/grandchild has left the Catholic faith and even become atheist or agnostic. One mother wrote me: “Our son informed us recently that he does not believe in God. It doesn't help that his fiancé is Russian and an atheist. Needless to say, my husband and I are heartbroken and terrified.”

<sup>275</sup> Many religious institutes and communities have a wide variety of styles of faith sharing/faith reflection.

<sup>276</sup> As of September, 2015 the Christian Life Communities (CLCs) in Kenya included: 24 adult groups in Nairobi Archdiocese. four adult groups in Kisii Diocese and two adult groups in Meru Diocese. There are students groups in the universities of Egerton, Kenyatta, Moi and Nairobi. They meet every two weeks.

Conversation with Kenyan laywoman Beatrice Churu, Nairobi, Kenya, 31 August, 2015.

<sup>277</sup> While this is an important and influential new ecclesial movement in the Catholic Church worldwide today, it does not fit into the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa. While the Neo-Catechumenal Way (also known as the Neo-Catechumenate or NCW) has an effective small groups formation process (according to the 9 April, 2016 issue of *Tablet* there are 40,000 small parish-based communities around the world), it is controlled and managed

Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU), Sant'Egidio, Taize, Third-Order Franciscans, Young Christian Students (YCS) and Young Christian Workers (YCW).

Many of these Small Apostolic Groups emphasize *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection in small groups both in their regular meetings and in recollection days and retreats. A Case study is Taize's retreats for young adults in Nairobi.

Preparing ourselves to become leaders in our local groups and communities requires deep roots in a personal relationship with Christ. The retreats at Mji wa Furaha are aimed to develop the capacity of young adults in taking responsibilities. Together we want to go to the wellsprings of faith through prayer, *Bible* reflection and an experience of communion sharing, common life, personal reflection and silence... Each morning, Brothers of Taizé will introduce a *Bible* reflection, followed by a time of silence and sharing in small groups. In the afternoon, practical work and seminars will help us to deepen the relationship between faith and life. Experiencing a simple life shared with others reminds us that daily life is the place where Christ is waiting for us.<sup>278</sup>

These retreats can be excellent formation and training for members of Youth SCCs.

Our research shows that the international church movements (including the New Ecclesial Movements) in the Catholic Church have brought much energy, enthusiasm and creativity to the African Church. Their approach to African youth is threefold:

- They can draw the Catholic youth out of the parish into specialized groups of that particular ecclesial movement.
- They can establish specialized groups of Catholic youth within the parish having the charism of that particular ecclesial movement.
- They can help form and train Catholic youth to participate more actively in their parish on the local level.

Cardinal Pengo welcomed international movements into Dar es Salaam Archdiocese but he emphasized that he did not want them to establish a parallel structure alongside the diocesan/parish structure. He said the movements should feed energy into the parishes, not take energy (and people) away from it. He stated why he likes SCCs so much is that they are parish-based and are an excellent means for the Catholic laity to energize the parish and participate in pastoral activities themselves on the local level.

## 5. Online SCCs.

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rather than being a grassroots People of God church from below. Several Eastern bishops have complained about the movement's "elite status" and how it takes energy away from the parish rather than feed energy into the parish following the model of parish-based SCCs. A concrete example is how the Neo-Catechumenate has its own liturgies during Holy Week rather than participate in the parish's liturgies.

<sup>278</sup> Taize International Retreats, Mji wa Furaha, August, 2014, Religious Superiors' Conference of Kenya (RSCK) Email Message 1 July, 2014.

One of the key values of these various types of SCCs is that they are important support groups for their members. Many are also faith sharing/faith reflection groups.

Are these specialized groups or communities of interest really SCCs? We can apply the [28 Criteria to Evaluate a Typical SCC in Eastern Africa](#). Four criteria are especially relevant:

1. No. 10. The SCC has some kind of Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Life Connections on a regular basis.
2. No. 13. The SCC has some kind of planned practical action, service, mutual aid, and social outreach. Ideally this is a communal response where the SCC members carry out the practical action as a group.
3. No. 18. The SCC has various pastoral responsibilities, decisions, and activities in the parish. These include service to parish activities like the Sunday Liturgy, the SCC members' religious education<sup>279</sup> and preparation for receiving the sacraments and financial support of the parish.
4. No. 23. The SCC officially participates in the parish structures as a “communion of communities” (or “community of communities” or “network of communities”) model of church.<sup>280</sup> For example, the SCC (or a group of SCCs) has a representative on the Outstation, Subparish or Parish Council/Parish Pastoral Council. Leadership starts from below.

Some of these specialized groups can be classified as SCCs. Others that are small prayer groups, small *Bible Study Groups*, small, felt need support groups<sup>281</sup> focused on one priority only and small social groups with no outside involvement cannot be classified as

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<sup>279</sup> A Case Study is St. Charles Lwanga Small Christian Community in the Drive-in Estate of St. Peter's Parish in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania that has special sessions to teach the fundamentals of the Catholic Faith (prayers, sacraments, commandments, etc.) to children in the community.

<sup>280</sup> Sociologists describe the differences in the meaning of “communion” (ideally based on intimacy, friendship and spiritual sharing), “community” and “network.”

There are other metaphors for a vision of the parish. The parish can serve as the “umbrella” under which a plethora of smaller, “true” communities can shelter: Small Faith Sharing Groups, mothers' clubs, scouting troops, sodalities, etc...the parish, while not a true community in itself, can serve as the locale and catalyst for fostering the real communities in which the faith is lived and expressed.” American Sister of Charity sociologist Sister Patricia Wittberg, SC, *Building Strong Church Communities: A Sociological Overview*, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2012, page 31.

<sup>281</sup> Michael Cowan and Bernard Lee state: “A community without a recognizable public life is better understood as a support group and...a community without a strong inner life is better understood as an action group.” *Conversation, Risk, and Conversion: The Inner & Public Life of Small Christian Communities*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

SCCs strictly speaking. It is advised that a committed Catholic remain part of his or her neighborhood SCC and participate in a small felt need support group at the same time such as the widows groups in Mombasa, Kenya and in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya.

A common example is the many parishes and centers that have *Bible Study Groups*<sup>282</sup> and *Bible* courses for a specific period of time and covering specific books of the *Bible*. These programs can greatly enrich SCC members' knowledge and experience, but participation should be on a "both...and" basis. They should not substitute for the weekly lectionary-based faith sharing SCCs.

American laywoman and evangelist Mrs. Belza Ramos emphasizes strongly that small *Bible Study Groups* are *not* Small Christian Communities. The wide variety of *Bible Study Groups* have a beginning and an end that is connected to the specific tasks, for example, the study of St. *Luke's* Gospel or St. Paul's Letter to the *Ephesians*. So they go in and out of existence depending on the interest and energy of the members. Some *Bible Study Groups* are purely academic – interested only in the study of the scripture text. However Small Christian Communities involve its members in the variety of activities on a regular, even daily, and ongoing basis.<sup>283</sup>

While the growth of these specialized SCCs is good, the AMECEA bishops continue to stress the primary importance of the more numerous pastoral, parish-based, territorial neighborhood SCCs. A newer challenge is how to integrate these specialized Small Apostolic Groups into the parish "communion of communities" model of church. An important distinction is which of the Small Apostolic Groups that are connected to the New Ecclesial Movements<sup>284</sup> are parish-based and which are not. Cardinal Polycarp, the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, Tanzania emphasizes that these specialized SCCs should support and energize the parish, not take energy away from it (such as encouraging lay leaders to get involved in other activities outside the parish).<sup>285</sup> Archbishop James Odongo, the retired archbishop of Tororo, Uganda stresses that SCCs of university students should be an integral part of the university parish, not separate from it or parallel to it.

Cieslikiewicz gave this insight:

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<sup>282</sup> Research and evaluation indicates that people participate in these study groups for short periods of time, but they don't hold people's interest and time over long periods especially if they are too academic/intellectual/"heady."

<sup>283</sup> Summary of Belza Ramos' views in a Skype conversation with the author on 2 April, 2015.

<sup>284</sup> New Ecclesial Movements have certainly brought new life and energy into the Catholic Church throughout the world in the last 50 years. Especially in Europe where they are connected to parishes, they can be described as a third (or fourth) model, the New Movements Model of Church.

<sup>285</sup> An interesting study has been done in the Latino (Hispanic) community in Paterson Diocese in the USA to see how the formation of Small Christian Communities as cells of evangelization can give life back to the parishes.

This territorial principle safeguards great values of solidarity and mutual assistance which takes a concrete shape in the neighborhood than in communities based on professions or interests. Territorial communities can still play a very important role in the life of parishes and society; it is in such communities that ethnocentrism is overcome, equality promoted, differences respected. SCCs found on common interests may bring about divisions and discrimination: poor, rich, tribalism...elements that do not contribute to *communion*.<sup>286</sup>

One present challenge is the effects of mixing the SCCs Model of Church and the Small Apostolic Group Model of Church ([traditional] parish apostolic or pious associations/societies/sodalities/organizations/devotional groups/clubs; parish commissions/committees/departments; special parish service/ministry groups) in a single parish.<sup>287</sup> Recent research indicates that there are three broad categories of these Small Apostolic Groups that are volunteer groups with a wide variety of names:

Examples of [traditional] parish apostolic or pious associations/societies/ sodalities/guilds/ organizations/devotional groups/clubs are (alphabetically): Adoration, Bible Study, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Catholic Men's Association (CMA), Catholic Women's Association (CWA), Choir, Communion and Liberation, Couples for Christ, Christian Life Communities (CLCs), Divine Mercy, Faithful House (FTH) Program, Focolare, Generation Christ, Handmaids for Christ, Holy Cross Family Ministry, Junior Legion of Mary, Kids for Christ, Legion of Mary, Magis, Marriage Encounter, Missionary Youth Movement (MYM), Neo Catechumenate, Pioneers, Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC), Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS) Parents, Pontifical Missionary Youth (PMY), Project Rachel, Pro-Life, Rosary Society, Sacred Heart, Secular Franciscan Order (SFO), Servants for Christ, Singles for Christ, St. Egidio, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Sunday School, St. Vincent de Paul, Taize, Sts. Joachim and Anne, Third Order of St. Francis, True Love Waits, Vocations, Widows, Young Christian Professionals, Young Christian Students (YCS), Young Christian Workers (YCW), Youth Alive, Youth for Christ and Youth Groups (Junior Youth and Senior Youth). Each has their own charism, spirituality, talents and interests. Complications arise when these groups too aggressively promote their own charism and spirituality in the parish at large or on the Parish Pastoral Council. **ADD in Later Places**

1. Examples of the parish commissions/committees/departments/activities with specific ministries are (alphabetically): Development, Education, Faith Formation, Family Life, Finance, Health Care, Justice and Peace, Liturgy,

<sup>286</sup> Christopher Cieslikiewicz, "Urban Small Christian Communities," p. 97.

<sup>287</sup> Kenyan diocesan priest Father Armogast Mdawida of Mombasa Archdiocese wrote his M.A. Thesis in Pastoral Ministry on this topic at Tangaza University College in Nairobi in 2012.

Worldwide another model is the Ministries/Services/Activities Model of Church. Many of these same ministries are present but they are not small. The Parish Youth Group, the Catholic Charismatic Group, the Women's Group, the Senior Citizens Group and the Knights of Columbus can have a hundred members. I met a pastor of a parish in Florida, USA who said that he has 90 ministries in his parish, many of which are support groups or self-help groups.

Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), Pastoral, [Social] Communications,<sup>288</sup> Social, Spiritual and Youth.<sup>289</sup>

2. Examples of parish service/parish ministry groups are (alphabetically): Altar Servers, Altar Society, Catechists, Choir, Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Liturgical Dancers and Ushers. Sometimes these are called ministerial Small Christian Communities.

Research over many years indicates that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to actively maintain both models (the SCCs Model of Church and the Small Apostolic Group Model of Church) simultaneously. At points the two models overlap and even collide. The committed Catholic lay person can spread herself or himself only so far. To take a typical example: a dedicated Catholic woman who is an active member of her SCC and at the same time a member of the weekly Catholic Charismatic Renewal Group, a member of the monthly Catholic Women's Association (CWA) and a member of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) – along with her family responsibilities and a professional job. Usually she is elected to leadership positions in these groups. She can't do everything. Something has to suffer. Sometimes her involvement in her SCC takes second place. A related problem is when such an active Catholic is asked to make financial contributions to her parish both as a member of her SCC and as a member of her different apostolic groups it becomes impossible.

Malawian diocesan priest Vincent Mwakhwawa writes:

The difficulty of maintaining these two models of SCCs (the neighborhood SCC and the associations/devotional groups model) has been a pastoral challenge in Lilongwe Archdiocese. Strengthening SCC life has been a problem because people neglected the SCCs because of devotional groups. Thus in the Lilongwe Archdiocesan Mini-synod held in 2004-2006 one of the resolutions was to encourage Christians to prioritize SCC activities over devotional groups/associations.<sup>290</sup> Christians were taught that they first belong

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<sup>288</sup> Many parishes have bulletins, newsletters and magazines in which SCC members are involved. For example, on the Editorial Team of *The Basilican*, the Catholic Magazine of the Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi are members of the SCCs of St. Dominic, St. Augustine, St. Jude and Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Sometimes the Parish Youth Group or a YSCC sell the bulletins to make a little profit.

<sup>289</sup> Sometimes the Parish Youth Groups operate like a SCC. For example Regina Caeli Youth Group in Karen, Nairobi meets twice a week. About 15 members gather on Saturday for *Bible* Sharing and discussion on such topics as self-esteem, Lent, etc. About 30 members gather on Sundays for business matters.

<sup>290</sup> Nigerian priest Matthew Bassah Shinkut, SMA writes about this tension in Nigeria in an article "Absence of Small Christian Communities and Active Presence of Devotional Groups in Nigeria: A Case Study of St. John's Parish Kachia in Kaduna Archdiocese." Retrieved from the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website on 12 May, 2012 <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/nigeria/199-absence-of-small-christian-communities-and-active-presence-of-devotional-groups-in-nigeria-a-case-study-of-st-johns-parish-kachia-in-kaduna-archdiocese.html>. In English-speaking West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, etc.) the Catholic Church has a strong institutional presence with the image of priests

to SCCs and then from this foundation they can join other groups. Devotional groups/association leaders were reminded to respect the SCC activities and encourage the devotional groups/association members to participate actively in SCCs. This resolution helped Christians to understand and differentiate SCCs and devotional groups/associations.<sup>291</sup>

Segeja makes some helpful distinctions:

SCCs, therefore, should not be understood as fringe groups, nor groups for a few elite people, nor groups formed for a particular purpose, such as prayer groups. A SCC is radically different from a solidarity group, a Catholic Action group, a development group, a study group, although these are legitimate and valuable. SCCs are precisely the means by which the one church is present in each locality, touching the *whole life* of its members...SCCs should perceive themselves differently from “outstations” in the parish. They should perceive themselves as the realization of the Local Church.<sup>292</sup>

There are various realistic “thinking outside the box” approaches: All the above groups in the parish can develop a small community life style that uses faith sharing and faith reflection starting with prayer and Bible sharing as a “way of life” in all their gatherings. An example is the Youth Choir in Narus Parish in Torit Diocese in South Sudan. The choir meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays for singing practice and on Saturdays for *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*.

Another solution is for SCC members who have a particular interest (rosary, special devotions, singing songs, praying in a charismatic way) to meet before the regular weekly *Bible Service* in the SCC. Or meet at another time for these kinds of religious and devotional activities.

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“running” the parishes and a heavy emphasis on spirituality and the sacraments. In a number of dioceses SCCs (with the involvement of lay people from the ground up) have never taken off.

Nigerian Cardinal John Onaiyekan of Abuja Archdiocese points out that the SCC Model of Church has never been a pastoral priority in Nigeria, but there is a strong Small Groups Model of Church as seen in the lively, active small groups in the Catholic Charismatic Movement, Legion of Mary and the wide variety of devotional associations and organizations for example, specific associations for men and women. Conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 21 August, 2012.

This has confirmed by students from Ghana in my classes in Nairobi from 2010-2013 who emphasize that in Ghana there is more focus on devotional groups than on SCCs.

<sup>291</sup> Vincent Mwakhwawa in an email dated 8 May, 2012.

<sup>292</sup> Nicholas Segeja, “Small Christian Communities: A Vital Icon for New Evangelization,” *African Christian Studies*, 27:4 (December, 2011): 11.

Starting in the 1970s Mwoleka proposed a radical solution in Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania where all pastoral work passed through the SCCs. Two examples: Instead of having an overall Parish Hospitality Committee, each SCC was responsible to welcome newcomers and visitors in its neighborhood (geographic area). The praiseworthy home visitation ministry of the Legion of Mary became the responsibility of each SCC.<sup>293</sup>

Research on the composition and characteristics of the members of SCCs in Eastern Africa include these factors: age, cultural preferences, economic status (poor/rich), education, employment, ethnicity (one ethnic group/many), gender, geography (urban, urban/rural [called peri-urban in Zambia], rural/urban, rural),<sup>294</sup> living/housing situation, marital status (single/engaged/married), political affiliation, etc. While the overwhelming majority are Catholics, there are some SCC members from other religious denominations. A major challenge is how to integrate creatively these differences.

Many SCCs are located in economically poorer areas. Italian missionary and writer Father Alex Zanotelli, MCCJ lived in Korogocho, one of the many shantytowns surrounding Nairobi. “He founded many small Christian communities and a workers' cooperative for recycling, which employed many of the inhabitants of the shanties.”<sup>295</sup>

One growing challenge is how to develop SCCs in urban areas. Kilaini points out:

The challenge of Dar es Salaam Archdiocese is to unite the Catholics from all those diverse origins with different status into one cohesive church. To have these people who are uprooted from their cultural home setting and are in an anonymous milieu keep their personal respect reinforced by mutual support in doing good. To give them a new clan and a new tribe whose cohesion is based on faith, love and care. In other words, to give them an

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<sup>293</sup> American pastor and SCCs advocate Father Art Baranowski wrote about, and practiced in his parish, a similar vision of church in Detroit Archdiocese, USA. He established small communities of faith and transformed existing parish programs into prayer and eucharistic communities. Arthur Baranowski, *Creating Small Church Communities: A Plan for Restructuring the Parish and Renewing Catholic Life*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Cincinnati, OH: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1996. He also adapted the personal and parish renewal process “Christ Renews His Parish” (CRHP) to the SCCs Model of Church and vice versa. The retreat is an pathway to the development of parish-based Small Church Communities. Baranowski adjusted the retreat format and the team formation process leading up to the retreat to infuse it with more of the Small Christian Community style. This evangelizing, conversion-focused retreat is designed to be done *by* the parish, *for* the parish, *at* the parish. It has been particularly effective in Hartford Archdiocese, USA. Bob Moriarty writes: “While the retreat is meant for parishioners in general, Fr. Art’s and our own special concern is to promote an evangelizing outreach to younger adults, men and women, in their 30s and early 40s.” See *Christ Renews His Parish Retreats: A Pathway to the Development of Small Church Communities*, [http://www.sccquest.org/news\\_CRHP.html](http://www.sccquest.org/news_CRHP.html)

<sup>294</sup> See Footnote 64.

<sup>295</sup> Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, retrieved on 16 March, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex\\_Zanotelli](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Zanotelli)

extended family in the city that they left at home in the village.<sup>296</sup>

A Case Study is Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Adams Arcade in Nairobi Archdiocese that has 43 active SCCs. The SCCs are doing well in the poorer areas of the parish, but not doing well in the middle class areas of the parish. Also the middle class people do not want to mix with the poorer people. Given the democratization of the SCC model of church, a cook from a particular home can be the chairperson of his/her SCC while the homeowner is an ordinary member. A renter of a house can be the chairperson while the landlord or landlady is an ordinary member. This can cause tensions. Twenty-five years ago the then Father Rodrigo Mejia carried out research on SCCs in Nairobi Archdiocese. He discovered that the ethnic groups (Kamba, Kikuyu, Luo, Luyia, etc.) would mix together, but the rich and the poor would not.<sup>297</sup> New research is needed to see if this pattern still hold today especially after the 2008 Post-Election violence in Kenya. Clearly new research shows that the tensions between the economically more wealthy SCCs and the economically poorer SCCs are growing especially when parish collections are coordinated through the SCCs.

Research shows that a statistical evaluation of SCCs in the AMECEA Region is better done on a diocese to diocese basis, and even on a parish by parish basis, rather than on a country to country basis. Of the 130 dioceses in the nine AMECEA countries some have structures or mechanisms that coordinate the activities of SCCs. Some dioceses such as Ngong Diocese in Kenya have specific a Small Christian Communities Office. Bishop Davies documents how the Ngong Diocesan Secretariat set up a SCCs Department with a religious sister in charge in 1985. She would team up with the Diocesan Catechists Coordinator and the person in charge of the Women's Department to give weekend courses and training sessions in parishes and in the diocesan pastoral center.<sup>298</sup>

Some dioceses such as Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese in Uganda have an active Diocesan SCCs Coordinator with a training team within the Diocesan Pastoral Department. Meru Diocese in Kenya has a priest in charge of the Small Christian Community Formation and Spirituality. Some dioceses such as Malindi Diocese in Kenya have a SCCs Diocesan Animation Team. Some dioceses such as Mombasa Archdiocese in Kenya coordinate SCCs through the Pastoral Coordinator of the Pastoral Office (called a Pastoral Department in some dioceses).<sup>299</sup> Some dioceses have a Pastoral Center such as Arua Diocese in Uganda to sponsor SCCs activities. Some dioceses such as Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi have a

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<sup>296</sup> Method Kilaini, "Small Christian Communities," p. 4.

<sup>297</sup> In commenting on the Swahili saying *Usawa ni haki* (*Equality is justice and a right*) Ndau Kelvin said: "This does rarely occur coz we've got two tribes, *maskini na tajiri* (Swahili for 'the poor and the rich'). Message on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Facebook Page dated 29 March, 2013.

<sup>298</sup> Colin C. Davies, *Mission to the Maasai (1959-2003)*, Ngong: Privately Printed, 2006, p. 314.

<sup>299</sup> Some Pastoral Offices or Departments have a permanent library of SCCs resources including books, booklets, pamphlets, posters and DVDs that include Lumko training materials. A key is that these SCCs resources remain in the office when a new director or secretary takes over and are used in ongoing formation and training programs.

Diocesan Pastoral Plan where the all the Parish Pastoral Councils are comprised of the chair people of the SCCs.

On the parish level Kanengo Parish in Liongwe Archdiocese is a city parish that has 40 SCCs. The whole structure of the parish is based on SCCs with SCCs Masses celebrated once a week. A similar parish is Chezi Parish, a rural parish in Liongwe Archdiocese. Holy Trinity Parish in Kariobangi North in Nairobi Archdiocese in Kenya has 74 SCCs that are deeply involved in many pastoral and social ministries. Holy Cross Parish in Dandora, Nairobi begins its “Mission Statement” with the these words: “Formation of vibrant Small Christian Communities where people love and support one another.” The parish has 59 SCCs including six active Youth SCCs. Case Studies of individual SCCs in Eastern Africa can very instructive and helpful too. Some are documented on the [Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website](#).

Research indictates that to develop SCCs as a new way of being church through a National SCC Office in the secretariat of the National Catholic Bishops Conference is not effective. It is too top heavy and bureaucratic. Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda have explored a more appropriate mechanism: a National SCCs Training Team to animate and coordinate workshops, seminars and meetings.

As the number of Catholics and the numbers of parishes grow dramatically especially in urban Africa, Kenyan diocesan priest Joseph Otineo emphasizes that active Christian groups are the greatest indicators of a growing church. Kenyan diocesan priest John Kragu, the Pastor of St, Joseph Mukasa Kahawa West Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese, describes the 63 SCCs in his parish:

These are “clans” where the faithful are unified not by blood of kinship but the blood of Jesus Christ. It is in these groups that a lot of church activities are organized including prepaing couples for the sacrament of matrimony and children for Baptism.<sup>300</sup>

Fresh statistics in 2015 come from St. Matia Mulumba Parish in Irundu in Jinja Diocese, Uganda where “over 100 SCCs meet to discuss the weekly Scriptures and plan their response to the Word.”<sup>301</sup>

A visit to Kakamega Diocese, Kenya from 19-22 February, 2015 produced interesting statistics. The 41 parishes average around 70 to 80 SCCs each making a total of around 3,000 for the whole diocese. Every lay person that I met is a member of a particular neighborhood SCC. It is indeed the normal way of life for them. The parish priests are enthusiastic and request “ministry workshops” on the deanery level to train SCC members in specific lay ministries.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Stephen, Seed **CHECK**

<sup>301</sup> James Cutts, “Across the Continents,” 22 January 2015, *Tablet*, Tablet Website, retrieved on 24 January, 2015, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/parish-practice/6/4469/across-the-continents>

<sup>302</sup> Based on conversations with Kenyan diocesan priest (and Secretary General of AMECEA) Father Ferdinand Lugonzo and Tanzanian diocesan priest incardinated in

The Chaplaincy Centre at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) in Kakamega Diocese, Kenya has 20 Bible Study Groups (the equivalent of SCCs). A Fourth Year student described her St. Monica Group of 22 members that meets on Sundays.

A visit to Tororo Archdiocese, Uganda from 20-21 February, 2015 produce a similar pattern: 43 parishes with around a total of 3,000 Basic Christian Communities (equivalent of SCCs). As an example, the Benedictine Community BCC connected to the Benedictine Monastery in Tororo consists of the monks and the lay people living in the immediate neighborhood. There is a big difference between the BCCs in the rural and urban areas. The BCCs have brought unity to the Christians of the different ethnic groups.

In a wide ranging exclusive interview on Friday, 20 February, 2015 Archbishop Emeritus James Odongo of Tororo Archdiocese vividly described how his vision of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) begin when he was a seminarian in Rome in the 1950s. He lived at Propaganda Fide College with 350 students from 52 countries. Sometimes they formed smaller groups for prayer and socializing. Odongo experienced the value of small groups composed of people from different countries and languages and the meaning and spirit of community. As a young priest and then bishop in Tororo Diocese (later Archdiocese) he saw the need to unite the 11 different ethnic groups. A very good pastoral method was to establish neighborhood SCCs.<sup>303</sup>

This local pastoral experience served him in good stead when as Chairman of AMECEA from 1973-1979 he oversaw the implementaton of SCCs as a key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa.

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Kakamega Diocese (and Vicar General of Kakamega Diocese) Father Bede Marangu in Kakamega on 19-22 February, 2015.

<sup>303</sup> Joseph G. Healey, "Archbishop James Odongo Celebrates His Episcopal Golden Jubilee in Tororo, Uganda on 21 February 2015," Nairobi: Privately photocopied, 26 February, 2015. Reproduced as "Recollection of Memorable Moments as Retired Ugandan Archbishop Celebrates Episcopal Golden Jubilee," Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA), retrieved on 27 February, 2015, <http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php/home/16-latestnews/205-recollection-of-memorable-moments-as-retired-ugandan-archbishop-celebrates-episcopal-golden-jubilee>; "Ugandan Emeritus Archbishop Odongo Celebrates Golden Jubilee," Vatican Radio, retrieved on 26 February, 2015, [http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/02/26/ugandan\\_emeritus\\_archbishop\\_odongo\\_celebrates\\_golden\\_jubilee/1125792](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/02/26/ugandan_emeritus_archbishop_odongo_celebrates_golden_jubilee/1125792), UGANDA: "Archbishop Odongo; the first African Chairman of AMECEA"-- An Exclusive Interview by Fr Joseph Healey, retrieved on 28 February, 2015, <http://amecea.blogspot.com/2015/02/uganda-archbishop-odongo-first-african.html>

### 3. Qualitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region

This qualitative evaluation traces some important historical shifts. Most commentators agree that the AMECEA Pastoral Priority initially/originally came from the top – from the official church expressed through statements of the AMECEA Bishops – and then spread through a trickledown effect. It did, however, correspond to the growing need experienced by African Christians to express their own values of community, unity, solidarity, family, sharing and mutual help in the context of their Christian faith. The sometimes-heard critique of a top down episcopal approach does not stand the test of time. Over the years a SCC identity from the grassroots has emerged with widespread participation and ownership by the laity.

Overall Rutechura summarizes:

Fifty years along the line Small Christian Communities have been one of the distinctive marks of what it means to be Church and neighbor in a good number of the [130] dioceses within the region that has a population of about 300 million of whom 30 million are Catholic Christians... The pastoral option by AMECEA Bishops to give a priority to building of SCCs has tremendously contributed to the quality of being Church in the region. We cannot envision being Church otherwise. SCCs have given more visibility to the Ecclesiology of Church Family of God. SCCs must not only be of interest for mere intellectual speculations; we must all be challenged to get involved and experience the warmth of communion and belonging.<sup>304</sup>

He adds: “The pastoral priority of the AMECEA bishops has been lively. The Church in the region has consistently pursued the building of SCCs... This is one of the main achievements that the bishops have had in the AMECEA Region.”<sup>305</sup>

From our recent research (see our SCCs Website), the most effective ongoing evaluation starts by examining how SCCs fit into/are an integral part of the Pastoral Plan of the Local Church – at the national, metropolitan, diocesan, deanery and parish levels. Recent Diocesan Synods feed into these Pastoral Plans.

SCCs have to be measured diocese by diocese in the AMECEA Region. Rutechura points out that “SCCs have spread and grown with different intensity within the various [130] dioceses in the AMECEA countries.”<sup>306</sup> SCCs are widespread and active in most of the

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<sup>304</sup> Pius Rutechura, “The Experience of the AMECEA Region with Small Christian Communities, Pastoral Priority since the 1970s,” Unpublished Paper at the 27<sup>th</sup> Theological Week of Kinshasa on “The Experience of Basic Living Ecclesial Communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Theological and Pastoral Perspectives after 50 Years” (Kinshasa: 2011), pp. 2, 11.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

dioceses in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania,<sup>307</sup> Uganda and Zambia. SCCs have not gotten off the ground in some dioceses in Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan for various political, social and cultural reasons. An exception is the Apostolic Vicariate of Soddo in Ethiopia where Mejia pioneered transforming the parishes into a communion of SCCs model of church.<sup>308</sup> Every year he sponsored a Lumko Course for pastoral agents of his diocese and other dioceses in Ethiopia that takes place at the Galilee Center in Debre Zeit.

Our diocese by diocese evaluation is especially helped by the reports of Diocesan Synods and Diocesan Pastoral Plans. A Case Study is Mombasa Archdiocese in Kenya. In *Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa Pastoral Policy* Chapter Two is on “Small Christian Communities.” It clearly states: “All Christians in the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa should be members of the SCCs.” This chapter has sections on “Composition,” “Duties of SCCs leaders,” and “Qualities of SCCs Leaders” with appropriate recommendations. It faced the financial question directly by stating: “We highly recommend that appropriate ways approved by the Deanery Pastoral Council (DPC) for fundraising should be established and not use SCCs to raise money as this may discourage people from coming to the SCCs.” A formal Archdiocesan Synod is planned for late 2014 or early 2015.

It is important that the AMECEA bishops themselves speak and write about SCCs. Many bishops in Eastern Africa emphasize the importance of Small Christian Communities in their pastoral letters and pastoral plans on the diocesan and national levels and in their books,<sup>309</sup> booklets, speeches, homilies and sermons. Cardinal Pengo is known for always regularly referring to SCCs in his pastoral letters, speeches and homilies in Tanzania. In a seminar for priests Kenyan Auxiliary Bishop David Kamau of Nairobi Archdiocese said that SCCs are “the pillar of the church in Nairobi Archdiocese.” Bishop Rodrigo Mejia, formerly Bishop of Sodo Apostolic Vicariate in Ethiopia states that SCCs are different from traditional

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<sup>307</sup> For a detailed Case Study of one SCC in Tanzania see Joseph Healey, “16 Year (1986-2002) Journey of St. Jude Thaddeus Small Christian Community (SCC) in Tanzania and the World,” San Antonio: Handout No. 3 in “Workshop on International SCC Twinning,” 1 August, 2002, 6 pages.

<sup>308</sup> Rodrigo Mejia’s book *We Are the Church: Sharing in Small Christian Communities*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009 uses stories and questions to challenge the reader to take a fresh look at the Catholic Church in Africa and its life and mission (the deeper issues in the church and society today) from both personal and communal viewpoints. He has also written *The Church in the Neighborhood: Meetings for the Animation of Small Christian Communities*, (the Swahili version is *Kanisa la Kimazingira*), Nairobi: St. Paul Publications Africa, 1992. It is also available as a 43 minute DVD documentary *The Church in the Neighborhood*, Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1995 with Swahili and Arabic versions.

<sup>309</sup> A number of archbishops and bishops in the AMECEA Region have written their academic dissertations and theses on SCCs. For example, Patrick Kalilombe, *From Outstation to Small Christian Communities: A Comparison of Two Pastoral Methods in Lilongwe Diocese* (University of California); Archbishop Protase Rugambwa, the Adjunct Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples: *Ministry and Collaboration in Small Christian Communities: Communities in Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania, a Case Study* (Lateran University).

Catholic movements because SCCs have the whole program of the church itself as its aim, SCCs are formed by the whole family and SCC members share the life of the neighborhood and see each other almost every day.<sup>310</sup> In reflecting on 50 years of AMECEA Ugandan Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala recalled how the bishops unanimously resolved to build the SCCs structure as a pastoral strategy for grassroots evangelization.<sup>311</sup> Malawian Archbishop Tarcisius Ziyaye of Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi and Chairman of AMECEA said: “For half a century, evangelization in solidarity has led to significant achievements in the region including the pastoral option of building Small Christian Communities.”<sup>312</sup> A recent example is Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth during an ordination ceremony in Kisumu, Kenya on Saturday, 30 August, 2014:

He urged the priests to encourage the growth of the Small Christian Communities in the church since they are the strength of the Local Church. “Be with the Small Christian Communities, pray with them. These are the families that feed you, these are the families that receive the sacraments, these are the families that bring their children to be baptized.”<sup>313</sup>

Mejia writes extensively on SCCs. He assesses the AMECEA pastoral priority by considering the good pastoral results as “lights”:

- aspects of neighborhood,
- service,
- collaboration,
- human relationships
- and inculturation.

He describes the difficulties or weaknesses of SCCs as “shadows”:<sup>314</sup>

- exaggerated/overstressed/imposed role of SCCs,
- poor leadership,
- lack of pastoral and spiritual ongoing formation, and

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<sup>310</sup> Summary of Rodrigo Mejia, *Church in the Neighborhood*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>311</sup> Emmanuel Wamala, *AMECEA 50 Years of Evangelization in Solidarity: 1961 – 2011*, Nairobi: AMECEA Secretariat, 2011, p. x.

<sup>312</sup> Tarcisius Ziyaye, *AMECEA Celebrating a Golden Jubilee of Evangelization in Solidarity: Proceedings of the 17th Plenary Assembly at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) 27<sup>th</sup> June - 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2011*, Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2011, p. 25.

<sup>313</sup> “KENYA: Ten Ordained Priests in Colorful Ceremony,” Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) *Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 67, Wednesday, 3 September, 2014. Available online: <http://cisanewsafrika.com/kenya-ten-ordained-priests-in-colorful-ceremony>

<sup>314</sup> Fritz Lobinger of South Africa states: “Thanks for faithfully pursuing this topic [of SCCs]. Each time you present it there is an improvement. It is now more correct to call it an “evaluation” of the SCCs because not only the successes but also the drawbacks are presented.” Email message to the author dated 12 August, 2014.

- absence of SCCs in the high middle and rich classes).<sup>315</sup>

An ongoing evaluation that includes both the strengths and weaknesses of SCCs is essential for continuing growth. The SWOT Analysis can be very beneficial. Mwakhwawa states: "Evaluations are crucial to facilitate ongoing formation because they may reveal the gaps and new emerging challenges."<sup>316</sup> Some of the terms used in alphabetical order:

constructive criticism  
 critical analysis  
 critical assessment  
 critical attitude  
 critical evaluation  
 critical opinion  
 critical thinking  
 criticism  
 criticism offered in a constructive spirit  
 critique  
 healthy criticism  
 polite criticism  
 positive criticism  
 self-criticism

My personal experience over many years is that Africans, in particular, do not like criticism as such from the outside and do not respond well to it. As a case in point, I produced Catholic radio programs on Radio Tumaini in Dar es Salaam for 12 years (1994-2006). African presenters were never comfortable with criticism of their programs. They took the criticism personally. We were unsuccessful in explaining that the criticism was of the radio program itself (content, style, presentation, voice, etc.), not of the person. Some people thought we were making a judgement about or on them. So I have changed to use the word "critique" that is less threatening and has the extended meaning of how to do something better the next time. Fair and constructive critique can help to see problems more clearly and to find better solutions.

Two weaknesses of the Catholic Church in general is:

the lack of self-criticism<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Rodrigo Mejia, "Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa 26 Years On: Lights and Shadows" in Patrick Ryan (ed.), *New Strategies for a New Evangelization*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2002.

<sup>316</sup> Vincent Mwakhwawa, *Improving Participation of the Laity in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe*, Nairobi: Unpublished Master's Thesis, CUEA, 2012, p. 130.

<sup>317</sup> American psychologist and theologian Father Donald Cozzens states:

Pope Francis is willing to turn the light of the Gospel on the church itself. Not an easy thing to do. The Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich -- some of you have heard of him -- pointed out how difficult it is for the church to turn the light of the Gospel on itself. Here's what Tillich wrote: "If the church does not

the lack of being open to criticism and critiquing from others

These are two distinct but related issues. If a person is not self-critical (that is, being willing to evaluate oneself), he or she will probably not be open to criticism from others. Such a person is probably insecure and likely to take a defensive stand/be defensive. In the African context there are also issues of patriarchy, clericalism and the long tradition of a hierarchical church.

Orobator points out that the official Catholic Church in Africa does not like to be criticized by others. African Bishops do not like to be critiqued by African theologians.

Kalilombe, one the architects of the SCC plan in Eastern Africa, states:

A spirit of self-criticism in how things are going on in SCCs helps the community to grow...If members feel at home in their SCCs, they will feel free to put forward their opinions on how they think things should be done. Thus they give leaders insights on where and how to improve things in SCCs.<sup>318</sup>

Cameroon Sister Kenyuyfoon Gloria Wirba identifies the following shortcomings of SCCs in sub-Sahara Africa: gap between well planned programs and uneven implementation; exaggerated ethnocentrism; competition between SCCs and new religious movements in parishes; SCC leaders and animators are more concerned about power and control than ministerial service; and danger of SCCs becoming social and political action groups.<sup>319</sup>

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subject itself to the judgment, which is pronounced *by* the church, it becomes idolatrous to itself. Such idolatry is its permanent temptation. A church which tries to exclude itself from such a judgment loses its right to judge the world, and is rightly judged by the world." Then Tillich added these painful words: "This is the tragedy of the Roman Catholic Church." We take the light of the Gospel, and we judge the world by it; but we seem slow to turn that same light on ourselves, and judge ourselves by it; *and so the world is judging us*. Francis understands that the world is indeed judging the church; and the world's verdict is cutting to the heart of the Church's integrity. So in his extraordinary *Apostolic Exhortation: The Joy of the Gospel*, Francis writes, "Since I am called to put into practice what I ask others, I too must think about a conversion of the papacy." So we have Francis turning the light of the Gospel on the papacy itself. Unheard of! Can we imagine a day when church authorities might say about a given teaching, "We were wrong about that." I think Pope Francis can.

Donald Cozzens, "New Pope, New Hope: Out from the Underground," Westland, Michigan, Unpublished Talk, 17 September, 2014.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> Summary of Kenyuyfoon Gloria Wirba, *Women and Inculturated Evangelization in Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications – CUEA Press *Double Spearhead* Nos. 201-204 (2013), pp. 184-185.

In the evaluation and assessment of SCCs in the AMECEA Region, research on the participation of priests<sup>320</sup> is mixed. On the open statement -- “The priests...” we have heard a wide range of comments (including the exact words) listed below from the negative/critical to the positive/complimentary ranging from:

Priests can be one the biggest obstacles in the growth of SCCs;  
 lack of interest and involvement of priests is the biggest obstacle,  
 are guilty of clerical manipulation such as naming members to the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC);  
 dominate and control the SCCs (like wanting to preach during a SCC Mass in a home);  
 superiority complex on the part of the priest when he wants to provide all the answers;  
 fear that educated lay people know more than they do;  
 inferiority complex of the priest when he fears his own Christians;  
 feel threatened by the lay people who question the priest and also want to take too much control and responsibility;  
 are involved in a tug of war between themselves and the lay leaders over control of the SCC;  
 are too concerned about their authority;  
 don't want to let go of their power and control;  
 see SCCs as an improper way of democratizing the church;  
 see SCCs as colleges of piety;  
 don't understand and appreciate collaborative ministry;  
 who are not introduced to SCCs in their training do not appreciate their value.  
 are concerned that there is too much work in animating SCC;  
 are sensitive to the criticism that they favor certain SCCs;  
 don't hear the truth because lay people are afraid to criticize priests even if they are wrong;  
 use the SCCs too much for fundraising in the parish. Reality of “Father Pesa” (“Father Money”), “*Michango Church*” (“Collections Church”), “*Jumuiya ya Pesa*” (“Small Community of Money”), overuse of *Harambees* and SCCs as a small bank; tend to favor, and cater to, the rich SCC members;  
 use SCCs as cash-cows;  
 use SCCs as fund-raising organ;  
 turn SCCs into ATM cards;  
 can be a "milking cow" when the pastor loses sight of the mission of the church.  
 many people tend to leave SCCs because their some of their pastors are using them as a means of getting money for themselves. Some Xtians say that SCCs have changed to be groups for pastors to use to enrich themselves. And I think that's why most men do not attend SCCs;<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Fritz Lobinger states: “I also hear that the priests [in South Africa] are no longer as enthusiastic about Small Christian Communities as they were thirty years ago. The bishops know about the value of SCCs and try to promote them but they find it difficult.” Email message to the author dated 12 August, 2014.

<sup>321</sup> Tanzanian diocesan priest Father Edwin Makusanya wrote his MA Thesis in the Institute of Social Ministry in Mission at Tangaza University College on *Efficient Management of Economic Resources in Parishes as a Way to Achieve Self-Reliance: A Case Study of Tabora*

we African priests try to get extra money through the SCCs;  
 impose a SCCs compulsory policy such as parents have to be members so their  
 children can be baptized that prompts a negative reaction from the laity;  
 are more interested in a development model of church than a pastoral model of  
 church;  
 complain that there is no diocesan pastoral policy on SCCs, no funds to  
 implement any policy and SCCs are not on the agenda of diocesan meetings;  
 ask for a coordinated pastoral strategy of SCCs on the diocesan and parish level;  
 don't understand the theology and pastoral priority of SCCs;  
 don't have enough time for the lay people;  
 don't recognize the priest's important role in training lay people in the *Bible* and  
 church teachings;  
 show no interest in SCCs;  
 are neutral (saying that lay people can have any parish organizations that they want);  
 see SCCs as optional -- just another organization or program in the parish.  
 see SCCs as merely a more efficient and effective way of running their parishes;  
 try to encourage more lay participation in SCCs while laity are still passive in a  
 clerical church;  
 show real interest in the life and activities of the SCCs;  
 feel SCCs are very important, even essential, for the parish;  
 feel that belonging to one particular SCC as an ordinary member is important;  
 listen to the views of the SCC members;  
 should be animators, not bosses;  
 interest of the priest in SCCs is essential and supportive;  
 celebrate SCC Masses on a regular rotation basis (but some priests do nothing else in  
 the SCC);  
 appreciate collaborative ministry;  
 are necessary for the success of SCCs in parishes;<sup>322</sup>  
 cannot animate and coordinate the parish without the help of SCCs;  
 dioceses should invest in sending priests to do the LUMKO Course on SCCs;  
 feel training of seminarians (before ordination) in this SCCs model of church is  
 essential;  
 see SCCs as a new way of being/becoming church.<sup>323</sup>

In a talk to the priests of Dar es Salaam Archdiocese in 2006 Bishop Method Kilaini, the then Auxiliary Bishop, emphasized that the best way for them to know their parishioners is to visit the SCCs on a regular basis. By visiting the SCC members in their homes the

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*and Sikonge Parishes, Archdiocese of Tabora, Tanzania.* His research included how SCCs help promote self-reliance in a parish. He says: "If priests use SCCs collections for their own use this will kill self-reliance in the parish." Conversation with the author in Nairobi dated 12 November, 2013.

<sup>322</sup> A lay person in Immaculate Conception Parish, Upanga, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania 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.

<sup>323</sup> Based on conversations with many bishops, priests, brothers, sisters and SCCs lay animators and leaders in Eastern Africa together with their written reports and comments.

priests can experience the people's lives from the inside. Davies states: "Regular visits by the priest to the SCCs prove to be excellent in bringing the priest close to his people and the people to their priest. A good priest (and we are all good priests!) will really delight in promoting the laity to catechise themselves in their meetings."<sup>324</sup> Kenyan diocesan priest Father Joseph Ngala says that SCCs help the Parish Priest to know the spiritual and material needs of the Christians and to appreciate the different economic and social classes in the parish especially the gap between the rich and the poor. This helps him to design a realistic and practical pastoral plan.<sup>325</sup>

This is echoed by Pope Francis who urges the world's priests to bring the healing power of God's grace to everyone in need, to stay close to the marginalized and to be "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep."<sup>326</sup> The pope explains this further in No. 24 of *The Joy of the Gospel* in the section on "A Church Which Goes Forth:"

An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on [have] the "smell of the sheep"<sup>327</sup> and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be.

Part of our call as missionary disciples is to smell like the sheep/take on the smell of the sheep that struggle on the territorial and existential peripheral outskirts.

In another talk the pope said that "real contact" with the poor is necessary to understand poverty: "This is very important to me: the need to become acquainted with reality by experience, to spend time walking on the periphery in order [to] really become acquainted with the reality and life experiences of people. If this does not happen we then run the risk of being abstract ideologists or fundamentalists, which is not healthy."<sup>328</sup> Thus all

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<sup>324</sup> Colin Davies, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop*, p. 112.

<sup>325</sup> Joseph Ngala in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 15 August, 2014.

<sup>326</sup> Carol Glatz, "Pope Francis: Priests Should Be 'Shepherds Living with the Smell of The Sheep,'" *Catholic News Service*, 28 March, 2013, retrieved from the *Catholic Telegraph Website* on 128 March, 2013 <http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/pope-francis-priests-should-be-shepherds-living-with-the-smell-of-the-sheep/13439>

<sup>327</sup> It is significant that at the panel on "The Bishop in the Church of Pope Francis" at the Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA) in Nairobi on 7 August, 2014 all three bishops referred to the importance of pastoral shepherds having the smell of the sheep on themselves and pastoral workers.

<sup>328</sup> Pope Francis in Joshua J. McElwee, "Francis Tells Religious to 'Wake the World,' Outlines Modern Struggles for Church," *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, |3 January, 2014, National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved 4 January, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/francis-tells-religious-wake-world-outlines-modern-struggles-church>

SCCs animators and facilitators should regularly smell the sheep on the local level and even have/take on the smell of the sheep/smell like the sheep.

In evaluating his achievements in the last five years in Embu Diocese Kenyan Bishop Paul Kariuki states:

I have been able to visit every Small Christian Community in this diocese. I know exactly where they are, what they are doing, what is happening there. I am in touch with the reality on the ground.<sup>329</sup>

Our evaluation shows that many priests support SCCs but others do not. The pattern is not consistent. In any given diocese you can expect SCCs coordination and training programs in some parishes, but other parishes are left out. One solution in Eastern Africa is to run a SCCs training program/workshop on the local Catholic radio station. Then all lay people have to opportunity to listen and learn.

Everyone agrees that seminarians should be introduced to the importance of SCCs during their seminary formation and training including the time of their pastoral work in the parishes and not wait until they are already priests.

In the original AMECEA plan of building SCCs in the 1970s catechists were not the leaders of SCCs, but rather the animators similar to priests, brothers and sisters. After many years of having a special status as “the priest’s Boy Friday,” this was a new role that they found difficult. Traditionally the catechists sometimes wanted to be set apart and be “over” the SCC lay leaders. Through training programs organized by SCC Founding Fathers such as Mwoleka, catechists gradually learned their new role including being ordinary members of a specific SCC in their neighborhood. But even today some catechists like a special status as confirmed by some priests including American Maryknoll priest Father Donald Sybertz, MM in Shinyanga.<sup>330</sup>

This evaluation has studied carefully the important role of youth in SCCs.<sup>331</sup> Given the importance of youth in the demographics of both the general population and the Catholic population in Africa, the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Second African Synod did not give enough attention to youth in Africa. A single section -- Number 27 -- in *Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God*– treats youth after priests, religious, lay faithful, Catholics in public life, families, women and men. It states: “You are not just the future of the Church: you are with us already in big numbers. In many countries of Africa, over 60% of the population is under 25. The ratio in the Church would not be much different.” But the message could have said much more. *Proposition 48* treats youth in a

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<sup>329</sup> National Mirror Team, “One-One With the Bishop of Embu Rt. Rev. Paul Kariuki, *National Mirror*, 10/14 (October, 2014), p. 11.

<sup>330</sup> Donald Sybertz in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 23 April, 2013.

<sup>331</sup> Our SCCs Website (<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>) has a user friendly Search Feature. A Search on 29 September, 2014 shows: If you search for “youth” you get 46 hits (visits). If you search for “young people” you get 29 hits (visits). If you search for “young adults” you get 13 hits (visits).

problem-centered way saying that the Synod Fathers “are deeply concerned about the plight of youth” and proposes various recommendations. Much more could have been said about the great potential of young people in the Catholic Church and in the general society in Africa.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Africa’s Commitment* is more positive and expansive. Especially in Number 63 on “Young People” the pope encourages young people to “active and enthusiastic participation in ecclesial groups and movements. Cultivate a yearning for fraternity,<sup>332</sup> justice and peace...the future is in your hands.”

Due to African cultural traditions African youth normally do not speak in public in front of adults. Youth do not usually actively participate in adult SCCs in Eastern Africa. Thus it is crucial to form specific Youth SCCs that give young people a specific voice and role and to encourage them to plan their own discussions, reflections and activities.

During the Mwanza Metropolitan Workshop on the theme “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Embrace the Word of God” at the St. Dominic Pastoral Centre in Mwanza, Tanzania from 19 to 22 May, 2014 there was a spirited discussion on the advisability of Youth SCCs. A number of delegates who because of their age or their involvement in the Catholic Church in rural areas of northwestern Tanzania only were against Youth SCCs. They stressed that this would create a gap between parents and youth, between the elders’ values/supervision of youth and the youth themselves. Youth would go off on their own and be influenced by the negative aspects of our secular and postmodern world. But Bishop Method Kilaini and Sister Rita Ishengoma explained that this would not happen if the Youth SCCs (and even Children SCCs) would be formed within the overall Mama SCC in a particular geographical area. There would be an ongoing link and mutual communication. Sometimes the Adult SCC and the Youth SCC would meet together. They gave examples in Lusaka, Zambia and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where adult SCC members serve as advisors or guardians of the Youth SCCs. An adult man is the Patron and an adult woman is the Matron.

In one parish in Monze Diocese, Zambia youth meet as part of the Mama SCC. There is a common *Bible* reading for everyone. Then they go into specific groups with prepared questions: a teenage group; a young adult group; and a married young adult group. At the end they come back together into the full SCC for announcements and closing prayers.

A survey among young people in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Lilongwe, Malawi, Lusaka, Zambia and Nairobi, Kenya revealed that their favorite discussion topics in SCCs meetings are:

- Topics clustered around boy-girl relationships, sex,<sup>333</sup> dating, fashion, popular music, video games, social networks, information technology, sports and the use of leisure time. Kenyan layman Steven Juma says:

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<sup>332</sup> Fraternity is a word that needs to be changed to inclusive (nonsexist) language like “brotherhood and sisterhood.” To 95% of the youth in the USA “fraternity” refers to the social club and residence for young men on college campuses. The equivalent for young women is “sorority.”

<sup>333</sup> In our SCCs Class at Tangaza in March, 2016 the students (mostly seminarians) were reluctant to mention sex as one of the African youths’ favorite topic (as though it was not proper). Finally the sole priest in the class said, “Youth want to talk about sex.”

I spent a lot of time going to church, *jumuiya*, fellowship and all kinds of Small Christian Communities where we talked about everything from feeding the poor to Jesus forgiving the prostitutes. We talked about everything but sex. Yet most of my Christian formation happened in a Small Christian Community... We have to talk about sex in an honest, candid way, and that talk has to start in our Small Christian Communities because we are not going to hear it at the 10.30 mass on Sunday.<sup>334</sup>

- Employment/unemployment, job hunting and career planning.
- Involvement in justice and peace issues. In his research American theologian Father Bernard Lee, SM makes a valuable distinction that applies to African Youth SCCs summarized as follows:

Full Christianhood is necessarily gathered and sent—community and mission belong together. I can say clearly that while traditional SCC members (the elder groups) do care about the shape of the world outside of their gathering, they tend to be more attentive to being gathered than to being sent (in mission). Some of us are guessing that for today’s young adult Catholics, “sending” will attract attention sooner than “gathering.” Young adults deserve some prioritized attention *vis-à-vis* their social agency in the world, and base communities are a way of connecting social agency with sound Christian hearts, heads, and feet.<sup>335</sup>

- How to answer challenges from their Protestant friends especially Pentecostals on the *Bible*, Catholic Church teachings, etc. Recent research shows this is the main reason that African Catholic youth want to learn more about the *Bible*.
- Fund raising projects.
- Generation gap – communications problems between themselves and their parents.

A very good example of a Youth SCC is St. Stephen Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC) in St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Kangemi in Nairobi. It meets on Sundays for announcements and planning and then choir practice with the other parish choir and on Thursdays for a variety of activities: *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection; Mass; Adoration of the St. Sacrament; sports like football, darts, etc.; discussion on various topics; and music, singing and dancing. This Youth SCC emphasizes social outreach. Members of St. Stephen SCC joined other youth in the parish to bring foodstuffs and other gifts to a camp of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) outside of Nairobi.

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<sup>334</sup> Steven Juma, St. Gonzaga Gonza SCC Youth Group Website, retrieved on 20 July, 2013, [https://www.facebook.com/groups/gonzagagonzasc/494064024005727/?notif\\_t=group\\_comment\\_reply](https://www.facebook.com/groups/gonzagagonzasc/494064024005727/?notif_t=group_comment_reply)

<sup>335</sup> Bernard Lee, “Young Adults Gathered & Sent or Sent & Gathered,” in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, pp. 2-3.

Another active youth haven is Dandora Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese. It has 59 SCCs including six active Youth SCCs. The Patron/Patroness Saints are: Achille Kiwanuka, Gonzaga Gonza, Kizito, Marcelino, Perpetua and Sylvester. These are neighborhood groups of young people between 14-29 years-old who are organized according to the five geographical phases (divided by the streets). When the number of youth in one phase became too many they divided into two YSCCs. These Youth SCCs are connected to the regular (mainly adult) SCCs in their phases. Youth who have experienced SCCs in their high school boarding schools have an excellent background for these parish-based Youth SCCs. They have many activities similar to the Kangemi Youth SCC above. The young men and women of these different Youth SCCs communicate the feeling that “we young people are the church too.” They reach out to various Youth Groups in other parishes to encourage them to start specific YSCCs.

In terms of ecclesial structure the chairperson and secretary of each YSCC are on the 15 member Central Youth Committee whose chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary are on the PPC. The five-member Executive Committee is on the Outer Ring Deanery Council.

One example is the St. Gonzaga Gonza Youth SCC over the years coordinated by Mercy Wandera, James Omondi, Evelyn Nyaituga, Anthony Odoyo, Jenny Kyalo, Gibson Thiongo, Johnte Ndiawo and others. Their photograph is posted in the Photo Gallery of our SCCs Website. <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/photo-gallery.html>. The members have weekly *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection every Sunday afternoon as well as many other activities – social, apostolic and spiritual. They have a “Public (Open) Group” on Facebook that presently has 127 members as of 23 April, 2016: <https://www.Facebook.com/search/results.php?q=Gonza+%C3%89+Gonzaga+Gonzaga&init=public#!/groups/gonzagagonzascc> Their posts on this Facebook Page are like a Case Study of a Youth SCC and describe the members’ lives, priorities and activities very well.

A creative example is the question: “What’s your favorite verse in the *Bible*? And why? It might be a verse that defines you or your life.<sup>336</sup> Kindly just share it out.” Some answers:

- *Psalms* 139:1-18, 23-24.
- *Luke* 24:26. “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”
- *Psalms* 41:10: “Be still and know that I am God”.
- *1 Peter* 2:9: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and a holy nation..... God has brought you from darkness to his precious light.”
- *Luke* 4:43: “Jesus said to them, ‘I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because for this purpose I was sent/have been sent.’” Also *Mark* 1:38: “Jesus said to them, ‘Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also; for this purpose have I come.’”<sup>337</sup>

<sup>336</sup> Another approach is to mention one’s favorite verse(s) at different stages in one’s life.

<sup>337</sup> When Ukweli Video produced a DVD on my missionary ministry in Eastern Africa in 2004 I used this Gospel text to trace a chronological line in my missionary journeys/travels to other towns and places in Kenya and Tanzania. Starting in Nairobi, Kenya in 1968 and then

- *John 3:16*: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life".<sup>338</sup>
- *Matthew 25:1*: "Come, blessed of my Father."

Another example is to ask on any given Sunday: "What have you learned in today's gospel?" Based on Sunday, 21 September, 2015's Gospel story of the "Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard" (*Matthew 20:1-16*)" some answers are:

- That I should seek the Lord while He can be found.
- That he will reward us with his salvation and make us be under his lordship. That's the automatic one denarius he will give to everyone who comes into his field.
- That He is always with us in our times of trouble and whenever we call unto him.
- This mantra: "Faith and salvation are generous free gifts from God."
- We should hope the first shall be the last. We should not covet anything before God. We are all equal.
- God is always merciful.

Representatives of St. Stephen Youth SCC and the Dandora Youth SCCs have presented their experiences in our SCC Classes in Nairobi and posted material on our SCCs Website and Facebook Page.

Another model is Christ the King Parish, Kibera in Nairobi Archdiocese. In the Parish Center and in each outstation the youth form separate Youth SCCs. For example, around 25 youth at the Parish Center (the geographical section called *Laini Saba*) are members of St. John Bosco SCC. Filipino Comboni seminarian Caspis Jemboy, MCCJ reports:

Each Sunday of the month has its schedule for an activity. Such activities in SCC are: *Bible Sharing* (once a month), Meetings and Planning, Seminars on Justice and Peace including Ethnic Identity, Recollection or Retreat Outreach Program for the poor and Catechism (once a month). For the past months and weeks [in 2013], concentration was made on the focus of rights, justice and peace in political and social responsibilities...The youth themselves are enthusiastic in promulgating what is good and better for everyone, starting from family, community and society as a whole. Despite

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on to Rulenge, Iramba, Makoko and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. NOTE: By returning to Nairobi in 2007 in the words of William Shakespeare, "the wheel has come full circle."

During the Buzz Groups *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* on this passage in our SCCs Class at Tangaza University College on 5 February, 2015 I shared that a new "town or place" for me is not a geographical or physical place but a virtual or existential or situational place such as the internet, social media and social networking.

<sup>338</sup> This is part of the Gospel for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on 14 September. In an online internet poll it was voted the most popular Bible verse. In USA it was made famous by the American football quarterback Tim Tebow who wore eye black with this inscription. He caused millions of football fans to Google the meaning of *John 3:16*.

their different ethnic identities, they hope for change and transformation towards a better way of life and participate in eradicating ethnicity conflict. The whole parish and other organizations are very supportive in helping the young people for their vision and mission for the betterment of the family, community, church, and society as a whole.<sup>339</sup>

The Fish Youth Group was founded in 1985 in Kisumu City, Kenya by two Catholic missionaries, English Mill Hill Missionary Father Anthony Chantry MHM and American Sister of Notre Dame Sister Mary Ellen Howard SND. Their main goal was to bring the Catholic youth together to strengthen their common faith, become strong members of the church and grow into responsible adults. The group was officially launched on 21 April, 1985 when the first 22 trained youth leaders were sent out, two by two to start their small groups following the SCCs Model of Church. The Fish Group was founded on the principles of Small Christian Communities. The motto of the group is SHARING which enables the members to grow and nourish their faith by encouraging each other to be faithful to God as they share continuously. At least here, the youth have a church group they can call their own.

Today after 30 years of existence the Fish Group is very active. First, to hear the Word of God and by sharing and answering questions find out how to apply it to our daily lives. Second, to do a group action to serve the local communities especially by helping the poor, the sick, the elderly and the suffering. Third, to arrange social and educational activities for the group such as sports, music, seminars/trainings, etc.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Caspis Jemboy, "Missionary Life and Outreach of SCCs in Africa and around the World," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on the on 28 April, 2013 at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/kenya/237-missionary-life-and-outreach-of-sccs-in-africa-and-around-the-world.html>

<sup>340</sup> Based on "The Fish Group Profile." Retrieved on 7 January, 2014, The Fish Group Blogspot, <http://fygroup.blogspot.co.ke>



FISH Youth Group Alumni during the *Bible* Sharing session in one of their monthly meetings. This photo of the Fish Group members sitting in a circle together outside -- this is the SCCs Model of Church in Africa today.

The members in the Fish Youth Group – the alumni and the young men and women of today -- have many opportunities to use the social media for communications and evangelization such as (alphabetically): BlogSpot, Facebook, online chatrooms and online small communities, Skype, Twitter, Websites and WhatsApp. Their choices are important and are determined by various factors such as (alphabetically): accessibility, commitment, context, cost, education, focus, interest, priorities and time.

One “thinking outside the box” solution is to encourage Kenyan youth to use [Sheng](#) in their SCC meetings. Sheng, the short form of Swahili and English, is a common language of interaction among youth especially in Kenyan cities. It is a blend of Swahili, English and other local Kenyan languages such as Gikuyu, Kamba, Luo, etc. This will send a message that the Catholic Church is interested in youth and their unique world. Using Sheng can also help overcome tribalism and specific ethnic loyalties.

Another good example is the SCCs in Hekima Secondary School in Bukoba, Tanzania that started in 1992. As of 2014 there were eight SCCs of Catholic girls and one SCC of girls of different Protestant denominations. These SCC members meet every Monday to read and reflect on the *Bible* passages related to formation of youth and liturgical themes. These

students are very active in participating in various religious activities and helping one another.<sup>341</sup>

Tanzanian Msgr. Deogratias Mbiku, the Catholic Chaplain at the University of Dar es Salaam, reports on SCCs on the university level:

The students are organized as Small Christian Communities in every residential hall. In every hall there are leaders chosen through free election who cater for the welfare of the students spiritually, academically, socially and materially. The leaders are five: Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. Several halls join together to form zones. For example at the University of Dar es Salaam Main Campus, there are seven halls and two zones. Halls I, II, III & V form one zone and Halls IV, VI & VII form the second zone. The leaders of each zone choose five leaders who become zonal leaders.

As to participation in the sacramental life and service/witness in the community, the Family Apostolate Committee and Small Christian Communities have great impact. Through Small Christian Communities I facilitate a program for both students and non-students to visit orphans and the sick in hospitals and bring them spiritual and material help.<sup>342</sup>

An interesting Case Study is St. Clement's Youth SCC in Mary Immaculate Parish in Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia. The parish has 11 SCCs that meet twice a month as the Adults SCC and twice a month as the Youth SCC. Our SCC team participated in a meeting on Sunday, 1 December, 2013 in the home of two of the youth. The 13 SCC members included seven young women and six young men.

In a frank discussion members said that many Catholic youth find the Adult SCCs boring because the *Bible* Sharing is long and heavy. The meetings become too dull and routine. They mentioned that many youth are attracted to the singing, dancing and liveliness of Pentecostal worship services in Zambia. They urged Eastern African SCCs to use creative ways of reflecting on the *Bible*<sup>343</sup> and applying it to our everyday life. They used an exercise starting with a reading of *John* 14:15-17. Then participants spontaneously drew out of a basket questions written on slips of paper related to friends and relationships. After a period of quiet reflection each SCC member answered his or her question from their personal experience. An example: "Do you rely on your good friends in time of troubles and problems? One answer used the saying *Friends in need are friends indeed*.

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<sup>341</sup> Based on an interview with Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 19 April, 2012.

<sup>342</sup> Deogratias Mbiku, "Report on Campus Ministry and Chaplaincy," Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) Unpublished Report, 2014.

<sup>343</sup> Creative *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection can include: dramatic reading of the *Bible* text chosen. Acting out/dramatizing the *Bible* text chosen. Playing a DVD/Video version or audio version of the *Bible* text chosen.

Then St. Clement Youth SCC discussed general issues including plans for the annual Christmas party; a new self-reliance project and a charity outreach in January, 2014 – to buy foodstuffs and gifts to take to a hospice of disabled children. They displayed the bookmarks with *Bible* verses in different languages such as Nyanja, English, etc. that they made as a self-reliance project.

36 people participated in a National Youth SCCs Workshop on the theme “Youth SCCs Embrace the Word of God” at the Salesian Pastoral Centre, Bauleni in Lusaka, Zambia from 2 to 5 December, 2013. Participants included representatives from seven dioceses and three youth movements: 14 young men, nine young women, two Youth Coordinators, five Youth Priest Chaplains, one religious sister, three priest visitors and two priest facilitators. The workshop was sponsored by the Pastoral Department of the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) and the Zambian National Council for Catholic Youth (ZNCCY) in conjunction with the Pastoral Department of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA).

It is the first of a series of national SCCs Workshops in the nine AMECEA countries. The SCCs Workshop was facilitated by Father Febian Pikiti and Father Joseph Healey, MM.

In the spirit of “learning by doing” participants formed four SCCs (St. Kizito, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Mary) for three separate sessions:

- Lectionary-based faith sharing on the Gospel of the following 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent (*Matthew* 3: 1-12);
- Using the **SEE – JUDGE – ACT** reflection method/process on topics in the general society in Zambia: “Gender-based Violence; “Poverty” (two SCCs); and “Youth Unemployment” and in the Catholic Church in Zambia: “The Church Hierarchy is Too Closed;” “Resistance to Change in the Catholic Church;” “Youth Do Not Know the Catholic Church Teaching on Sex and Marriage;” and “Youth Leaving the Catholic Church.”
- Reflecting on passages in the *Bible* using the “Reading Guide for Understanding the *Bible*.”

Highlights included two SCCs Masses with plenty of youth participation; a session on “Interacting with Youth in the Social Media”<sup>344</sup> including an online presentation of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page” ([www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)) and participants demonstrating their own websites and Facebook Pages connected to youth in Zambia;<sup>345</sup> and an African-based DVD, *The Church in the Neighborhood: Small Christian Communities* that included Segment I on “Life and Activities of SCCs” and Segment II on “Services (Ministries) in the SCC.”

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<sup>344</sup> An interesting study is Pius Wesonga, *An Evaluation of the Use of New Media in Evangelizing Youth in the Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Nairobi*, Nairobi: Unpublished MA Thesis at Daystar University, 2014.

<sup>345</sup> See Archdiocese of Lusaka Youth Facebook Page [https://www.facebook.com/groups/196941513776884/334481956689505/?notif\\_t=group\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/196941513776884/334481956689505/?notif_t=group_activity)

Recommendations included: Plan and schedule Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshops on Youth SCCs on the diocesan and parish levels in Zambia. Importance of sharing resources on SCCs – printed materials, audio-visual materials and online materials. With the help of Diocesan Youth Chaplains, the youth leaders will encourage their fellow youth to embrace the Word of God in their lives and actively participate in Youth SCCs. Communicate the results and follow-up plans of this SCCs Workshop to the Bishop and Youth Chaplain in each diocese in Zambia.

Some feedback and comments on the Youth SCCs Workshop that the youth participants posted on Facebook: “Wow!!! So youthful and yet so fulfilling. This is a really wonderful experience.” “It has been nice for me to attend this type of workshop. It has really helped me to know more about Small Christian Communities.” “The lectionary-based *Bible* sharing in our St. Mary's SCC was so enriching. We realized that Zambian youth today are so busy preparing for Christmas without understanding the meaning of Advent and what to do during this period. In fact, preparations for the coming Christmas celebrations have hijacked the meaning of this Advent season. A challenge to us all is: Do we understand the meaning of Advent and how can we take Advent to the secular world? “I participated in the workshop session on “See,” “Judge” and “Act.” It was awesome.” “Surely Small Christian Communities is the way to go. Can't wait to implement the lectionary-based *Bible* sharing in Ndola Diocese.” “Having such a workshop at parish level would really help to reboot our Youth SCCs.”<sup>346</sup>

Some later feedback in email messages: “Thank you very much for the work you did in Bauleni. Youth and SCCs is such an important issue that needs a lot of attention in our church in Zambia. The workshop in Bauleni gave us a point of departure in tackling this issue. We have already had a follow-up workshop in December, 2014 where we gave feedback to the members of our Diocesan Youth Council. We are yet to visit each deanery to share on this same topic. These notes you have sent will give us good material as we try to help our youth appreciate the SCCs.” “I can gladly report that the document is very useful so was the workshop. Two weeks ago I visited St. John the Baptist Parish in Chinsali, Mpika Diocese where I attended a Youth SCC. I was amazed with what I found there. This SCC is now using most of the ideas from the SCCs Workshop and this document too. We are so grateful for you taking the time to send it to all of us. I am yet to visit many other dioceses to see if this information has been delivered. You may start working on something more for the future.” “We are having our end of year council meeting in Ndola where we intend to talk on the SCCs report and how the workshop was helpful to us and our diocese.”

Youth SCCs in Zambia are an idea whose time has come. Zambian Bishop Clement Mulenga, SDB is presently the Bishop of Kabwe Diocese. Previously he was a Diocesan Youth Coordinator of Lusaka Archdiocese and is committed to the SCCs Model of Church. As the present Chairman of the Pastoral Department of ZEC (that includes Youth Ministry) he feel that young people need their own SCCs separate from the Adult SCCs.<sup>347</sup> This was reinforced by Chishimba Chishimba, the Vice Chairperson of the Zambia National Council

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<sup>346</sup> A full report, [Zambia Hosts National Youth SCCs Workshop on the Theme “Youth SCCs Embrace the Word of God”](#) is found on the SCCs Website and [ZAMBIA: ZEC Hosts National Youth SCCs Workshop on the Theme “Youth SCCs Embrace the Word of God”](#) is found on the AMECEA Website.

<sup>347</sup> Clement Mulenga in a conversation with the author in Monze, Zambia on 2 May, 2014.

for Catholic Youth (ZNCCY). She is a member of St. Maxmillian Kolbe YSCC that became independent of but is still connected to, the Adult SCC. The young people want to have their own identity and activities. She wrote on the SCCs Facebook Page on 1 May, 2014: “My YSCC, Maxmillian Kolbe, is dealing with PMC which is an interesting venture.”  
[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=10152101885698316&id=279921983315&notif\\_t=like](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10152101885698316&id=279921983315&notif_t=like)<sup>348</sup>

Another approach is Catholic Youth in Malawi who have a Facebook Page called “A Am a Catholic and I Am Proud” that has 8,684 fans (members). It is a closed group where young Catholics can discuss issues related to their faith. These youth exchange views on the growth of Youth SCCs and the spiritual values underlying SCCs.

In our SCCs Workshops we discussed that Facebook and other social media are not just casual and superficial activity, but can be a ministry and evangelization. It was mentioned that the Catholic Bishop of Kitui Diocese, Kenya has appointed two priests to be Facebook Chaplains to reach out to young people. Is Facebook Ministry and Facebook Evangelization the wave of the future?

Ugandan Consolata Sister Immaculate Nyaketcho Spe, MC provides very valuable qualitative research in her 2014 long essay on the “Impact of Small Christian Communities on Youth: A Qualitative Case Study in Our Lady Consolata Catholic Church, Riara Ridge” in the Institute of Youth Studies (IYS), Tangaza, University College. The research asks the same question in two different ways. How have SCCs impacted on the youth? What has been the impact of SCCs on youth? She surveys the participation of 12 youth between the ages of 18 and 29 (seven male and five female) in the four SCCs in Our Lady of Consolata Catholic Church in Nazareth, Riara Ridge, Nairobi Archdiocese. She analyzes eight positive themes of the impact or influence in the order of importance:

- Prayer.
- Spiritual growth.
- Togetherness and living as a family.
- Encouragement.
- Happiness.
- Support of the needs of others.
- Nurturing and molding.
- Learning the Catholic faith.

Hopefully another study will analyze the negative themes of the youth in these SCCs such as boredom, exclusive use of the Gikuyu language in three of the four SCCs, excessive length of SCC meetings, irrelevance of some discussion topics, etc. **ADD QUOTES**

This present evaluation documents many examples of the growing importance of women in SCCs. African women are challenging the patriarchal style in both traditional African culture and in traditional Catholic Church leadership. In 1992 the author was invited to give a Public Lecture at CUEA on “Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa.” Since

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<sup>348</sup> Chishimba Chishimba in a conversation with the author in Lusaka, Zambia on 2 May, 2014.

lay people are the heart of SCCs I agree to speak only if a lay woman could co-present with me. Mrs. Rose Musimba, the former Chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council of Holy Trinity Parish, Buruburu I, Nairobi and a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team, eloquently explained the central role of the laity in SCCs in Eastern Africa. After the lecture a Malawian priest who was studying at CUEA came up to the front and told Rose she was the first woman Chairperson of a Parish Council that he had ever met. In the last 20 years this has changed dramatically and now many committed Catholic lay women are in leadership positions on the diocesan, parish, outstation and SCC levels.

The lack of participation and involvement of men in SCCs in Eastern Africa is also well documented throughout this evaluation and assessment. Charles Ddungu's research pointed out that from the very initial steps of launching SCCs in Tabora Archdiocese, Tanzania many considered them only prayer groups or *Bible* Sharing Groups. The exclusion of the human development aspects is one of the major reasons why men and the youth abandoned the SCCs.<sup>349</sup>

At the Second Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA II) in Nairobi, Kenya in August, 2014 part of the discussion focused on concrete pastoral solutions. Regarding the obstacle that only a few men come to the SCCs, someone joked that in Nairobi Archdiocese that now has 4,537 SCCs when a SCC meeting includes a meal many men come. When beer is served all the men come. It was pointed out that men don't like long prayer services, but practical projects such as service to others and self-help projects attract men. Men also want the weekly *Bible* Service to start on time and don't like just sitting around waiting.

The last five years has seen the slow, gradual shift of SCCs 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 (emphasizing especially the rosary and popular devotions)<sup>350</sup> and not concerned with the wider social issues. Many SCCs still shy away from justice and peace concerns. The challenge of Ugandan historian/theologian Father John Waliggo (who died in 2008) and Magesa has encouraged the SCCs in Africa to become more involved in justice and peace issues and social action.

Bishop Christopher Mwoleka, the deceased bishop of Rulenge Diocese who was the founder of SCCs in Tanzania, already saw this challenge in the 1980s when he identified the pressing need for an effective and inculturated method of *Bible* Reflection in Eastern Africa that gets beyond the small prayer group model. Just as Africa needs an "appropriate technology" for economic development, it needs an "appropriate methodology" for *Bible*

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<sup>349</sup> Charles Ddungu, *Towards Self-Ministering Small Christian Communities: the Case of Ndala Parish*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Brussels: Catholic University of Louvain, 2005.

<sup>350</sup> Research in the rural areas of Luganda speaking dioceses of Uganda such as a Masaka Diocese in 2013 indicate that SCCs mainly meet in May and October for the rosary and devotions to the Blessed Mary. Ugandan layman Richard Kakeeto, conversation with author in Nairobi, Kenya, 26 November, 2013.

Reflection that connects the *Bible* to the real issues of our daily life and includes faith sharing. He called this "finding the African bait."<sup>351</sup>

Orobator sums up the history as follows:

Some theologians have pointed out that a major drawback of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and parishes in Africa lies in their predilection for caritative options in response to social issues to the detriment of the more structural ones. According to Uzukwu: "It is...symptomatic of the SCCs that group reflections rarely touch areas of social action, but rather emphasize the caritative dimension."<sup>352</sup> Joseph Donders also makes the point that, in contrast to the Latin American experience of Basic Ecclesial Communities, "In Africa the Small Christian Communities do not politicize. They are trying to find political survival in an over-politicized world."<sup>353</sup> A more accurate assessment of this situation allows us to say that these communities comprise men and women who have been catechized in quietist and devotional piety, prone to fatalistic acceptance of their conditions of oppression, poverty and misery.<sup>354</sup>

Fortunately this situation is changing. One important reason for this positive shift is the use of an inductive Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR) Process/Method such as the "Pastoral Spiral"<sup>355</sup> in SCCs that helps the members to go deeper and make concrete changes in our lives. This Pastoral Spiral (also known as the Pastoral Circle and the Pastoral Cycle<sup>356</sup>) uses the four steps of:

1. Insertion
2. Social/Cultural Analysis
3. Theological Reflection
4. Action/Pastoral Planning

Another version is the five steps of:

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<sup>351</sup> Joseph Healey, "The Need for an Effective Bible Reflection Method in SCCs in Africa," *Biblical Pastoral Bulletin*, 8 (1989), 28-29. *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)* 37/3 (May, 1995), 156-159. Another version is Joseph G. Healey, "Finding the African Bait," *New People*, 6-9 (1990), 10-11.

<sup>352</sup> Uzukwu, *A Listening Church, Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996, p.118.

<sup>353</sup> Joseph Donders, *Non-Bourgeois Theology: An African Experience of Jesus*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 173.

<sup>354</sup> A. E. Orobator, *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in its Social Context*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000, pp. 145-146.

<sup>355</sup> See the African examples in Frans Wijssen, Peter Henriot and Rodrigo Mejia (eds.), *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006.

<sup>356</sup> See the video series *Pastoral Cycle Methodology for Social Transformation*. Nairobi: Institute of Social Ministry, Tangaza, 2015.

1. Experience
2. Social/Cultural Analysis
3. Theological Reflection
4. Pastoral Planning
5. Evaluation.<sup>357</sup>

Still another version is Dutch lay missiologist Frans Wijzen, SMS's practical--theological spiral:

1. Observation.
2. Interpretation.
3. Evaluation.
4. Innovation.

The term "Pastoral Spiral" is preferred because it showed the ongoing-ness of the process or method. It is well known in pastoral theology, social ministry and formation programs. The full process has been tested in SCCs in Eastern Africa and found to be too complex to fit the needs of the short time frame of a weekly SCC meeting (one hour to one and a half hours at the most) and the educational background of lay members. But it has been successfully adapted to the three steps of the well-known "See," "Judge" and "Act" process/method<sup>358 359</sup> starting from concrete experience. Many SCCs begin with the step:

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<sup>357</sup> These five steps of the Pastoral Spiral are clearly described in Malawian Montfort Seminarian Peter Makina's Case Study of St. Louis Montfort SCC in Sitima Parish, Zomba Diocese, Malawi. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 24 June, 2013 at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/malawi/242-using-the-pastoral-spiral-see-judge-and-act-process-in-sccs-in-africa.html>

<sup>358</sup> American Maryknoll priest Rafael Davila, MM points out that "the Jocist (widely used term that comes from the French acronym JOC -- *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* or Young Christian Workers [YCW] that is an international organization founded by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn in Belgium) method of "See," "Judge" and Act" is a method of spirituality. He summarizes his views as follows:

- To grow personally, as a family and as a faith community/community of faith.
- To practice personal reflection, communication and dialog as a couple, as a family and as a faith community/community of faith.
- To use the method as a spiritual guide:
  - To see, analyze and contemplate the reality of our life with the eyes of the mystery of faith including the Paschal Mystery and the Mystery of the Trinity.
  - To judge, critique, evaluate, enlighten and encounter Jesus in our reality with the Word of God in the communion of love.
  - To act, decide and be transformed in our commitments with a mission of joyful hope.

Rafael Davila conversation with the author, Houston Texas, 3 October, 2015.

<sup>359</sup>Research indicates that young people in Eastern Africa who have experienced these "See," "Judge and "Act" steps in the Young Christian Students (YCS) and Young Christian Workers (YCW) Movements are more confident and better qualified to use them in SCCs.

Brief reports on the members' lives during the past week (called a “touchdown period”). This includes a report on the SCC's actions/tasks (community response) carried out during the previous week. Other SCCs take a concrete experience, incident or story as the starting point of a weekly meeting.

Now more and more SCCs in Africa are using various reflection processes and methods 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 with concrete actions.<sup>360</sup> Through their use of the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process,<sup>361</sup> small communities move out into the world in a dialog with the daily way of life. Using this methodology SCCs are well suited to make real changes and have a real impact in transforming our world.

But it is not easy as Ngalula point out:

The instability of many countries in Africa provoke a massive rush to some devotional groups in the Catholic Church or to the promises of miracle in the New Religious Movements that both teach people that the solution will come only from God in exchange of long prayers. This is a big competition for the BCCs that seem rather stern with their "See," "Judge" and "Act" method that prevents people from escaping the hard realities of life to take refuge in the spiritual practices. Some people prefer to choose the way of easiness and quit the BCCs.<sup>362</sup>

An example of a reflection process/method: One of the eight Gospel Sharing Methods in the Lumko Series is the Group Response Method (or *Bible-Mirror Method*) that is described on pages 263-265. It aims at seeing daily situations and problems reflected in the biblical text. It makes the Gospel a driving force in talking about life issues. This method holds up the Scripture text (such as the gospel of the following Sunday) as a kind of mirror in which the SCC members can recognize their own problems and situations of daily life. It helps SCC members to look beyond their immediate personal spiritual needs to the wider church and society. It is very practical and pastoral:

Parish Liturgical Committees could use Group Response to prepare the Sunday Liturgy. It will assist them in finding the *Sitz im Leben* (German for "setting in life") or *hali halisi* (Swahili for local situation) of a particular text of the *Bible*. In other words, it helps them find which life situation of a local community is reflected in the biblical text. This will also help the preacher in

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<sup>360</sup> A practical book that explains the methodology and dynamics of the Pastoral Circle in an African context is Patrick Ryan (ed.), *New Strategies for a New Evangelization*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2002.

<sup>361</sup> This process operates at different levels. For example, a Diocesan Synod or Diocesan Pastoral Letter can be a theological lens through which the life and ministries of a diocese can be viewed and evaluated.

<sup>362</sup> Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 12.

his homily to address the real problems of a local community allowing the people to find together with him or her “what God thinks about it.”<sup>363</sup>

Three specific examples of the successful use of this “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process/method in promoting justice and peace are as follows: First, the booklets in English and Swahili for the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign produced by the Kenya Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (described throughout this book and listed in the “Select Annotated Bibliography”).

Second, the ministry and publications of the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection (JCTR) in Lusaka, Zambia. Henriot writes:

To strengthen the life of the SCCs, the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection has in recent years developed some small pamphlets for use by these [SCCs] groups during their weekly meetings. The purpose of the pamphlets is to provide a resource for guided reflection that can generate faith-based action. The Pastoral Circle serves as the framework for the pamphlets.<sup>364</sup>

Examples are *What is the Church’s Social Teaching Saying about Poverty?* (JCTR, 2003) and *Traditional Healing: A Pastoral Challenge for the Catholic Church in Zambia* (JCTR, 2004).<sup>365</sup>

Third, the various reflection methods especially related to social justice in the Lumko series program such as the “Amos Program for Small Christian Communities” found on page 331. These programs search for the root causes of common problems leading to social action:

The Amos Program is a form of *Bible* Sharing in five steps where the *Bible* is read in the context of everyday life realities of the people of our time. The starting point in each case is a concrete social or political problem -- poverty, unemployment, corruption, drug use, HIV/AIDS, violence, prostitution, etc. -- that is then analyzed in light of the *Bible* and of the

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<sup>363</sup> Oswald Hirmer, *The Pastoral Use of the Bible: Gospel Sharing Methods*, No. 20 of the Series “Training for Community Members,” Germiston, South Africa: Lumko, 2003, p. 52.

<sup>364</sup> Peter Henriot, *Pastoral Circle Revisited*, p. 39.

<sup>365</sup> See Bboloka Bubala Nchimunya, SJ’s Ph.D Dissertation topic at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, A Graduate School of Santa Clara University: “Inculturating CST in SCC: A Necessary Paradigm of Evangelization In Zambia.” He explains: “CST is not known by most Zambian Catholics because it is not easily made available to them. Since the Zambian Catholic formation is little or not there at all after confirmation lessons, CST has not been integrated or taught to most Catholics. Hence the term: Catholic Social Teaching of the Catholic Church as the “Best Kept Secret.” Therefore, I argue that inculturating CST in SCC will enable many Christians in Zambia to access these informative documents. It will indeed become a new paradigm for evangelization for Catholics in Zambia. I believe SCC is an appropriate platform for most Christians to learn, share or teach these important documents from Mother Church.” Email dated 8 April, 2014.

Christian Tradition. But participants do not stop at the steps of analysis and interpretation. Instead, they move on to develop viable solutions that are as realistic and practical as possible. By so doing they make it possible for life relationships to improve step by step.<sup>366</sup>

Unfortunately these excellent Lumko materials have not been updated with new stories, examples and references in newer church documents such as the First and Second African Synods.

One concrete fruit of all the materials described above is to develop a spirituality of justice and peace in all our apostolic activities.<sup>367</sup> This had led to a new social consciousness

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<sup>366</sup> "The Amos Program: Prophetic Action in the World of Today," *Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) Newsletter*, Edition 4/2007.

<sup>367</sup> An important and influential book for many years in Eastern Africa is Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers*, 3 volumes, Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984. These volumes have helped two generations of Africans to begin with their personal and communal experience (as done in the "See" Step or "Insertion" of the Pastoral Circle). The books are excellent for justice formation and provide useful group exercises and group dynamics related to the question: How can SCC members be agents of change and social transformation? Margaret Mead, the American cultural anthropologist, said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

*Training for Transformation* can be described as a great river originating in a number of different springs. These sources were joined together initially in the Delta Training Program of team training for development workers, started in Kenya by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel in 1973. Since then numerous tributaries bringing new insights and skills have contributed effective ways of enabling local communities to improve the quality of their lives in the ways they choose. The leadership skills and methodology of DELTA (Development Education for Leaders and Trainers Action) and TtT (Training for Trainers) have irrigated and brought new life to different fields: including Health, Agriculture, Literacy, Women and Youth groups, Group Ranches and Income-producing projects, Lay Leadership in Faith Communities, Catechetics and Religious Education.

Davies points out the importance of the Psycho-Social Method (PMS) as a really effective way of developing a parish materially and spiritually by motivating people to be united in spirit, owning a project ("It's our project") and states:

The PMS could be said to have become important with the arrival in Kenya of two Grail members, Ann Hope and Sally Timmel, to act as facilitators in Development Education using the Psycho-Social Method of Paul Frere. The great value of the method was/is that it is genuinely involves "groups of people" into becoming "communities" which are united in implementing projects. (Davies, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop*, p. 118)

Bernard Ugeux and Pierre Lefebvre emphasize: "It should however be stressed that this work of consciousness-raising and of the struggle for justice can only be undertaken by Small Christian Communities and their leaders when they have reached a certain degree of

on the local level. One recent development is SCCs members in Eastern Africa being more involved in civic education and political processes like awareness of political issues before and during elections. For example, in Kenya a significant turning point was the post-election crisis in Kenya in January-February, 2008. Using the "See," "Judge" and "Act" process during the Kenya Lenten Campaign 2008 SCCs members dramatically discovered how much tribalism and negative ethnicity existed in their SCCs on the local level.<sup>368</sup> This led to concrete actions such as: 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. Therapeutic group counseling sessions during SCC meetings. SCC mediation teams comprised of members from different ethnic groups visiting the small communities in their neighborhood. Various reconciliation and healing services and rites on the SCCs, outstation and parish levels. Long-range action steps included subsequent Lenten Campaigns devoted to SCCs' involvement in peaceful, free and fair elections.<sup>369</sup>

The *National Mirror*, the monthly Catholic newspaper in Kenya, has started a series "Voices from the Grassroots" that encourages SCC members and other Catholics to express their views before the 2013 National Elections in Kenya. The first article entitled "St. Kizito SCCs: An Example of What SCCs Can Do" describes how a small community in Waruku, Nairobi is involved in a civic education program of the 2012 Kenya Lenten Campaign that is outlined in Section 5. SCC members pledged to promote peaceful elections and non-violence in 2012 and 2013. They emphasized the importance of registering to vote and then using their tools of voting -- their ID and Voter's Card -- to vote on election's day on 4 March, 2013. Studying the new *Constitution* together will make the SCC members better citizens. By so doing, "surely the SCCs are fast becoming a voice of the church at the grassroots level," remarked a member of St. Kizito SCC during their meeting for the First Sunday of Lent.<sup>370</sup>

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maturity. There are laws of psychological growth and stages which cannot be skipped. The active participation of so many of these communities in the movement for democracy shows, however, that they are perfectly capable of taking part in the non-violent struggle for justice." Bernard Ugeux and Pierre Lefebvre, *Small Christian Communities and Parishes*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995, p. 29.

<sup>368</sup> In my SCC Course on "Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today" at Hekima College 19 out of the 24 students wrote their Final Term Papers in April, 2008 on tribalism and negative ethnicity in SCCs especially in Nairobi and their ramifications such as Cultural Associations, Discrimination, Favoritism, Cronyism, Human Rights, Gender Issues, Land Reform, Nepotism, Clannism, etc.

<sup>369</sup> This and similar examples was the subject of a Faculty Research Seminar at Hekima College on 15 February, 2012 on the topic "The Pastoral Spiral ("See," "Judge" and "Act") as a New Paradigm for Promoting Justice and Peace in Africa Today." The focus is on a paradigm shift that is occurring in Africa not because of the newness of the process or methodology but because of the new results -- the new pastoral and social actions taken. "Spiral" is preferred to "Circle" because it is more open-ended and ongoing in terms of new planning and action.

<sup>370</sup> Francis Njuguna, "Saint Kizito SCCs: An Example of What SCCs Can Do," *National Mirror*, 24:3 (April, 2012), p. 16.

The second article entitled “SCCs of Dandora Parish Worth to Be Emulated by Others” (“A Bold Step towards Forming Youth SCCs”) describes the six Youth SCCs in Dandora Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese – part of the total number of 59 SCCs in the parish. These SCCs are comprised of young people ranging from 14 to 29 years: working youth, unemployed youth, high school students and college students. In discussing the 2013 National Elections they emphasized the importance of educating each other on the main issues, being guided by their Catholic faith, not being used by politicians and using first names only so they do not focus on their ethnic group/tribal affiliation.<sup>371</sup>

SCCs in Eastern Africa are increasingly an inculturated model of church. This responds to Pope Francis’ call in *The Joy of the Gospel* under the section “A People of Many Faces” (Numbers 115-118):”

The People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture. The concept of culture is valuable for grasping the various expressions of the Christian life present in God’s people... Through inculturation, the church introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community, for every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived... We would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous... We cannot demand that peoples of every continent, in expressing their Christian faith, imitate modes of expression which European nations developed at a particular moment of their history, because the faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture. It is an indisputable fact that no single culture can exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ.

Inculturation in Africa is seen in the unique or specific names for SCC in the local African languages<sup>372</sup> that take on a life of their own such as (in alphabetical order):

*Amahega* (the Ankole, Uganda word for SCC);  
*Bete Tsellote* (the Amharic, Ethiopia) word for SCC);  
*Bungwe* (the Nyanja, Zambia word for SCC);  
*Citente* (the Bemba, Zambia word for SCC);  
*Dhome* (the Giriama, Kenya word for SCC);  
*Dog gang* (the Acholi, Uganda word for SCC);  
*Duol* (central hut of the homestead and the place in front of the chief or local leader’s house where the people gathered)) or *Kidieny* (small part of the whole like a part or piece of an animal, small group of people) (the Luo, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda words for SCC);  
*Enyati* (the Lugbara, Uganda word for SCC);  
*Jumuiya* or *Mkamilishano* (the Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa words for SCC);

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<sup>371</sup> Francis Njuguna, “SCC of Dandora Parish Worth to Be Emulated by Others” *National Mirror*, 24:4 (May, 2012), p. 20.

<sup>372</sup> These African languages are listed by their root word without the prefixes like “the language of.”

*Imiryango Remezoi Vuguruye* (the Rwanda, Rwanda word for SCC (“Community of Deep Foundation”));

*Imiryango Remezoya Kiliziya* (the Rwanda, Rwanda word for (“Community of Church Foundation” or BEC);

*Mwaki* (the Gikuyu,<sup>373</sup> Kenya word for SCC);

*Kabondo* or *Katabi* or *Ebibina by’abasseekimu* (the Ganda, Uganda words for SCC);

*Kabras* or *Shikwenyi* (the Luhya, Kenya words for SCC similar to small unit);

*Kamwaki* (the Meru, Kenya word for SCC)

*Kokwet* and *Mursik* (the Kalenjin, Kenya words for SCC);

*Limana* (the Chewa, Malawi and the Ngoni, Malawi and Tanzania word for SCC);

*Mphakati* (the Chewa, Malawi and the Nyanja, Zambia word for SCC);

*Mugongo* (the Runyoro, Uganda word for SCC),

*Nguthu* (the Kamba, Kenya word for SCC);

*Uzengzani* (the Tumbuka, Malawi word for SCC)

and so on in other African countries.<sup>374</sup> Whatever the country or language, we try to think and be "community" and think and be “a member of a Small Christian Community.”

To expand two examples: *Jumuiya* literally means “community” in Swahili. Kenyan diocesan priest and SCC animator Father Harrison Yaa states:

The word *Jumuiya* has a deeper meaning. It may express brotherhood or sisterhood, communion, unity, integration and harmony. Members of a *Jumuiya* are referred to as *wanajumuiya* that literally means “sons and daughters of the *jumuiya*.” *Jumuiya* in an African context is always personified and signifies a parental figure who takes care of the little ones without any segregation. A parent ordinarily shares what he or she has with the children. In Eastern Africa *wanajumuiya* gather in order to share with each other from what the parent has for them. This particular aspect of sharing constitutes one of the essential elements within the community of believers.<sup>375</sup>

*Mwaki* literally means “fire” in Gikuyu.<sup>376</sup> Fire is a symbol of unity, life and communication. In traditional Kikuyu society the small community gathered around the fire/fireplace/hearth. It was the place to teach African values, discuss and approve important community issues and perform local ceremonies. A neighborhood community was also called

<sup>373</sup> The original and authentic name is Gikuyu.

<sup>374</sup> 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 Nos. 126-28, 1993, pp. 96-99.

<sup>375</sup> Harrison Yaa, *Building, Strengthening and Sustaining Small Christian Communities in an Urban Set-up in Nairobi, Kenya: A Case Study in Holy Trinity Catholic Parish in Kariobangi North*, Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Tangaza University College (CUEA), 2011, p. 5.

<sup>376</sup> The Focolare is an international apostolic group or association in Eastern Africa. An interesting connection is that the Italian word *foca* means “fire” and *lare* is “hearth.” So *Focolare* refers to the fireplace area similar to the extended meaning of *mwaki*.

*mwaki* from the way that people made a fire and shared that fire. When the fire had been lit in one home, all the other homes in the neighborhood took their fire from that one place. This sharing of fire helped the people to identify themselves as one community. *Mwaki* or "fire" was symbolic of sharing and communion.

This word *mwaki* now has a specific Christian meaning and ecclesial identity for the local, neighborhood SCC. It is really a "spirituality" with a spirit of solidarity and a sharing of Christian values in the small community. Now when the local Christians say "Let's go to the *mwaki*" in Gikuyu, everyone knows they are going to the weekly SCC meeting. They have a specific ecclesial identity and life as members of the *mwaki*.<sup>377</sup>

Ugandan seminarian Charles Okure, OCD deepens the meaning of this symbolism by explaining that as Catholics "gather together as the church, they gather around the fire that is Christ. Catholics come and communicate with Christ, who in turn transforms them into his own church that they can easily know, experience and love, and therefore help to perpetuate."<sup>378</sup>

Recent research indicates that of the 45,000 SCCs in Kenya as many as 8,000 could be *miaki* (plural of *mwaki*). The origin of the name is traced to Ngarariga Parish in Limuru Deanery in Nairobi Archdiocese. In the period 1975-76 the parish priest, Kenyan diocesan priest Father Cletus Ngugi, visited the homes of parishioners. He found the Gikuyu-speaking Catholics rather distant from each other and the Sunday Masses filled with a large anonymous crowd of parishioners. So to bring closer personal relationships and better family spirit he suggested that the Catholics meet in their homes to reflection on the Scriptures together. So *mwaki* was born.

The Kikuyu people composed a specific song in Gikuyu about *mwaki* called *God, Keep the Fire Burning* that is found in the *Gikuyu Hymnal*. It is their SCC theme song to encourage *mwaki* members. Some of the verses are: "When you miss the weekly meeting you put the fire out." "Let the fire burn and don't cover it."

In traditional African village life one home fire at a central place spreads fire and light to all the other fires. A Sukuma, Tanzania proverb says *A good supply of wood keeps the fire burning through the night* which is similar to the universal proverbs *You never let the home fire go out* and *always keep the home fire burning*. This is connected to the African value of life. There is a Malawi saying: *As long as there is a fire burning in the village so long God will give us life*.<sup>379</sup> Mwoleka used this symbolism to explain the growth of SCCs. A small group of people is better than one person. Then the fire of the Holy Spirit works in the whole group. It is important that the core community remains alive and zealous so it can light others. If a parish or outstation has one or two SCCs that are dynamic, these can stimulate the growth and expansion of other SCCs.

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<sup>377</sup> Based on a conversation of Kenyan Bishop James Maria Wainaina of Murang'a Diocese, Kenya with the author in Nairobi, Kenya in June, 2011.

<sup>378</sup> Charles Okure, "The Common Activities in Small Christian Communities in Africa Today," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2016.

<sup>379</sup> See Joseph Healey, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Back Christian Values*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press, 1981, p. 115.

Another dimension of inculturation is the new lay ministries that have emerged in the SCCs in Eastern Africa. In fact, SCCs are a continuing source of new ministries. This is seen in the true story “What New Ministry Would You Start?”

In one part of Tanzania Small Christian Community (SCC) members were asked: "In addition to the existing ministries in our SCCs, what new ministry or ministries would you start?" They answered immediately: "The ministry of healing especially the laying on of hands." In African society healing (physical, psychological, and spiritual) is very important especially in light of the on-going influence of superstition and witchcraft. Healing rituals are an essential part of various African Independent Churches and Pentecostal Churches: prayers for healing, healing ceremonies and rituals and the regular laying on of hands.

Yet the Catholic Church has hesitated to make this a part of its regular (even daily) ministry and liturgy. One elderly expatriate missionary priest was asked what he would do differently if he was starting his missionary ministry over again. Immediately he answered: “Emphasize healing liturgies more.”<sup>380</sup>

Praying over sick people and laying on of hands is now a common part of many SCCs. SCC members visit the sick people in their neighborhood immediately after the weekly *Bible Service* or on a designated day of the week.

But we need to emphasize the healing ministry even more. This is one of the great attractions of the Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches that often use names such as the Deliverance Church and the Healing Church. St. Charles Lwanga Small Christian Community in the Drive-in Estate of St. Peter’s Parish is one of the best SCCs in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Members faithfully participate in the parish and SCCs activities. Yet one day several members asked: “Is it all right for us to go to the healing services at the main Pentecostal Church down the road?” There is a clear message and challenge here. An increasing number of Catholics are comfortable with a both/and approach.

Another new lay ministry in SCCs is described by American Maryknoll Missionary and Kenyatta University Catholic chaplain Lance Nadeau, MM:

In addition to being agents of missionary outreach to the poor, SCCs in Nairobi and elsewhere in East Africa are developing a *new, inculturated and critical* form of lay health care ministry: the *huduma ya afya* (Swahili for “the service of health care”), a volunteer community-based health care apostolate. In response to the health needs of the wider community, the *jumuiya ndogo ndogo* collectively select those among their members who have the special abilities needed for the *huduma ya afya* that is also called “*Health Care Ministry*” or “*Health Service Giving*” or “*Health Services*.” These gifted men and women are then commissioned to be *wahudumu wa afya* (“ministers” or

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<sup>380</sup> “What New Ministry Would You Start?” Story No. 550 in the “African Stories Database”, African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 21 July 2011, [http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=504](http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=504)

“service givers”) who carry out the SCCs’ health care ministry. These volunteer health care workers [also called field health workers] provide the following services:

1. Visit the sick in their homes to talk and pray with them.
2. Bring nurses and social workers to evaluate the sick.
3. Recommend that the sick go to dispensaries and hospitals.
4. Accompany the sick to dispensaries and hospitals if necessary.
5. Bring medications to the sick.
6. Train the family members in home care, nutrition and hygiene.
7. Inform the parish priests if the sick want a visit.<sup>381</sup>

These volunteer Community Health Care (CHC) workers or ministers focus on reaching out to people with HIV/AIDS and their families. The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet of Eastern Deanery Community-Based Health Care and AIDS Relief Program (EDARP) of Nairobi Archdiocese states.

Our pools of dedicated CHWs are members of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs). These are nominated by the parish though occasionally individual members may nominate themselves. They too must be vetted by the parish. Once potential CHWs are identified, they must undergo training within their respective parishes using the National CHWs Curriculum. The training curriculum comprises forty hours spread out as two hour weekly modules. On successful completion of training they are commissioned by the parish at the main mass on Sunday to care for the sick. CHWs walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ making Him more present to the sick person, to the community and are prophetic against the culture of death in this multi-faceted response.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Lance Nadeau, “The Small Christian Communities’ Healthcare Ministry: A Model for Future Mission” in *African Continent Report for the 1999 International Consultation on Small Christian Communities*, Nairobi: Printed Paper, 1999, pp. 33-34. These healthcare ministers carry out their apostolate with the support of the Archdiocese of Nairobi’s Eastern Deanery Community-Based Health Care and AIDS Relief Program (EDARP).

Nairobi’s SCCs do not stand alone in developing a new form of health care ministry. Other communities are making similar contributions to the formation of the East African Church. Mombasa Archdiocese has the Mombasa Catholic Community-Based Health Care (CBHC) Services. Kisumu Archdiocese has the Pandipieri Catholic Center Program of Home Based Health Care Workers (HBCW) – volunteers from the SCCs who work alongside paid nurses and social workers in the outreach to HIV/AIDS patients.

On the health care ministry of SCCs in Kampala, Uganda, see Joseph G. Healey, “Inculturation in Africa,” *New People*, May-June, 1992, pp. 13-18; Healey, “Twelve Case Studies,” pp. 70-71; Glen Williams, and Nassali Tamale, *The Caring Community: Coping with AIDS in Urban Uganda*, Strategies for Hope 6, London: ActionAid; Nairobi: African Medical and Research Foundation [AMREF], 1991.

<sup>382</sup> *History of Innovative Community Health Care & TB/HIV Prevention, Care & Treatment*, Unpublished Booklet, Nairobi: Eastern Deanery AIDS Relief Program (EDARP), 2013. p. 14.

As of 30 September, 2014 a total of 2,680 CHWs have been trained in the past 21 years. 1,051 are presently active.

African values are seen in importance of mourning, bereavement and funerals in the ministries and activities of SCCs in Eastern Africa. SCCs in Zambia have established Funeral Committees almost always headed by women. Zambian Oblates of Mary Immaculate priest Kelvin Lubinda Yeta, OMI writes:

The Funeral Committee in Zambia is one of the activities that is female driven. This [SCC] committee is headed by a female member. When there is a funeral in the community, it is this committee that liaises with the family. It mobilizes members to cook and clean at the funeral throughout the mourning period till burial. The committee also ensures that there are members to sing, pray and offer words of encouragement to the bereaved family. The women normally take turns to spend nights at the funeral house. The committee also acts as the link between the parish priest and the bereaved family. When the day of burial is agreed, it is the committee that relays this to the parish priest and ensures that the burial program is in place. It gives the community contribution to the family. The contribution can be in kind or cash depending on whether a community member is just hosting a funeral or it is actually a community member that has passed away. In addition, the committee makes certain that transport is available for community members who will attend the burial. Finally the committee advises the family on the dos and don'ts of the church.<sup>383</sup>

African forms of inculturation can be effectively used in the formation and empowerment<sup>384</sup> of the laity and SCCs members. Healey and Sybertz write:

"Empowerment by the Spirit" is more than just a nice sounding expression. It is a daily reality on the local level. A concrete example of inculturation is the various empowerment, commissioning and sending forth ceremonies: the installation of the new parish council leaders or a new catechist; the commissioning of new religion teachers; and the sending forth of SCC members to start new small communities. The people deeply feel the presence and activity of the "Unsurpassed Great Spirit."<sup>385</sup>

Another interesting example of inculturation is how African art and illustrations promote the importance of SCCs. Africans easily respond to visual communications. The cover of *Spearhead* Booklet No. 45, *Ujamaa and Christian Communities* edited by Christopher Mwoleka and Joseph Healey, is a creative design by American artist Mary Lou

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<sup>383</sup> Kelvin Lubinda Yeta, *The Involvement/Participation of Women in Small Christian Communities -- St. Leopold Parish, Shangombo, Diocese of Livingstone, Zambia*, Nairobi: Tangaza University College Unpublished Long Essay, 2013, pp. 4-5.

<sup>384</sup> Empowerment is used in many different contexts. Most are good especially in the spiritual and religious sense. But one must get away from the wrong idea of the unequal, one-sided sense: the rich empowering the poor, the "haves" empowering the "have not's," the West empowering the Global South.

<sup>385</sup> Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, pp. 301-302.

Rose. The top half shows 10 different Africans walking as individuals. The bottom half shows them walking two by two and helping each other: a farmer carries a small child on his shoulder; a young boy leads a blind man, a young woman carries the heavy load of a mother carrying a baby on her back; two youth carry a basket together; and a young man walks arm in arm with an old man who walks with a cane.

The Lumko teaching series of SCC posters especially the *Training for Community Ministries* series depict various ways that SCCs are a new model of church. The communion (or community) of communities model is clearly seen in the drawing of a parish being a communion of outstations and the outstations being a communion of SCCs (depicted as 10-12 people sitting around in a circle with the *Bible* in the middle). The teaching on “developing shared ministries” is conveyed through a drawing of the Body Christ based on *Ephesians* 4:1-16 and *1 Corinthians* 2:1-11. Some of the serving tasks of community ministries depicted inside the drawing of Christ are SCC members visiting and laying hands on the sick, teaching small groups of adults and children, singing and praising God together and laying bricks in building together.

One Lumko poster depicts a cartoon of the *Kokoteni* (the Swahili word for a large hand-drawn cart) Model of Church. Lay people are sitting in a cart that is being pulled by two bishops and being pushed by two nuns. This portrays the traditional “Provided for Church.” This leads to a discussion on giving more responsibility to lay people in a communitarian rather than a hierarchical church. The teaching mantra is: *Build the people so we can build the church.*

A special feature of these Lumko courses is to help participants learn how to write local training programs to suit their own situations and needs back home. This is a key part of the process of “Training of Trainers” (TOT) Workshops.

Tanzanian layman Charles Ndege is one of the leading religious artists in East Africa. The Cathedral Parish of Musoma Diocese, Tanzania is called Mary, Mother of God. On one large wall Ndege created an inculturated oil painting called *Our Lady of Fatima in Africa*, the famous miracle story in an African context. In the center of the large mural is an African Blessed Virgin Mary teaching the three African children the rosary. She is standing amidst the large boulders and rocks so characteristic of the shore of Lake Victoria where Musoma is located in northwestern Tanzania. In each corner of the painting is a SCC gathering: SCC members sitting in a circle reading the *Bible* and praying the rosary.

On the other large wall of the cathedral Ndege created an inculturated oil painting called *Jesus Sends Out Seventy Tanzanian Disciples*, the story of *Luke* 10:1 in an African context. He uses the faces of real people in Musoma Diocese-- the local African bishop, priests, sisters, catechists and lay people – to emphasize that we are all missionaries. These “Tanzanian disciples” are sent two by two in the spirit of small communities.

A similar oil painting<sup>386</sup> called *Jesus Teaches Along the Lake Shore*<sup>387</sup> is on the back wall of the chapel of the Makoko Language School, Makoko, Musoma, Tanzania. The setting is near Lake Victoria in the small village of Makoko, three miles from Musoma. The time is 9 a.m. with a bright tropical sun glowing on the horizon. In the background are local sailboats on the lake, small islands and rock formations that are characteristic of the local area. The huts and houses near the shore follow the design of the local ethnic groups, the Kwaya, Kuria, and Ngoreme and one modern tin-roof house. Jesus stands in the middle dressed in the royal color of red.<sup>388</sup> He is sending out modern Tanzanian disciples two by

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<sup>386</sup> This color version is on the cover of one of the printings of the book *Towards an African Narrative Theology*. A black and white version and explanation is on p. 344.

<sup>387</sup> This and other paintings by Charles Ndege can be found on the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Africa Region Website, retrieved 24 July, 2014, <http://www.maryknollafrica.org/HealeyAlbum2.htm> and the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 24 July, 2014, <http://www.afriprov.org>

<sup>388</sup> Ndege always portrays Jesus Christ as an African. He recognizes the importance of the Jesus Christ of history (“historical Jesus”), but he wants to paint the Jesus Christ of his African faith (“Jesus of faith”). Similar to a Kenyan artist’s comments, Ndege movingly describes his feelings while painting Jesus as an African. He said that he experiences Jesus in a deeper and more meaningful way through African culture and symbols. He wanted to share his experience of the African Christ through art. In his African paintings Ndege wants to portray how Jesus Christ becomes one of us in an African context. He says: “I have many dreams about our African Jesus who is the one God.” Charles Ndege, email to the author, 3 March, 2016.

A section on “The Jesus Christ of History and the Jesus Christ of Faith” in *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Orbis Books) states:

The challenge in evolving an authentic African Christianity is graphically symbolized in the controversy over the "African Christ" or the "Black Christ." During our many years in Africa we have been involved in the on-going debate over how to portray Jesus Christ in pictures, in art, and in drama. We have participated in endless workshops, discussions, even arguments, about the Christ of History *vis-a-vis* the Christ of Faith. For many Africans it is still important to portray Jesus as a Jew who lived in Israel 2,000 years ago including all the historical and cultural details. Others want to portray Christ as an African living here and now. Both ways have their meaning and relevance. The goal is "both...and," rather than "either...or."

*Towards an African Narrative Theology*, p. 91.

The Ghanaian artist Cephaz Agbememu discusses the meaning of the Ewe (Ghana, Benin, Nigeria and Togo) proverb:

*Akpa le tome gake menya tsi fe vevie nyenyee.* (Ewe)  
*A fish is in water but does not know the importance of water.* (English literal translation)  
*A fish is the last to acknowledge the existence of water.* (English figurative translation)

two -- men and women, adults, youth and children. There is a mixture of elderly couples, women carrying babies on their backs and young boys and girls wearing a combination of traditional and modern African clothes. Some are still listening to Jesus's commission to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (*Mark 16:15*). Others have begun walking away on their missionary journeys. Some of these disciples have already gotten into the small boats two by two. Two others are riding a bicycle. Their faces radiate the joy and enthusiasm of being messengers of the good news. Traveling two by two represents the strength and energy of the small communities. There is a famous African proverb: *If you want to walk fast walk alone. If you want to walk far walk together.*

Each week of the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign uses a striking drawing in the reflection booklet. All SCC members quickly get involved in studying and discussing the meaning and teaching of the drawing. Week Three of Lent, 2009 focused on "Environmental Care (Ecology)" within the overall theme of "Justice, Peace and Reconciliation." The drawing depicted eight examples of harming or destroying the environment in the top half and seven examples of helping or caring for the environment in the bottom half. A SCC member in St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi, Kenya spotted that the farmers were barefoot (bad) in the top half of the drawing while the farmers were wearing shoes and boots (good) in the bottom half of the drawing. No one else in the various SCCs that I visited had noticed this.

The Jesus Mafa paintings from the Mafa Ethnic Group in North Cameroon are an excellent example of inculturation in Africa.<sup>389</sup> They help SCCs members to understand and live the Gospel in an African context. Mafa Christian communities wanted to have an African representation of the gospel. The most important New Testament scenes for liturgical and catechetical use were selected, adapted and acted out in tableaus by the village people. These simple tableaus were photographed. After a careful and detailed study they were painted by the artist Bénédite de la Roncière. 63 scenes from the Annunciation to Pentecost illustrate the three years of Sunday gospels in the lectionary cycle. "The Mission to the World (the Great Commission), "Jesus Sends the Seventy-two Disciples" and "The Disciples at Emmaus" can be especially applied to SCCs ministry.

Another example of inculturation is the Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions)<sup>390</sup> that are an important part of the weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*,

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The meaning is that a fish is always in the water, but until it comes out of the water it doesn't even recognize that the water exists. This proverb explains why African Christians, in particular some church leaders, are slow in Africanization and inculturation such as emphasizing the importance of African art such as the African Christ. Africans can be the last to recognize the value of their local "Africanness" and the importance of their African cultures and environment. This Ewe proverb challenges them to inculturate more.

October, 2009 "African Proverb of the Month," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 5 March, 2016,

<http://afriprov.org/african-proverb-of-the-month/42-2009proverbmonth/495-proverbmonthoct09.html>

<sup>389</sup> See the Life of Jesus Mafa Website at <http://www.jesusmafa.com/?lang=en>.

<sup>390</sup> Also called the "Universal Prayer" and the "Bidding Prayers."

liturgical ceremonies and SCC gatherings of any type. Ugandan historian and theologian John Waliggo emphasized that the authentic African spirituality of the local people is reflected in these prayers. The now retired Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki of Nairobi Archdiocese encourages people to pray in their heart languages that is usually their mother tongue or first language.

Prayers for the sick and for deceased people (our ancestors in Christ or the living dead) have always been important, frequent and reflect deep African cultural and Christian values. On feasts such as All Souls Day on 2 November we remember and celebrate the lives of those who have gone before us, "that great cloud of witnesses who surround us" or "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses" (*Hebrews* 12:1) and support us with their prayers and inspiration. Also in the first week of November and on the annual Patron/Patroness Saint feast days of our SCCs, the members remember and pray for (and with) especially those people who have died in our small communities in the past year.

Participating in various SCCs I hear other intentions that reflect the "signs of the times" in Kenya.<sup>391</sup> SCC members always pray in blessing and thanksgiving before a cup of tea or any kind of food and drink in the SCCs gatherings. Prayers for rain and good crops are common everywhere. Mothers especially pray that "our daughters marry the right man" (surely a commentary on the lack of eligible spouses in our increasingly secular<sup>392</sup> and "a-

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<sup>391</sup> In a talk on the liturgy in the United States American spiritual writer and speaker Father Ronald Rolheiser, OMI said that we often get the order of the Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions) in Mass wrong. We should begin with the local, specific intentions of our family, SCCs, neighborhood, workplace, school and gradually move to national and finally international intentions such as the Pope and world peace. These should be inductive prayers, not deductive and hierarchical.

<sup>392</sup> This word has many meanings and is often misused. Traditionally in the Catholic Church secular priests do not take vows while religious (belonging to religious institutes) take vows. This is similar to a wide variety of Third Orders that use the name "Secular."

Many people use "secular" to describe the present day reality in the world that is not religious or spiritual. This is connected to consumerism, materialism, relativism and a more scientific interpretation of the world. One dictionary definition is: "denoting attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis." Example: "secular music;" "secular universities;" "secular buildings." Synonyms: nonreligious, areligious, lay, temporal, worldly, earthly, profane.

I feel that there is a false distinction between sacred and secular and a similar dichotomy in pairs like "sacred" and "profane." For me basically "secular" is a neutral word, yet it is often wrongly used to describe parts of our everyday life that are not/and even against the religious or holy, and even bad, for example, "the secular world" and "secular society." Some writers express their reservations by using the word in inverted commas – "secular" or use the expression "the so-called secular world or life." The same can be said for the word "world" that has connotations of being not religious or holy, even bad as in "worldly" or "worldliness." It is helpful to put adjectives in front of these words like "spiritual worldliness."

religious” cities such as Nairobi). “May our children be free from alcoholism and drugs.” “May God remove greed from the lives of our political leaders.” “May corruption be rooted out from our institutions and projects.” “May all our ethnic groups live in peace and harmony.”

In our evaluation we noticed that inculturation has not taken place in some African SCCs. In some places clerical-centeredness, too much supervision from above and over-emphasis on administration has stifled creative inculturation from below. From the perspective of Malawi, Malawian diocesan priest and theologian Father Francis Masuku points out:

Traditional religion, customs and practices seems to be ignored in the program of SCCs. Good structures as they are [and a good environment] for dialog with [African] traditional religion, customs and practices, SCCs do not seem to be utilized for that purpose.<sup>393</sup>

When the retired Archbishop of Kumasi, Ghana Peter Sarpong was asked what is the core value of African society,<sup>394</sup> he immediately answered in the single word "participation." Participation is at the heart of the life and activities of SCCs. In recent years another important word has emerged: “Solidarity.” The Apostolic Exhortation on the First African Synod, *The Church in Africa*, states: “African cultures have an acute sense of solidarity and community life.”

Worldwide, the unofficial theme song of SCCs is *Bind Us Together, Lord*. It expresses the conscious solidarity and bonding between SCC members. It was sung at the African Inculturated Small Christian Community (Jumuiya) Mass at Hekima College (Jesuit School of Theology) in Nairobi, Kenya on 23 February, 2011. It was also sung at our Eucharistic Celebration at CUEA led by the Faculty of Theology on the occasion of the 13th Interdisciplinary Theological Session on 4 March, 2011.

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Daniel O’Leary writes: “We need to be reminded every Christmas morning, every Sunday morning, that there are no longer two parallel lives in our existence – on the one hand the so-called spiritual life, on the other the so-called secular [life]. Every moment of authentic experience is the felt propinquity [nearness, closeness] of divine grace.” “Illuminating Our Darkness,” *Tablet*, Vol. 268, No. 9079 (13 December, 2014), p. 16. *Tablet* Website, retrieved on 21 December, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/4141/illuminating-our-darkness> The Dutch Protestant theologian Dr. Johannes C. Hoekendijk said that there are not two towers in the world – a sacred tower and a secular tower. Rather there is just one tower in which “the holy is the depth of the common.” This fits into the worldview that God created everything and that all of God’s creation is good. French Jesuit scientist and theologian Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ says: “By virtue of Creation, and still more the Incarnation, nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see.”

<sup>393</sup> Francis Masuku, *Exploring the Nature of the Encounter Between Christian and Traditional African Spiritualities in Malawi: The Search for a Contextual Lomwe Christian Spirituality*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 2007.

<sup>394</sup> To the question “What is the core value of SCCs?” SCCs members in Eastern Africa would answer “relationships.”

In a social context solidarity is a rich and meaningful word that signifies a conscious identification with others and pulling together for a common cause. It expresses the concern and support that SCC members feel towards struggling and suffering people, for example, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Kenya, the people of South Sudan rebuilding their country after independence and people with terminal illnesses. The mass mentioned above had a concrete example of conscious solidarity through prayer. In saying the *Our Father* the word: "Food" was substituted for "Bread" ("Give us this day our daily food...") to express solidarity with hungry and starving people in Northern Kenya, Somalia, the Horn of Africa and other places in Africa.

In all our courses and workshops on SCCs we begin with a "conscious" solidarity prayer or song<sup>395</sup> or Scripture reading or church document reading linked to a specific place, people and intention, for example: Peace in South Sudan; Presidential Elections in African countries; Eliminating Human Trafficking; Overcoming Corruption, Poor Governance and Tribalism; Solving Problems of Insecurity; More Catholic Church Marriages; and World Mission Sunday.<sup>396</sup>

Another concrete example is some of the reflections during the Mission Symposium on "The Future of Mission in Africa" that took place at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya on 1-2 April, 2011. The Panel Presentation and Breakout Small Apostolic Group on "Environment and Mission" quoted St. John Paul II's challenge: "The ecological crisis reveals the urgent moral need for a new solidarity"<sup>397</sup> with the problems associated with environmental deterioration. Besides what we can do personally to promote ecology and the environment, several participants emphasized concerted action through our SCCs. What if the 45,000 SCCs in Kenya focused their efforts on environmental change? Kenya Lenten Campaigns have emphasized "Environmental Care" and ask what part SCCs can play "in promoting human rights and preserving the environment." SCCs can be mobilized through Kenya for national campaigns.

This is closely related to the importance of the word "solidarity" in the theme of AMECEA's 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee celebrations: "AMECEA Family of God Celebrating a Golden Jubilee

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<sup>395</sup> SCC-related songs that are used in these courses, workshops, the weekly meetings of the SCCs and *Jumuiya* Masses include: "Bind Us Together, Lord" that includes a lyric referring to "You are the Family of God," a key concept to Africa) "*Iende Mbele Injili*" ("Let the Word of God Go Forth"), "*Jumuiya Zote na Waumini Wote*" ("All Communities and All Believers"). "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace" and "Tazama, Tazama" ("Look, Look"). Other popular Swahili songs are "*Bwana Yesu Kafufuka, Twimbe Alleluya*" ("The Lord Jesus Has Risen, Let's Sing Alleluya"), "*Karibuni Moyoni Mwangu*" ("Welcome into My Heart") and "*Tumaini Letu*" ("Our Hope").

<sup>396</sup> Mission in the singular is preferred in light of contemporary missiology and mission practice. Missions in the plural has overtones of the outdated geographical or territorial missions as in "the Young Churches in mission lands" and "those poor mission countries in Africa and Asia."

<sup>397</sup> John Paul II, *Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace 1 January 1990*: "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation," No. 10.

of Evangelization in Solidarity.” The “Prayer for AMECEA” says in part: “We the AMECEA Bishops thank God for inspiring the founding Fathers to create this illustrious association of solidarity and pastoral collaboration.” The final *Communiqué of the 17<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly and Golden Jubilee Celebrations* uses the word “solidarity” seven times.

Here is the personal witness of Kenyan laywoman Pamela Adinda:

The aspect of “solidarity” in the Small Christian Community is something that I recently experienced firsthand. At St. Paul's University Chapel in Nairobi, Kenya that is my parish, our Small Christian Communities are the various groups in the parish in which parishioners are obliged to join. There are about 18 groups or SCCs including CWA, Community Choir Group, Friends of St. Paul's Group, St. Paul Prayer Group, Men of St. Paul Group, Lectors, Altar Society, PMS, St. Paul Youth Group, Self Help Group, Eucharistic Members Group, *Bible* Study Group, Mass Servers, Liturgical Committee Group, CJPC Group, Renewal Group, Family Life Group and Ushers and Helpers Group.

I belong to the Lectors SCC. Three weeks ago my two babies were admitted at Gertrude's Children Hospital when both had throat infections. We stayed in the hospital for six days and trust me the SOLIDARITY that I got from my Small Christian Community, the Lectors Group of St. Paul, was amazing. Each day SCC members called, texted, and used all sorts of social media to keep in touch with me. We prayed together over the phone and they encouraged me a lot. I felt like I really belonged and that was very important to me. The Lectors SCC members journeyed with me throughout the time my children were admitted and they continued supporting me even after we left the hospital. That's why SOLIDARITY in the Small Christian Community is very important to me.<sup>398</sup>

There is a big difference between a SCC and a Small Apostolic Group (of which there are many varieties) just as there is a big difference between a SCC Model of Church and a Small Apostolic Group Model of Church. The SCCs are integrally connected to the life, pastoral structures, ministries/services and overall activities of the parish. In many cases the Small Apostolic Groups are not. They are free floating and exist independently in the parish.<sup>399</sup> The parish-based SCCs follow a communion of the small communities' praxis and theology and the newer term -- a solidarity of the small communities' praxis and theology.

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<sup>398</sup> Pamela Adinda, email message to the author, 9 July, 2015.

<sup>399</sup> Pierre Hegy points out that some parishes have become “supermarkets of ministries and devotions,” *Wake Up Lazarus! On Catholic Renewal*, Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2011, p. 254. Three successful examples of Small Apostolic Group ministry in parishes in the USA are: JustFaith Ministries (JFM) that provide a USA parish-based formation program that transforms people and expands their commitment to social ministry (an intensive adult formation program in Catholic Social Teaching (CST), the RCIA (adult catechumenate program) and Alpha that originated in England and has become worldwide. They provide valuable resource materials to our SCCs in Eastern Africa.

A key document is the [Checklist of 14 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in Africa Today](#) that highlights the wide range of SCC activities, experiences and projects. In SCC meetings, workshops and seminars we ask: How many of the following activities are part of the life of your SCC? How many of these activities have you actually participated in? Based on new experiences and data we continue to update this list.

Comparing SCCs worldwide, the SCCs in the AMECEA Region have certain strong points.<sup>400</sup> The key characteristics of a weekly lectionary-based faith sharing<sup>401</sup> meeting, following the charism of a patron or patroness saint and being a pastoral priority integrally connected to the parish structures, ministries and activities<sup>402</sup> help maintain a strong and consistent SCC Catholic identity<sup>403</sup> and focus.

Pius Rutechura emphasizes:

There is the power behind the names in Small Christian Communities. Names mostly drawn from saints, shape both the identity and a sense of belonging. The building of Small Christian Communities reflect the identity within the neighborhood, parish and even leadership. Names define what the community stands for in terms of values, bonding and activities that are carried out up to the parish and even diocesan levels. It is a strong wish and recommendation that hopefully there could be more catechisis on emulating the virtues of particular patron/patroness saints at various levels of witnessing Christian faith by community members.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> It is always a good learning experience to see how others see us. American Maryknoll Superior General Father Edward Dougherty, MM gives a good summary when he says that in Africa “Small Christian Communities enable local people to develop their own leaders, grow in their faith and work for social progress.” Michael Gable, “Maryknoll’s 100 Years of Mission,” *St. Anthony Messenger*, October, 2011.

<sup>401</sup> This term or expression has evolved out of many years of trial and error in Eastern Africa and seems the best way of describing the experience and process.

<sup>402</sup> After many years of being asked how our Eastern Africa SCCs are different, I try to explain that in the African SCC Model of Church these SCCs are not just optional Small Apostolic Groups, but are a pastoral priority integrally connected to the structures, ministries and activities of the parish. When people in the USA tell me that they want to start (or join) a SCC, what I find is that most of the time what they really want to start is a small support group or a small prayer group that is different from a genuine SCC.

<sup>403</sup> At a car workshop in downtown Nairobi in July, 2011 during an informal conversation I mentioned to the foreman that I was a Catholic priest and he immediately said: “I am a Catholic too. I belong to Maria Consolata Parish and Maria Consolata is my *Jumuiya* too. We meet every Friday.” This little incident reveals how the Catholic identity is more and more bound up with the SCC (*Jumuiya*).

<sup>404</sup> Pius Rutechura, “Pastoral Vision” in Krämer and Vellguth, *Small Christian Communities*, p. 274.

Segeja stresses:

Choosing of a patron saint or name of a SCC is also very important. The name given to a SCC should take into consideration the vision of the community itself. This will help to articulate the identity of the community and the role it should play in the parish as communion of SCCs. It is important that the SCCs members understand what their unique identity within the context of the parish is.<sup>405</sup>

Our tradition in Eastern Africa of the SCCs of having patron or patroness saints is important. These saints are especially remembered on their specific feast days and on All Saints Day on 1 November. We can positively influence USA and Europe where SCCs are often called only “The Wednesday Afternoon Group” or “Mary’s Friday Evening Group.”

While the challenge of continuing strong and active SCCs exists everywhere, it seems that in some parts of the world small faith sharing/faith reflection groups tend to lose their enthusiasm and dynamism after a period of time.<sup>406</sup> So these SCCs need a renewal every ten years or so. One of the many new creative parish spiritual renewal programs and retreats<sup>407</sup> is used to revive, refresh or jumpstart them.<sup>408</sup> Or a parish offers an optional small faith

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<sup>405</sup> Nicholas Segeja in “Small Christian Communities: A Vital Icon,” p. 23.

<sup>406</sup> It has been pointed out that excellent renewal organizations, processes and programs such as RENEW International start many SCCs in a diocese or parish in the USA. The ideal is that these SCCs become part of a permanent pastoral plan and structure of the parish, but most of them stop or slow down over a period of time. RENEW tries to keep the momentum by offering many varieties of ministries, renewal experiences and processes of spiritual renewal such as “Advent Awakenings,” “ARISE: Together in Christ,” “Creation at the Crossroads,” “Lenten Longings,” and “Why Catholic?” Research shows that like with many Small Apostolic Groups, sometimes the small community members jell/bond/connect, sometimes they don’t. Many factors are involved. One main reasons that these SCCs slow down is that they are an optional parish program and not a pastoral model of church integrally and permanently connected to the parish structures.

<sup>407</sup> Examples (alphabetically) in the USA include “ACTS (Adoration, Community, Theology, Service),” “Alpha,” “Antioch,” “ChristLife,” “Christ Renews His Parish,” “Cornerstone,” “Cursillo,” “Discovering Christ,” “Evangelical Catholic,” “Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS),” “Holy Family,” “JustFaith,” “Marriage Encounter,” “RCIA;” “Rock” and “Why Catholic?” Spiritual renewal programs occur at specific times like the 2000 Jubilee year or a special Holy Year or the anniversary of a diocese.

ACTS Retreats are very popular now in states like Texas. But the question remains: After an ACTS Retreat what? Catholics should be encouraged to participate in SCCs not as a strategy or plan of the parish, but as a way of life.

<sup>408</sup> Christ the King Parish, New Vernon, New Jersey, USA tried a different approach. It is a parish of 900 Catholic families that includes the “Community of the Gathered” (220 Catholic families who participate in Mass on Sunday). The parish leadership is exploring how to reach out to the Community of the “Others” (680 Catholic families who still belong to the parish but are inactive for a variety of reasons). Rather than bring in a renewal program from

sharing/faith reflection group module from time to time during the Advent and Lenten seasons. Often after these renewal programs have finished, participants have a felt need to live their faith in a deeper way. Some join an existing SCC in the parish or start a new SCC. Others get involved in social outreach programs like prison ministry.

In Eastern Africa weekly lectionary-based faith sharing is the foundation of the SCCs. See the difference from the USA explained in the author's email message to Tom Reese:

“I continue to do research and writing on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the USA. This fall, 2015 I am focusing on:

1. Small faith sharing groups on college campuses.
2. Weekly lectionary-based faith sharing in SCCs. Your comment that I have used in my free online Ebook remains a big challenge:

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American theologian Father Tom Reese, SJ states emphatically: “Lectionary-based Catholics can change the world.” In other words, Catholics who individually, in their families or in their SCCs in the middle of the week seriously reflect on the readings of the following Sunday and their application to our lives can transform themselves and their world. Reese adds:

The [Catholic] Church needs a massive *Bible* education program. The church needs to acknowledge that understanding the *Bible* is more important than memorizing the catechism. If we could get Catholics to read the Sunday Scripture readings each week before they come to Mass, it would be revolutionary. If you do not read and pray the Scriptures, you are not an adult Christian. Catholics who become evangelicals understand this.

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My research indicates that sadly American Catholics still do not “get it.” Here are two examples:

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the outside and top down, the parish leadership decided to begin slowly from the bottom up. They had a Pilot Project of Lectionary-based Faith Sharing for about 15 lay people in the parish on three consecutive Tuesday evenings: 9, 16 and 23 July 2013. After an evaluation they started a new Pilot Project in the Advent Season of Fall, 2013. This included starting SCCs (groups of 6-8 people) that combine weekly Lectionary-based Faith Sharing and *Lectio Divina* on four Wednesdays; 13 and 20 November and 4 and 11 December, 2013. Parishioners have a choice of a morning session at 10 a.m. or an evening session at 7:30 p.m. The pastor states: “I am very excited about bringing Small Christian Communities to Christ the King. It will be our special way of participating in the New Evangelization that our recent Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have called Catholics to proclaim.” Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, retrieved 10 October, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

1. My cousins in Boston Archdiocese were very involved in the successful “ARISE: Together in Christ” Process (facilitated by RENEW International). Now the over-riding, ongoing question is “After ARISE what?” Here is a section from an email that they received from the Director of Faith Formation in their parish.

“There has been a lot of focus over the past 20 years concerning Smaller Faith Communities within larger entities like a parish. Twenty five years ago while at Sacred Heart in Lexington we offered a parish mission whose follow-up was to invite adult parishioners into small groupings for prayer, book discussion, collective activities, etc. After all these years I am still part of a group which includes folks from Bedford, Burlington, Lexington and Cambridge -- the common denominator having been a small faith group at Sacred Heart.”

The three examples of the follow-up do not directly include *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*. Five of the original ARISE Small Groups have decided to continue as Small Book Groups that meet monthly.

2. My brother Tommy’s parish here in Paterson Diocese, New Jersey for many years had a small group that met in the middle of the week to reflect on the Three Readings of the following Sunday. Now the members have decided to use a new format. Each week they read and reflect on one chapter of one Gospel consecutively until the end. Right now it is *Mark*.

All good things, but... We still have a long way to go in the USA to respond to your challenge to have weekly lectionary-based faith sharing in our SCCs. May the Holy Spirit inspire us.”

In addition to being weekly lectionary-based faith sharing small groups, for 42 years (1973-2015) the SCCs in Eastern Africa, without “new renewal programs,” have been regularly renewed, reenergized, revitalized and updated through their own on-going African resources that constantly read and respond to the contemporary signs of the times such as:

- The challenging themes of the AMECEA Plenary Meetings that take place every three years. The 18<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly will take place in Lilongwe, Malawi from 16-26 July, 2014 on the theme “New Evangelization through True Conversion and Witnessing to the Christian Faith.”
- The 1994 First African Synod that promoted the theme "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000" with five main topics: "Proclamation of the Good News of Salvation", "Inculturation," "Dialog", "Justice and Peace" and the "Means of Social Communications."
- The Jubilee Year in 2000.
- The 2009 Second African Synod that promoted the theme "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace."
- The whole process and implementation of the 2012 World Synod of Bishops on “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.”

- Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council (1962-2012) and the 20th anniversary of the publication of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992-2012).
- Year of Faith 2012-2013.
- The whole process and implementation of the 2014 and 2015 World Synods of Bishops on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization."
- Periodic African Catholic Church campaigns with their challenging themes and activities such as the yearly Kenya Lenten Campaign that focuses on justice and peace.
- Weekly lectionary-based faith sharing materials produced for special occasions such as the RSCK materials for the 2013 General Elections in Kenya.
- Special events in a country or diocese such as anniversaries, jubilees and formation/education programs.

Part of this qualitative evaluation has been to study the influence of SCCs on the use and the importance of the *Bible*<sup>409</sup> in the lives and ministries of Catholics in Eastern Africa. Some of the important questions we asked are:

- How many SCC members (individuals and families) have personal *Bibles* in their homes?
- How important is the oral tradition in understanding the *Bible* especially among people who are illiterate in Africa and those who live in rural areas?
- How many have the *Bible* on their Smartphones,<sup>410</sup> tablets and computers?
- How many use the parish leaflets that contain the Scripture readings of the following Sunday?
- How many read the *Bible* on a regular basis?
- How many read the Scripture readings of the following Sunday ahead of time?

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<sup>409</sup> As of 1 September, 2014 there were 496 references to the *Bible* in the free, online Ebook on "SCCs in Africa" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website.

<sup>410</sup> A SCC member in Nairobi told me that during the coffee break at her workplace there was a question about a particular *Bible* text. One of her colleagues simply opened the *Bible* on her Smartphone and answered the question. In our SCCs courses and workshops participants find relevant Bible passages much more quickly using a Smartphone than a paper Bible.

- How many go beyond a private reading of the *Bible* to connect/apply the Scripture readings to our daily lives and local situations?
- How many identify life situations and everyday events in the *Bible* (similar to the Group Response Method/*Bible* -- Mirror Method of Lumko, South Africa)?<sup>411</sup>
- How many feel more confident and capable to discuss the *Bible* with Protestant and Muslim friends and neighbors – and even hostile people?

The results are mixed. Certainly many Catholics have learned about the importance and centrality of the *Bible* through participation in their SCCs. *Bibles* are available in many African languages and at affordable prices. A wide variety of *Bible* Reflection Methods are used in the AMECEA countries. More and more SCCs have left the “Prayer Group Stage” and connect/apply the Scripture readings to their daily lives and local situations. Research indicates that the two most importance characteristics of successful, vibrant SCCs are the centrality of *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection and the practical action/social outreach.

But many Catholic homes still do not have their personal *Bibles*.<sup>412</sup> In workshops and seminars we use the saying that traditionally *a farmer does not go to the farm or garden without a hoe*. A contemporary saying is *people do not travel about without their smartphones*. Making the parallel, many SCC members still do not go to their weekly *Bible* Reflection Services with their *Bibles*. If there is a workshop or seminar on the *Bible*, many participants don’t remember to bring their *Bibles*.

A number of SCC members study the *Bible* mainly to refute the false teachings of biased Evangelical (especially Pentecostals) and Muslim preachers and teachers. Some SCC members who regularly use *Missals* with the Sunday Readings included in their weekly meetings have never become familiar with using the *Bible* by itself. For example, they have trouble finding a particular gospel or a letter written by St. Paul. *Bible* literacy and regular reading of the *Bible* is still a hope rather than a reality.

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<sup>411</sup> Paul Bere points out: “The impact of the oral culture in Africa calls for further research in order to make room for the biblical text in our daily life! The questionnaire could include a question on reference to a word, an image, or a scene from the *Bible* in life situations, as we usually do when we use proverbs. Therefore, it is not the use of the *Bible* in life situations in general (from *Bible* text to Life), but the reference to the *Bible* text in life (Life situation to *Bible* texts). The technique draws from the proverbs tradition.” Email to the author dated 17 November, 2013.

<sup>412</sup> This is an on-going problem and challenge. It is part of the history of African culture that has been mainly oral and not a book culture. Research shows that many Africans like free books, but do not put a priority on buying books. One Kenyan Evangelical pastor in Nairobi told me that even in his church, where the *Bible* is central, some of the church members spend a lot of money to invite him to an elaborate meal in their home, but do not have personal *Bibles*. Issac Maina in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, October, 2011.

We try to use humor to explain and to teach. We joke with the African men and ask: Why do you have enough money to buy a beer, but not a book about SCCs?

Yet the dramatic increase in Smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices help SCC members to carry and access the *Bible* or Sunday Readings regularly. *Bible* passages such as the readings of the following Sunday are easily available as free automatic text messages, audio links and daily email messages.

On our 2014 SCCs Class exam at Tangaza University College I asked the question: “How can the internet and the social media/new media/social networking help in the formation and training of SCC leaders/animators/facilitators/coordinators in Africa?” Some answers:

- With a smartphone a person can read the *Breviary* in a *matatu* (small bus) on the way to school.
- On my smartphone I have a program called “*Gaudete*” that has the day’s *Bible* reading, commentary, homily, and *Breviary* Reading. What a grace!

Our qualitative evaluation has studied the influence of ecumenism and inter-religious dialog in the development of SCCs in Eastern Africa. Ecumenical involvement varies from country to country, from diocese to diocese and from local area to local area. It has often been pointed out that African Christians generally want to work together and cooperate with each other especially on the local level. They don’t want to inherit the classical divisions of the Christian denominations of the West. Especially in urban areas African of different Christian denominations and religious faiths live side by side. In the traditional African spirit of community, unity and hospitality, neighborhood Catholic SCCs are inclusive. Christians of other denominations participate in the following: social activities such as the celebrations of marriages, graduations, year-end parties and national patriotic events; visiting the sick; bereavement at time of deaths in the local community; and outreach programs such as community health care, visiting people with HIV/AIDS, visiting prisoners and self-help campaigns to fix up the neighborhood.

Depending on the location Muslims and members of African Religions living in the neighborhood also participate. In the neighborhood SCCs in the villages in rural areas in Eastern Africa Catholic and members of African Regions live side by side and share many aspects of everyday life. In urban areas that are predominantly Muslims tensions sometimes arise, but most people want to live peacefully together.

Research in Nairobi shows that there is very little official ecumenical dialog and communications on the local level between the different Christian Churches. In general, the different small communities of the different Christian denominations do not formally share their experiences with each other. This is a challenge for all of us. But at the same time Christians of different denominations are welcome to participate in the general activities of the Catholic SCCs.

A particular challenge is where a committed member of a SCC has a husband or wife who is not a Catholic. Sometimes the person who is not a Catholic does not want the SCC to meet in his or her home. In other cases the witness and example of the SCC members has encouraged the person who is not a Catholic to join the Catholic Church.

No. 9 in the [Checklist](#) states:

The SCC is responsible for assisting (called “animating”) in the Sunday Mass in the parish, subparish or outstation 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.

In some parishes the SCC of the week is responsible for cleaning the whole church compound and for supplying the readers for the daily masses too.

In addition to these regular weekly pastoral responsibilities, SCCs participate in particular prayer and pastoral activities during Holy Week. On Holy Thursday SCCs take turns animating the prayer periods during the adoration of the St. Sacrament that has been solemnly reserved after the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper. On Good Friday SCCs take turns animating the different stations of the outdoor Way of the Cross.<sup>413</sup> During the Easter Vigil SCCs accompany their members during the Baptism of adults in the RCIA. On Easter Sunday and Easter Monday SCCs host parties for the newly baptized.

In this overall qualitative evaluation a certain pattern emerges again and again. In the history of a particular SCC or a plan of SCCs in a parish there is an ongoing dying and rising, periods of ups and downs, times of inactivity and activity. Much depends on leadership. A priest committed to SCCs is transferred to another parish. A new pastor comes who may or may not be interested in SCCs. A dynamic lay leader moves to another part of the diocese or country. The SCC treasurer walks off with the money, and the SCC members get discouraged and the activities of the group stop. Several new members bring fresh energy to the group.

Another approach in evaluating SCCs is to experience the daily life and identity of an Eastern African SCC. One way is for the parish priest or the pastoral agent or a visitor to walk around the geographical area of a SCC and meet the SCC members in their homes and experience their ordinary daily activities on the local level. This is what Pope Francis has famously calls “smelling the sheep.” Look at this short Case Study:

On Friday, 16 May, 2014 a priest visitor from Latin America visited St. Kizito SCC located in Waruku, an informal settlement area in Nairobi, Kenya. It is one of the 10 neighborhood, parish-based SCCs in St Austin’s Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese. The visitor did not participate in the weekly *Bible Service* on Sunday afternoon or a specific SCC activity. He just experienced the ordinary life of the SCC members. The priest first visited Kenyan layman and Chairperson Josphat Mulinya (called the servant” of the

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<sup>413</sup> If African SCCs are a new way of being church, they are challenged to used inculturated “Ways of the Cross” such as the “African Way of the Cross Following Our Local African Situation Especially the Sufferings, Crosses, and Problems of Our Everyday Life,” the “AIDs Way of the Cross,” the “Ecological Way of the Cross” and “Njia ya Msalaba Kunlingana na Mazingira Yetu ya Afrika” (Swahili for a “Way of the Cross That is Like Our African Environment”). Available in different media such as a printed text, posters and slides. Also the DVD: *A Meditation on the Way of the Cross*, 50 minutes, Nairobi: Paulines Audiovisuals Production, 2008.

“servants” in Swahili) of the SCC in his small home. They discussed the reality of living in simple rented one-room or two room houses in Waruku that do not have indoor plumbing. Tenants carrying water in plastic containers from a nearby water tank. There is a common toilet and shower for residents in the compound. Josphat briefed the visitor on the various SCC members and the overall activities of the SCC.

Then in a walking tour they met various SCC members. Everywhere people referred to our *jumuiya*: Two Kenyan laywomen just returning from a meeting of one of the local Cooperative Groups (called *chama*<sup>414</sup> or circle or club or kitty party or merry-go-round association or communal bank) where members contribute to a revolving fund and can get small loans. These groups are very popular and many SCC members participate. Kenyan lay woman Agnes Wangala who showed the visitor the workroom and products of the St. Agatha Joy Women’s Training and Tailoring Group, the women’s group who have a sewing club. Kenya layman Daniel Mutinda who showed how he sets up one of the rooms in his house as a Sports Hall or Parlor. 100 people at 30/= Kenyan shillings (\$0.35) a person squeeze in the room to watch international football (soccer) matches like the World Cup and English Premier League. The priest visitor gave a blessing to a SCC member sick with the flu. In one sense nothing “happened” during in the afternoon, but the spirit and identity of the SCC came through clearly.

In our ongoing qualitative research one clear way of reading the contemporary signs of the times in Eastern Africa is to analyze the recent titles/topics/themes of the Doctorate Dissertations, Master’s Theses and Long Essays at the various colleges connected to CUEA and other educational institutions in Eastern Africa and universities abroad:<sup>415</sup>

1. *Building, Strengthening and Sustaining Small Christian Communities in an Urban Set-up in Nairobi, Kenya: A Case Study in Holy Trinity Catholic Parish in Kariobangi North.*

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<sup>414</sup> Nearly one out of every two women in Kenya is a member of a women’s saving group, that are voluntary groups formed to help women overcome barriers to financial participation and support. Called *chamas* these groups allow women to mobilize savings and collectively invest to improve their livelihoods by contributing a certain amount of money to a pooled fund. More and more men are joining these groups. Recent statistics indicate that women have a 95% repayment rate and men have a 50-70% repayment rate.

Irish Medical Missionaries of Mary Sister Patricia Lanigan, MMM makes the interesting point that SCCs provide a very good infrastructure for these kind of saving groups. SCC members know and trust each other. There is a community spirit and support. There is a spirit of forgiveness for bad loans.

Conversation with Patricia Lanigan, Nairobi, Kenya, 31 August, 2015.

<sup>415</sup> Our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team Fund helps to pay for six copies of each thesis to be placed in the libraries of Catholic universities in the Nairobi area and in the AMECEA Office Library.

2. *Challenges Facing Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru: A Pastoral Response.*
3. *Comparing Two Models of the Catholic Church: SCC Model of Church and Apostolic Association Model of Church: A Case Study at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Nairobi, Kenya.*
4. *Consciousness-raising for the Active Participation of Small Christian Community Members as Agents of Social Transformation Through Evangelization in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya.*
5. *Critique of the Trinitarian Social Model of Leonardo Boff: Small Christian Communities of the Archdiocese of Tabora in Tanzania, a Case Study.*
6. *Efficient Financial Management in the Parish as a Way to Achieve Self-Reliance: A Case Study of Tabora Deanery, Tanzania.*
7. *Enhancing the Spirit of Communion in Small Christian Communities: A Case Study in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya*
8. *An Evaluation of the Practice of Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible-Life Connections in Small Christian Communities in Africa: A Case Study of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Nairobi, Kenya.*
9. *Faith-Based Communities as Social Actors for the Transformation of Society: Case Study of the Small Christian Communities in Kawagware Division, Nairobi County, Kenya.*
10. *Impact of Economic Status on Small Christian Communities in Nairobi, Kenya: A Case Study of St. Michael the Archangel Parish, Otiende, Nairobi.*
11. *The Impact of Small Christian Communities on Youth in Kenya.*
12. *Implementation of Small Christian Communities as a Pastoral Priority in the Church in Kenya: Opportunities and Challenges.*
13. *Improving Participation of the Laity in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Malawi.*
14. *The Involvement/Participation of Women in Small Christian Communities -- St. Leopold Parish, Shangombo, Diocese of Livingstone, Zambia.*
15. *The Liturgical Celebration of the Word of God is the Summit of the Manifestation of God.*
16. *More Participation of Men in Small Christian Communities as a Way of Strengthening the Faith in Families in Kenya Today: A Case Study of Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Karen Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese.*<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> This is the title of a 2015 MA Thesis in Pastoral Ministry from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA offered through Tangaza University College in Nairobi. It is a critical theological reflection based on 150 hours of supervised pastoral ministry called the

17. *A Pastoral Approach towards the Reawakening of Small Christian Communities in St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Parish, Lwangiri, Uganda.*
18. *Pastoral Solutions to the Obstacles in the Growth of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in St. Massimo Parish, Meru Diocese, Kenya.*
19. *The Role of SCCs in Mission and Evangelization in Malindi Diocese, Kenya.*
20. *Small Christian Communities as Agents of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation: A Case Study of Holy Mother of God Catholic Church – Githurai, Nairobi, Kenya.*
21. *Small Christian Communities as Agents of New Evangelization in Kenya.*
22. *Small Christian Communities as Agents of New Evangelization in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.*
23. *Small Christian Community (SCC) as a Platform for Continuous Catechesis in Eastern Africa -- Opportunities and Challenges: Case Study of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish South B, Nairobi, Kenya*
24. *Small Christian Communities as a Way of Evangelization in Eastern Africa under AMECEA.*
25. *Social Differences in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge for Deeper Evangelization in Nairobi-West Deanery, Kenya.*
26. *Women's Role in Small Christian Communities in Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, South B, Nairobi, Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities.*

It is significant that in assessing the Master's Theses and Long Essays on SCCs that I have been supervising/reading at Tangaza University College and CUEA, the weakest part is the lack of concrete, practical suggestions in the "Final Recommendations" or the "Pastoral Recommendations" or the "Pastoral Strategies." These are an essential part of either the

1. Fourth step (Action/Pastoral Planning) or Fourth/Fifth Steps (Pastoral Planning and Evaluation) in the Pastoral Spiral process/methodology.
2. The Third or "Act" Step in the "See," "Judge" and "Act" process/methodology.

The authors give the "what" but not the "how" (including the finances) the "when" and the "where." For example, they write: "We need to attract more youth to join SCCs" without saying "how," "when" and "where." Or they write "SCC members should read the *Bible* more, without saying "how," "when" and "where." These general pastoral recommendations are not that helpful. They are too much "in the air" and not focused enough.

Another approach is to track the evaluation of SCCs in international conferences. A conference on "Paul VI and the Church in Africa" took place in Nairobi, Kenya on 1-2 August, 2012. In the opening speech Cardinal Pengo presented Venerable Pope Paul VI's

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"Practicum." The student submitted a "Dossier on the Insertation Experience." Neighborhood parish-based SCCs provide an ideal practical, pastoral context.

two challenges of “missionaries to yourselves” and “inculturation” (“You may and you must have an African Christianity”). He said that one of the greatest responses of the Church in Africa to Venerable Pope Paul VI’s two challenges is the establishment and growth of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa as well as other regions in Africa.

Pengo’s key points on SCC members being missionaries to themselves:

1. SCCs are centers of communion, evangelization and missionary outreach.
2. SCCs are self-ministering and self-propagating.
3. SCCs offer opportunities for formation and training.
4. Leaders of the SCCs are lay people who participate in a new way of being church.

Pengo’s key points on SCC members promoting inculturation:

1. The aim is to make the Catholic Church more “African” and close to the people.
2. SCCs offer a sense of belonging where real relationships can be experienced.
3. Christianity is lived in local communities in which everyday life and work take place.
4. SCCs are the most concrete expression of the Church-as-Family Model of Church.<sup>417</sup>

At the same conference DRC Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, the Archbishop of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) integrated the “missionary to yourselves” and “inculturation” challenges in describing the development of non-ordained lay ministries through the Living Ecclesial Communities in DRC. He said:

In 1977 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the Catholic Church set up non-ordained ministries on the Living Ecclesial Communities’ level: the Ministries of President of the Community, Teacher, Family Counselor and Comforter of the Sick People while leaving the opportunity to create other ministries according to the need and circumstances. These lay ministries paved the way for the rapid expansion of laity’s commitment in the church.<sup>418</sup>

A recent 2013 evaluation states:

One of the most encouraging things is to see how much the local bishops, clergy, religious and the laity are responding to the need to plant the SCCs seeds within their localities and equally their efforts to ensure that the planted

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<sup>417</sup> Summary of Polycarp Pengo, “Missionaries to Yourselves: The Legacy of Vatican II and the Identity of the Church in Africa,” Conference on “Paul VI and the Church in Africa,” Nairobi: Kenya: Unpublished Paper, 1 August, 2012, pp. 4-5.

<sup>418</sup> Laurent Monsengwo, “The Legacy of the Paul VI Teaching for the African Church Today,” Conference on “Paul VI and the Church in Africa,” Nairobi: Kenya: Unpublished Paper, 2 August, 2012, p. 4.

seed is well weeded and has enough water to assist it grow into a big tree just like the biblical mustard seed.”<sup>419</sup>

An ongoing evaluation of the qualitative growth of SCCs in Eastern Africa has to continually track the changing social, economic, political and religious context to assess the emerging obstacles and challenges. Ngalula insightfully points out:

Today some situations in Africa lead to the instability or even the disappearance of BCCs. On the one hand, war and political instability force people – especially in rural areas – to leave their home or even the country. On the other hand, the situation of economic instability and poverty force people to spend most of their time searching for something to survive. Then many Catholics have not enough time to participate in the BCC activities. BCCs require a minimum of peace and stability to really be the “Church in the Neighborhood.”

The social, political and economic instability of many countries in Africa provokes a massive rush to specific devotional groups either within in the Catholic Church or in the New Religious Movements with their promise for miracles and their teaching that the solution will come from God only after of long prayers. This is a big competition for BCCs that which seem to be rather stern with their method of “See-Judge-Act” that does not allow people to take refuge in spiritual practices while escaping from the hard realities of life. Some people prefer to choose the seemingly easier way and leave the BCCs.<sup>420</sup>

Our qualitative evaluation is ongoing and integrates new SCC experiences. Austrian missionary priest Father Hans Humer regularly documents the development of SCCs in Kayanga Parish, Kayanga Diocese, Western Tanzania. Particularly valuable is the local, grassroots “feel” of his reports. Here is one summary for March and April, 2014:

We are having seminars and meetings for strengthening our Small Christian Communities (SCCs). On Ash Wednesday we began Lent. The faithful received with large participation in the morning and in the afternoon the sign of the ashes. Every Friday there is the liturgical celebration of the Way of the Cross. Preparations for Easter are going on well in Kayanga Parish. We make in all our 10 outstations again short “half day” retreats. The faithful are happy about it and they are receiving them well. The new chapel in Kibombo is nearly finished – there are only some small finishing touches to complete around the entrance. In Ruzinga and Kasharara (close to the spring water sources), a fence was built around the parish/diocesan land. In the future this will help to plant trees and not get repeatedly damage from “wandering” goats or cattle.

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<sup>419</sup> Njuguna, Francis, “SCCs and the Future of Pastoral Mission,” *National Mirror*, 1:5 (May, 2013), 14.

<sup>420</sup> Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 5.

Bishop Almachius Vincent Rweyongeza came back well from Rome with the blessing of Pope Francis. He explained to us about the cordial meetings especially the Metropolitan Teams with Pope Francis and a celebration of mass together with Archbishop Protase Rugambwa who comes from our Kayanga Diocese. 2014 is the “Year of Small Christian Communities” (SCCs). The preparations for the beginning of "accounting" (*Sensa* in Swahili) all faithful are on the way to be worked out. This exercise will be connected also with spiritual lessons and will help to strengthen the community life.<sup>421</sup>

SCCs patterns vary according to the local context. In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania many SCCs meet weekly at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday morning. This is the “best” time for many members. SCC activities are spread out throughout the week. Many Catholic find a spiritual, apostolic and social identity in their SCCs. There are many cultural shifts like more and more Catholic weddings taking place in the afternoon. There are complaints that too many fund-raising activities and collections pass through the SCCs.<sup>422</sup>

Tanzanian laywoman Mrs. Rosemary Kigadye reports from Dar es Salaam: “You cannot do anything in the parish unless you start in the Small Christian Community for endorsement. Pastoral activities like Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage and funerals pass through the SCCs.”<sup>423</sup>

Kenyan diocesan priest Father Joseph Ngala reports from Marafa Parish, Malindi Diocese, Kenya. There are four SCCs at the parish center. After the Christmas, 2014 Mass the SCC members were discouraged and wanted to give up their SCCs. But Ngala encouraged them to persevere and overcome their obstacles. So they started again and are doing well. This reflect the dying and rising pattern in many SCCs in Eastern Africa.<sup>424</sup>

Kenyan diocesan priest Father Francis Ekissa reports from Kocholia Parish, Bungoma Diocese, Kenya. The great majority of SCC members are women, especially older women and widows. An increasing number of members, especially the economically better off, do not come to the weekly meetings, but contribute money when requested.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Hans Humer, “News: March -- April 2014 (Lent, Holy Week),” email message dated 19 April, 2014.

<sup>422</sup> Tanzanian laywoman Irene Kessy in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 20 April, 2014.

<sup>423</sup> Interview with Rosemary Kigadye in Nairobi on 26 June, 2014. She is a member of St. Anne SCC in St. Gaspare del Bufalo Parish.

<sup>424</sup> Joseph Ngala in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 20 January, 2015.

<sup>425</sup> Francis Ekissa in a conversation with the author in Ngong, Kenya, 13 February, 2015.

One can expect that factors such as urbanization and secularism/secularization<sup>426</sup> influence the changing styles and patterns of SCCs in Eastern Africa. In some parishes of the city periphery and the housing estates there is a half-developed form of SCCs that is sometimes called a “block system” or “cell system.” The geographical parish area is divided into neighbourhood areas. People of such “blocks” or “cells” meet in one of their homes, pray together, share their experiences, organize neighborly help, report to the parish council. The priests realize they need these blocks for the administration of the parish, but do not develop them further into genuine, full fledged SCCs.

Our ongoing qualitative evaluation continues to go deeper into the 2011 AMECEA Plenary’s Resolution No. 3: “Enhance Initial and Ongoing Quality Formation of Pastoral Agents at All Levels.” The five SCCs Workshops 2013-2015 in Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania (Mwanza Metropolitan), Uganda (Tororo Metropolitan) and Zambia raised specific questions. The elections of lay leaders take place in our parishes every three years starting with the SCC leaders, but many gaps occur. According to the overall pastoral strategy of forming and training SCCs leaders, the new SCC leaders should immediately participate in workshops and seminars to learn their new responsibilities. Tanzanian seminarian Erick Muganyizi from Kayanga Diocese, Tanzania and presently studying theology at St. Paul’s Senior Seminary, Kipalapala writes: “The first thing is training of leaders, then carry out various workshops so that each leader may know his or her work and does it properly.”<sup>427</sup> Often this does not occur. Many untrained SCCs leaders just jump into their new tasks without a preparatory workshop. Examples would be the SCCs leaders in marriage ministry and justice and peace ministry.

What exactly is the training they receive? Is it in the spirit of SCCs being a new way of being church and a new model of church? Both formation and training are necessary as seen in No. 2 and No. 3 in the future challenges, priorities and actions on page 432.

In a wide ranging conversation with Catholic lay leaders Mr. Peter Kiarie and Mr. Francis Warui,<sup>428</sup> we focused on the changing trends in Catholic parishes in urban Kenya. There are many parish lay associations and apostolic groups that compete with the time and energy of SCCs members. The number of these associations is growing -- both new local small devotional groups and local branches of international movements. Some SCCs members say that they can’t participate in their weekly SCC gatherings due to the conflicting times of various meetings and activities. Both Kiarie and Warui agree that there two practical solutions. First, in urban areas encourage as many SCCs as possible to meet after work in the evenings on weekdays, say 7 to 8 p.m. or 8 to 9 p.m. Second, since participation in SCCs is the responsibility of every Catholic (whereas the parish lay associations and apostolic groups are voluntary), Sundays afternoons in the parishes should be reserved only for the meetings and activities of the SCCs. Dandora Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese is a good model.

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<sup>426</sup> Religion theorists call “secularization” the broad process by which religion gradually loses its social influence.

<sup>427</sup> Erick Muganyizi, SCCs Facebook Page, retrieved on 4 June, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

<sup>428</sup> Nairobi and Nakuru, Kenya, 9 March, 2015.

The process of the two Synods of Bishops encouraged looking for new pastoral solutions for many issues related to family and marriage. Realizing that often the situation is “both... and” rather than “either...or,” some pastoral strategies related to SCCs are:

- So that some poor families are not embarrassed at not being able to serve food and drinks at the weekly SCC meetings, some SCCs have decided to meet at the same home rather than rotate among the homes.
- SCC members should visit Catholic couples or a Catholic with a spouse who is not a Catholic in their homes to discuss the obstacles to their getting married in a Catholic Church. Issues such as paying the dowry should be studied on a case by case basis.
- It is very important that parents marry in the Catholic Church to be a model for their teenage and young adult children.
- More study is needed on the special problems of mixed marriages including how the faith formation of the children is affected.
- It is very important that, when and where possible, husband and wife (father and mother) participate in SCC meetings together to model their joint commitment to their children.

More and more specialized SCCs are developing. “In Kampala Archdiocese there are workplace-based Small Christian Communities like in St. Balikuddembe Market and in Arcades.”<sup>429</sup>

44 people participated in a Tororo Metropolitan (Ecclesiastical Province) Workshop on the theme “Building Small Christian Communities for Grassroots Evangelization in Uganda” at the Benedictine Sisters Priory and St. Peter’s College in Tororo, Uganda from 4 to 7 May, 2014.<sup>430</sup> Participants included representatives from two dioceses in eastern Uganda (Tororo Archdiocese and Jinja Diocese): one archbishop, 16 priests, 24 laymen (especially catechists) and 3 laywomen.

In his opening remarks Archbishop Emmanuel Obbo, the Archbishop of Tororo emphasized that “the success of SCCs will be the success of the Local Church in Africa.” In expanding on SCCs as a new way of being church he said, “SCCs are not a project but a life for our Catholic people.” He emphasized the importance of Word of God, but said that Catholics have not yet taken the *Bible* as their book. Laughingly he said that when we see

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<sup>429</sup> Caxton Peter Mayanja, “Involvements of Men in Weekly Small Christian Community Meetings in Bukalagi Parish, Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>430</sup> Reports on this workshop can be found on the AMECEA Website ([www.amecea.org](http://www.amecea.org)) as a report in the 23 May, 2014 AMECEA Online Newsletter: [TANZANIA: Catholics are Called to Reflect on the Importance of Various Ministries of the Church](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/05/tanzania-catholics-are-called-to-reflect-on-the-importance-of-various-ministries-of-the-church) <http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/05/tanzania-catholics-are-called-to.html> and on the SCCs Website under “Tanzania.”

people carrying the *Bible* on the streets in Uganda we say “there go the Born Again Pentecostals.”<sup>431</sup>

The workshop focused on a participatory learning process that included four small groups by diocese and the formation of six mixed SCCs. This “learning by doing” style showed how we can be enriched by each other’s grassroots SCC experiences as seen in the Ugandan proverb *One hand washes the other*.

The workshop evaluated the development of SCCs “on the ground” in Uganda:

- The Catholic Church in Uganda really started SCCs 20 years late. Even though the AMECEA Pastoral Priority started with the 1973 and 1976 Plenaries, Emeritus Archbishop James Odongo summarized:

By 1969 the political changes in national governments [in Uganda] made meetings difficult, almost impossible. For almost 23 years gatherings or meetings were virtually banned. The climate was too hostile for any meaningful apostolate... By the beginning of 1993, relative peace was restored in our country. Our Pastoral Council had its first meeting in almost 20 years. We all complained that the history of our country had hindered our own pastoral progress for almost those same 20 years.<sup>432</sup>

- Workshop participants reports how different models, and even names, of SCCs emerged in Uganda. The name SCCs was popular in Central, Western and Northern Uganda. Arua Diocese and Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese especially developed very good pastoral models of parish-based SCCs. Using mainly the name Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) a form developed in Eastern Uganda that could be called Small Neighborhood Prayer Groups and Activities Groups. They were mainly a structure of the outstation. *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* was not a regular feature. Members of these prayer groups met daily in their homes to pray the rosary in the months of May and October. BCCs as an activities group met “on need.”<sup>433</sup>
- Using the SEE – JUDGE – ACT reflection process/method on critical problems/challenges in the general society in Uganda: “Corruption” (two SCCs); “Domestic Violence,” (two SCCs), “Love of Secular Values,” “Poor Leadership” and “Sexual Abuse.” In the Catholic Church in Uganda:

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<sup>431</sup> Emmanuel Obbo, “Opening Talk,” Tororo Metropolitan (Ecclesiastical Province) Workshop on the theme “Building Small Christian Communities for Grassroots Evangelization in Uganda” Tororo, Uganda, 5 May, 2015.

<sup>432</sup> James Odongo, “Lifetime Legacy as Shepherd of the People of God in Tororo Archdiocese in Emeritus Archbishop of Tororo James Odongo, *50 Episcopal Golden Jubilee 1965-2015 – February 21, 2015*, Kampala, Uganda, 2015.

<sup>433</sup> Following our usual plan the facilitators arrived two days early to visit an outstation and an SCC to experience the local pastoral reality. During a Sunday Mass at the outstation we baptized 27 babies. During the baptismal ceremony the local people sang a perfect song for the occasion translated as “Brothers and Sisters, Come to Jesus. You Will be Born Again.”

“Adultery,” Cohabitation,” “Dual Worship (God and material things),” “Lack of Commitment to the Faith and Catholic Church;” “Low Reception of Sacrament of Matrimony” and “Mass Exodus of Youth from the Catholic Church.”

The concluding “Message” from the facilitators to Archbishop Emmanuel Obbo stated:

### **Observations and appreciations**

- The warmth and commitment of Archbishop Emmanuel Obbo to the building of SCCs for grassroots evangelization.
- The neighborhood BCCs that have been popularly considered SCCs can be described as prayer groups or activity based groups.
- The availability of the infrastructure provided by existing BCCs is important for building parish-based SCCs in the dioceses as the “Church in the Neighborhood.”
- The commitment of the workshop participants (priests, catechists and youth) to the building of parish-based SCCs in their dioceses.
- Issues of finances are distinct aspects of BCCs (SCCs).

### **Recommendations**

- Establish SCCs coordinating teams (diocese and parish levels) to manage the growth of parish-based SCCs.<sup>434</sup>
- Establish SCCs Training Teams to nourish and sustain the building of parish-based SCCs.
- Encourage the different lay ecclesial ministries of Pastoral Companiers in the SCCs. Sometimes the whole SCC (all the SCC members) are the companions especially in preparing people for the sacraments.
- Prioritise the establishment of Youth SCCs (YSCCs) and youth involvement in the coordination and training teams.
- Emphasize the involvement of SCC members in the social media and the internet especially to attract youth.
- Arrange training for the pastoral coordinators on SCCs.
- Discuss and debate how to find a proper method to handle finances in the SCCs.

### **Prioritized action points by the participants**

- To RESTRUCTURE the existing Small Christian Communities in Tororo Archdiocese.

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<sup>434</sup> This priority came out in the group discussion during the workshop. The Pastor of Busia Parish said that he did not have the time to visit and animate all 52 SCCs in his parish. But working with and through the SCC lay animators and coordinators he can network and plan with everyone.

- To introduce the WORD OF GOD (*Bible Sharing*) in the Small Christian Community meetings.
- To introduce the WORD OF GOD and SCCs Masses in Jinja Diocese.

Other follow-up recommendations of the SCCs Workshop included:

- A scholarship has been awarded to three leaders (priest, catechist, young person) in Tororo Archdiocese to the September, 2015 Lumko SCCs Course in Nairobi, Kenya.
- Produce a *Small Christian Communities Training Handbook or Manual* (with Facilitators Guide) in both print and electronic formats in the next year.

The number of SCCs continue to expand especially in the wide variety of specialized small groups. A recent example is small groups that welcome children with special needs such as autism and Down Syndrome.<sup>435</sup>

Fourteen delegates from six African countries (Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Togo and Zambia) and from Bolivia and Germany participated in a “Planning Workshop on Networking among Small Christian Communities (SCCs)/Base Christian Communities (BCCs) in Africa” in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from 6 to 9 August, 2015. The three member AMECEA delegation was Father Febian Pikiti, the Director of the Pastoral Department of AMECEA and Father Joseph Healey, MM and Mrs. Rose Musimba, members of the Eastern African SCCs Training Team. They were joined by 15 grassroots representatives of BCCs in the host country. The workshop was organized by the SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) Commission of Evangelization in association with Missio, Aachen, Germany.

In his “Opening Address” Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, the Archbishop of Ouagadougou, emphasized the significance of small Base Christian Communities in Africa in relation to the 2015-2016 worldwide Year of Mercy in the Catholic Church and the continent-wide 2015-2016 African Year of Reconciliation (ATR). He said that African BCCs combine the pastoral experience of the apostolic church in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and the values of African culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. BCCs play an important role in the growth of the African Church today and promote the theology and practice of the Church as Family of God. He urged the delegates to find concrete ways that SCCs/BCCs can help family and marriage in Africa, adding that at the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October, 2015 “we African Bishops will have something to say.”

The delegates shared their grassroots pastoral experiences of SCCs/BCCs in the Local Churches in Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eastern Africa (the AMECEA Region of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia), and Togo as well as Bolivia/Latin America and Missio/Germany. The participants experienced the dynamism and energy of this “New Way of Being/Becoming Church” and this “New Pastoral Model of Church” especially in the Global South. It was reported that the host country Burkina Faso has 15 dioceses, 177 parishes with CCBs and a total of 8,162

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<sup>435</sup> "Is My Child Welcome Here? Four Ways to Reach Parents of Children with Special Needs" by Allen White documents various Christian Church-related small support groups of two types: for the parents themselves and for parents and their special needs children together. SmallGroups.com Website, retrieved 6 December, 2015, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2015/is-my-child-welcome-here.html>

CCBs (*Communautés Chrétiennes de Base* in French). The nine countries of Eastern Africa have over 180,000 SCCs.

The main “Recommendation for the Way Forward” is summarized as follows:

The consultative meeting that was attended by SECAM and Missio delegates recommended the creation of a SECAM-MISSIO Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Networking Team that will be coordinated by the SECAM Commission of Evangelization. It is supposed to be a small team whose membership will be those pastoral agents who are actively involved in the promotion of this ecclesial model.

The Networking Team will promote information and sharing of experiences about the importance of SCCs in the Local Churches of Africa, reciprocal theological reflection with the Department of Theology of Missio in Germany and interaction with other continental bodies where SCCs are seen as a new way of being church.

New projects include setting up: a SCCs Networking Team Page and Blog on the SECAM Website. A SCCs Networking Library at the SECAM Secretariat in Accra, Ghana (both a physical library and a “virtual” online library). Similar libraries will be set up at the AMECEA Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya.

Highlights of the SCCs Workshop included:

- Visit to St. Lazarus CCB, one of the 32 CCBs in Our Lady of the Apostles Parish. Combining three zones in the parish this BCC has 100 families and 600 members. About 60-70 members participated in the singing, dancing, drumming, speeches, questions and answers and prayers in French and Moore the local language. There was a good mixture of women and men and quite a few young people. There was a lot of lay participation and the explanation of many lay ecclesial ministries. Given that Burkina Faso is 60% Muslim the ministry of Christian-Muslim Dialog is very important. *Matthew* 18:21-35 on the theme of “Forgiveness and Reconciliation” was read and reflected upon. BCC members gave practical examples of the challenges of forgiveness in their families and communities. The Prayer Leader emphasized the greatness of God’s mercy and connected the theme to the 2015-2016 Year of Mercy in the Catholic Church. In a joyful spirit of friendship and sharing the visitors were welcomed with a cold local drink made of millet and sugar and roast meat.
- Small Christian Communities Mass. To celebrate the continent-wide 2015-2016 African Year of Reconciliation (AYR) the theme was “Reconciliation and Peace” using the Eucharistic Prayer of Reconciliation. Participants danced into the church singing *Kweli Kweli ni Baraka Kutoka kwa Mungu* (a Swahili song meaning “Yes Indeed These are Blessings Coming from God”). The Exchange of Peace was at the end of the Penitential Rite to show that “the community of believers was of one mind and heart” (*Acts* 4:32) before listening to the Word of God. The symbol of peace was from Mende Ethnic Group in Sierra Leone and ethnic groups in South Sudan and Sudan: simultaneously putting one’s right hand on the other person's left shoulder and saying "peace."

Before the readings the *Bible* was carried into the chapel in a *Bible* Procession with singing and dancing. Rather than the traditional homily there was a Shared Homily in small groups of two each. To show the rich diversity of the Catholic Church the *Our Father* was said in different African mother tongues (heart languages) -- Bemba (Zambia), Ewe (Ghana, Togo, Benin and Niger), Lingala (DRC), Luyia (Kenya), Moore (Burkina Faso) and Swahili (Eastern and Central Africa) -- as well as in English, French, German and Spanish. Then everyone joined hands and prayed a second time in one language, French, to show the unity in the church.

All the participants in the workshop felt support for their involvement in SCCs around the world and expressed both enthusiasm and commitment to march ahead.

The workshop was an opportunity evaluate the “State of SCCs in the Catholic Church on the Continent of Africa.” SCCs (or CCBs in French) are growing stronger and more important in French-speaking Africa. They are strong in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Unfortunately the important countries of Ghana and Nigeria are lagging behind. Orobator’s assessment is succinct: In these two countries “associations rule.”<sup>436</sup> That is, the traditional Pious Associations/Sodalities/Guilds/Devotional Groups or Societies or Clubs are the main Model of Church in the parish.<sup>437</sup> They emphasize popular spiritual devotions, prayers, singing and often have a special identity like a uniform. Many of the local Catholics are resistant to new ideas like the SCCs Model of Church that is built on SCCs as small neighborhood parish-based groups. While there are places that have active SCCs like Lagos Archdiocese, in general the Catholic Church in Ghana and Nigeria do not have National Pastoral Plans that emphasize the importance of SCCs.

The Parish Evangelizing Cells Movement (also called the Parish System of Cells of Evangelization) was founded in South Korea by the Pastor Paul Yonggi Cho with the aim of promoting the spirit of evangelization. This system has flourished in many countries including the United States (Father Michael Eivers<sup>438</sup> in Florida), Italy (Don Pigi Perini in Milan), Ireland and Australia. Pope Francis greeted an estimated 5,000 members of the Parish Evangelizing Cell Movement in the Blessed Paul VI Hall in the Vatican on 5 September, 2015. The pope stressed four points that are very relevant to SCCs in Eastern Africa:

1. Importance of being a missionary. Above all, this requires listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit who is at the heart of evangelization.

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<sup>436</sup> Emmanuel Orobator, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 14 August, 2015.

<sup>437</sup> Some examples: Christian Mothers Association, Daughters of St. Ann, Immaculate Heart of Mary, Knights of the Altar, Knights of St. John, Ladies Auxiliary of St. John, Ladies of Charity, Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sodality of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sodality of Our Lady, Sodality of St. Ann, Sodality of St. Peter Claver, St Anna’s Sodality, St. Monica Association and various other associations of Knights and Dames.

<sup>438</sup> See Michael J. Eivers, “Parish Evangelizing Cells: The Fields Are White With the Promise of Harvest, But Where Can We Find the Reapers?” Carrick Parish Website, retrieved on 8 September, 2015, <http://www.carrickparish.org/cellsFrEivers.htm>

2. How the daily life and work of small communities like the cells help the parish community become a family where “we find the rich and multifaceted reality of the Catholic Church” and where no one is judged.
3. Sharing time together, such as in the home, “is a genuine experience of evangelization that is very similar to what happened in the early days of the Church.”
4. The members of the cells present should make the Eucharist the heart of their mission of evangelization so that each cell [that is, small community] is a Eucharistic Community “where the breaking of the bread is to recognize the real presence of Jesus Christ in our midst.”<sup>439</sup>

Despite the danger of civil unrest, delegates from seven dioceses in South Sudan were very brave to participate in a Workshop on “Revitalization of Small Christians Communities (SCCs) as Tools for Grassroots Evangelization in South Sudan” that took place in Juba, South Sudan on 21-22 October 2015. This was the seventh in a series of national and metropolitan SCCs Workshops in the nine AMECEA countries.

The objectives of the workshop that was organized by the AMECEA Pastoral Department in collaboration with Pastoral Department of the Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference (SCBC) were:

1. To share experiences on SCCs in the parishes/dioceses and to learn from one another.
2. To reflect on the role of the different individuals and groups in supporting the growth and development of SCCs in the parishes/dioceses.
3. To enhance networking and collaboration among the Catholic groups, parishes and dioceses in strengthening the growth of SCCs.

During the two-day workshop, the delegates shared their experiences of SCCs in their dioceses and parishes. It was observed that only three out of seven dioceses have made the building of SCCs as part of their pastoral plan. Among the major reasons that were given about this situation are: the long civil war to independence; the current internal conflict; the displacement of people and the lack of skilled pastoral agents in some of the dioceses.

Despite this situation, the delegates in their strategic resolutions and plans expressed their determination to use every situation to make the building of SCCs is a pastoral priority in all the dioceses. When making their work plans the common areas of concern and recommendations were the following:

1. All Diocesan Pastoral Teams to present to the local ordinaries, Bishops and Archbishops, the relevance of considering the building of SCCs as a new way of becoming church so that it is included in the Pastoral Strategic Plans.

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<sup>439</sup> Lydia O’Kane, “Pope Francis Meets with Parish Cell Movement,” News.va Website, retrieved on 7 September, 2015, <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-meets-with-parish-cell-movement>

2. The Solidarity Pastoral Team of SCBC to intensify the Trainer of Trainers (TOT) Workshops around the Dioceses, offer capacity building to Diocesan Pastoral Teams and use the radio as a means of formation and sharing about SCCs.
3. Involvement of priests as key pastoral agents in the implementation process especially in those dioceses that are starting the building of SCCs.
4. In those dioceses where SCCs have been initiated, to intensify the involvement of the Lay Leaders, Parish Councils and all the laity in sensitization on the importance of SCCs in promoting the pastoral life of the Church.
5. To design plans on emphasizing follow-down through the Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Teams.

The facilitators of the workshop were Father Febian Pikiti Mulenga, AMECEA Pastoral Coordinator and Dr. Alphonse Omolo, a member of the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team. The twenty-four delegates who participated in the workshop were from the following Arch/dioceses: Juba (1); Malakal (2); Rumbek (4), Torit (4); Tombura-Yambio (1); Wau (4); Yei (4) and the Pastoral Solidarity Team (4).

In his closing remarks, Father Philip Bingo, the Pastoral Coordinator of SCBC, expressed gratitude to AMECEA Secretariat for the gesture of solidarity and for offering capacity building to the members of the Inter-Diocesan Pastoral Team.

A report from Cynthia Kayla on the Juba, South Sudan Workshop on the SCCs Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>) puts our lives in perspective:

The training of Pastoral Coordinators on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) from all the dioceses of South Sudan has begun today 20 October, 2015 in earnest in Juba. In an informal sharing during breakfast, the participant from Yambio Diocese shared a heart-breaking story on how he had to pass through roadblocks mounted by different groups of rebels. At times he had to be taken through bushy paths in order to avoid any harm to his life. Thank God he got to Juba safely. Hmmm! Makes me wonder how we take peace for granted. Don't we?<sup>440</sup>

The staff in the Kenya Catholic Secretariat of the KCCB in Nairobi formed four SCCs that meet on the first Monday of the month from 8 to 10:30 a.m.: St. Francis Xavier SCC for national executive secretaries; St. Joseph the Worker SCC for administrative staff and accountants; St. Ignatius Loyola SCC for program officers and project officers; and St. Peter SCC for clergy and religious. Members pray together and discuss common issues.

SCCs in Eastern Africa are deeply involved in the 2015-2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy. Several emails give a good summary:

“Yesterday I spoke with layman Josphat Mulinya, Chairperson of St. Kizito SCC, in Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya about how our SCCs can celebrate the 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy. We can choose specific “Corporal Works of Mercy:”

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<sup>440</sup> See Cynthia Kayla, SCCs Facebook Page, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, [https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org/posts\\_to\\_page](https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org/posts_to_page)

- Feed the hungry.
- Give drink to the thirsty.
- Clothe the naked.
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick.
- Visit the imprisoned.
- Bury the dead.

and specific “Spiritual Works of Mercy:”

- Instruct the ignorant.
- Counsel the doubtful.
- Admonish sinners.
- Bear wrongs patiently.
- Forgive offences willingly.
- Comfort the afflicted.
- Pray for the living and the dead.”

”The Gospel for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C includes *Luke* 4: 18-19.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring glad tidings to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”<sup>441</sup>

This is closely connected to *Matthew* 25:34-40:

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

The *Bible*’s teaching that we are to welcome the stranger is one of the most frequently mentioned moral imperatives in both the *Old* and *New Testament*.” This core passage of

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<sup>441</sup> This is the same as the Jubilee Year that is described in *Deuteronomy* 15:1-11 and *Leviticus* 25:8-22. This Jubilee text from *Isaiah* 62:1-2 reveals what holiness in action means for Jesus. See footnote on pages 1735-1736 of *The African Bible*, Nairobi: Paulines Africa, 1999.

*Matthew* can be rewritten in new contexts today. Pope Francis says “For I was an immigrant and you welcomed me” to reaffirm his commitment to a “church of the peripheries”<sup>442</sup>

This can be described as the “Agenda” and “Action Plan” of Jesus Christ’s Public Ministry and Pope Francis’ Pontificate as well as our SCCs’ involvement in the 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy. Pope Francis has called and challenged us to perform specific acts of mercy and forgiveness this year. Our research shows that many SCC members do not associate/connect the Gospel phrase “a year acceptable to the Lord” to the 2016 Jubilee Year. Many practice the works of mercy, for example, visiting the sick without naming them or knowing them as such. Very good articles appear in the Catholic Press such as “When I Was in Prison You Visited Me” in the January--February, 2016 issue of *New People* that refer to doing works of charity during the Jubilee Year of Mercy without the corporal works of mercy “branding.” Here is where SCC members can bring a new awareness and a new consciousness and make the works of mercy a “conscious way of life.”

Here are some comments on our SCC Facebook Page:

- A SCC in Machakos Diocese, Kenya has put this into practice by buying a wheelchair for one of its members who has a disability and cannot walk.
- In most of our SCCs "visiting the sick" is the most common “Corporal Work of Mercy.”
- "Bury the dead" and "pray for the living and the dead" are two works that are very important in our SCCs.
- This is what we are doing in the Archdiocese of Lagos, Nigeria.
- As we celebrate the 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy in our SCCs, let us recall this African parable:

Title: "What is the Most Important Religion?"

Theme: “Love”

Sub Themes: Forgiveness, Mercy, Interreligious Dialog, Leadership, Religion, Wisdom/Stupidity

Author/City/Country: Father Joseph G. Healey, MM with the Christians of Musoma, Tanzania

Genre/Type: Parable

Locale: Musoma, Tanzania

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<sup>442</sup> In his over 12 overseas journeys to date Francis' concerted insistence for his "open time" has become more than clear, and – surprise, surprise – it's a conspicuous shift: in a nod to what he's repeatedly cited as "the protocol by which we all will be judged," every visit now hinges upon what can be called the "*Matthew* 25 stops,” that is, an outreach to some mix of the sick, migrants, prisons, the poor... in a word, "the least brothers" of whom Jesus said "whatever you did for [them], you did for me." "I examine my conscience with this chapter," Francis told a 2014 audience – "Every day." See the blog by Rocco Palmo, “Whispers in the Loggio,” retrieved on 19 February, 2016,

<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.co.ke/2015/11/how-can-i-not-denounce-injustices-you.html>

Publication Information: *What Language Does God Speak: African Stories about Christmas and Easter* (St. Paul Publications – Africa, 1989). “African Stories by Season” on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, <http://www.afriprov.org/african-stories-by-season/12-easter-stories/47-what-is-the-most-important-religion.html>

- As leaders and members of SCCs we have one goal: To convey the love and tenderness of Christ to those who are most in need.

Here is a practical example of how one can unexpectedly experience SCCs as a new way of being church from the grassroots up. On Tuesday, 1 March, 2016 I visited [St. Austin’s Parish](#) in Nairobi to discuss with the Parish Priest plans for the marriage of two members of our St. Kizito SCC on Easter Sunday. I discovered that both priests were away for a Recollection Day. So I was able to spend quality time interacting with four members of the parish staff – something I never would have done if I had been immediately ushered into the Parish Priest’s Office.

The office secretary gave me the list of the newly elected SCC leaders and we found the name of the newly elected Parish Pastoral Council Secretary (who is from St. Kizito SCC) on our SCC Facebook Page. I helped her to vote on our SCCs Website. I gave copies of our two recommended books for our SCC Course at Tangaza to the Felician Sister working in religious education. I discussed SCCs training programs with the senior catechist and that the most SCCs in Kenya come from his home diocese of Machakos. I discussed the Holy Week liturgies with the sacristan including the outdoor “Way of the Cross” on Good Friday winding through our different SCCs to finally reach the parish church for the 15<sup>th</sup> Station. Each person received a bookmark of our SCCs Website. All four were actively involved in coordinating parish activities without the priests being around. I felt the energy of SCCs being involved in pastoral activities.

On 12 April, 2016 we had a one day SCCs Coordinators Workshop on “Finding Pastoral Solutions to the Ongoing Challenges in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Meru Diocese” at the St. Michael Retreat Centre, Meru, Kenya. There were 77 participants from seven deaneries. Special praise for the parish that sent 10 representatives meaning 2,000/= Kenyan Shillings x 10 = 20,000/= (or \$200) raised by the parish. The facilitators were Kenyan diocesan priest Father Lawrence Murori, SCCs Coordiaor in Meru Diocese Kenyan diocesan priest Father Moses Muriira, SCCs Researcher and Father Joseph Healey, a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team.



It was emphasized that as a new model of church SCCs move from being gatherings to authentic small communities of 15 to 20 people. The clear mark of a SCC is Gospel Sharing. This highlights the difference between a SCC and general meetings of Catholics.

The major challenges/obstacles (“vikwazo” in Swahili)/problems by votes:

- Time Management (42 votes):
  - a. Not coming on time to weekly SCC meetings and other activities.
  - b. The facilitator not planning well the time for the various steps of the weekly SCCs meeting (one hour as the norm).
- Lack of men and youth (15 votes).
- Catholic Church leaders (priests and PPC members) do not emphasize the importance of SCCs (15 votes).

Pastoral solutions included: each dedicated SCC member should make a personal commitment to be on time. Start specific Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in the parish. SCCs should be directly represented on the PPCs. If SCC leaders are members of PPCs they will promote the SCCs pastoral priority.

One of the major obstacles identified by the three facilitators was the very large size of SCCs in Meru Diocese. The number of members of one SCC can be 100 or more Christians. It is significant that the participants in the workshop and other SCCs members that we visited did not see this as a problem. They liked the socializing in the larger SCCs especially through the networking of the extended families (keeping the clans intact) and the additional revenue that came into the SCCs' treasury do to the larger numbers. In the social and cultural analysis chapter of his Master's Thesis -- *Pastoral Solutions to the Obstacles in the Growth of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in St. Massimo Parish, Meru Diocese, Kenya* – Muriira is using the tool of the Problem Tree Analysis (with the corresponding Objective Tree and Solution Tree) to try to come up with a pastoral solution.

A “Critical Incident” was Catechist Samson’s report on his visit to a friend in Thika Town in Nairobi Archdiocese. He happened to participate in a Home Mass/House Mass of the SCC of his friend. But this was not really a SCC Mass. The mass was exactly the same mass that the priest celebrates in the parish church. The priest preached and there was very little lay participation.

Another “Critical Incident” was Bishop Salesius Mugambi, Bishop of Meru Diocese,’s story of clannism among the Meru Catholic people. As an example rather than remain in its particular neighborhood (geographical area) SCC in its parish, a particular Catholic family traveled five kilometers across town to join some relatives in an extended family–type SCC. This has all kinds of problems: favoritism creeps in, the SCC becomes a social rather than a religious group and so on.<sup>443</sup>

As immediate follow-up 100 SCCs leaders participated in a one-day SCCs Workshop in Chuka Parish facilitated by Father Lawrence Murori, now called *Mwanajumuiya Damu Damu*. Also there was a regular meeting of the nine SCCs Deanery Chaplains (similar terminology to youth chaplains) with Bishop Mugambi.<sup>444</sup> SCCs Masses in the deaneries will begin in September, 2016 with Bishop Mugambi as the main celebrant.

It is hoped that Small Christian Communities can be the theme of one of the future Clergy Meetings in Meru Diocese. It could include Muriira’s report in the findings of his thesis and a talk on “Five Reasons Why the SCCs Model of Church Changes the Way that Priests do Pastoral Ministry for the Better.”

In a wide ranging interview/conversation on 25 April 2016 French Little Brother of the Gospel Allain **ADD** presented a sociological and demographic picture of the 30 SCCs in St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Kangemi, Nairobi, Kenya. Highlights:

- He emphasized that the first priority is in depth, quality formation of SCCs leaders and members. An occasional workshop or seminar is not enough. The New Religious Movements have better formation programs for their lay members, for example, Leadership Training, and Bible Study/Faith Formation, than what is offered to Catholic lay people in parishes and dioceses such as SCC Leaders. The Zaidi Centre

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<sup>443</sup> Author’s interview with Salesius Mugambi, Meru, Kenya, 14 April, 2016.

<sup>444</sup> See the “Minutes of the Meru Diocese Small Christian Communities Deanery Chaplains Meeting on 21 April, 2016 in the Parlor.”

for Ignatian Spirituality, started in July, 2000 in Nairobi as a means of ministering to Christians through workshops, presentations, recollections and retreats on aspects of our Christian life, offers excellent formation and pastoral accompaniment programs for parishes such as **Retreat in Life**.

- Without good leaders to animate the weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*, the SCCs can end up as rosary prayer groups and vehicles for fund raising.
- He saw new patterns in why Catholics are not sacramentalizing their marriages in Kenya. A growing factor is that people do not want to make permanent, lifetime commitments. Both men and women feel that they do not “need” to be official married in the Catholic Church.
- Training programs are necessary for better marriage preparation and accompanying newly married couples.

## 4. Four Case Studies of SCCs in Eastern Africa

### 1. 29 Year (1986-2015) Journey of St. Jude Thaddeus Small Christian Community (SCC) in Tanzania and the World<sup>445</sup>

**NOTE:** A unique type of ongoing evaluation and assessment is to track one specific SCC over many years and learn from its variety of experiences. This Case Study describes very well the “ecclesial life” and activities of a Tanzanian SCC and how it evolves from one generation to the next.

St. Augustine Parish presently is one of the five parishes in Musoma Town Area of Musoma Diocese, Tanzania and has undergone many changes over the years. Its geographical area was part of Musoma Cathedral that was founded in 1952 and then later was part of Nyamiongo Parish that was founded in 1986 and originally had ten SCCs. St. Augustine Parish also called Mwisenge Parish was founded in 2000.

St. Jude Thaddeus Small Christian Community (SCC) in the Mwisenge Juu section of the St. Augustine Parish started in 1986. Of the 100 adult lay Christians who were registered in the community there were about 40 active members. About 15 adults (together with youth and children) met every Thursday afternoon for the *Bible Service/Bible Reflection* and a pastoral meeting (that rotated in the members’ homes or courtyards). Visiting sick neighbors and those in the town hospital and Catholics who do not come to church regularly usually took place on Friday afternoon.

As the Catholic population grew in the parish so did the number of people in the SCCs in Mwisenge Juu section. In 2014 St. Jude Thaddeus SCC “gave birth” to two new SCCs. The core group remained part of the SCC Mama, but other SCCs members joined the new communities. A new generation of leaders took responsibility.

It is worthwhile to relive the early history of this SCC and its development over the years. St. Jude Thaddeus SCC is typical of many SCCs in East Africa. It is a parish-based Small Christian Community with a pastoral focus. Stated another way, most of the SCCs in Eastern Africa are a "Pastoral Model" that develops within the parish structure (quite different from the Latin American model, for example).

Here is a description taken from 1996:

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Three-quarters of the members are women. In fact the only committed men are William Marko, the chairperson of the community for five years (who has since moved to

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<sup>445</sup> Originally published as one of the “Examples of African Narrative Theology and Practical Evangelization” in Chapter Three on “Church as the Extended Family of God” in the book *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (1996). Updated version as of August, 2002 was presented at a Workshop on International SCC Twinning, National SCC Convocation, San Antonio, Texas, USA on 1 August, 2002. Updated version as of July, 2014 was posted on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website on 16 July, 2014.

another parish), Wilson Chacha who has been chairperson and vice-chairperson over the years, Fabian Bunini who is the present vice-chairperson and a faithful member Shindika. Women take all the other leadership roles -- Prayer Leader, Marriage Counselor, Guardian of the Children and Good Neighbor Minister. A pillar of the SCC from the beginning has been Semphroza Chacha who has taken many leadership roles. The current secretary is Anna Wanzagi and the current treasurer is Bernadetta Matuma. When William Marko went to Mwanza for a one-year catechists' course, Beata Raphaeli filled in very well as the Acting Chairperson. Most Catholics in the neighborhood say they are too busy to participate in the weekly *Bible Service*. Very few youth come to the SCC activities. Many children attend as part of African extended family life.

The SCC has occasional seminars on topics such as HIV/AIDS, the 1994 First African Synod and lay leadership training. It coordinates a small lending library especially to encourage reading of religious books. Mutual aid and social outreach are very important such as visiting the sick, visiting the bereaved, and taking a collection (money, food, supplies) for poor and needy people. Occasionally SCC members visit a neighboring SCC. While visiting a woman whose uncle had just died in another SCC (whose patron was also St. Jude Thaddeus) Semphroza Chacha said: "When there is a death in your family there is a death in our family. When there is a death in your SCC there is a death in our SCC."

The Eucharist is celebrated almost monthly in the SCC including: a weekday in Advent and Lent; October 28, the feast of St. Jude Thaddeus; the annual Mass of Anointing; and special events such as the mass of a newly ordained priest and a farewell to a regular member of the SCC. There are special celebrations in the community after members receive the sacraments such as Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation. The SCC sponsors, encourages, and accompanies its Adult Catechumens before their Baptism on Holy Saturday night.

Special events have included the marriage celebration of the former chairperson William Marko, celebrations after the ordination to the diaconate and priesthood of Father John Chacha and jubilee and anniversary celebrations. These parties include plenty of food, singing, dancing, and merry-making. Celebrations are an important part of the *life* of the SCC. Visitors are welcomed to the SCC meetings with singing and clapping.

The last ten years have witnessed a real growth in the community. After a great deal of discussion St. Jude Thaddeus was chosen as the patron of the SCC to emphasize its apostolic spirit and the desire to help the neediest (the lost causes). At first only a few members shared their reflections on the gospel of the following Sunday. Then members divided into three small groups<sup>446</sup> during the faith sharing and everyone began speaking and sharing. Now SCC members reflect easily on different scripture passages. Even Blandina Mgita (now deceased), a 75-year-old woman who could not read and write, occasionally led a small group.

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<sup>446</sup> Based on the LUMKO, South Africa Method of small buzz groups in SCCs that are a feature of group dynamics.

Sometimes the children form their own small reflection group so they could participate more freely in their own way.<sup>447</sup> A *Bible* reflection on “The Parable of the Lost Sheep” began with ten children (aged five to 14) closing their eyes, picturing a favorite animal, and then mentioning it to the small group -- a giraffe, sheep, cow, gazelle, lion. Then two young boys (who actually herd their family sheep) described what it is like. This led the group into a discussion on “Jesus as the Good Shepherd” in *John* 10.

An example of the *Bible* reflection in the SCC is the insights on “The Parable of the Shrewd Manager” (*Luke* 16:1-13). SCC members pointed out the different meanings of “money” -- actual cash, material goods, the lures of the devil, worldly pleasures, various compulsions and excesses, etc. Each person is challenged to make a choice when two paths or two options are present, for example:

- a. Schoolchild: studies or play.
- b. Married man: one or two wives.
- c. SCC member: to attend the weekly *Bible Service* or take care of personal interests like going to a bar.
- d. Young person: Different religious vocations.

It was pointed out that people need to take a stand and not be blown about like a flag in the wind. A person mentioned the popular animal Story-Proverb of “The Hyena and the Two Roads.”<sup>448</sup>

A very hungry hyena went out on the Tanzanian plains to hunt for food. He came to a branch in the bush road where the two paths veered off in different directions. He saw two goats caught in the thickets at the far end of the two different paths. With his mouth watering in anticipation, he decided that his left leg would follow the left path and his right leg the right path. As the two paths continued to veer in different directions he tried to follow them both at once. Finally he split in two. As the well-known African proverb says: *Two roads overcame the hyena.*

The last sentence of this story is the proverb *Two roads overcame the hyena* (Luyia, Kenya and Swahili, Eastern Africa). This proverb teaches that you cannot do two things at once. Another SCC member mentioned the parallel scripture passage in *Matthew* 6:24: “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve God and wealth.”

A practical action is usually chosen that links to the theme of the gospel. Most frequently this is visiting the sick people in the neighborhood and the laying on of hands for

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<sup>447</sup> A visiting priest (a former scripture professor) participated in the small reflection groups during two different weeks. He was amazed how the children were so comfortable and vocal in talking about the gospel in their small group. Later he said: “I would not have believed this is possible if I had not seen it with my own eyes.”

<sup>448</sup> There are many versions and titles of this popular animal story. See *The Undecided Hyena* in Rose Mwangi, *Kikuyu Folktales: Their Nature and Value* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1970), pp. 66-67 and *Chagua Moja* (Swahili for “Choose One”) in M.P. Nyagwaswa, *Mifano Hai -- Kitabu cha Kwanza* (Mwanza: Inland Publishers, 1979), p. 18.

healing. Other examples are visiting bereaved people; taking up a collection for a needy person; personal and community spiritual preparation for an important feast or liturgical season; visiting Catholics in the neighborhood who have been lax in their faith life; and preparing a local celebration.

A lot of decision-making and activities of the parish pass through the SCCs. During their pastoral meetings members evaluate the requests for Marriage and Baptism of infants. This becomes a challenging and learning experience regarding the importance of Christian marriage. Many Catholics cannot receive communion because they have not married in the church. There are an increasing number of unmarried mothers. Many parish activities and financial campaigns/collections are carried out through the SCCs. Recently St. Jude Thaddeus SCC raised money for new vestments in the parish church.

Over the years SCCs like St. Jude Thaddeus have come to believe and experience that they are the church on the local level, that they are an authentic basic community of Christian life and formation. These SCCs are participating more in pastoral decision-making on the local level. But the lay people are still too dependent on the priests in what continues largely as a clerical and hierarchical church in East Africa. A growing edge is how the SCCs can be more "transformational" in the larger society especially in justice and peace issues.

One member of St. Jude Thaddeus SCC has AIDS. She now lives at the nearby Charity Home run by a Tanzanian priest. She is very thin and cannot walk. The whole St. Jude Thaddeus SCC takes responsibility for her. When she was too sick to live at home, the SCC arranged for her to move to the Charity Home. On every First Friday of the month the SCC members visit her bringing food, clothing, soap, and money for her living expenses during the next month. One member said: "Our gift is small, but our love is large." SCC members also visit at other times to pray with her and encourage her to persevere. There is a saying used in the outreach of the SCC: *Sharing truly divides the sorrow.*

How can a local African SCC share with the World Church? In 1992 St. Jude Thaddeus SCC participated in a worldwide project to prepare questions from local small faith sharing church communities on the Sunday readings of the three-year lectionary cycle.<sup>449</sup> Six SCC members (three men and three women) wrote three questions for Passion Sunday (Year C), the Easter Vigil (Years A, B, and C) and the 11th and 12th Sundays of Ordinary Time (Year B). Some questions are: "What crosses do you carry in your everyday lives -- sickness, AIDS, marriage conflicts, backbiting and jealousy in personal relationships, civil and tribal wars, etc.?" "Women play an important role at the foot of the cross and at the empty tomb. What women played an important role in your faith life? How?" "In your personal life or your small church community what small thing [like a mustard seed] has become a big or important thing?" "What images of Jesus come from your own culture and grassroots experience?"

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<sup>449</sup> See *Faith Sharing for Small Church Communities: Questions and Commentaries on the Sunday Readings* edited by Art Baranowski and the National Alliance for Parishes Restructuring into Communities (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993). Over 7,500 members of Small Church Communities throughout the world including Kenya, South Africa, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe prepared these questions.

St. Jude Thaddeus SCC started twinning with the Circle of Friends SCC in St. Joseph's Parish in Golden, Colorado, USA in the fall of 1996.<sup>450</sup> The seed was sown at the Tenth Anniversary Convocation of Buena Vista in Estes Park, Colorado in January, 1996. The meeting's *Bible* Groups sent signed Bibles (the *Serendipity New Testament*) to SCCs throughout the world including Tanzania. One of the Buena Vista participants, Bernie Moore from Golden, Colorado, invited Father Joe Healey, a Maryknoll missionary priest in Tanzania, to visit her SCC in Golden (that started in 1994 and now is called Circle of Friends SCC) in November, 1996. They set up the SCC Twinning or SCC Partnership. It also called "SCC Partners" or "SCC Sisters"/Sister SCCs" or "Sister Communities". In Swahili it is called "*Jumuiya Pacha*" or "*Jumuiya Dada*."

The members of St. Jude Thaddeus SCC and Circle of Friends SCC began exchanging letters and photographs. This led to the Golden SCC sending gifts of Colorado souvenirs, shirts, rosaries and scapulars to its Musoma twin. In turn the St. Jude Thaddeus SCC members sent African cloths and woven baskets to their Golden twin. The USA twin helped the women's group in its Tanzania twin to start a self-reliance project. Praying for one another is an important part of this twinning relationship. Members of the two SCCs also share stories of the pastoral activities in their SCCs and parishes.

Individual families in each SCC adopted each other and exchanged letters (paper letters and email messages) and photographs. This "Family Twinning" within the SCC is another creative "New Way of Living World Church at the Grassroots Level." In a recent letter to its USA Twin, the Tanzanians wrote: "We your SCC Twin greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though you dear friends live far from us we want to express our deep sympathy on the events of 9 September, 2001." They also sent a colorful African cloth called a "*Khanga*" with a Swahili saying translated as: *Put God first in everything*. These various examples show that the main purpose of SCC twinning is sharing the mutual spiritual and pastoral experiences of SCCs and networking in building a World Church. International SCC twinning is a practical expression of the global experience of Small Church Communities, "Global Solidarity" in action.

For many years my main pastoral work has been animating Small Christian Communities (SCCs) that is the key pastoral priority of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. I joined as a full member of St. Jude Thaddeus SCC in 1988 and have journeyed with the community ever since. Even though a priest I try to be just a regular participant, not a leader. Whenever I am "home" in Musoma I participate in the Thursday *Bible Service* and meeting of my SCC. The leaders of St. Jude Thaddeus SCC are like family to me especially Semphroza and Wilson Chacha. One of their grandchildren, Virginia (now 22 years old), is named after my deceased mother. This is part of the meaningful African custom to keep alive the name and memory of a deceased person as one of the living dead.

One month our SCC started planning a big celebration. Special invitations were sent out to priests, sisters and lay leaders of the other SCCs. The day before the feast I mentioned to Semphroza that I hadn't received an invitation. She answered with a big smile: "You can't get an invitation. You're a member of our SCC. We don't send invitations to ourselves."

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<sup>450</sup> See the description of this SCC Twinning in: Gaughan, Margaret. "Connected by Faith." *Maryknoll*, February, 1998: 22-24. Reprinted in *SCC Gatherings*, 11, 2 (Summer, 1998): 1-2.

Suddenly I realized that I really belonged. I was truly part of this SCC -- a communion of extended families in the same neighborhood. The SCC members had evangelized me.

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In 1994 I moved to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, but I continued to communicate with my SCC. Some SCC members visited me in Dar es Salaam. St. Jude Thaddeus SCC members remain faithful to the weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* and social outreach to the needy.

Often the SCC members reflect on the missionary spirit of their Patron St. Jude Thaddeus, one of the 12 disciples and the various missionary passages in the *Bible*. Jesus sends His disciples "to the ends of the earth" (*Acts* 1:8) to proclaim the Good News of Salvation. "The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go" (*Luke* 10:1). Their work was very fruitful. "The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!'" (*Luke* 10:17). Members of St. Jude Thaddeus SCC reflected on this mission passage in *Luke* as follows:

The seventy people were a mixture of men and women, old and young. The SCC members emphasized that Jesus sent out the disciples in pairs. This was the community reaching out in mission. The disciples helped each other along the way. Today SCC members follow in the footsteps of the first disciples and imitate especially the apostolic spirit of St. Jude Thaddeus. The SCC is a community that is both gathered and sent. Several African proverbs on community were mentioned. Two Christians, James and Maria Goretti, said that modern disciples does not go out alone, but with the Holy Spirit.<sup>451</sup>

The SCC tries to live out this pastoral and missionary spirit in concrete ways. SCC members visit Christians in the neighborhood who no longer receive the sacraments or have complicated marriage situations. On the celebration of the community's feast day (St. Jude Thaddeus on October 28), each member invites one or two Christians who are wavering or "new" people in the neighborhood to the Eucharist and meal. This is also a way of implementing the gospel on the "Good Shepherd."

But getting involved in deeper justice and peace issues was difficult. Becoming agents of change and transformation was a big challenge. On one occasion some St. Jude Thaddeus SCC members visited a sick member in the Musoma Hospital. They were told that the only way to get extra medicine was pay a bribe. During their weekly meeting the members discussed what to do. They decided that they couldn't change the situation. They would just little, ordinary people. They said the Parish Priest, the Catholic Bishop and influential government leaders were the best people to intervene. The SCC members prayed the rosary and hoped for the best.<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>451</sup> See Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, pp. 344-345.

<sup>452</sup> The full story is told as "What Would You and Your Small Christian Community Do?" in Joseph Healey, *African Stories for Preachers and Teachers*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2006 and as "What Would Your Small Christian Community Do?" African Story No. 553 in the "African Stories Database," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 14

In December, 2001 I visited Musoma for the first time in seven years. It was the occasion of the Final Vows of Sister Juliana Karomba, MSOLA. I visited St. Jude Thaddeus SCC at the home of Wilson and Semphroza Chacha, long-time members and leaders of the SCC. A family spirit and family values continued at the heart of the SCC. The SCC continued to be the preferred “place” to pass on the Catholic faith to the children and grandchildren.

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In July, 2014 I visited Musoma for the first time in 13 years. It was the occasion of the Book Launch of two books by and about the Tanzanian theologian Father Laurenti Magesa who writes a lot about SCCs. I visited St. Jude Thaddeus SCC at the home of Wilson Chacha, a long-time member and leader of the SCC. The SCC continues to meet on Thursday afternoons and is very involved in parish activities. Wilson explained how the SCC continues to adapt to changing situations in the parish and in the Tanzanian reality. This includes a new generation of leaders.<sup>453</sup>

A small community of us representing three generations of the family visited the grave of his wife Semphroza Chacha whose fourth anniversary of death is 16 July. We had a memorial prayer service and blessing. Besides having been a very active SCC member, Semphroza is one of the two women in Musoma Diocese who has two priest sons: Father Godfrey Biseko and Father John Chacha. Her memory and example lives on.

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July, 2014,

[http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=506](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid[0]=506)

<sup>453</sup> Wilson Chacha, conversation with the author in Musoma, Tanzania on 10 July, 2014.

## 2. Case Study of a SCC Member in Lusaka, Zambia

We usually think of case studies as a written report or a research project. But a DVD can be a case study such as *Small Christian Communities: The Heart of the Church*, a 25-minute DVD produced by Catholic Media Services Television Production Studios, the communications ministry of the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) in Lusaka, Zambia. In the spirit of SCCs being a new way of being church, the DVD begins with the grassroots story of a Zambian laywomen Mrs. Clementina Banda, a widow with 11 children and 14 grandchildren. She is a member of St. Gabriel SCC in St. Francis de Sales Parish in Lusaka Archdiocese.

She explains how she sells vegetables for a living at the market. Clementina is conscientious and hard working. She is a responsible mother and sends all her children to school. The foundation of her life is her Catholic faith. Clementina is very conscious of God in her life. She describes how she passes on her faith to her children. She says that all her children are strong in their faith. One is an altar boy, another a member of the choir, another has just sacramentalized his marriage in church.

Regularly she is seen with *Bible* in hand going to her SCC meeting. She says: “At church we listen to the Word of God, but here in the SCC we meet and discuss every detail for everyone to understand.” The SCCs members read the *Bible*, then discuss in groups of five each. Then everyone participates in the sharing.

Small Christian Communities are, in fact, an extension of good neighborliness intended to share Scripture, pray together, care for the sick and show concern on issues of justice and peace. Banda describes their life and ministry in these words: “Small Christian Communities are interesting. We strengthen each other in our faith. Every strong Christian has to start from a Small Christian Community. If there is an illness we support each other.”

The DVD also portrays the life and activities of St. Lawrence SCC in the parish and the pastoral, spiritual and theological reflections of Zambian Cardinal Medardo Mazombwe (died in 2013), the former Archbishop of Lusaka, and Zambian diocesan priest Father Edwin Mwale, the pastor of St. Francis de Sales Parish. Truly SCCs are the heart of the church and the foundation of the parish in Eastern Africa.

### 3. Case Study of a Recent Experience of SCCs in Nairobi, Kenya

In addition to presenting this academic-style evaluation, I would like to share a recent personal experience to convey the life and spirit of SCCs. On 17 February, 2011 I participated in a meeting of the Huruma Zone (*Jumuiya Pamoja* in Swahili) of 10 SCCs in Holy Trinity Parish in Kariobangi North in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya.<sup>454</sup> The joint meeting was in Swahili and took one and one half hours. The meeting was well prepared ahead of time with a table, special cloth, candle, crucifix, *Bible* and hymn books.

There are a total of 74 SCCs<sup>455</sup> in the whole parish. Every Thursday these particular 10 SCCs meet separately in their homes. On the third Thursday of the month they meet together at St. Mary Mother of Mercy Center for a zonal meeting. Between 60 and 70 people (a majority of women with a good number of men and youth) reflected on the gospel of the following Sunday and discussed their responsibilities in a SCCs Model of Church. I felt the liveliness, energy and sense of participation of this community. The coordinator (responsible) is a dynamic middle aged Catholic woman named Hellen Wanjiru. She directly represents the zone on the 40-member Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). NOTE: All the representatives of the parish associations/organizations on the council belong to SCCs. During the meeting different SCC members took on leadership roles. The facilitator of the *Bible* Sharing was a young woman who called on different members to read. 12 people (six women and six men) shared the *Bible* verses that struck them. Then there were reflections on the gospel passage and Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions).

The pastoral meeting section included reports from the coordinators of different ministries in the SCCs like the family apostolate, apostolate to the sick, liturgy and justice and peace. The SCC members discussed an action plan. The coordinator was skilled in answering questions and calling upon others. There was a good spirit of fraternal correction and pointing out better ways of doing things. I felt the leaders saying that “we lay people, we SCC members, are the Church. The growth of the Church here in Kariobangi North is our responsibility.” I heard the Swahili word for “we are responsible” – *tunawajibika* -- used frequently.

I thought of the guideline that in the SCC Model of Church in the AMECEA countries the pastoral activities of the parish pass through the SCCs. There was a sense of ownership by these local Christians and a willingness to face the inevitable challenges of a busy parish in Nairobi. Overall I felt these people understood and practiced that SCCs are a way of life, not just a project or a program in the parish.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> See Holy Trinity Catholic Parish, Kariobangi North, Nairobi, Kenya (<http://www.holytrinitykariobangi.org>)

<sup>455</sup> Each SCC has a large moveable photograph of Servant of God Cardinal Michael Maurice Otunga on the wall of its meeting place and promotes his cause of beatification.

<sup>456</sup> I like to spontaneously visit Catholic Churches on Sunday mornings and listen to the announcements at the end of the Sunday masses, read the notices posted on the Church Notice Board and read the weekly bulletin. Often they give a clear picture of the life, activities and priorities in the parish. I have heard up to ten references to SCCs on a single Sunday – announcements ranging from the time and place of meetings of specific SCCs in the parish to the names of the SCCs responsible (*zamu* in Swahili) for the readings, taking the

I had the opportunity to participate in this meeting of the Huruma Zone because I accompanied Father Harrison Yaa of Mombasa Archdiocese who did his SCC Practicum (in-service or on-site training) in Holy Trinity Parish as part of writing his M.A. Thesis in Pastoral Ministry on SCCs in the Pastoral Theology Department at Tangaza University College.<sup>457</sup> He focused on the challenges of promoting SCCs as a model of church in an urban context. He drew on Italian missionary Father Daniel Moschetti, MCCJ's insight that SCCs are "a fitting ecclesiology for the cities" in Africa:

This leads to a measure of decentralization to neighborhood household groups. This model of being a church-community befits the human situation of the city and slum-dwellers because it creates a network of solidary and mutual trust.<sup>458</sup>

SCC members themselves describe how their small communities offer security and support in the midst of the unrest, crime and violence of Nairobi city life.

Yaa tells the story that as part of his weekly participation in the activities of the SCCs one Saturday he helped the members of a particular SCC to clean the church before the Sunday Eucharist. Afterwards several people remarked that a priest should not sweep and clean the church. But Yaa explains that as a priest he wanted to fully participate in the responsibilities of the SCC – just like everyone else.<sup>459</sup> This is a good example of the changing role of the priest in this new model of church.

Three years later in 2014 *Seed Magazine* provided an update and evaluation of the SCCs in Kariobangi Parish.<sup>460</sup> Some key quotations:

The power of the Small Christian Communities lies in the ministries that each member is expected to take part in. There are those who minister to the sick, some to the needy and others on issues of peace and justice. Those who belong to the different ministries are known as *wanahuduma* and they work within the community where they live...

The other ministry is the *Huduma ya Familia na Imani*, Family and Faith Ministry, and here is where the catechists belong. They are those who

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and bringing up the offertory for the follow Sunday's masses to plans for training workshops/seminars of SCC leaders and animators. These examples show that SCCs are integral to the pastoral and social life of the parish.

<sup>457</sup> Harrison Yaa, *Building, Strengthening and Sustaining Small Christian Communities*.

<sup>458</sup> Daniel Moschetti, *Urban Ministry in Africa: Need for New Models*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* Nos. 145-147, 1997, p. 64.

<sup>459</sup> On a bishop and other prominent Catholics being ordinary members of a SCC, Kilaini adds: "One day I went to clean the church when it was our turn, and besides me were two judges of the high court and the wife of a government minister. I love it." In Ishengoma, *Akamwani*, p. 7.

<sup>460</sup> Lourine Oluoch, "Why Jumuias Form the Backbone of Kariobangi Parish," *Seed*, Vol. 26, No. 12, Issue 272 (December, 2014), pp. 12-13.

teach the catechumens and the families to prepare for infant baptisms. “Four times a year we have infant baptism with an average of 15 to 20 infants. In a year we can have 80 to 100 infant baptisms. The parishioners who belong to this *huduma ya familia* look into the preparation during two months for the parents of the infants and the *wasimamizi*. They are also tasked with preparing the couples for marriage. Twice a year we have two and a half months formation for couples who want to get married, and they have to go through this formation. Currently we have eight couples who are preparing to be married together and eight others who are preparing for other occasions. Twice a year we have the *ndoa pamoja* where they can get married together on the same day.”

As Fr. [Felipe] Resende explains, one of the biggest fears people have of getting married is the *gharama* but as a church they don't focus on that. “We don't look at that in the church, for us it's not important if you have a good dress, you go to eat well or you have a good car. What is important is that you prepare, you know what is a Christian family and then you get to be a Christian family under the grace of the sacraments,” he says...

“We know the good of being in *jumias* and it is an experience that the people like. Through the *jumuia* we learn the Word and live it, we build unity without tribal boundaries. This parish is made up of people from many tribes in Kenya but through the *jumuia* we have to meet as one tribe, the tribe of God,” Alice Wekesa, the social worker in the parish, concludes.

#### 4. Case Study of Six Active YSCCs in Dandora Parish, Nairobi

Another active youth haven is Dandora Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese. It has 58 SCCs including six active Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs). These are neighborhood groups of young people between 14-29 years-old who are organized according to the five geographical phases (divided by the streets). When the number of youth in one phase became too many they divided into two Youth SCCs. These Youth SCCs are connected to the regular (mainly adult) SCCs in their phases and meet with them occasionally. Youth who have experienced SCCs in their high school boarding schools have an excellent background for these parish-based Youth SCCs. They have many activities similar to the Kangemi Youth SCC above. The young men and women of these different Youth SCCs communicate the feeling that “we young people are the church too.” They reach out to various Youth Groups in other parishes to encourage them to start specific YSCCs.

St. Gonzaga Gonza Youth SCC over the years has been coordinated by Mercy Wandera, James Omondi, Evelyn Nyaituga, Anthony Odoyo, Jenny Kyalo, Gibson Thiongo, Johnthe Ndiawo and others. Their photograph is posted in the Photo Gallery of our SCCs Website. <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/photo-gallery.html>. The members have weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* every Sunday afternoon as well as many other activities – social, apostolic and spiritual. They have a “Public (Open) Group” on Facebook that presently has 127 members as of 23 April, 2016:

<https://www.Facebook.com/search/results.php?q=Gonza+%C3%89+Gonzaga+Gonzaga&init=public#!/groups/gonzagagonzascc> Their posts on this Facebook Page are like a Case Study of a Youth SCC and describe the members’ lives, priorities and activities very well. A lot of posts are on relationships and friendships.

A creative example is the question: “What's your favorite verse in the *Bible*? And why? It might be a verse that defines you or your life.<sup>461</sup> Kindly just share it out.” Some answers:

- *Psalm* 139:1-18, 23-24.
- *Luke* 24:26. “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”
- *Psalm* 41:10: “Be still and know that I am God”.
- *1 Peter* 2:9: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and a holy nation..... God has brought you from darkness to his precious light.”
- *Luke* 4:43: “Jesus said to them, ‘I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because for this purpose I was sent/have been sent.’” Also *Mark* 1:38: “Jesus said to them, ‘Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also; for this propose have I come.’”<sup>462</sup>

<sup>461</sup> Another approach is to mention one’s favorite verse(s) at different stages in one’s life.

<sup>462</sup> When Ukweli Video produced a DVD in 2004 on the author’s missionary ministry in Eastern Africa called *Walking with the Eastern African Church in Mission*, I used this Gospel text to trace a chronological line of my missionary journeys or travels to other towns and places in Kenya and Tanzania: Starting in Nairobi, Kenya and traveling going to Rulenge to Iramba to Makoko to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. During the Buzz Groups *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* on this passage in our SCCs Class at Tangaza University College on 5 February, 2015 I connected this passage to our daily lives and mentioned the internet towns

- *John 3:16*: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life".<sup>463</sup>

Another example is to ask on any given Sunday: "What have you learned in today's gospel?" Based on Sunday, 21 September, 2015's Gospel story of the "Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard" (*Matthew 20:1-16*) some answers are:

- That I should seek the Lord while He can be found.
- That he will reward us with his salvation n make us be under his lordship. That's the automatic one denarius he will give to everyone who comes into his field.
- That He is always with us in our times of trouble and whenever we call unto him.
- This mantra: "Faith and salvation are generous free gifts from God."
- We should hope the first shall be the last. We should not covet anything before God. We are all equal.
- God is always merciful.

Representatives of St. Stephen Youth SCC and the Dandora Youth SCCs have presented their experiences in our SCC Classes in Nairobi and posted material on our SCCs Website and Facebook Page.

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that are not geographical but situational. I used this passage in my homily at my 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Maryknoll Missionary Priesthood (Golden Jubilee) Mass at the Maryknoll Society House in Nairobi on 14 January, 2016. I shared that the new "town or place" for me is not a physical or geographical place, but a virtual or existential or situational place --the internet, social media and social networking. So mission for me means going to the "towns" of Facebook, Skype, You Tube and WhatsApp. I mentioned that I meet and interact with Kenyan young people not outside the church after the Sunday Mass, but in the social media on the internet.

<sup>463</sup> This is part of the Gospel for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on 14 September. In an online internet poll it was voted the most popular Bible verse. In USA it was made famous by the American football quarterback Tim Tebow who wore eye black with this inscription. He caused millions of football fans to Google the meaning of *John 3:16*.

## 5. How SCCs Promote Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa

The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) have stood up on key justice and peace issues in Eastern Africa in different ways. James O'Halloran reports:

According to animators in the field the [small] groups in Zambia played 'a considerable role' in that country's peaceful transition from one-party state to multi-party democracy. In Kenya too, during the 1993 elections, some ordinary [small] community members surprised politicians by speaking out on what they felt was for the good of the country.<sup>464</sup>

SCC members use African proverbs and sayings to promote justice and peace on the grassroots level. In challenging dictatorship and one person rule in Malawi the people use the Chewa (Malawi) and Nyanja (Zambia) proverb *One head does not hold up (or carry) a roof*. Another example is the Chewa (Malawi) and Nyanja (Zambia) proverb *One white ant does not build an ant hill*. . Conversely proverbs using the pattern "Two..." communicate unity, cooperation, strength, and success. Example: *Bangles sound when there are two* (Sena, Zambia). Another common pattern to communicate unity, cooperation, strength, and success are the African proverbs that begin "Many..." Example: *Many sticks burn together* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).<sup>465</sup>

To encourage the SCCs values of unity, teamwork and cooperation there is the famous Amharic (Ethiopia) proverb *When spiders unite, they can tie up a lion*. Another version is *Enough spider webs wound together can stop a lion*. The Amara Ethnic Group in Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia use this proverb in many different situations to emphasize the value, importance, power and strength of unity. Individually a person is weak, but working together people are very strong. For example, if ordinary people work together they can overcome an unpopular leader like a dictator. A similar proverb is *When they work together strings of bark can tie up an elephant* (Oromo, Ethiopia proverb). Other examples of cooperation and sharing are: *One who encounters problems in a crowd will be helped* (Kaonde, Zambia proverb). *To stay together is brotherhood and sisterhood* (Tonga, Zambia proverb.).

The last nine years (from the 2006 *Lineamenta* of the Second African Synod to the present) has seen increasing involvement of SCCs in promoting forgiveness, healing reconciliation, justice and peace in Eastern Africa. The seeds were sown when the AMECEA SCCs pastoral priority was established in the 1970s. Christopher Mwoleka challenged SCCs members to go deeper. He emphasized that the person-centered and community values of African society can be both an asset and a liability. Emphasizing harmony in personal relationships above everything else can lead to superficial agreement and even an appeasement mentality at the expense of deeper sharing, change and healing. Sometimes only Christian communal ("fraternal" is sexist language) correction will help people to grow in the Christian life. "So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our

<sup>464</sup> O'Halloran, *Living Cells*, p. 203.

<sup>465</sup> Swahili is spoken in the following countries: Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Kenya, Libya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Source: [Ethnologue: Africa](#).

neighbors, for we are members of one another" (*Ephesians* 4:25). Another translation is "speak the truth in love." African Christians need to live out deeper Gospel values that sometimes go counter to certain traditional values of African culture.

This is part of a process of critiquing, self-evaluation and self-criticism in SCCs in the context of ongoing evaluation and assessment that leads to improvement and revision.

Laurenti Magesa points out:

Structurally, Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are capable of manifesting the sense of being church in Africa in many of its dimensions. Genuine inculturation requires that SCCs become truly respected as *theological* expressions of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. They should exercise freedom in terms of ministry and governance. The practice of justice in the church is best realized in SCCs when they are allowed to develop as the Spirit directs them. They should be allowed to develop structures of justice in society, with new ministries dictated by the needs of the place and hour. Again, the threefold qualities and mission of Jesus of kingship, priesthood and prophecy, received by every Christian at Baptism, are most practically and realistically exercised at this level. What we are engaged in with SCCs are not "political" but theological considerations, related to the most fundamental principle of the Christian life: the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the world.<sup>466</sup>

Burkina Faso Scripture Scholar Father Paul Bere, SJ provides a further cultural context:

If we think of the SCCs as our Christian clan, then we can imagine the SCC as a place where spiritual guidance is received. There Christians learn to listen to the voice of God through the unfolding of historical events of their lives. Carefully chosen wise women and men, whom we might call elders, may exercise the ministry of reconciliation. These elders can help the penitent in his or her effort to repair the brokenness (even in an invisible way) that his or her sin provoked. At this level God speaking through history can be the visible part of the process with the help of the elders of the community, the SCC.<sup>467</sup>

Kenya provides a unique Case Study. When Kenya plunged into a wave of riots and violence in January, 2008 much of the unrest was fueled by tribalism and negative

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<sup>466</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *What is Not Sacred? African Spirituality*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014, pp. 190-91.

<sup>467</sup> Paul Bere, "The Word of God as Transformative Power in Reconciling African Christians" in Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace – the Second Africa Synod*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2011, p. 55.

ethnicity.<sup>468</sup> This dramatically affected the thousands of SCCs too. But some communities and people rose above the crisis. Some SCCs in Kenya became effective local tribunals to mediate tribal and ethnic conflicts. A three member mediation team was formed in St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Kangemi in Nairobi Archdiocese. First, a member of St. Augustine SCC visited all 28 SCCs in the parish during a three month period to learn where the conflicts existed. The team itself came from three different SCCs and was a mixed group consisting of two men and one woman – one Kamba, one Kikuyu and one Luyia. They visited the specific SCCs that had the conflicts to promote the healing of their ethnic tensions and promote reconciliation and peace. The team especially encouraged the SCC members to talk about their problems and feelings. Later members of five SCCs participated in a mass in the parish hall to offer thanksgiving for the reconciliation and peace that had taken place. Up until today peace and harmony continue among the SCC members.<sup>469</sup>

St. Martin de Porres SCC in Holy Trinity Parish, Buruburu I in Nairobi Archdiocese had a similar experience – a critical incident<sup>470</sup> -- when two women of different ethnic groups (Luo and Taita) argued/quarreled/had an emotional exchange over the tense Kenyan situation and stopped going to each other homes for the SCCs meetings because of their anger. Other SCCs members helped them to resolve their differences after several meetings.<sup>471</sup> During the SCC Course at Hekima College Rose Musimba, a SCC Coordinator in Holy Trinity Parish and a member of St. Martin de Porres SCC, 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."

A report on the peacebuilding process in the 35 SCCs in five subparishes in Christ the King Parish in Kibera in Nairobi recommended:

Carry out reconciliation prayer services and rites. During such ceremonies you may use symbols of reconciliation that are similar among the different ethnic groups and are rich in meaning. Examples include the use of reconciliation plants or trees, the use of stones (many meanings), having meals together with meat from ritual animals, gestures of peace for the kiss of peace during the Eucharist and encourage the choir to compose and sing songs of reconciliation and peace.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Examples are given in Joseph G. Healey, "New Learnings in Animating a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa Today," in *African Christian Studies* (CUEA), Vol. 24: No. 2 (June, 2008), pp. 13-17.

<sup>469</sup> Based on Simon Rurinjah's conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 28 August, 2012 and various presentations in the SCCs Class at Tangaza University College.

<sup>470</sup> "Critical incident" is a specific term used in Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR). It refers to a significant real-life event/situation that is more than a passing anecdote or story. It carries a seriousness/gravity that leads to deeper analysis and action/change/transformation.

<sup>471</sup> Based on Rose Musimba's conversations with the author in Nairobi, Kenya in 2010 and 2011.

<sup>472</sup> Hillary Awiti, MHM (compiler), "Suggestions on the Peacebuilding Process in Christ the King Parish, Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2009.

I personally belong to St. Kizito SCC in Waruku (an informal settlement area near Kangemi) in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi, Kenya. We had a dispute between two SCC women members of different ethnic groups (Kamba and Luo) over favoritism in the financial contributions to the families of deceased members in the community. The Luo woman claimed that the SCC's bereavement collection was greater for the deceased person in the Kamba woman's family than for her own family. When the dispute could not be resolved through the normal dialog and *palaver*, we had a special Reconciliation Service in the SCC with a relevant *Bible* reading, prayers, the laying on of hands and the exchange of peace. The issue was finally resolved after months of prayer and dialog. The two women are friends again.

Storytelling (that can lead to African Narrative Theology) is particularly effective.<sup>473</sup> Stories and examples from Eastern Africa are found in Chapter Three on "Church as the [Extended] Family of God" in our book *Towards an African Narrative Theology* that is published by Paulines Publications Africa and Orbis Books. Starting with the experience and context of SCCs in Eastern Africa we are developing a contextualized and inculturated African ecclesiology.

The "African Stories Database" of the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website ([www.afriprov.org](http://www.afriprov.org)) contains 585 African stories. For an example of inspiring stories about women in peacemaking in SCCs in Eastern Africa, listen to "I Am a Christian First:"

After the post December, 2007 election crisis and the resulting tribalism-related violence in Kenya in early 2008, a Catholic woman in a St. Paul Chaplaincy Center Prayer Group (a type of SCC) in Nairobi said: "I am a Christian first, a Kenyan second and a Kikuyu third."<sup>474</sup>

Another story is "Pray for Me to Forgive President Mwai Kibaki:"

During a meeting of the St. Jude South Small Christian Community (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. He said:

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<sup>473</sup> Tina Beattie describes Pope Francis' theological method as "a privileging of narrative and storytelling (a theology of the people) over dogmatics and systematics (a theology of the scholars), which comes from his Argentinian background," *Towards Faith, Hope and Love*, 30 October 2014, *Tablet*, retrieved on 1 November, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/3761/towards-faith-hope-and-love>

<sup>474</sup> African Story No. 177 in the "African Stories Database," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 20 August, 2014, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=610](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=610) Also SCCs Story No. 2 in the "SCCs Stories Database," Small Christian Community Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 20 August, 2014, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=628](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=628) This order does not diminish the importance of positive ethnicity and the values of African cultural roots but expresses priorities. In the genuine dialog between Christian Faith and African culture it is both/and rather than either/or.

"Pray for me to forgive President Mwai Kibaki." During the post-election crisis period in Kenya 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 and laid hands on him. He said that he felt peaceful again.<sup>475</sup>

These two short, powerful stories are a ringing challenge to tribalism and negative ethnicity and can be the starting point of an African Theology of Reconciliation and Peace.

Another story, "Celebrating a Jumuiya Mass in Nairobi, Kenya," describes how to celebrate unity and diversity among Kenyan ethnic groups:

To celebrate the official beginning of 18 new SCCs in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (Adams Arcade), Nairobi, Kenya (thus increasing from 21 SCCs to 39 SCCs), all the outstation masses were cancelled and there was one large, outdoor mass of over 1,000 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 negative 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 2008 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, Gikuyu, 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.

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<sup>475</sup> Story No. 336 in the "African Stories Database", African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 20 August, 2014, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=603](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=603)  
Also SCCs Story No. 5 in the "SCCs Stories Database," Small Christian Community Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 20 August, 2014, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=624](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=624)

The lively mass that focused on community (*jumuiya* in Swahili) was filled with singing and processions.<sup>476</sup>

Tanzanian Augustinian of the Assumption seminarian Leonard Michael Shayo states:

In a traditional African family we used to gather around the fire and listen to stories from the elders. These African stories were used as paradigms in transmitting virtues like courage, accountability and generosity among others. I suggest that we can meet in our SCCs and tell stories on the themes of justice, reconciliation and peace...People, especially the youth, will be fascinated with the images that are embedded in the stories told.<sup>477</sup>

The famous Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe (who died in 2013) inspires SCC members to tell their stories:

There is that great African proverb – *that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter*. That did not come to me until much later. Once I realized that, I had to be a writer. I had to be that historian. It is not one person's job. But it is something we have to do, so that that story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail, the bravery even of the lions.

Some SCCs on the grassroots in Eastern Africa are involved in an African style of restorative justice rather than retributive (punitive) justice. The Second African Synod Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortative *Africa's Commitment* in Number 83 under "The Good Governance of States" states that "pastoral workers have the task of studying and recommending restorative justice as a means and a process for promoting reconciliation, justice and peace, and the return of victims and offenders to the community." When disputes and conflicts arise, SCC members use a *palaver* style of conversation, discussion and dialog to resolve the problems. It involves establishing right relationships and the healing of all parties. Sometimes this process uses symbols and signs of African culture as well as songs, role plays and skits.

Here is a Case Study of Tegeti Parish. In 2008 Kenyan layman and evangelist Simon Rurinjah, a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team, was invited to the new Parish of Tegeti (that had been divided from Longisa Parish) in Kericho Diocese, Kenya by Father Daniel, the Parish Priest, to be a mediator in a dispute between the Kalenjin and

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<sup>476</sup> SCCs Story No. 1 in the "SCCs Stories Database," Small Christian Community Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 28 October, 2013, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=623](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=623)  
Also African Story No. 75 in the "African Stories Database," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 20 August, 2014, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=49](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid[0]=49)

<sup>477</sup> Leonard Shayo, "How SCCs Promote Justice, Reconciliation and Peace in Kenya," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2013, p. 10.

Kikuyu Ethnic Groups.<sup>478</sup> This dispute involved the Kalenjin people burning the houses and stealing the cattle of the Kikuyu people during the January-February, 2008 post-election crisis in Kenya. The Kikuyu fled from the area and then later came back to their homesteads.

In April, 2008 with the elders (both men and women) present there was a week of mediation on the parish and outstation levels of the families of the two ethnic groups concerned that had intermarried over the years. On the last day seven SCCs gathered to participate in a forgiveness and reconciliation ceremony. Prayers were said by each ethnic group. As part of the compensation and restorative justice the Kalenjins rebuilt the houses and returned the cattle of the Kikuyu as a fine for their original wrongdoing.

Then nine months later in 2009 there was a special Reconciliation Mass with prayers in both the Kalenjin and Gikuyu languages. Everyone in the SCCs participated in a communal meal of reconciliation with both Kalenjin and Kikuyu food served and eaten by the whole community. Everyone agreed that this violence and wrongdoing should never happen again. Until today (August, 2015) the peace continues and the local people are forgetting the past disputes.<sup>479</sup>

After the post-election violence in Kenya in 2008 the People for Peace in Africa (PPA) Office in Nairobi facilitated three workshops on the “Role of Small Christian Communities in Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution.” Participants were: Catechists and SCCs Leaders. Yala Catholic Church, Kisumu, Kenya. 29-30 March, 2008. Kenyan Diocesan Priests in Siaya Deanery, Kisumu Archdiocese. Yala Catholic Church, Kisumu, Kenya. 31 March, 2008. Provincial, district, divisional and location police officers in the Peace Support Program in the North and South Rift Region. Royal Springs Hotel, Nakuru, Kenya. 13 June, 2008. SCCs processes/methodologies (especially "See," "Judge" and "Act") were used to reconcile and to bring healing to ethnic communities that were not relating to each other. This process concerned especially the Luo people (perceived to be Raila Odinga followers) and the Kikuyu people (perceived to be Mwai Kibaki followers) in areas that were badly hit by violence.

The People for Peace in Africa (PPA) Office also facilitated a “Reconciliation and Peacebuilding Workshop” for Kenyan children of different ethnic groups on a primary school grounds in Kiambu, Kenya and organized by a Kenyan storyteller. African proverbs, sayings and stories were used to emphasize the importance of community, unity, reconciliation and peace. The message to the children was the goodness of staying united as Kenyans and how to forgive and reunite after the post-election violence. All the children exchanged a sign of peace and unity at the end. This was symbolized in the 2008 Kenyan Lenten campaign poster of “Hands United Together.”

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<sup>478</sup> Our SCCs Training Team is exploring the possibility of a Reconciliation and Peace Workshop in the SCCs of the Samburu and Turkana Ethnic Groups in Baragoi Parish, Maralal Diocese, Kenya.

<sup>479</sup> Based on Simon Rurinjah’s conversations with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 23 February, 2012 and 24 August, 2012. See “Seven SCCs Participate in a Forgiveness and Reconciliation Ceremony in Kenya,” SCCs Story No. 6 in the “SCCs Stories Database”, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 28 August, 2012, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=630](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=630)

A Reconciliation and Peacebuilding Seminar for the Small Christian Community leaders of Christ the King Catholic Parish took place in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya on Saturday, 7 March 2009. Tribalism, negative ethnicity, poverty, insecurity, instability and corruption are frequent in the urban slums. There was a role play on the causes of instability in the Kibera slum. Kibera is a very populous slum located in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya and its inhabitants come from almost all the ethnic groups in Kenya. The residents live from hand to mouth in desperate conditions such as poor infrastructures. Their main concern is to meet their very basic human needs. Due to this diversity and vulnerability it was one of the hot spots of the post-election violence in 2008 with examples of tribalism, negative ethnicity, instability and other problems. Hence the need for a reconciliation and peacebuilding seminar.

Some special *Bible* readings on Reconciliation, Justice and Peace that are used in SCCs in an African context include *Galatians* 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” that is especially meaningful in the context of overcoming tribalism and negative ethnicity in our SCCs. This text from *Galatians* is rewritten in Kenya and in our SCCs today to read: “There is neither Kikuyu nor Luo, there is neither Christian nor Muslim, there is neither Catholic nor Protestant, there is neither married or unmarried, there is neither rich nor poor, there is neither educated nor uneducated, there is neither city dweller nor rural dweller, there is neither Kenyan nor foreigner (expatriate), there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Other relevant texts on forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and peacemaking are: *Ephesians* 4:32: “Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.” *Luke* 23:34: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” *Matthew* 5:9: “St. are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God.”

This present book documents many examples and case studies of SCCs that are involved in social and mission outreach and in promoting reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa.

One challenge is equality and human rights. In interviews Catholic women (in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Nairobi, Kenya and other places) have said: “In the hierarchical, clerical Catholic Church in Kenya we women feel at the bottom. This is reinforced by traditional African customs and traditions where women are second class. But in the SCCs we feel that we women are equals and have a voice.”<sup>480</sup> Often women take leadership roles in the SCCs and are very active in committees and SCCs activities. Research in Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Sudan indicates that women are better in peacemaking than men. Men tend to emphasize power and control while women emphasize personal relationships.

Especially through the East African Community and the growing use of English Rwanda is working closer with the countries of Eastern Africa. American writer layman Jeffrey Odell Korgen documents how some of the 20,000 base communities (another name for

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<sup>480</sup> “We Women Are Equals and Have a Voice,” African Story No. 538 in the “African Stories Database”, African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 13 March, 2011, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=615](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=615)

SCCs) were involved in the reconciliation and healing ministry in Rwanda after the 2004 genocide.<sup>481</sup>

Rwandan Bishop Antoine Kambanda of Kibungo Diocese describes how neighborhood base communities meet weekly to try to resolve conflicts such as a husband beating a wife and other family disputes. These base communities promote reconciliation and peace on the grassroots level. Women are elected leaders of the BCs and are effective peacemakers.

Documents from the Second African Synod refer to “Rites of Reconciliation” in SCCs and state that SCCs open roads or paths to peace. More and more healing and reconciliation services, rituals and ceremonies are being integrated into SCC masses, Bible Services, meetings, workshops and seminars in Eastern Africa.

Examples of symbols of forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, and peace include:

First, are the universal symbols such as a white dove, olive branch, white flag, handshake, embrace, 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, songs in the national languages and the Swahili word *harambee* that means “let us pull together.”

Third, are the specific African cultural symbols of sorrow, repentance, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and peace that traditionally are “sacred” signs of sorrow, repentance, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and peace.<sup>482</sup> Perhaps the most common symbol/ ceremony/ritual used in many ethnic groups in Africa is eating a meal together and drinking the local beer/wine/beverage together from the same calabash/bowl. Sometimes a fine is paid by the offending party. Some specific examples:

1. Acholi, Uganda: *Mato Oput* Ceremony of drinking a bitter root (community reconciliation ceremony between the clans). Stepping on an egg (welcoming a person back into the community).<sup>483</sup>
2. Bemba, Zambia: blood and flour.
3. Bukusu (Luyia), Kenya: joint meal including drinking local beer from a common pot.

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<sup>481</sup> See the powerful Rwandan Case Study called “Forgiving the Unforgivable: Peacemaking in Rwanda,” in *Solidarity Will Transform the World: Stories of Hope from Catholic Relief Services*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007, pp. 97-122.

<sup>482</sup> See Healey, Joseph and Donald Sybertz. *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa and Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 286.

<sup>483</sup> 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.

4. Chagga, Tanzania: green isale leaf itself; and isale tree, a special reconciliation tree,<sup>484</sup> a white goat and even a baby.
5. Ethnic groups in Cameroon: palm wine.
6. Ethnic groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): bowing heads and crossing arms on breast as a sign of sorrow (see the Zaire Rite).
7. Ethnic groups in Ghana: putting the back of one's right hand into the palm of one's right hand.
8. Ethnic groups in Zambia: relaxing a tightly closed fist.
9. Jita, Tanzania: local beer and a meal.
10. Kalenjin, Kenya: drinking together from a gourd of fermented milk (*mursik* in Kalenjin).
11. Maasai, Kenya and Tanzania and Samburu, Kenya: special green tuft of grass; spittle.
12. Marakwet, Kenya: green leaves; a belt of cowry shells.
13. Mende, Sierra Leone and ethnic groups in South Sudan and Sudan: simultaneously two people put their right hands on the other person's left shoulder while saying "Peace." South Sudan and Sudan liturgical dancers also use this symbol in a dance during Eucharistic Celebrations.
14. Pökot<sup>485</sup> and Turkana, Kenya; Logir, South Sudan: breaking a spear.
15. Sabaot, Kenya: breaking a stick.
16. Sukuma, Tanzania: spittle.
17. Toposa, South Sudan: two people exchange double embrace followed by shaking hands.

A key is when the different ethnic groups share the same symbols and reconciliation rites, for example, eating each other's food and drink.

Many of these symbols are used in the Exchange of Peace, the last step of the weekly *Bible Service* in the SCCs and in the Exchange of Peace during Mass such as a SCC Mass (*Jumuiya Mass*). This SCC Mass is celebrated in a home and has its unique characteristics and style.

Another Case Study is the SCCs' campaign against Human Trafficking during the 2011 Kenya Lenten Campaign. First, our SCCs class at Tangaza University College used the three steps of "See," "Judge" and Act" for Week 1 (First Sunday of Lent – 13 March, 2011).” Our whole class read:

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<sup>484</sup> See "Searching for a Symbol of Reconciliation," Joseph Healey (compiled), *Once Upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004, p. 101 and as Africa Story No. 360 in the African Stories Database on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 19 August, 2014, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=138](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=138).

<sup>485</sup> 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 in 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).

1. The story in Step One (“See”): “A New Slavery – Another Story to Tell...” about the innocent teenage girl named Una who became a victim of sexual exploitation.
2. Gospel (*Matthew* 4:1-11) and Scripture commentary.
3. Situational Analysis in Step Two (“Judge”).

We discussed the problem in our four class SCCs and then answered questions in Step Three (“Act”) such as: “How can your SCC be involved in raising awareness against human trafficking?”<sup>486</sup> Then class members visited various parish-based SCCs in Nairobi during the following week. Many SCC members said that young girls have been brought from the rural areas into the city with the promise of work, a good salaried job and further education. Then they are used as almost slave labor (house girls with almost no salary) and even sexually abused. Other cases were told of Kenyan girls lured overseas and forced into prostitution. Many SCC members realized the seriousness of this problem for the first time and promised to alert other people.

An important new addition to the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign is the booklet *Lent: Let Light Shine Out of Darkness... Kenya Lenten Campaign Training Manual for Small Christian Communities* produced by the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops in February, 2012. In the “Preface” Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth, Chairman of Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, states:

This manual will therefore provide information for the Small Christian Communities on Lent and the Lenten Campaign. This is in recognition that the future of the Catholic Church will be one built from the grassroots. This will be possible through the existence of Small Christian Communities and the realization of the Church as a Family Model community of believers which reflects the ecclesiology of communion of Vatican II.<sup>487</sup>

Section III is on “Lenten Campaign Training for Small Christian Communities” and clearly explains how to use the Lenten Campaign Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials to create awareness and for advocacy during the Lenten period. These materials include the *Bible*; Lenten Campaign Poster; Lenten Campaign Booklet; and any other advocacy materials depending on the theme and specific context in a diocese/parish. Focus is on the weekly meetings and activities of the Small Christian Community Sharing Groups.

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<sup>486</sup> “Bishop Martin Kivuva of Machakos, near Nairobi, is supporting a project which involves the Small Christian Communities in awareness, victim support, focusing on the most vulnerable, together with developing programs that will eventually raise the standard of living and provide appropriate sustainability.” English Missionary Sister of Our Lady of Africa Maggi Kennedy, MSOLA, “Human Trafficking...21<sup>st</sup> Century Slaves -- the Silent Epidemic...Our Story--Our Challenge,” New Slavery Conference, Rome: Unpublished Paper, 11 November, 2012, p. 12.

<sup>487</sup> Zacchaeus Okoth in Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Lent: Let Light Shine Out of Darkness... Kenya Lenten Campaign Training Manual for Small Christian Communities*, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2012, p. 4.

This SCCs Manual is being used to promote SCCs' involvement in the Kenya Lenten Campaign 2012 on the theme *Towards a Transformed Kenya: Let Light Shine out of Darkness*.<sup>488</sup> There is a campaign to promote civic education before the Kenya General Elections. This includes training SCC Leaders to use the inductive "See," "Judge" and "Act" process and facilitating "Training of Trainers" (TOT) Workshops in our parishes and SCCs. Week 1 (First Sunday of Lent – 26 February, 2012) focuses on "General Elections: Our Country, Our Leaders, Our Responsibility."<sup>489</sup> SCCs are encouraged to:

1. Analyze and discuss the drawing (cartoon) on page 8.<sup>490</sup>
2. Read the story in Step One ("See"): "Another Season is here for Songa Country."
3. Read part of the Situational Analysis in Step Two ("Judge")
4. Read the Gospel (*Mark 1:12-15*) and Scripture commentary.
5. Answer question 4 in Step Three ("Act") that includes:
  - a. What is required to be a voter?
  - b. How can you participate in the next General Election as a Small Christian Community?
  - c. What is your role to insure peaceful elections as a Small Christian Community?

Another important civic education resource produced by the KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission is *The Leadership Handbook* (Swahili is *Maelekezo ya Uongozi*). The "Guidelines on the Use of the Handbook" state:

The leadership handbook like the Lenten Campaign handbooks that the church produces annually will help Small Christian Communities to reflect on their role towards determining the kind of leaders Kenya should have for effective service delivery. As individuals and Small Christian Communities we are asked to use this small handbook to reflect on leadership in our country in the light of the new constitution and the Social Teachings of the Church.<sup>491</sup>

This handbook uses clever, humorous and effective cartoons by the cartoonist of the *Standard* newspaper in Kenya to teach civic education. For example, in a two page spread entitled "At a meeting at the market place" four overweight politicians makes false promises to the citizen voters related to buying votes, violation of women's rights and fomenting tribalism.

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<sup>488</sup> See the booklet Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Towards a Transformed Kenya: Let Light Shine Out of Darkness*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2012, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2012.

<sup>489</sup> Explained in "Kenya: Lent 2012, 'Let Light Shine Out of Darkness,'" *Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns NewsNotes*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (March-April 2012), Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) Website, retrieved 10 July, 2012, <http://www.maryknollogc.org/newsnotes/37.2/Kenya.html>

<sup>490</sup> Kenyan Youth Groups perform little plays and skits based on these cartoons as part of the Sunday Homilies.

<sup>491</sup> Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *The Leadership Handbook* (Swahili is *Maelekezo ya Uongozi*), Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2012.

These printed materials can be effectively used with the dramatic DVD *Never Again! Never again should Kenya walk the path of the 2007-2008 post-election violence* produced by Ukweli Video Productions. The 70-minute DVD provides firsthand accounts of a number of Kenyans who were directly and indirectly affected by the 2007-2008 post-election violence. The DVD asks what lessons have we learned as Kenya prepares for the 2013 General Election. The DVC can be shown in segments in SCCs followed by questions and discussion.

Another perspective on how SCCs promote justice and equality is seen in this story from Tanzania “Let Us All Sit around the Table in a Big Circle and Eat Together”:

Sometimes Christian values in our SCCs challenge African cultural values. After a Small Christian Communities Workshop in Geita Diocese, Tanzania everyone gathered in one of the SCC members’ home for the traditional closing meal. Following the custom of the local Sukuma Ethnic Group the men sat in a circle around the table. The women served and then ate sitting in the back of the room. One person politely challenged this custom saying: “We have just finished a workshop where everyone participated equally. Now we eat in a way that makes women second class. Let everyone sit around the table in a big circle and eat together. And so it was done. This was a real learning experience for all the men and women present.”<sup>492</sup>

An on-going challenge is witchcraft and superstition. A 2011 report from Malindi Diocese in Kenya states: “In some villages in the diocese there are still strong beliefs in superstition and witchcraft. Some interviewees said they shy away from the SCCs because of the suspicion that some members actively practice witchcraft. They feel witchcraft could affect their lives, business and family.”<sup>493</sup> The 2011 AMECEA Study Session discussed at length the problems of witchcraft and superstition and passed two resolutions to fight devil worship and witchcraft. In the AMECEA countries SCCs are involved in reconciliation related to cases of witchcraft and superstition. This has been an important ministry in Zambia for many years.

The most recent initiative is the “Yes, Kenya Matters Campaign” that is a new online resource to promote civic education before the Kenya General Election in March, 2013.

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<sup>492</sup> “Let Us All Sit Around the Table in a Big Circle and Eat Together” Story No. 256 in the “African Stories Database,” African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 23 November, 2011, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=629](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=629). SCCs Story No. 3 in the “SCCs Stories Database,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 23 November, 2011, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=625](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=625) and in “Missioner Tales,” *Maryknoll Magazine*, January-February, 2014, p. 9., *Maryknoll Magazine Website*, retrieved on 26 February, 2014, <http://www.maryknollmagazine.org/index.php/magazines/472-missioner-tales-january-february-2014>

<sup>493</sup> Ndichia Anthony Ndong, MHM, *The Role of SCCs in Mission and Evangelization in Malindi Diocese, Kenya*, Unpublished Long Essay, Tangaza University College (CUEA), 2011, p. 56.

These are "Weekly Reflections for the 2012-2013 Election Year" inspired by the Bible Readings of each Sunday. These reflections are circulated by the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC) Commission of Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya (RSCK) free every week for personal prayer, for homilies and for SCC meetings.

The section on "Kenya Matters: Kenyan Life Focus" and "Questions for Personal and Community Reflection" for the 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time B (5 August, 2012) stated:

The tens of thousands of *Jumuiya* in our country can be a tremendous force to promote the values of the Gospel we are discussing here: they can offer a meaningful contribution to help us be more attentive to the environment, water, more equitable sharing of goods and riches, etc...What can we do in order to make our meetings in our *Jumuiya* and our Sunday Eucharistic Celebrations more relevant? For example, how can these faith gatherings become opportunities of enhancing our spirit of solidarity with those in need?<sup>494</sup>

Members of St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in the Waruku Section of St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya contributed the reflections for the Fifth Sunday of Easter B (6 May, 2012). To the question "How can you participate in the next General Election as an individual/Small Christian Community/Community?" they answered: "As the Kenya National Anthem suggests let justice be our shield and defender and may we dwell in unity, peace and liberty. As SCC members we are branches of our Kenya Government on the grassroots to promote peace and unity with our brothers and sisters. During this Election Year in Kenya it is our responsibility in our SCCs to promote civic education on the local level."<sup>495</sup>

The reflections for the Third Sunday of Lent C (3 March 2013) stated: "In Kenya we are in the middle of the 2013 Lenten campaign to prepare for the general elections tomorrow, Monday, March 4. After the terrible post-election violence in 2008, can Kenya elect a new president and government in peaceful, just and fair elections? We realize the whole world is watching." The reflections continued:

The overall theme of the 2013 Kenya Lenten Campaign is "United and Peaceful Kenya: The Change I Want to See." The specific theme for this third Sunday of Lent is "county governance." The 2010 Kenya Constitution provides for a devolved governance structure that sets up 47 counties that are guided by democratic principles, separation of powers and reliable sources of income to facilitate local development.

The Lenten campaign booklet uses a "See," "Judge" and "Act" methodology or process to reflect on these issues. Catholics in their local

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<sup>494</sup> 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time B (5 August, 2012), Christ the Teacher Parish-KU Website, retrieved on 31 July, 2012, <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke/index.php/component/content/article/39-yes-kenya-matters/107-18th-sunday-in-ordinary-time-b-august-5-2012-.html>

<sup>495</sup> Fifth Sunday of Easter B (6 May, 2012), Christ the Teacher Parish-KU Website, retrieved on 31 July, 2012, <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke/index.php/component/content/article/39-yes-kenya-matters/92-fifth-sunday-of-easter-b-6-may-2012.html>

groups, such as the 45,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Kenya, are encouraged to reflect on such questions as: “How can we, as Small Christian Communities, contribute to good governance in the Church and our counties?” We are challenged to participate in civic education programs and to study and reflect on the qualities of good leaders.<sup>496</sup>

The 2013 Kenya Lenten campaign mobilized SCCs throughout the country to get involved in civic education and voter education. This included: participating in "Workshops on Civic Education and Voter Education;" using the three steps of "See," "Judge" and "Act" to go deeper in analyzing the key Kenyan election issues and try to elect leaders with good morals and integrity (as stated in the "Kenya Lenten Campaign Booklet"); using the "Prayer for Peaceful Elections in Kenya" prepared by the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) as part of a novena (prayer for nine days) leading up to the elections; and SCC members being monitors/observers/agents at the Polling Stations in the 4 March, 2013 General Elections.

These shifts to SCCs in Africa being more out-going and more involved in justice and peace issues in the public life can be described in a term borrowed from the SCCs in the USA: “The Public Life of Small Christian Communities.” Lee, American psychologist/theologian Michael Cowan and others have written about the inner life of SCCs (when SCC members gather) and the public life of SCCs (when SCC members are sent).<sup>497</sup> While social concern is a high value, actual social involvement is low. There is a need to focus more intentionally on the relation of faith to the larger world and its needs. There is a power in small communities to help transform the world. SCCs members are responding more to the radical message of the Gospel and its call for social justice. SCCs members are called to be intentional disciples and intentional evangelists of Jesus Christ.

A clear challenge to African SCCs is found in the famous quotation from No. 6 of *Justice in the World*, the final document of the 1971 World Synod of Bishops: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”

As an example of responding to the signs of the times, in January, 2013 I began teaching a ten-week seminar on “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today”<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> These reflections were circulated widely through many Email Mailing Lists and websites. For example, the Third Sunday of Lent C (3 March 2013), Christ the Teacher Parish-KU Website, retrieved on 3 March, 2013, <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke/index.php/component/content/article/39-yes-kenya-matters/138-third-sunday-of-lent-year-c-3-march-2013.html>

<sup>497</sup> See Michael Cowan and Bernard Lee, SM, *Conversation, Risk, and Conversion: The Inner & Public Life of Small Christian Communities*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997. Bernard Lee and Michael Cowan. *Gathered and Sent: The Mission of Small Church Communities Today*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003.

<sup>498</sup> Listed under the area “Methodologies of Evangelization.”

at Hekima College, Nairobi. The aim was to examine how Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are a New Model of Church and a New Way of Being Church in promoting justice, reconciliation and peace in Africa today.

One of our most interesting discussions was on the best order of words in the reconciliation and peacemaking process. We discovered that the word order used in the process of peacemaking/peacebuilding is very important, yet varies. The theme of the 2009 Second African Synod was “Reconciliation, Justice and Peace.” The theme of the 2008 AMECEA Plenary Assembly was “Reconciliation through Justice and Peace.” The theme of the 2009 Kenya Lenten Campaign was “Justice, Reconciliation and Peace.” The word order depends on the specific context and circumstances and the local interpretation. In general we seminar participants felt that this is an ongoing process in which real justice comes first. Then this leads to genuine reconciliation and finally to a more lasting peace. This is reflected in name of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission in Kenya.

We agreed that after any kind of violence in the “Justice Stage” the wrongdoer/offender/perpetrator has to admit his or her mistake and make some kind of compensation/amends where appropriate. This is part of restorative justice where stolen cattle have to be returned, a burned house repaired, etc. The person wronged/the victim has to genuinely forgive the wrongdoer while a slow process of dialog, healing and reconciliation takes place. This is solemnized by some kind of official ritual/ceremony and the use of symbols. All this can lead to a lasting peace. How SCCs participate in this process is found in the Case Study of Tegeti Parish described earlier.

Our seminar also explored SCCs’ involvement in community development in Africa (social transformation through community-based organizations). The basic questions are: What is the Catholic Church’s participation in social change, social transformation and community development, especially at the Small Christian Community level?<sup>499</sup> How can Small Christian Community members develop a deeper social consciousness and act as real agents of social change? This change is not simply change for change’s sake, but is deeply rooted in the gospel.

A Case Study is the neighborhood communities in Kisumu, Kenya. Kenyan layman Alphonse Omolo explains how SCCs are at the heart of this community development process and outreach:

Neighborhood ministries, such as prayer, visiting the sick, counseling the emotionally afflicted, helping the needy and other services, have been transformed into projects so that they can provide functional and sustainable relief to the growing complexities of the community quandary. These projects were started to give a holistic approach to community challenges over and above pastoral ministry. Now in 2004 they include community based health care, home-based health care, voluntary counseling and testing, nutrition clinics, treatment clinics, a community health information center, social counseling, child counseling, street visits, temporary shelter, recreation, and rehabilitation for street children. Other projects are a child right’s center,

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<sup>499</sup> SCCs are used as Case Study Reference Groups in Community Development, Action and Mobilization Studies in two courses at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya.

nursery school, non-formal education, art school, training in carpentry, masonry, computer graphics, girls' domestic training, a community ambulance, plastic waste recycling, textile production, a community savings and credit bank and a community study library.

The SCCs remain at the heart of these projects. Each community has nominated and sponsored members for specific training to work in an area of immediate neighborhood concern. For instance, this might be as a counselor, community health worker, nutritionist, traditional birth attender, youth development representative or child counselor. The training is carried out in the homes of the community members and sometimes in the community centers or prayer houses. The other members of the community volunteer to prepare meals during the training workshops. Those trained offer relevant services within their neighborhood voluntarily and without any discrimination. Their voluntary work covers the geographical area of their SCCs and the services are offered to any one in need whether Catholic or not.<sup>500</sup>

Kalilombe, one of the original architects of the SCCs plan in Eastern Africa, emphasizes that in the different stages of growth in SCCs the final stage is the "Transformation of Society." This means going beyond superficial changes to tackle the necessary structural and systemic changes in our society such as facing the underlying tribal and negative ethnic group tensions in Kenya and other countries today, corruption/graft, insecurity and ongoing poverty. A process/methodology such as the Pastoral Spiral<sup>501</sup> can help in this transformation.

"Can the Pastoral Circle Transform a Parish" by Christine Bodewes in *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation* edited by Frans Wijzen, Peter Henriot and Rodrigo Mejia, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006 (pp. 77-93) is a Case Study from the Kibera Slums in Nairobi, Kenya that documents how the communal use of the Pastoral Circle in SCCs can transform a parish.<sup>502</sup>

An interesting example of SCCs responding to the contemporary signs of the times is the changes in the languages used in SCC Bible Services and Meetings due to population shifts in urban areas in Africa. Kenyan Consolata seminarian Walter Kisikwa Ingosi, IMC narrates an important Case Study involving a critical incident when two non-Gikuyu speaking families moved into an all Gikuyu speaking area of St John the Baptist Parish, Riruta in

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<sup>500</sup> Alphonse Omolo, "Small Communities Light up Neighborhoods in Kisumu" in Healey and Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today*, p. 112. Retrieved from the Google Books Website on 7 February, 2016, [https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=YsJ3CAAQBAJ&pg=PT117&lpg=PT117&dq=Alphonse+Omolo+Small+Christian+Communities&source=bl&ots=mxPyDErg3F&sig=Yoi50QjFESycFehgNuK2Z2tXJto&hl=en&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Alphonse%20Omolo%20Small%20Christian%20Communities&f=false](https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=YsJ3CAAQBAJ&pg=PT117&lpg=PT117&dq=Alphonse+Omolo+Small+Christian+Communities&source=bl&ots=mxPyDErg3F&sig=Yoi50QjFESycFehgNuK2Z2tXJto&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Alphonse%20Omolo%20Small%20Christian%20Communities&f=false)

<sup>501</sup> An important online resource is ADD

<sup>502</sup> See a fuller explanation in Christine Bodewes, *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums: Voices of Kibera, Kenya*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005.

Nairobi Archdiocese. He explains how after much discussion in their meetings the St. Maria Goretti SCC members

were willing to solve it [the language issue] once and for all by allowing all their meetings to be done in Kiswahili. They acknowledged what had taken place and asked forgiveness from the two families. This was a very important decision that brought everyone home. They were able to decide themselves and join together in a way that will unite them together.<sup>503</sup>

Ugandan Missionaries of Africa seminarian Didus Baguma, MAfr presents a similar critical incident in a Case Study entitled “Addressing the Issue of Negative Ethnicity in Small Christian Communities in Kenya.” St. Felista SCC, Kaberera in Our Lady Queen of Africa, South B Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese was composed of different ethnic groups and used Swahili, the national language. But the Gikuyu-speaking members did not want to associate with the rest and would all the time speak their own local language in the weekly meetings that no any other member understood. On social occasions they don’t eat the food prepared but instead carried always their own traditional Kikuyu dish and shared it among themselves in one corner. In fact they preferred to attend and participate in a distant Gikuyu-speaking *jumuiya* far off from their residences and outside the parish demarcations.

As an animator and reconciler Didus encouraged all the SCC members to discuss together the evils of tribalism and exclusiveness and how they could resolve their differences together stating:

The way forward to foster unity among a community divided on ethnic lines is a challenge because individuals are products of their ethnic groups and to keep its tradition is to safeguard its identity, values and sense of belonging. However as we become Christians we are open to the spirit of universal inclusiveness advocated by Jesus whom we follow. This is a message that as pastors we can preach to the *wanajumuiya*... This challenges the SCC members to realize the greater value of belonging to the small [inclusive] family that has a greater Christian value above ethnic groups.<sup>504</sup>

Recently I have been participating in discussions<sup>505</sup> on how, when and where African SCCs have evolved from devotional and liturgical groups (prayer) to developmental groups (“See,” “Judge” and “Act” process) to liberative groups

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<sup>503</sup> Walter Ingosi, “A Challenge of Using Different Languages in a SCC,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>504</sup> Didus Baguma, “A Day in a Jumuiya and Addressing the Issue of Negative Ethnicity in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Kenya,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 24 February, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/kenya/236-a-day-in-a-jumuiya-and-addressing-the-issue-of-negative-ethnicity-in-the-small-christian-communities-sccs-in-kenya.html>

<sup>505</sup> See exchanges with American theologian layman Terence McGoldrick by email, phone and Skype in July and August, 2013.

(actions for structural change).<sup>506</sup> Does each phase incorporate and build upon the previous one? Is there a natural evolution for SCC members to become social activists?<sup>507</sup> An all-encompassing answer is: “It depends on the local context.” If you have a strict pastoral, parish-based model of SCCs where the emphasis is on the sacraments and devotional life, social activism is less likely to take place: If parishes have Parish and Subparish Justice and Peace Commissions (also called Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commissions) and use the “See, “Judge” and “Act” process in their weekly SCCs gatherings, social activism can easily take place. A good example is Kenya, especially related to the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign.

In various AMECEA countries the episcopal conferences have issued good statements on social justice but other priorities (“the local context”) take over. An example is Tanzania where the SCCs are heavily involved in fund raising and financial self-reliance.

It is significant that theologians continue to write serious articles on SCCs. American lay theologian J. J. Carney writes about

the biggest contemporary challenge facing both SCCs and the African church—namely their engagement with issues of social justice, peace, and reconciliation. Here I argue that the growing SCC emphasis on social analysis and social justice could be further developed through more intentional theological reflection on the Eucharistic politics implicit in the Small Christian Community.<sup>508</sup>

He presents a specific case study of the challenges in Uganda:

Many East African SCCs have struggled to move towards a more concrete engagement with issues of social justice and reconciliation. While reiterating to me their commitment to providing social assistance and burial funds for members, SCC leaders in Luweero, Uganda described the *raison d’être* of their groups in terms of parish fundraising and community socializing. In particular, they reflected a marked reticence towards anything deemed “political,” including conflict resolution or social reconciliation. In the words of one leader, “we [SCCs] don’t engage in politics . . . if people need to resolve conflicts they go to the police.”<sup>509</sup>

The planning and realization of the African Year of Reconciliation (AYR), recommended by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation

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<sup>506</sup> These stages or types of church are based on Francisco Claver, *Making of a Local Church*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008, pp. 92-94.

<sup>507</sup> See Francisco Claver, for an elaboration of this natural evolution of BECs, chapter 7.

<sup>508</sup> J. J. Carney, “The People Bonded Together by Love: Eucharistic Ecclesiology and Small Christian Communities in Africa,” *Modern Theology* 30: 2, April, 2014, p. 301.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

*Africae Munus* was among the objectives of a workshop on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa under the auspices of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) in partnership with Missio, Aachen that took place in Accra, Ghana from 24-26 November, 2014. The theme of the workshop was “Small Christian Communities: Moving towards the African Year of Reconciliation and Sharing with Other Churches.” The 13 delegates came from 12 Africa countries: Benin, Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The three delegates from Eastern Africa were Father Don Bosco Ochieng Onyalla, CANAA Coordinator, Nairobi, Kenya; Father Ferdinand Barugize, Executive Secretary of the Pastoral Department, Kigoma Diocese, Tanzania and Father Joseph Komakoma originally from Zambia and now Secretary General of SECAM, Accra, Ghana.

The meeting was a follow-up of the September, 2012 Nairobi workshop that discussed the commitment of SCCs in the process of reconciliation in Africa in the light of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* that encouraged each African country to mark on annual basis “a day or week of reconciliation, particularly during Advent or Lent,” and mandated SECAM to facilitate the realization of these celebrations whose purpose would be “to encourage reconciliation in communities.”

In closing the workshop Archbishop Jean-Marie Speich, the Apostolic Nuncio in Ghana, acknowledged with appreciation the initiative of organizing the workshop on SCCs in Africa by SECAM, but challenged the participants to ensure a shift from “words and speeches” to feasible recommendations and “facts.” The nuncio further appealed to Christian communities in Africa to take inspiration from the family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, calling it “the best example of the first Small Christian Community.” “Look at the Holy Family: people with a lot of problems, people followed, persecuted, poor; they had concrete, normal problems, coming to Africa, going out of Africa and living in Israel, in Palestine. The Holy Family is the ‘Patron of the Small Christian Communities’ to which all SCCs have to be consecrated.”<sup>510</sup>

At the conclusion of their deliberations, having been enriched by the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Africae Munus* taken within the perspective of the ecclesial and social practices of Small Christian Communities (SCCs), and in view of the need for a reconciling Church as Family of God, the participants made following resolutions and recommendations.

1. In line with *Africae Munus*, *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*) and the final message of SECAM’s 2013 Plenary Assembly, to create SCCs where they do not exist, and to strengthen existing ones.
2. Have harmonious and structural relations between families and SCCs so that families enrich SCCs and that these SCCs support families.
3. Promote the awareness of SCCs among members, giving priority to the biblical apostolate and social analysis.
4. Prioritize the actions and practices of Small Christian Communities in genuine reconciliation (*Africae Munus* 21) anchored in truth (*Africae Munus* 20).
5. Set up regional collaboration teams at the level of SCCs to evaluate and to define actions and strategies to be implemented for SCCs reconciling mission.

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<sup>510</sup> Jean-Marie Speich, “Africa is an “Extended Holy Land,” Nuncio in Ghana Clarifies,” Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA), 27 November, 2014.

6. Renew theological research by integrating theologians in the SCCs including the training of candidates to ministries in accordance with the reality of SCCs.
7. Constitute an *ad hoc* team, which will continue the work begun in Accra and will organize in August, 2015 in Burkina Faso, a meeting of resource persons in view of an enlarged workshop for regional lay delegates involved in the pastoral care of SCCs.<sup>511</sup>

SECAM launched the continent-wide African Year of Reconciliation (AYR) in Accra, Ghana on 29 July, 2015 and it will run until 29 July, 2016. The theme chosen for this event was “A Reconciled Africa for Peaceful Coexistence.” All the African Episcopal Conferences are invited to organize during this year “programs and initiatives of reconciliation in collaboration with the respective commissions of Justice and Peace in their countries.” The promotion of reconciliation will involve all the other religions in Africa and will have an ecumenical outreach. SCC members are invited to participate in a day or week of reconciliation, particularly during Advent or Lent. How can we prioritize the actions and practices of Small Christian Communities in genuine reconciliation (*Africae Munus* 21) anchored in truth (*Africae Munus* 20). Can each SCC choose one concrete practical action of reconciliation on the local level?

I close with Archbishop Jean-Marie Speich, the Apostolic Nuncio in Ghana’s, challenge to the participants at our November, 2014 meeting: to shift from “words and speeches” to feasible recommendations and “facts.” So I propose a concrete action: Join several SCC members to visit a Muslim family in your neighborhood and pray together to our One God for reconciliation and peace to happen in a particular place in Africa, for example, in a needy slum near you, the Kenya-Somalia border, South Sudan, etc. Choose your own example.

To prepare for this meeting we posted this concrete action on the SCCs Facebook Page on our

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website  
[www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

So far six people have clicked “Like.” **ADD**

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<sup>511</sup> “SECAM Workshop Recommends Creation and Strengthening of Small Christian Communities in Africa,” Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA), 27 November, 2014.

## 6. SCCs' Contribution to the Praxis and Theology of the Church as Family of God in Africa

The 1994 First African Synod developed the specific ecclesial identity of the Church<sup>512</sup> as Family<sup>513</sup> of God in Africa while the 2009 Second African Synod focused more on the pastoral and mission activities of this Church as Family of God in Africa, namely to work toward reconciliation, justice and peace.

St. John Paul II's 1995 Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa* in Number 63 under "The Church as God's Family" states:

Not only did the Synod speak of inculturation, but it also made use of it, taking the *Church as God's Family* as its guiding idea for the evangelization of Africa. The Synod Fathers acknowledged it as an expression of the church's nature particularly appropriate for Africa. For this image emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust. The new evangelization will thus aim at *building up the Church as Family*, avoiding all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism, trying instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favoring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among the Particular [Local] Churches, without undue ethnic considerations. "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".<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> The word "church" is specifically used in this book to refer to the Roman Catholic Church, but we have to be sensitive to the other meanings such as the many other Christian Churches (Protestant, Anglican, Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc.). In general, I prefer using "church" with lower case unless it is used in a title.

<sup>513</sup> I prefer to use the word "family" to cover a whole variety of meanings. Magesa and other African theologians and scholars emphasize that "extended family" originates from a Western sociological conception of family structures. For Africans this wide network of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. is simply "family" or on a wider scale "clan." Many have pointed out that this wide family network is the Africans' worst enemy as well as best friend. This family solidarity system (called "the economy of affection") can help needy members, but the more financially successful members can be constantly preyed upon by their "poor cousins."

<sup>514</sup> Section 4 on "African Metaphors of Church" in Chapter Three on "Church as the [Extended] Family of God" describes some African metaphors or images or symbols of church using African proverbs, sayings and stories.

- a. The Church as the Extended Family of God.
- b. The Church as the Clan of Jesus Christ.
- c. The Church as the Universal Family in Christ.

All this presupposes a profound study of the heritage of Scripture and Tradition which the Second Vatican Council presented in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. This admirable text expounds the doctrine on the church using images drawn from Sacred Scripture such as the Mystical Body, People of God, Temple of the Holy Spirit, Flock and Sheepfold, the House in which God Dwells with Humans. According to the council, the Church is the Bride of Christ, our Mother, the Holy City and the First Fruits of the Coming Kingdom. These images will have to be taken into account when developing, according to the synod's recommendation, an ecclesiology focused on the idea of the Church as the Family of God. It will then be possible to appreciate in all its richness and depth the statement which is the Dogmatic Constitution's point of departure: "By her relationship with Christ, the church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humankind".

Pope Benedict XVI's 2011 Apostolic Exhortation *Africa's Commitment* in Number 172 under "Conclusion: "Take Heart; Rise, He Is Calling"" states: "While earnestly desiring to help implement the directives of the Synod on such burning issues as reconciliation, justice and peace, I express my trust that "theologians will continue to probe the depths of the trinitarian mystery and its meaning for everyday African life."

The two popes hurl a challenge to the theologians of the Faculty of Theology at CUEA including its Constituent Colleges and to other theologians in the AMECEA Region.

In discussing the implementation of the Second African Synod Ghanaian Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, emphasizes the "inseparable" link between the First African Synod (1994) and the Second African Synod (2009) stating:

For it is in its theological content and character as family of God that the church-family becomes an image of, and a foreshadowing of, the kingdom of God on earth and in history, animating the African society and the world with values of the kingdom of God, namely, reconciliation, justice, truth and peace.<sup>515</sup>

In the context of African SCCs being a communion of families within the Church as Family of God, Eritrean Bishop Menghhesteab Tesfamariam, MCCJ, Eparch of Asmara, Eritrea's contemporary challenge can be summarized in these words:

If we want to shape the destiny of our societies in the AMECEA Region it is vital that we give the Christian family the utmost priority. Are they truly African and truly Christian? We need to rediscover and revive the

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See Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996 and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997, pp. 123-128.

<sup>515</sup> Peter Turkson, "The Second Synod of Bishops for Africa – a New Pentecost for the Church in Africa," Maputo, Mozambique, 24 May 2010 as quoted in Peter Henriot, "A Balancing Act: Facing the Challenge of Implementing the Directions of the Second African Synod," in Orobator (ed.), *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, p. 243.

Rights of the Family. In the Post Synodal Exhortation of St. John Paul II *The Family in the Modern World* the Christian family is presented in its three main functions as evangelizer, worshiper and servant. We in the AMECEA Region are called to help the family become what it is supposed to be and to fulfill its vocation.<sup>516</sup>

We have made a good start in the books and articles that we have written in the past 15 years. In pointing out that the attitude toward SCCs in Eastern Africa appears more positive than it is elsewhere on the continent, Orobator states:

The 1994 [First] African Synod made a decisive option for the formation and development of SCCs as the privileged means for actualizing the model of church as family. Presently a significant number of African theologians laud the rapid implantation and growth of SCCs, which they judge as the active embodiment and tangible manifestation of “a new way of being Local Church.”<sup>517</sup>

Waliggo adds:

The [African] bishops could have chosen the Vatican II concept of church as Communion or as People of God. They purposely chose Church as Family; they wanted to use the African family as the model for being and living church. The family model includes everyone, baptized and non-baptized, involving every member. It serves well the emphasis on Small Christian Communities.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> Menghhesteab Tesfamariam, “The Role of the Church,” *New People*, No. 135, November-December, 2011, p. 13.

<sup>517</sup> A. E. Orobator, *The Church as Family*, p. 24.

<sup>518</sup> John Mary Waliggo, “The Church as Family of God and Small Christian Communities,” *AMECEA Documentation Service*, No. 429 (1 December, 1994), p. 1

The theme of the 1998 Fourth Interdisciplinary Theological Session at CUEA was *The Model of Church as Family: Meeting the African Challenge*. In his paper on how the 1994 First African Synod stressed the formation of genuine SCCs Ugandan liturgist Father David Kyeyune (who died in 2011) states:

Liturgy therefore activates their [the SCC members] Trinitarian and ecclesial relationship, talents and services of the kingdom. The purpose is to enable a Small Christian Community to become an ecclesial community of the Trinity through self-evangelization. It should then be empowered to carry out a mission of liberation in all the dimensions of human life.<sup>519</sup>

The theme of the 2009 Eleventh Interdisciplinary Theological Session at CUEA was *The Faculty of Theology of CUEA Celebrating the Jubilee of St. Paul: Apostle, Missionary and Martyr*. In his paper on “The Jubilee of St. Paul, the Missionary Animator and Father of Small Christian Communities” Mondo asked: “What can we imitate from St. Paul’s missionary methodology for the African Church today?”<sup>520</sup> St. Paul shifted his missionary operation center from synagogues to families making them the true milieus of solidarity (Domestic Churches), open to other Domestic Churches.

Paul founded the first Small Christian Communities as House Churches<sup>521</sup> that met in private homes. In these early years of Christianity, these small communities were the basic units of Christianity -- before the beginnings of parish structures. See the many examples of House Churches in *Acts of the Apostles, Romans, I Corinthians, Colossians* and *Philippians*. *Acts 2:46* describes a twofold dynamic: The early Christians continued to pray in the synagogues in the Jewish tradition. “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.” But the Eucharist was celebrated in the homes in extended families. “They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”

A concrete example is *Romans 16:3-5*: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but

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<sup>519</sup> David Kyeyune, “The Small Christian Community in the Church as Family” in *The Model of Church as Family: Meeting the African Challenge*, Fourth Interdisciplinary Theological Session at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 1999, p. 5

<sup>520</sup>Paulino Mondo, “The Jubilee of St. Paul, the Missionary Animator and Father of Small Christian Communities,” in *The Faculty of Theology of CUEA Celebrating the Jubilee of St. Paul: Apostle, Missionary and Martyr*, 11<sup>th</sup> Interdisciplinary Theological Session at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi: Unpublished paper, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>521</sup> The Dura-Europos church (also known as the Dura-Europos house church) is the earliest identified Christian [house church](#). It is located in Dura-Europos in Syria. It is one of the earliest known Christian churches, and was apparently a normal domestic house converted for worship some time between 233 and 256, when the town was abandoned after conquest by the Persians. One can ask: “Is it too much of a stretch to imagine Dura-Europos as the site of the world’s first Small Christian Community?”

also all the churches of the Gentiles.<sup>522</sup> Greet also the church in their house.” Indian theologian Father Felix Wilfred points out:

Whenever we read about “houses” as meeting places in records of early Christianity, this does not mean primarily buildings but *families*. In his letters Paul mentions these families several times as meeting places of Local Churches. These experiences of Jesus’ followers manifested themselves in the form of House Churches. They were small fellowships which represented a new set of values.<sup>523</sup>

These communities were self-ministering. They were missionary by their very nature. These SCCs were family-based evangelizing communities. This is the “Pauline method of founding Small Christian Communities with the responsibility of evangelizing their regions.”<sup>524</sup> During the “Year of St. Paul” in 2008-2009 SCCs in Africa especially tried to follow St. Paul’s missionary spirit and ministry. For example, Dar es Salaam Archdiocese had a full weekly program of reading the Letters of St. Paul in the SCCs starting with Paul’s Letter to the *Romans* (beginning on 23 November, 2008) through Paul’s Letter to *Philemon* ending on 29 June, 2009).<sup>525</sup>

In another place Mondo comments on Luke’s account in *Acts of the Apostles* of the itinerant ministries of Paul and Barnabas in Asia Minor:

If the earliest generations of believers in Jesus had enlisted the services of a cartographer to map out Paul and Barnabas’ numerous foundations, the result would have been a network of Small Christian Communities spread throughout the then known world. Small, interconnected communities have been integral to the faith experience of Jews and Christians for centuries... When Jesus came upon the scene, he also fostered the small community experience. He gathered a small group of twelve to travel with him, to share prayer, ministry, faith and values. He promised his followers that wherever a Small Christian Community of two or three would gather in his name, he would be present among them. After his death and resurrection, Jesus’ disciples missioned forth to establish Small Christian Communities wherever they found a welcome... [In Eastern Africa] we have been wise in returning to our 1<sup>st</sup> Century roots by establishing believers that are a network of Small Christian Communities, bound together in prayer, faith, mutual support,

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<sup>522</sup> “Gentiles” and “pagans” are words used in the *New Testament* (both actual text and commentary) to refer to all those people who were not Jews. They are not politically correct today and so are normally avoided except when trying to make a specific point.

<sup>523</sup> Felix Wilfred, “Why Basic Ecclesial Communities” in Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus*, pp. 20-21. This essay has many insights into the nature and activities of these House Churches.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

<sup>525</sup> See *Mwongozo – Jubilei ya Mwaka wa Paulo 2008/2009*, Jimbo Kuu la Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam: Privately Printed, 2008, p. 16.

service, missionary" outreach and accountability. In a world increasingly suspicious of grandiose institutions and "trickle down collegiality," the Small Christian Community would appear to be an apt and viable model to emulate.<sup>526</sup>

Many SCCs in Eastern Africa follow this House Church<sup>527</sup> model. American volunteer missionary Vicki Smith describes accompanying the assistant parish priest in Kowak Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania as he celebrates the Eucharist on a rotational basis for perhaps 20 SCC members in a particular family home in a SCC. She says, "These are House Churches."<sup>528</sup> A mass in a home (a Home Mass or a House Mass) anywhere in the world can be called a type of House Church.<sup>529</sup>

<sup>526</sup> Paulino Mondo, Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter Year C on the theme of "The Great Motivator," Email File Attachment retrieved on 18 April, 2013.

<sup>527</sup> The rich variety of Houses Churches, especially from the Evangelical Christian perspective, is seen in this comment:

Most likely you don't use the term "house church" to describe your small group [in the USA]. After all, don't house churches meet "over there," in places like China, India, and Ethiopia where Christians are persecuted? The reality, however, is that the house church movement is alive and well in America. Researchers have estimated that there are 20 million people meeting in house churches in America and Barna predicts that alternative movements like house churches might reach 30-35 percent of all Christians by 2025. Yet, many more small groups exist in the U.S. with some estimating that 75 million adult Americans regularly attend the estimated 3 million small groups.

What are the differences between house churches and small groups? What might small groups have to learn from modern-day house churches? Houses churches see themselves as fully the church, quite apart from the Sunday gathering. The leaders are elders or pastors, not facilitators developed in the local church. House churches derive their meaning squarely from the *New Testament* Church, not by any modern small-group model. Small groups, on the other hand, are not independent, but part of a local church. Leaders are prepared and coached through the local church and the small groups gather together each week for corporate worship. Though there are some key differences, small groups can learn a lot from house churches.

Joel Comiskey, "Four Things Small Groups Can Learn from House Churches," SmallGroups.com Website, retrieved 14 October, 2015, [http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2015/four-things-small-groups-can-learn-from-house-churches.html?utm\\_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=9077722&utm\\_content=389162233&utm\\_campaign=2013](http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2015/four-things-small-groups-can-learn-from-house-churches.html?utm_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=389162233&utm_campaign=2013)

<sup>528</sup> Vicki Smith in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 18 September, 2013.

<sup>529</sup> The satisfaction level of those attending House Churches or House Groups tends to be higher than their counterparts who attend traditional churches. Surveys have shown that satisfaction levels are elevated in regard to church leadership, faith commitment of members, level of community within the church and spiritual depth of the church setting. Research has shown that older members are drawn to House Churches because they are devout Christians

So far 19 B.A., M.A. and Ph. D. Theses have been written at CUEA on SCCs and more are in process.<sup>530</sup> Four M.A. Theses on SCCs have been written in the School of Theology at Tangaza University College. In April, 2015 Kenyan layman Paul Njuki finished a M.A Thesis on *Inadequacy of Faith-based Communities as Social Actors for Social Transformation: Case Study in Kawangware Division, Nairobi County* in the Institute of Social Ministry (ISM). Presently Kenyan diocesan priest Father Paul Mungathia is writing on **ADD** in the Institute of Social Ministry (ISM). This reflects the current interest in the involvement of SCCs in justice and peace.

There is also an increasing interest in Youth SCCs for example, Spe's 2004 long essay on the "Impact of Small Christian Communities on Youth: A Qualitative Case Study in Our Lady Consolata Catholic Church, Riara Ridge" in the Institute of Youth Studies (IYS), Tangaza, University College.

Small Christian Communities embody the values of inclusiveness, sharing, unity and solidarity that form the contemporary family of God. Our models are the "first small community" (the Trinity -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit)<sup>531</sup> and the "first Small Christian Community" (the Holy Family – Jesus, Joseph and Mary).<sup>532</sup> Magesa boldly states: "Ecclesialogically they (SCCs) are the best thing that has happened since the *New Testament*."<sup>533</sup>

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who desire deeper, more intense relationships with God and other church members. Younger members who are drawn to House Churches are those who are interested in faith and spirituality but not traditional forms of church.

<sup>530</sup> The two latest theses are Peter Mbugua, *Social Differences in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge for Deeper Evangelization in Nairobi-West Deanery*, Nairobi: Unpublished Master's Thesis, CUEA, 2012. Vincent Mwakhwawa, *Improving Participation of the Laity in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe*, Nairobi: Unpublished Master's Thesis, CUEA, 2012.

<sup>531</sup> God is in a community of three persons in one—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who exist in perfect unity. So it is not surprising that from the beginning, God created us to be in community with one another. *Genesis* 2:18 states: "It is not good for a person to be alone." This passage is often used in the context of marriage, but it also speaks to our fundamental need to connect with others in the human community. Community is deeply grounded in the nature of God. It flows from who God is. Because God is community, God creates community. It is God's gift to humans. Therefore, the making of community may not be regarded as an optional decision for Christians. It is a compelling and irrevocable necessity, a binding divine mandate for all believers at all times. Adapted from *Why Small Groups? The Reason Behind Intentional Christian Community* by Carolyn Taketa, Small Groups Website, retrieved on 21 April, 2016, [http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2012/why-small-groups.html?utm\\_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=9077722&utm\\_content=431367207&utm\\_campaign=email](http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2012/why-small-groups.html?utm_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=431367207&utm_campaign=email)

<sup>532</sup> Technically the Holy Family may not have been a Christian Community, but was the prefigurement of the first one.

<sup>533</sup> Laurenti Magesa in a private letter to the author, July, 1983.

We can reflect more deeply on the life and experiences of the first SCCs in the *Acts of the Apostles* especially Chapters 2:42-45 and 4:32-35<sup>534</sup> and the implications for Africa today. These two core Scripture passages are very popular in SCCs workshops and courses along with Jesus' promise in *Matthew* 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Mukenge says that another biblical foundation of SCCs is the community of disciples after the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ especially the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (*Luke* 24:12-35). The Emmaus story is a model for spiritual formation, catechesis and evangelization in Africa today.<sup>535</sup> We need to begin from our local context. It emphasizes the importance of, even more the necessity of, contextualization. Jesus began the proclamation of the Good News of his resurrection from the situation of the hopelessness of the two disciples. All our preaching and teaching has to take into account the concrete situations of the daily lives of the African people: urban or rural, poor or rich, Sunday Catholic or daily communicant. Like Jesus on the road, modern day pastoral workers and evangelizers need to speak to the African peoples' questions, concerns, needs and desires. This includes addressing the burning questions of the struggle for survival, corruption, tribalism (negative ethnicity), realistic marriage laws and the inculturation of the liturgy. As Magesa states:

The first stage in proclamation, therefore, must be to identify the concrete situation of the lives of the people so that, in the light of the Scriptures and especially of the Good News of Jesus, they may come to recognize the life-giving presence of God even in situations that seem hopeless, as the two travelers to Emmaus did.<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> This is an ideal portrait of the life of the first SCCs. History reveals many experiments to imitate directly or indirectly these SCCs in a community or communitarian lifestyle (and in terms of general human society, an alternative lifestyle). A popular style is the commune that is normally a large (and sometimes small) gathering of people sharing a common life. It is an intentional community of people living together, sharing common interests, property, possessions, resources, and, in some communes, work and income. In addition to the communal economy, consensus decision-making, non-hierarchical structures and ecological living have become important core principles for many communes. Some examples: The Hutterites, named for their founder Jakob Hutter, live in a Christian "community of goods" and practice absolute pacifism that has resulted in hundreds of years of diaspora to many countries. Religious institutions such as abbeys and monasteries. Kibbutzim in Israel is an example of officially organized communes. A popular style that does not have a specific religious affiliation is young musicians living in a shared community in Amsterdam. There are many small justice and peace groups that live a community or communitarian lifestyle.

<sup>535</sup> The Emmaus story and SCCs in Eastern Africa are intertwined with 33 references in this Ebook.

<sup>536</sup> Laurenti Magesa, "*Redemptoris Missio, Centesimus Annus* and the African Synod," *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, 33, 6 (December, 1991): 332. I am indebted to American Maryknoll missionary priest Father Kenneth Thesing, MM for the challenging phrase "preaching the Good News in bad new situations in Africa."

Mukenge compares the life and activities of African SCCs to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus with the key common denominator being the active presence and power of the Risen Christ.

In order to underscore the significance of the experience of Jesus Christ's presence I suggest, as a paradigm, the account of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, which, to my mind, outlines the path of faith, emphasizing both its demands and the necessity to join a religious community in order to bear witness.<sup>537</sup>

First, he contrasts the community of disciples in the Upper Room in Jerusalem that the two disciples going to Emmaus leave with their natural community in the village of Emmaus that they return to stating:

Their return to Emmaus can be compared to a retreat to seclusion because expectations were not met and yearning left unsatisfied. African Christians [and by extension SCC members] confronted with existential problems employ a similar tactic, returning to traditional "solutions:" *Church in the morning, fetish priest in the evening* – similar to any other believer who, overwhelmed by events, fails to see salvation in the Gospel of Christ, which is a Gospel of the cross, service and love.<sup>538</sup>

Mukenge described how the two disciples are changed and transformed. First, they are galvanized by the contemplation of the Word of God especially as the stranger explains all the Scripture passages concerning Jesus Christ. Second, they recognize Jesus' presence during the communal meal, the place of communion and sharing. Third, they are inspired and energized to return to Jerusalem to rejoin the small community of the apostles in the Upper Room in order to bear witness. He adds:

The paradigm of the disciples from Emmaus, who travel as pilgrims, remind us that the creation of [basic] ecclesial communities constitutes an ongoing task, and that the Spirit abiding within their members leads the latter on new and unforeseen paths in order to open their eyes to the challenges denoted by brotherhood [and sisterhood,] solidarity and sharing.<sup>539</sup>

We see empowerment at work here in different ways. The two disciples, and by analogy we SCC members, are empowered by the Risen Christ and his Spirit through Scripture, the Eucharist and the ongoing openness to the Holy Spirit's activity in our lives. We are also empowered through accompaniment: walking together, sharing together, working together and evangelizing/ministering together gives strength and mutual support. A Burkina Faso proverb says, *If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk with others.*

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<sup>537</sup> André Kabasele Mukenge, "The Biblical Approach," p. 6.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13.

Pope Francis refers to the icon of Emmaus as a key for interpreting the role of the Catholic Church in the present and the future. Can the SCCs model be the kind of church he describes?

Today, we need a church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a church which accompanies them on their journey; a church able to make sense of the "night" contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Are we still a church capable of warming hearts? A church capable of leading people back to Jerusalem? Of bringing them home?<sup>540</sup>

Mukenge makes the further distinction:

A Christian community is fundamentally determined by the experience of the presence of Jesus Christ. Is this not reminiscent of the words attributed to Jesus himself: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (*Matthew* 18:20)? Viewed in this light, a Basic *Ecclesial* Community differs from any other neighborhood organization, a club of friends or an association insofar as it is founded on the presence of Jesus Christ in its midst. It is aware of this presence and endeavors to make it tangible. In other words, a Basic *Ecclesial* Community *convenes in the name of Christ*. Cf. *1 Corinthians* 3:11: "For nobody can lay down any other foundation than the one which is there already, namely Jesus Christ."<sup>541</sup>

So a key to the identity and ministry of our SCCs in Eastern Africa is the conscious presence and power of the Risen Christ.

When I am asked what I feel is the single most important verse in the *Bible* I answer: the "burning" question in *Luke* 24:26. "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" This passage goes on to quote Jesus saying to the apostles in the Upper Room: "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." (*Luke* 24: 46-48). SCC members are witnesses to the suffering, death<sup>542</sup> and resurrection of Jesus Christ – first as it was lived 2,000 ago and today as it is lived in our contemporary world.

Thus this story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus can be ever new in its interpretations and ever new in its applications. We can look at the ups and downs of our

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<sup>540</sup> Francis, "Francis' Address to Bishops [of Brazil]," 27 July, 2013, in an email message from the *Zenit Daily Dispatch*, 27 July, 2013.

<sup>541</sup> André Kabasele Mukenge, "The Biblical Approach," p. 6.

<sup>542</sup> From 1984-85 I was Pastor of Kiagata Parish, Musoma Diocese, Tanzania. Three Filipino lay missionaries were part of the pastoral team. When I asked them when did the Basic Christian Communities in the Philippines become strong, they answered: "When we were persecuted and has to suffer, and even to die, for our faith."

daily lives (see the opening words of *Gaudium et Spes*) through the lens of this *Bible* passage. For example, a member of St. Jude Thaddeus SCC in Musoma, Tanzania said that while St. Jude is not specifically named in this gospel account in the Upper Room, he was present in all these post-resurrection events. His involvement can bring something new to the retelling of these *Bible* stories. As an eye-witness of the resurrection and the Risen Christ, St. Jude inspires contemporary SCCs and their faith life especially those SCCs for whom he is the patron saint. SCCs members can also ask for St. Jude's special intercession because he is the Saint of Lost Causes.

Faith stories such as the Emmaus story can be retold in new ways especially using an African setting and context. All these African versions can lead to constructing a type of local narrative theology of inculturation.<sup>543</sup> These are Africa's fifth gospels. One example is *The Parable of the Two Young Men on the Road to Nakuru*. Tanzanian layman Emmanuel Chacha created a Swahili version of this story called *The Parable of the Two Youth Going to Majita* (a village thirty-seven miles from Musoma).

Another creative example is *The Parable of on the Way to Bauleni* by Renato Kizito Sesana:<sup>544</sup>

After the end of the 1994 African Synod two Zambian bishops return to Lusaka from Rome. In the story they become the two disciples returning to Emmaus. The two bishops are tired, disappointed, disillusioned, and even depressed about their month of hard work in Rome and the uncertain results. They are helped by a taxi cab driver named Mtonga who takes them to a meeting of a Small Christian Community in an area known as Bauleni, an estate established by squatters. A young woman with a two-week-old baby named "Sinodi," a young man with the dreams of youth, and an elderly refugee speak with the bishops. The bishops listen, their hearts moved. Why were they bored while listening to the solemn speeches given in the Vatican hall during the synod? Instead the simple language of their people set their hearts on fire. Their tiredness is gone. They feel more and more at home. Mtonga and the SCC members together as a community are the Jesus figure in the story. These lay Christians together minister to the two bishops and give

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<sup>543</sup> Another dimension of narrative theology is seen in Catherine Hilbert's comments on the preaching of Jesus in the Emmaus Narrative: "This initial analysis of the Emmaus story in light of [Paul] Ricoeur's theory of narrative suggests that effective narrative preaching involves the threefold pattern of prefiguration of past human experience, configuration of the human story in light of the divine plot of the story of Jesus, and refiguration of imagination and life through the ongoing process of conversion. "Retelling the Gospel Story," *Eglise et Theologie*, 21 (1990), p. 153.

<sup>544</sup> These and other similar stories can be found in the section on "Retelling the Emmaus Story in Africa Today" in Joseph Healey, and Donald Sybertz (eds.), *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996 and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997, pp. 261-266. Available as an Ebook on Amazon (for Kindle), Google and Barnes and Noble (for Nook).

them new hope. At the end of the SCC meeting the younger bishop says:  
 "They have proclaimed the Resurrected Lord to us."<sup>545</sup>

The prayer, reflection and discussion of African SCC members can also be enriched and stimulated by African artistic depictions of the biblical story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus<sup>546</sup> in creative African paintings, carvings, stories, poems, plays, songs, liturgies, homilies and liturgical symbols. Most of these artistic creations present a unique interpretation and application of this famous *Bible* story.

One specific example is the triptych (three panels or scenes) of the "Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus" on the front wall of the chapel of the Emmaus Spirituality Center in Lusaka, Zambia painted by Zambian artists coordinated by a Poor Clare Sister. The left scene is Jesus meeting the two disciples in the road. A unique feature is that Jesus is pointing to the sky where an image of the cross or crucifix appears. The larger, middle scene immediately behind the altar is the breaking of the bread. The right scene is the two disciples joyfully returning to Jerusalem.

"God-incidence" rather than a "coincidence"... **ADD**

Another important *Bible* passage on community is *Ecclesiastes* 4:9-12:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.  
 For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls  
 and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm;  
 but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against  
 another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

In these passages we find the biblical foundations of SCCs. Since SCCs are rooted in the *New Testament*, participants in our SCCs workshops and courses are reminded of the saying: "Small Christian Communities are a new way of being church that is really a very old (2,000 years old!) way of being church."<sup>547</sup> Magesa "thinks outside of the box" when he says:

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<sup>545</sup> Renato Kizito Sesana, "The Parable of On the Way to Bauleni," *New People Feature Service*, 26 (May 1, 1994), pp. 1-3. *African Stories for Preachers and Teachers*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), p. 20. Also African Story No. 453 in the "African Stories Database," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 2 May, 2014, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=174](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=174)

<sup>546</sup> Examples from Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia can be found in the section on "Retelling the Emmaus story in Africa Today" in Joseph Healey, and Donald Sybertz (eds.), *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996 and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997, pp. 261-266. Available as an Ebook on Amazon (for Kindle), Google and Barnes and Noble (for Nook).

<sup>547</sup> I was vividly reminded of this "living history" when I visited the city of Philippi, an eastern Macedonia town that was an early center of Christianity in Greece, during the "Year of St. Paul" in 2009. I stood in the middle of the excavation of one of the House Churches (also called a Small Domestic Church), the predecessor of SCCs. *Acts of the Apostles* recounts how Lydia and her household were baptized and offered hospitality to the traveling

From its inception as a community after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, this is what the church in the New Testament was – “the community of believers was of one heart and mind,” (*Acts* 4:32) leading them to share everything they had. To say, then, that SCCs constitute a, or the, “new way of being church” is a serious mischaracterization. More correctly, in SCCs, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the African church is pioneering in the rediscovery of the *original manner of being church*.<sup>548</sup>

Our African SCCs are a communion of families that are the fundamental cell of society, the main cell of society and the basic social unit of society. They are often called Domestic Churches.<sup>549</sup> Pengo calls “the family the smallest Christian Community.”<sup>550</sup> We are invited to imitate the life of the Trinity that is a life of sharing. Mwoleka was one of the first persons to see sharing in the Trinity as a model for sharing in SCCs:

I think we have difficulties in understanding the Holy Trinity because we approach the mystery from the wrong side.<sup>551</sup> The intellectual side is not the best side to start with. The right approach to the mystery is to imitate the life of the Trinity...I am dedicated to the ideal of *Ujamaa* (Swahili for "Familyhood") because it invites all people, in a down-to-earth practical way, to imitate the life of the Trinity which is a life of sharing.<sup>552</sup>

Using an inductive approach to the mystery of the Trinity, Africans start with concrete examples of sharing life in all its aspects. These human and cultural analogies are mirrored

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preachers. Lydia’s house becomes the site for the local church in Philippi, with her as its host and perhaps leader.

<sup>548</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “The Joy of Community,” p. 24.

<sup>549</sup> This is a very different model than SCCs in Europe and North America that are mainly composed of individuals (often living in different geographical locations) rather than members of families living together. It is felt that African’s model of family-based SCCs can give a positive message and influence to Western society that is witnessing the breakdown of family structures. For a Case Study of the African model see Cieslikiewicz, “Pastoral Involvement,” pp. 100-101.

<sup>550</sup> Polycarp Pengo, “The Church in Africa Regarding its Mission and Challenges,” Paper at the Inauguration Ceremony of the Research Area for Interdisciplinary Studies Related to African Culture at the Pontifical Lateran University, 6 December, 2011, in an email message from the *Zenit Daily Dispatch*, 6 December, 2011.

<sup>551</sup> In SCCs Workshops on the local level Mwoleka would hold up a stick and say: Let us suppose this stick is the Trinity. To understand it better let us look at the practical end of the stick, not at the theoretical end (that is “the wrong end of the stick”). And the practical end is a life of sharing. The three members of the Holy Trinity share their life together. And we human beings are invited to imitate this Trinitarian life, to share in this Trinitarian life. This is the meaning of life in SCCs.

<sup>552</sup> Mwoleka and Healey, eds., *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, p. 15.

in African proverbs and sayings: the bonding of the mother and child who are like the umbilical cord and strap in which the cord is wrapped; the husband and wife who are as close as ring and finger; and close friends who are like the small cowry shell and its pouch that do not separate.

Small Christian Communities try to live intensely the trinitarian life of mutual love, cooperation, participation and reaching out to others in loving service. This experiential approach can lead to a better understanding of the sharing among the Persons of the Trinity, for example, the intimate union of God the Father and God the Son: "The Father and I are one" (*John* 10:30). "The Father is in me and I am in the Father" (*John* 10:38).

When Pope Benedict XVI asks "theologians to continue to probe the depths of the trinitarian mystery and its meaning for everyday African life"<sup>553</sup> we can reflect on the Trinity as the first "Small Community" (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and imitate the Trinitarian life and union in our own African SCCs on the grassroots level. A special richness and depth are found in an East African adaptation of the prayer *Glory Be to the Father* (based on African names for God):

"Glory be to the Father, the Creator and Source,  
To the Nursing Mother,<sup>554</sup>  
To Jesus, the Healer and Eldest Brother  
And to the Unsurpassed Great Spirit. Amen."<sup>555</sup>

In this Church as Family of God Model of Church along with parish-based SCCs and Lectionary-based SCCs we can talk of family-based SCCs.<sup>556</sup> These include SCCs that incorporate youth and children into the activities of the small community and "Mother SCCs" that have branches of Youth SCCs (sometimes divided into Junior Youth and Senior Youth Groups)<sup>557</sup> and Children SCCs.<sup>558</sup> There are a variety of other SCCs that go by names such

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<sup>553</sup> Benedict XVI **CHECK**

<sup>554</sup> See:

a. *Isaiah* 49:15-16: "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me."

b. *Isaiah* 66:12-13: "You shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

<sup>555</sup> Joseph Healey (compiled), *Once Upon a Time in Africa*, p. 128.

<sup>556</sup> Described in Simon Rurinjah, "Importance of Small Christian Communities in Our Lives," Nairobi: Unpublished talk in SCCs Classes at Hekima College and Tangaza University College, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>557</sup> The Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) in various parishes in Mombasa Archdiocese and Kitale Diocese use the Lumko "Seven Steps" Method of Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing in Children SCCs of 12 members each. The PMC animators are trained first in this method.

<sup>558</sup> St. Jude Thaddeus Small Christian Community (SCC) in the Musoma, Tanzania meets every Thursday afternoon for the *Bible Service/Bible Reflection*. Sometimes the children form their own small reflection group so they can participate more freely in their own way. A

as Young Adult SCCs, Young Married Couples SCCs, <sup>559</sup> Married Couples with Young Children SCCs, etc.

There is a lot of discussion about the breakdown of the family structure in our contemporary society in Africa (and more so in western society). There are a large number of single parent homes in urban centers like Nairobi. A 2015 study reveal that single parents in Nairobi are 30%, the vast majority being single mothers living in the slums and economically poorer areas.

The husband/father is often a “missing person.” In the absence of men in the slums and informal settlements of many Nairobi parishes single mothers (that has two meanings)<sup>560</sup> are elected the leaders of their SCCs. So family and family values take on new meaning in new African contexts and situations. Fresh research is needed on what “family” means to contemporary Africans and how family values are shifting. Italian Comboni missionaries priests Mariano Tibaldo, MCCJ and Francesco Pierli, MCCJ state:

The family calls for a model of church that should be more and more communion, solidarity, sharing of ministry and authority. Such an experience of the church that is somehow already present in the SCC will promote the rise of a new model of family beyond and above the traditional extended family and the imported ailing nuclear family of the Western World.<sup>561</sup>

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reflection on “The Parable of the Lost Sheep” began with ten children (aged five to 14) closing their eyes, picturing a favorite animal, and then mentioning it to the small group -- a giraffe, sheep, cow, gazelle, lion. Then two young boys (who actually herd their family sheep) described what it is like. This led the group into a discussion on "Jesus as the Good Shepherd" in *John* 10. A visiting priest (a former Scripture professor) participated in this children’s small reflection group during two different weeks. He was amazed how the children were so comfortable and vocal in talking about the gospel in their small group. Later he said: "I would not have believed this is possible if I had not seen it with my own eyes." “Seeing It With My Own Eyes” Story No. 362 in the “African Stories Database,” African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 21 September, 2011, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=139](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=139)

<sup>559</sup> In an interview with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 January, 2015 Kenyan layman Henry Kiranga emphasized the importance of specific SCCs for newly married couples. He said that after finishing school and getting married, a lot of Catholic young people drift away from the church and seem to disappear. They do not feel at home in the Adult SCCs. Their parents and the adults have other interests and discuss other topics. The solution is specific Young Married Couples SCCs (the same age group or peer group) where they can discuss and focus on their own issues and concerns.

<sup>560</sup> What percentage of these women were married, but their husbands died, left them or were thrown out of the home? What percentage of these women decided to have children and raise them without a husband?

<sup>561</sup> Mariano Tibaldo and Francesco Pierli, “Two Extremes: The Pastoralists and Slums Experiences of the Family” in *Theology of the Church as Family of God*, Nairobi; Paulines Publications Africa, 1997, p. 64.

Some SCCs in Africa are countering these current trends by helping couples who cannot receive the Eucharist to regularize their marriages in a Catholic ceremony. Mdawida's research in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Nairobi in 2011-2012 shows that many Catholics married in the Catholic Church after joining a SCC.<sup>562</sup> Other SCCs have night prayers for families in the neighborhood and a carefully planned program of catechesis for younger members such as teaching the sacraments as a regular part of SCC meetings.

African SCCs emphasize personal relationships, family bonds, solidarity, and Christian belonging --sharing together, working together, and celebrating together (including meals and entertainment) in the context of African values and customs. Thus SCCs are a concrete expression of, and realization of, the Church as Family of God Model of Church in Africa. We need to explore further the inculturation of this family ecclesiology<sup>563</sup> in Africa and the implications of communion ecclesiology in an African context. This includes an African expression of Trinitarian Communion Ecclesiology.

Swiss Fidei Donum priest and historian Father John Baur (who died in 2003) emphasized that SCCs derive from Vatican II's ecclesiology of the Church as People of God, but are very much a work in process. "It implies that all the faithful fulfill their vocation and mission in the Church, implying a change from the priest-based apostolate to a people based apostolate that demands that the priest assumes the role of a community-minded inspirational minister."<sup>564</sup> Magesa points out: "If the pastoral implications of this shift have not been practically fully "digested" in many dioceses in Eastern Africa, as anyone with some ministerial experience in the region will know, there has not been any shortage of theological reflection on this rediscovered ecclesiology of the early church."<sup>565</sup> He goes on to state:

The best contribution of the ecclesiology of SCCs in Eastern Africa has been to provide a clear theological elaboration of the threefold theological characteristic of these entities. Like any baptized person, each SCC in its

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<sup>562</sup> Armogast Mdawida, *Comparing Two Models of the Catholic Church: SCC Model of Church and Apostolic Association Model of Church: A Case Study at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Nairobi, Kenya*, Nairobi: Unpublished Master's Thesis, Tangaza University College (CUEA), 2012, p. 69.

<sup>563</sup> As a sign of the times around the world compare this statement of RENEW International (based in Plainfield, New Jersey, USA)'s prophetic vision for the renewal of the Catholic Church today: "This vision calls the church to become a family of small communities whose shared purpose is to reinvigorate the church and serve the needs of the wider world. RENEW small communities are challenged to explore their own experiences in light of the Gospel and to commit to decisive action to live their faith in the world." Theresa Rickard, "Strategic Planning Assignment: RENEW International," New York: Columbia Business School, Executive Education Institute for Not-for-Profit Management, Unpublished paper, 2 May, 2011, p. 1.

<sup>564</sup> John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994, pp. 319-320.

<sup>565</sup> Laurenti Magesa, "A Panoramic View of 25 Years of African Theology in East Africa: Foundations, Developments and Prospects" in *Hekima Review*, Vol. 40 (May, 2009), p. 24.

members is priestly, prophetic and kingly. As priestly, its life must be based on faith and unceasing prayer to God. As prophetic, it must become an advocate of justice and reconciliation in society. As kingly, it must gather within itself, without undue discrimination, all those who seek refuge in its fold.<sup>566</sup>

Baur presents the challenge of this prophetic role in describing the growth of SCCs that calls for “public witness to justice and peace, and ecumenical cooperation in development.”<sup>567</sup>

But how do SCCs contribute to the construction of a local African theology of the Church as Family of God? Some years ago a friend of mine and I had an animated discussion with an East African Bishop about the development of Small Christian Communities. He said that we should not move further in promoting SCCs until we had a “more developed theology of SCCs especially a clearer ecclesiology.” But we took the view that in very many instances *praxis is prior to theology* and that the theology of SCCs should evolve out of the local people’s practical grassroots experience. So we had a basic difference about the starting point. The bishop favored a deductive approach with theology as the starting point. We preferred an inductive approach with the life, experience and reflections of existing SCCs as the starting point.

How is the recent praxis of SCCs in Africa contributing to the development of the theology of the Church as Family of God? Flynn points out: “African cultural relationships and communal life are the foundation that provides a developing model of a Church based on the African family...Small Christian Communities are affirmed as the fundamental building blocks of the Church as Family of God in Africa.”<sup>568</sup> Stated another way, SCCs are the ideal foundational units of building the Church as Family of God.

Rutechura emphasizes that “hopes for the Church in Africa depend on the courage to foster and build SCCs as the ideal foundational units of building the Church as Family of God.”<sup>569</sup> The SCC is a communion of families. The outstation or subparish is a communion of SCCs. The parish is a communion of outstations or subparishes. If members of the SCCs meet in the middle of the week for Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection using the Scripture readings of the following Sunday, then the Sunday Eucharist in the parish or subparish or outstation becomes a “communion of communities” ecclesial experience. The parish community also becomes a Eucharistic Community.

If “the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life” (Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 10 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*).

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<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>567</sup> Baur, *2000 Years*, Second Edition, 2009, p. 391.

<sup>568</sup> Kieran Flynn, *Communities for the Kingdom: A Handbook for Small Christian Community Leaders*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* Nos. 181-182, 2007, pp. 82, 98.

<sup>569</sup> Pius Rutechura, “From the First to the Second African Synod of Bishops: Hopes and Prospects for the Church in Africa,” in *Hekima Review*, Vol. 38 (2008), p. 14.

No. 1324), then fostering eucharistic communities at all levels – from the SCC Mass in the home to the Sunday Eucharist in the parish church – is vitally important. African relationship and community values enrich the meaning of the Eucharistic community. A Ganda, Uganda proverb says *Relationship is in the eating together* that can be the starting point for a rich eucharistic theology.<sup>570</sup>

A specific pastoral challenge in Africa today is what we call the “Eucharistic Famine”<sup>571</sup> (also called the “Eucharistic Hunger”). Due to the lack of priests (and lack of sacramentalized marriages) on any given Sunday most Catholics (up to 80%<sup>572</sup> in some surveys) participate in a “Sunday Service without a Priest” (especially in rural areas) where there is no Holy Communion rather than participate in a regular mass. This is popularly called “the Eucharistic Famine.” In some of these services communion is distributed by the catechist or by a trained and installed lay leader. In general the AMECEA Bishops do not have the Eucharist reserved in outstation chapels mainly because of security issues and do not allow the catechists to give out communion because of the abuses that have taken place.

So providing the Eucharist to all Catholics in Africa is a great need. Malawian theologian Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr emphasizes that the Eucharist community is the heart of our Christian life. He says that if Christian communities in Africa cannot receive the Eucharist because of the lack of ordained ministers that presently in the Latin Rite are male, celibate priests, then we must rethink our church laws and pastoral practices, for example, ordain mature married men of proven leadership skills (*virī probati* in Latin). Then many more people would be able to receive communion and our SCCs would truly be Eucharistic Communities. The retired German Fidei Donum Bishop (of Aliwal Diocese, South Africa) Fritz Lobinger has written extensively on topics such as *Teams of Elders: Moving Beyond “Virī Probati”* (Claretian Publications, 2007) and *Every Community Its Own Ordained Leaders* (Claretian Publications, Philippines, 2008).

Tanzanian theologian Father Peter Assenga, AJ states that “the reality of the Church expressed as SCC would be an ideal model of church as family.”<sup>573</sup> He bases this view on the realization that the inner nature of the church is that of a community. The church is seen as a community (or communion) of communities, a family of families. He connects this to the biblical references to the household churches (see *Ephesians 2:19*: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household

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<sup>570</sup> This is a pastoral problem not limited to Africa. Observers in the West explain that the *de facto* impact of the priest shortage is to deny laity everywhere ready access to the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. It imposes a fast from our most basic nourishment, forcing laity to travel further – sometimes much further — to find celebrations occurring at times available in their jammed and complicated schedules.

<sup>571</sup> While not a common expression in the West, it is well known in Africa. Ndingi used the term in his intervention at the First African Synod in 1994.

<sup>572</sup> This figure is quoted in **ADD** ~~~

<sup>573</sup> Peter Assenga, *Towards an African Model of Church as Family: A Socio-Anthropological, Ecclesiological and Pastoral Study Based on Family Structures and Community Building Rituals among the Chagga in Tanzania*, Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2009, p. 262.

of God”) and to the reality of the African family in its extended form. Assenga emphasizes that for SCCs to show effectively their full potential in realizing the African family model of church

the entire life of the Church must be done within their context. This may include not only the other sacraments within the competence of the parish but also the entire life of the faithful in their contexts: this includes the blessing of the seed for planting, blessing of the farms and their produce; it can also include the entire mechanism of conflict resolution in the various genres of the *palaver*.<sup>574</sup>

To give the praxis or practical dimension he presents case studies of SCCs in Mwanza Archdiocese and Moshi Diocese in Tanzania.

Expanding this “household” metaphor above, the basic unit in the Greco-Roman world of the *New Testament* was the household: the physical home or compound that included the slaves in the family. The new Christian household is where all have equal dignity as children of God,<sup>575</sup> adopted into the family of God. In Africa we can refer to SCCs as the homestead of God in rural areas and the household of God in urban areas. SCCs are household churches. SCCs are small households of faith. The extended family is the extended homestead and the extended household.

In the *Final Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God* of the First African Synod, Section 28 on “The Church as Family and Small Christian Communities” states: “The Church, the Family of God, implies the creation of small communities at the human level, living or basic ecclesial communities... These individual Churches as Families have the task of working to transform society.” Flynn states: “It is in being transforming communities [of themselves and others] that SCCs realize their ecclesial identity in the Church as Family Model. These individual [communities of] Church as Family have the task of working to transform society.”<sup>576</sup> A key part of this transformation is a deeper evangelization that proclaims that the water of Baptism is “thicker” than the blood of tribalism, negative ethnicity and nepotism and promotes true communion between different ethnic groups. SCCs give flesh to the African concept of family, based not on common blood but on common faith.

During research in Nairobi 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 (Kamba, Kikuyu, Luo, Luyia, etc.) through music, dancing, traditional meals, bereavement customs, and burial rites together rather than joining a multi-ethnic SCC in their neighborhood (geographic area). These exclusive associations are not genuine SCCs.

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<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>575</sup> As I travel around Eastern Africa when I am introduced at a meeting or workshop and asked to say a few words about myself, I like to begin by saying: “I am Father Joe Healey. I am a child of God.” This says it all.

<sup>576</sup> Flynn, *Communities*, p. 99.

When asked about the reason for this discrimination and exclusivism, Kenyan layman Julius Karanja, the catechist in Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Dagoretti Corner in Nairobi Archdiocese 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" has been translated into various African languages to challenge Christians on the local level.

Many statements from Second African Synod documents recommend the regular use of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. We are challenged in the AMECEA Region to continue to develop both a praxis and a theology of SCCs' involvement in the transformation of society. This is part of the social responsibility of SCCs as the family of God in Africa in the context of family ecclesiology in Africa. As a concrete example, in Zambia Small Christian Communities, at the lowest level, are really trying to get away from their old mentalities and thus changing the world around them by listening to the Word of God and the social teaching of the Church.

To summarize: In his well-known book *Models of Church* and in a subsequent book, American theologian Cardinal Avery Dulles, SJ categorized the church into six models: institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, servant and community of disciples. Over the years various African models of church have evolved. These are related to the People of God Model that emerged from the Second Vatican Council. The Church as Family of God Model emerged from the First African Synod. The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church is significant today especially in Eastern Africa.

Donald Sybertz and I wrote *Towards an African Narrative Theology*. Section Four on "African Metaphors of Church" in Chapter Three on "Church as the [Extended] Family of God" describes some African metaphors or images or symbols or models of church using African proverbs, sayings and stories.

- a. The Church as the Extended Family of God.
- b. The Church as the Clan of Jesus Christ.
- c. The Church as the Universal Family in Christ.

American Theologian Paul Sankey points out: "Avery Dulles has categorized theories of church into a number of models: institution, mystic communion, sacrament, herald, and servant. A possible African model is the church as clan, a family or social group related to a common ancestor."<sup>577</sup>

It has been suggested that an African theologian write an article describing these specific African Models of Church. These models can contribute substantially to the ongoing discussion in the World Church on ecclesial collegiality, synodality (basically the relationship between the College of Bishops and the pope), collaboration, dialog and subsidiarity.

As African theologians explore more deeply the Church as Family of God Model of Church, we see the growing importance of the Small Christian Community Model of Church

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<sup>577</sup> Paul Sankey, "The Church as Clan: Critical Refelctions on African Ecclesiology," *International Review of Mission*, 83, 33 (July, 1994), p. 437.

that is closely related to the Communion of Communities Model of Church and the Communitarian Model of Church. The Communitarian/Participatory/Collaborative/Circular/Inductive/Bottom-up Model can be compared and contrasted to the Hierarchical/Institutional/Pyramid/Deductive/Top-down Model.<sup>578</sup>

In various SCCs Training Workshops we use a very simple, but effective demonstration (role play) on unity, cooperation and the “Communitarian Model of Church”.<sup>579</sup> First, six volunteers walk in single file in one direction. The facilitator asks, "Who is in front?" and all of the workshop participants give the name the person in the front of the line. The facilitator asks, "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 are asked but the names were reversed. Then the facilitator asks the six volunteers to join hands and stand in a circle. When asked, "Who is first?" the participants answer, "No one." When asked, "Who is last?" the participants answer, "No one." The teaching is clear. We are challenged to overcome our intense individualism, excessive competitiveness and exaggerated rivalries to work together in building community and emphasizing a horizontal (a circle) rather than a vertical (pyramid) model of church.

In describing how SCCs are one of the new pastoral experiences, one of the new ways of living Catholicism today, American theologian of pastoral communication Father Robert White, SJ states:

One of the challenges to theology today is to articulate the ecclesial identity of our time—a major aspect of which are Small Christian Communities—and the new theology of communication that is expressed in these communities. Given the fact that the SCCs have flourished especially in the churches of the Global South, the theology of the Church in the Global South will certainly play a major role in generating a new sense of ecclesial identity in the Church as a whole. The SCCs have summed up well the new forms of communication emerging in the Church—participatory, aimed at consciousness-raising, from the grassroots up, dialogical, peace building.<sup>580</sup>

American writer David Andrews asserts that the establishment of SCCS has recreated a contemporary paradigm or model of being church that is biblical, quasi – democratic, African, particular, local yet universal, and Catholic.<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> See the section “Small Christian Communities: Ecclesiologies and Models of Church” in Flynn, *Communities*, pp. 67-81.

<sup>579</sup> 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.

<sup>580</sup> Robert White, “Small Christian Communities – A Dynamic Christianity for Young People,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2011, pp. 17-18.

<sup>581</sup> David Andrews, *Ministry in the Small Church*, Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988. pp. 16-19.

White goes on explain the task of theologians:

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, then Archbishop of Westminster in London, in his brief introduction to the book edited by Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton,<sup>582</sup> *Small Christian Communities Today*, called Small Christian Communities the heart of renewal in the Church today. Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor further referred to the SCCs as a "global moment" of renewal. It is up to theologians and especially theologians of pastoral communication to articulate what this global moment of renewal means and how we are to live in union with the 2000 year-old history of the Church.<sup>583</sup>

One example is African proverb-based communion ecclesiology that has clear implications for developing a Small Christian Community Model of Church both in terms of theology and praxis. Proverbs reflect the traditional values of African community, participation, consensus, and solidarity. These values support a communitarian model of church that Africa can contribute to the World Church. The African experience of living ecclesial communion in the extended family, clan, SCCs, and the wider "communion of communities" circles enriches the universal church. A group of African theologians and Africanists stated:

The natural African communities which in fact inspired the original formation of SCCs is one of the African experiences closest to the gospel. This must be given due credit so that the African contribution to the maturation of the church as communion and the African development of an adequate pastoral methodology be highlighted.<sup>584</sup>

At the same time the gospel and contemporary church praxis challenge African values as emphasized in a meeting on *communio-ecclesiology* in Nairobi in 1993. "The traditional values of African solidarity and authority in the SCCs should be assimilated in the Christian interpretation and in this process become enriched and transformed."<sup>585</sup> In particular the consensus model of authority should be promoted rather than the hierarchical model. "The mentality of the whole church needs to shift from the pyramid model to the community model of leadership."<sup>586</sup>

The African organization of the Christian community (ecclesiology) offers some fresh insights. Waliggo points out:

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<sup>582</sup> Sadly Jeanne died of severe liver cancer in Plymouth, England on 1 May, 2016. She was a long time international SCCs member, leader, animator and author who really "walked the walk."

<sup>583</sup> Robert White, "Small Christian Communities – A Dynamic Christianity," p. 18.

<sup>584</sup> *Cast Away Fear*, Nairobi: New People Media Center, 1994, pp. 25-26.

<sup>585</sup> *Final Statement of the Symposium on "The Reception of the Communio-Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council,"* Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 1993, p. 3

<sup>586</sup> *Cast Away Fear*, p. 26.

The *koinonia* practiced in the early church is nothing but familial relationship. Every believer is a brother or sister to the other. It was only through the subsequent development of the church that this relational and charismatic model of the church became weak and was gradually substituted with the institutional model. One of the signs of the times in the church has been the reawakening of this familial model through small groups, charismatic groups and others.<sup>587</sup>

The official document after the 1987 World Synod of Bishops on "Laity" states: "The ecclesiology of communion is a central and fundamental concept in the (Vatican II) conciliar documents."<sup>588</sup> German theologian Cardinal Walter Kasper comments:

The interest of the laity and its willingness to assume co-responsibility is perhaps the most valuable and important contribution of the postconciliar period. Not in vain did Venerable Pope Paul VI designate in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58 the truly ecclesiastical base communities as a hope for the universal church. *Communio*-ecclesiology means indeed that there may not be in the church active members beside passive ones; *communio*-ecclesiology puts an end to the model of a pastoral practice based on care and maintenance.<sup>589</sup>

This is closely related to the vision of church presented by the teaching materials of the Lumko Missiological Institute in South Africa. In its fifth and final stage of growth the church is a "communion of communities." All the believers of a parish are invited to be active members of a Small Christian Community. This theological vision is described as follows:

These communities are part of the parish structure. One of their number is a member of the parish council and all of them are engaged in various liturgical and other activities that keep them linked together and in union with the wider church. It is in this model of a Local Church that the renewed ecclesiology of Vatican II can be lived out, with all members of the church seen as equals and taking responsibility for their lives.<sup>590</sup>

Many terms are used to describe the Universal Church: the Big Church, the Global Church, the Great Church, the Greater Church, the International Church, the Large Church, the Multicultural Church, the Wider Church, and the World-wide Church. But *World Church* has caught on as really portraying the spirit of the post-Vatican II period: a communion of Local Churches on six continents and an international church of rich and striking diversity in praxis and theology. The Local Churches in Africa actively participate in this communion contributing many things such as: the fastest growing Catholic Church on any continent in the

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<sup>587</sup> Waliggo, "The African Clan as the True Model of the African Church," p. 125.

<sup>588</sup> *Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful*, No. 19.

<sup>589</sup> Walter Kasper, "Church as Communio," p. 115.

<sup>590</sup> Anselm Prior, "Equipping the People of God for Christian Witness -- A Roman Catholic Account," *International Review of Mission*, 83, 328 (January, 1994): 59.

world; a familial and experiential model based on participation; and the theology and praxis of SCCs which is one of the African Church's most important contributions to the World Church.

Our newest theological challenge is to explore more fully how all the above fits into the “theological framework of addressing key issues and challenges of ‘New Evangelization in Solidarity in the AMECEA countries’” as recommended by the AMECEA Plenary Study Session in July, 2011. Some theological, pastoral, and social questions (challenges, problems, issues) that SCCs members can reflect on using the Pastoral Spiral process/methodology are (in alphabetical order): Abortion, Addiction, Annulments, Communion for Catholic in Polygamous Unions, Communion for Divorced and Remarried Catholics, Corruption, Helping Couples Get Married in Church, Insecurity, Jobs for Youth, Poor Governance, Poverty, Single Mothers, Tensions Between Husband and Wife and Tribalism. The starting point is the SCC members’ personal experience on the grassroots level (the local context), not a book, dogma or church teaching.

New pastoral decisions, recommendations and practices are part of the *Sensus Fidelium* (Latin for “sense of the faithful”) – the body of the faithful as a whole, the People of God) that should be recognized and valued by higher church authority. The other term used is *Sensus Fidei* (Latin for “sense of the faith”).<sup>591</sup> Some feel that the most complete term is *sensus fidei fidelium* (Latin for the collective “sense of the faithful” of the People of God or whole church).<sup>592</sup>

No. 12 of *Lumen Gentium* (*Dogmatic Constitution of the Church of the Church*) states:

The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole people's supernatural discernment in matters of faith when "from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful" they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the People of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God.<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> English Cardinal John Henry Newman in his essay “On Consulting the Faithful on Matters of Doctrine” stated: “The tradition of the Apostles ... manifests itself variously at various times: sometimes by the mouth of the episcopacy, sometimes by the doctors, sometimes by the people, sometimes by liturgies, rites, ceremonies, and customs, by events, disputes, movements ... It follows that none of these channels of tradition may be treated with disrespect.”

<sup>592</sup> Latin American theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez and Maria Clara Lucchetti Binger emphasize that contributions to the *sensus fidelium* from Latin and South America, include liberation theology, the preferential option for the poor, base communities and “women listening to women.”

<sup>593</sup> Also in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 92-93.

See the popular universal Latin saying *vox populi, vox Dei* (the voice of the people is the voice of God) and the African proverbs: *The voice of many is heard by God. The voice of the people is the voice of God. Where there are many people God is there.*

In No. 119 of *The Joy of the Gospel* Pope Francis states:

In all the baptized, from first to last, the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, impelling us to evangelization. The People of God is holy thanks to this anointing, which makes it infallible *in credendo*. This means that it does not err in faith, even though it may not find words to explain that faith. The Spirit guides it in truth and leads it to salvation. As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an *instinct of faith* -- *sensus fidei* -- which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression.

The International Theological Commission in its 2014 document on “*Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*” explained the role of *sensus fidei* in the Catholic Church. This term is used to describe the people's collective ability to discern how the Gospel applies to their lives. The document focuses on ways to identify 'authentic' contributions to *sensus fidei* using two criteria: conformity to the apostolic tradition, and active participation in the life of the Church. The document's release coincides with the survey sent to episcopal conferences on the upcoming Synod of the Family.

Hopefully the SCCs in Eastern Africa will be able to contribute to the Extraordinary World Synod of Bishops on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization," to take place in Rome from 5-19 October, 2014. According to the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, an “extraordinary general session” of the synod is held to “deal with matters which require a speedy solution.” In emphasizing the church’s response to critical pastoral issues Pope Francis invites us to understand "frontier" in a much more expansive way and to reach out to those who don’t see much value in organized religion or who have been overlooked or excluded. He said that “a synodal [collegial] approach should be taken to the study” of the problems facing the family and marriage.

This chapter has summarized the contribution of SCCs to the content of the theology of the Church as Family of God in particular and the theology of communion and community in general. It is also important to describe and analyze the specific theological methods<sup>594</sup> or processes that are part of the overall contextual theological methodologies in Africa.

Historically, some seeds were sown when the Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern African Theologians (ESEAT) was formed in 1987 to promote contextual theology in Eastern Africa. In the symposium ecumenical scholars from all types of Christianity meet every year a week before Palm Sunday in a sharing and learning process that has continued until today. They present papers that are critiqued by their peers<sup>595</sup> as their diverse theological

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<sup>594</sup> An interesting background to this discussion is Bernard Lonergan’s *Method in Theology*.

<sup>595</sup> Part of this process is the development of a strong tradition of peer review in the African Christian theological journals in Kenya including *African Christian Studies*, *Hekima Review*,

perspectives interact with and challenge each other in a process of mutual consultation. Then they revise and update the papers. These scholars are prolific in research and ecumenically minded, willing to work as a team and committed to open learning that can deepen faith and extend their research horizons. This enhances the communal development of their contextual theology.

Their revised papers were published in 10 annual volumes in the “African Christianity Series” (1989-2002) on such topics as Christology, Ecclesiology, Missiology, Moral Theology, Pastoral Theology, Biblical Theology and Liturgy. The seventh volume was *Theological Method and Aspects of African Worship in African Christianity* (1998). Later topics including violence, democracy and reconciliation, poverty, challenges of the church in the 21st century, religion and health, religion and politics, urban ministry, ethnicity and peacebuilding were being published in the ongoing “ESEAT Series” (2005-2013).<sup>596</sup> It is interesting to track and analysis the shift in content in the two series.

In this contextual process African theologians must be involved with the real problems of Africa. Ngalula points out:

Theological research and publications must be linked to the present life of the church in Africa. African theologians must be attentive to the ways African Christians try to live their faith in Jesus Christ and strive to give evangelical responses to the questions raised in their own contexts especially in Small Christian Communities (SCCs).<sup>597</sup>

Today there is an emphasis on a new African Theological Process or Method or that is called by a variety of names: “African *Palaver* Theology;”<sup>598</sup> “African Theology as

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*Spearhead* Series and *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*. There is a close link between the process in revising and updating papers in various conferences and revising and updating articles for final publication in journals and books of collected essays.

<sup>596</sup> Summarized from Philomena Mwaura, “Regional Theological Associations and Theological Curriculum Development in East Africa: Challenges and Prospects,” *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2010), pps. 248-258, retrieved on 21 August, 2014, <http://docs.mak.ac.ug/sites/default/files/Regional%20Theological%20Associations%20and%20Theological%20Curriculum%20Development%20in%20East%20Africa%20-%20Philomena%20Mwaura.pdf>

<sup>597</sup> Josée Ngalula, “A Practice of Theology at the Service of African Societies: Some Lessons from the Experience of the Collections ‘The Bible and Women in Africa’” in Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, (ed.), *Theological Reimagination: Conversations on Church, Religion and Society in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2014, p. 132.

<sup>598</sup> Due to the considerable investment of time and energy necessary for successful *palaver*, the idea of *palaver* as a mechanism has often been derided as a typically African exercise in unproductive talk. But there are positive examples in everyday life such as marriage counseling, consensus at Parish Pastoral Council Meetings and making joint decisions at a SCC Meeting. Research shows that consensus and ownership of a decision in SCC meetings is long, slow and winding process especially in money matters.

Conversation;” “African Conversation Theology;” African Christian *Palaver* Theology;” and “African Christian Conversation Theology.”<sup>599</sup> or just “*Palaver* Theology”/”Conversational Theology”). It is both the name of a process/ method of theology and the name of the type of content of theology (like Liberation Theology). Method heavily influences/determines content and vice versa. It is a two-way process that illuminates and enriches African values and Christian values. It is similar to Mango Tree Theology, Theology Under a Tree, Shade Tree Theology<sup>600</sup> and Story-telling Theology. It is related to *Matatu* Theology.<sup>601</sup>

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American diocesan missionary priest Father Bill Vos comments:

It is good to have the experience that I had in processing pastoral issues while in Tanzania articulated as a theological method! I recall the experience that took some "learning" on my part of sitting with a *baraza* where everyone spoke. The people not infrequently repeated what had already been said and verbally chewed on an issue from all sides. It was painstakingly long for me, but eventually resulting in a consensus. Initially I said to myself, "what happened!", we didn't vote on it!" But I learned and came to appreciate the benefits including avoiding the "win-lose" aspect of decision-making by an up or down vote, and the positive side of it, an agreement that allowed everyone to "own it."

Email message to the author dated 3 September, 2013.

There are also positive examples of using palaver in the political area. Examples are Kofi Anan’s long, patient and seemingly endless discussions with Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga on resolving the Kenya political crisis in 2008. The various mechanisms for peace making, conflict resolution and social transformation in Africa such as the Gecaca Courts in Rwanda and the “Mato Oput” process in Northern Uganda. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa that is really a modernized form of African palaver. See Richard Kimosop Chelimo, “The Palaver: A Model To Reconcile Africa?” *SEDOS Bulletin*, 2011, No. 199. SEDOS Website, retrieved 30 July, 2014, [http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc\\_view/1845-the-palaver-a-model-to-reconcile-africa](http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc_view/1845-the-palaver-a-model-to-reconcile-africa)

<sup>599</sup> Terminology is a complex issue. Among the many types of African Theology there is African Islamic Theology and African [Traditional] Religion Theology. Within African Christian Theology there are many types or streams (in alphabetical order): Catholic, Evangelical, Mainline Protestant and Pentecostal.

<sup>600</sup> This term describes the ordinary conversation of, and with, African village peasants/university students/lay leaders who come together to interpret the Gospel in the light of the pressing challenges of their circumstances. This theology focuses on the empowerment of peasants. See the ideas of Bénézet Bujo, Jean Marc Ela, Emmanuel Katongele, Teresa Okure and Elochukwu Uzukwu.

<sup>601</sup> *Matatu* Theology or *Matatu* Philosophy was coined in Nairobi to describe a theology of streets, of the grassroots, of ordinary people. *Matatu* (the Swahili word for 30 cents in the local Kenyan currency or the original cost of a bus ride) is the small minivan is that is the most popular means of public transportation in Kenya. This a form of theology and

This is African Theology as Conversation,<sup>602</sup> Active Dialog, Intensive Listening and Learning from Each Other (described as “listening in conversation”) and Consensus. Conversation is a very important way of doing theology on the continent of Africa.<sup>603</sup> This is a new way of doing African Christian Theology that is conversational, participatory, collaborative, cross-disciplinary, and multi-generational. It includes oral theological conversation. American Mennonite theologian Harold Miller who has served in East Africa for many years says:

“Palaver theology” is a genre whose time has come. A most helpful addition to the range of approaches already commonplace... The connection between the spoken Word, on the one hand, and physical, social, spiritual and political realities, on the other, has been noted and highlighted by African theologians. In this regard, Bénézet Bujo wrote the following: “[In Africa] the word possesses such tremendous power that it can either create or destroy the community. This means that the word signifies life or death—it is medicine or poison. But it depends on the speaker whether the word brings life or death. Africans hold that when one hears the word, one also eats it and drinks it. Thus it is important how the word is digested, so that it may be invested anew in the community” (“The Palaver as Process for Discovering and Justifying Norms” in the book: *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2003. Nairobi, Kenya. p. 68).<sup>604</sup>

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theologizing that is not the academic theology of the university and the theological college, but of ordinary people riding in their minivans. This was popularized by Rodrigo Mejia and is described in Sahaya Selvam, “A Matatu Theology,” *Beyond the Ordinary: The Spiritual Journal of a Missionary*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, pp. 15-18.

This is related to what Sister Ilia Delio, OFM the American Franciscan woman theologian who seems less inclined to do traditional academic theology says: "I'd like to do theology with the people in the malls, in the parks and on Facebook." Jamie, Manson, “The Evolution of Ilia Delio,” 16 July, 2014, National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved 20 July, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/grace-margins/evolution-ilia-delio>

<sup>602</sup> In the meetings and writings of theologians worldwide the idea of Catholic theology as “conversation” is becoming more and more common. A report of the annual conference of the Catholic Theological Association in Durham, England in September, 2013 states: “All the members seem to like the idea of Catholic theology as a ‘conversation’”. Brendan Walsh, “Meet the Glums,” *Tablet*, 21 September, 2013, p.15. We can ask: “Is the West finally learning from Africa?”

A related example is the title “A Conversation on African Spirituality” for the Book Launch of African theologian Laurenti Magesa’s book *What is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* at Tangaza Theological College in Nairobi on 7 April, 2014.

<sup>603</sup> American theologian David Tracy writes about “theology as a conversation” as part of theological method.

<sup>604</sup> Harold Miller in an email to the author dated 28 October, 2013.

Carney gives a concrete example in DRC:

Congolese CEVBs embrace a well-honed process of Christian communal reconciliation following the African model of “palaver.” In the traditional palaver model, community elders would gather with representatives of the disputing sides, offering them the opportunity to dialogue on their grievances and ritually celebrate their reconciliation. In contemporary Congo, CEVB advocates and other parish leaders known as “Guardians of Reconciliation” serve in these mediating roles. Both sides are given the opportunity to discuss openly and honestly their perspectives on the conflict, and perpetrators are urged to take responsibility for their actions. Once a resolution has been reached, perpetrators signal reconciliation through giving victims a chicken, goat, house or other material sign of repentance. Reconciliation is then ritually marked within the broader community; the conflicting sides publicly hug, shake hands, and share a meal together. In the words of one Tshumbe CEVB leader, “you can’t eat with your enemy,” so the shared meal is perhaps the most important sign of communal reconciliation.<sup>605</sup>

The starting point of this kind of African Christian Theology is both context and experience.<sup>606</sup> Local, contextual theologies can be constructed in Africa with the local community/communities as “theologian.” The SCC is a natural place (*locus*) of theology and theological conversation.

Orobator writes:

Doing theology is not an isolated enterprise, particularly in Africa where doing theology is a community event. At Hekima College where I teach, one of my favorite classes is called simply “*Palaver Session*.” This is the time when students sit in a round hut and talk about God, faith, and their religious experiences in an African context. Sometimes we have something to drink and munch on as we dialogue, debate and converse.<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> J.J. Carney, “The People Bonded Together,” p. 316.

<sup>606</sup> Experience as the starting point of theology is especially true throughout the Global South (Africa, Asia and Latin America). Sri Lankan Redemptorist theologian Father Vimal Tirimanna, CSSR, explains this very well:

The “classical European theology” perceives faith as a body of truths and dogmas and uses philosophy to explain them. Asian theology, on the other hand, starts with the experience of the faith and analyzes concrete situations with the help of sociology, psychology and anthropology along with Asian resources. What matters to the bishops in Asia is the daily experiences of their people rather than “purely abstract theological concepts.”

Jose Kavi, “Catholic Moral Theologians Scan Asian Reality,” *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 14-27 August, 2015, *NCR Website*, retrieved on 13 August, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/global/catholic-moral-theologians-scan-asian-reality>

Canadian theologian Ms. Diane Stinton writes:

As the conversations spread across Africa today, theologians call for “Christian *palaver*.” The term “palaver” comes from the Portuguese word ‘*palavra*’, meaning “speech” or “word,” stemming from the Latin *parabola* (“parable”, “speech”).

The English term “palaver” often carries the sense of prolonged, tiresome talk or idle chatter – “talking on and on” -- used in a pejorative sense. Various commentators have said that the word palaver just carries too much “negative baggage” to be used effectively in the West. An exception are Black American and African women theologians in the USA who use the process in their theologizing.<sup>608</sup>

The concept and practice of “palaver” in Africa is very different. The fundamental notion of “word” remains at the heart of African palaver, where the word, whether spoken or unspoken, carries great power for it can either create or destroy the community. The word may be danced or dramatized or symbolized in art, or manifested in action or behavior within the community. Importantly, in Africa the concept of community is three dimensional, encompassing the living, the dead, and those not yet born. So, as Laurenti Magesa explains, “The sole purpose of the African *palaver* aims at creating, strengthening or restoring relationships for the sake of “the fullness” of life of the community through fellowship among all three dimensions of the community.”<sup>609</sup> In addition, the community exists only in relation to the Transcendent and the entire cosmos.

Bénézet Bujo adds that “the art of the *palaver* consists in setting out on a journey of exploration.”<sup>610</sup> Every member of the community has the right to participate, whether in speech or symbolic action. Hence African *palaver* guarantees equality in terms of accessing speech. In addition, the community reaches decisions not by compromise or voting according to the majority view, but only by establishing a solid consensus among all members. Thus the fundamental experience is based on communion; as participants engage together in “receiving,” “chewing” and “digesting” those words that bring life to the community. As Bujo explains, “In the *palaver* each person who speaks is a *ruminant* who, like certain animals, rechews the word eaten and drunk for a long time. In this way each person who speaks puts their word to the test so

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<sup>607</sup> Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe E., *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, Maryknoll, New York, USA: Orbis Books, 2008, page xi.

<sup>608</sup> Based on conversations with John Sivalon, Randy Young, Helen Mugambi and others.

<sup>609</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004, p. 161.

<sup>610</sup> Bénézet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001, p. 76. A fuller treatment of the meaning of palaver can be found in this book.

that the community can confirm or invalidate the vivifying effectiveness of what comes out of the mouth.”<sup>611</sup>

In the context of Christian *palaver*, the creative, life-giving Word of God has now become flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Just as the Emmaus disciples came to perceive the Risen Jesus in the opening of Scripture and the breaking of bread, with overtones of the Eucharist celebration, so African believers come to perceive Christ’s presence today through reflecting on Scripture and engaging in Christian worship and ministry. African *palaver* thus provides one image for understanding African theology, in terms of a serious conversation among believers who meditatively chew on the Word of God in their respective contexts and offer an interpretation of its meaning and implications for communal consideration.<sup>612</sup>

A Case Study of this *palaver* or conversation method or process is seen in the development of the essays in the book *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace – the Second African Synod* edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator who explains:

This methodology of dialog and “listening in conversation” has been adapted to the purposes of this book. The preparatory phase included a two-day conference in Nairobi, Kenya, in March 2010. The conference served as the occasion for exploring the synodal literature and conducting intensive discussion among the contributors and other invited participants. As a condition for participation, contributors submitted their papers in advance; the papers were distributed ahead of the conference to all participants [to be read and reflected upon ahead of time]. At the conference, each contributor briefly summarized the central thesis of his or her paper, following which a designated respondent presented a critical response.<sup>613</sup> Each paper was then subjected to an intensive discussion by all attendees. This volume contains the papers revised and edited for publication in light of the overall discussion and conclusions<sup>614</sup> of the conference. Not all the papers are published in this

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<sup>611</sup> Bénézet Bujo, *Christmas: God Becomes Man in Black Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995.

<sup>612</sup> Diane Stinton in the “Introduction” to Stinton, Diane (ed.). *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations*, London: SPCK International Study Guide 46, 2010.

<sup>613</sup> This process is very different from many conferences in Rome and other places that begins with a top down approach: a series of magisterial lectures with little time for interaction and open discussion.

<sup>614</sup> Conclusions included using a uniform style in the writing and editing of the essays, for example, using “African Religion” rather than “African Traditional Religion.”

The complexity of language, words and meanings was emphasized and how meanings shift according to context. In English more and more the word “traditional” has a “negative”/“primitive”/“backward”/“old fashioned” meaning or ring to it. The word is more positive in French. “Indigenous” still has a positive meaning in the sense of “local.” Two further examples: “Traditional” can be negative in terms of culture as in “traditional religions.” But it is positive in the sense of the “Church Tradition” or the “Tradition of the

volume, but the final list of chapters represents the fruit of active dialog and intensive listening among theologians and friends. It exemplifies the practice of palaver that emphasizes open conversation in community and prioritizes consensus over confrontation. The conversational ethics of dialog and listening characteristic of the Second African Synod provides the foundation and inspiration for this volume on reconciliation, justice, and peace.<sup>615</sup>

“*Palaver sessions*”<sup>616</sup> referred to the participants engaging in open conversations in view of contributing to and clarifying their understanding of the specific topics of African Christianity/African Christian Theology under consideration. A unique feature was that participants actively engaged in a cumulative learning process. They didn’t just wait their turn to give prepared comments on the original paper. Their comments added to and built on earlier comments. This created a process of evolving clarity and mutual enrichment. The writers’ final drafts included new ideas and insights from the conference’s theological conversations. Some of the final essays in the book added references to other writers’ essays and newly learned ideas. For example, the essay on women in Africa and the essay on laity in Zimbabwe quoted ideas from the essay on “Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa.”

The published volume reflected the dynamics of these conversations. Kenyan theologian Jesse Mugambi, the publisher of the African Edition of this book, emphasizes that “palaver then becomes a ‘conversational’ method of expressing theological insights.”<sup>617</sup> Several essays in the book refer to SCCs including one full essay on “Small Christian Communities: “Promoters of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa.”

But Mugambi prefers the term “African Theology as Conversation” to “African Palaver Theology” for several reasons. The latter expression carries too much baggage. To many people in Africa *palaver* is an obscure word and not well known. It does not communicate “Africanness.” It connotes superficial talk, even long-winded, idle, and useless chatter. It comes across as “theology lite.” He likes “African Theology as Conversation” even better than “African Conversation Theology” because the emphasis is on the conversation

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Church” capitalized (the historical teaching of the Christian Church such as the Patristic Period in the first centuries AD). “Primitive” can be negative in terms of culture as in “primitive religions” and “primitive people.” But it is positive in the sense of the “Primitive Church” capitalized (the Christian Church in the first centuries AD).

Based on discussions with Laurenti Magesa and Helen Mugambi.

<sup>615</sup> Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, page 3.

<sup>616</sup> The international Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA) is a “Three-year Theological Research Project in the Currents of the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II” taking place in Nairobi in 2013-2015. This conversation theological research seminar uses *palaver* sessions, *baraza* sessions to provoke discussion and conversation (the art of theological discourse and conversation) and a roundtable on African theology that is a live/informal interactive session.

<sup>617</sup> Jesse Mugambi in an email to the author dated 19 November, 2010.

process. Similarly he prefers Theology of Liberation to Liberation Theology because it gives more weight to the liberation process.<sup>618</sup>

At the Second Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA II) in Nairobi, Kenya in August, 2014 several participants pointed out that the word *palaver* carries a lot of semantic baggage regarding its history and meaning. The word has too many negative connotations and association. It can distract people from the more important topic of the method of African theology itself. So they prefer the more neutral term “African Theology as Conversation.”

But the process is clear: “I wanted to make a shift from individual, isolated theologians ruminating on faith and life issues,” Orobator explained. Instead, he is trying to create something new – “a small community of theologians conversing, collaborating and conducting research on Church, religion and society.”<sup>619</sup> He said that the book of colloquium papers intended to go beyond the immediate concerns of the African theology and be a contribution to the universal church. It will serve as a catalyst for wide-ranging cross-cultural and critical conversations on church, religion and society.

Writing in 2014 Orobator states: “Of all the models of conversational and communicative styles in African cultures *palaver* seems the most theologically fertile.”<sup>620</sup> The essays in the book *Theological Reimagination: Conversations on Church, Religion and Society in Africa* resulted from an experience of African *palaver* that doubled as a theological research project. *Theological Reimagination* depicted the central task of the African theologians who gathered in conversation about church, religion and society. Whether as *palaver* or *Ubuntu* the theological enterprise operates as a collaborative effort regulated by the communicative ethics of mutual listening and respective dialogue.<sup>621</sup>

As we continue to explore different aspects of African contextual theology many challenges remain. One is to dig deeper into the African meaning of *palaver* and give it more universal respectability. That it continues to be used in the current literature is significant. In the “Foreword” to *Endless Quest*, the 2014 Festschrift in honor of Laurenti Magesa, Aylward Shorter writes: “[Magesa] has remained in touch with ordinary Catholics through his continuous pastoral work. He practices – it has been said – a conversational theology, ‘a palaver theology’ that uses a story-telling method.”<sup>622</sup>

There are similar “*palaver*” and “conversation” words in African culture. *Indaba* is a term that comes from a Zulu, South Africa word meaning "business" or "matter" and is equivalent to *palaver*. The term has found widespread use throughout Southern Africa and

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<sup>618</sup> Summary of the author’s conversation with Jesse Mugambi in Nairobi on 12 October, 2013.

<sup>619</sup> See Brendan Walsh, “African Paradoxes,” *Tablet* 23 October 2014, Tablet Website, retrieved on 23 October, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/3174/african-paradoxes>

<sup>620</sup> Orobator, *Theological Reimagination*, p. 9.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>622</sup> Aylward Shorter, “Foreword,” *Endless Quest*, p. ii.

often simply means “gathering” or “meeting.” There are *indaba* groups in traditional African culture where people get together to sort out the problems that affect them all, where everyone has a voice and where there is an attempt to find a common mind or a common story that everyone is able to tell when they go away. It is along the lines of: “This is how we approached it.” “This is what we heard.” “This is where we arrived as we prayed and thought and talked/conversed together.”

Anglican Church conversation leading to consensus. **ADD**

This is related to *Ubuntu* that has its origin in the Bantu languages of southern Africa such as Zulu. It describes a South African ethic or humanist philosophy that focusing on people's allegiances and relations with each other – the essence of being human. It can be variously translated as “togetherness” or “interconnectedness” or “humanity.” It expresses the African saying *I am because we are*.

The Swahili word *baraza* refers to both the meeting place and the meeting/conversation itself.<sup>623</sup>

Orobator further explores “African Theology as Conversation” in the book *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice, Building Peace: Conversations in Catholic Theological Ethics in Africa*. The subtitle of the book is, in itself, significant. He states:

From the perspective of methodology, the format of the initial CTEWC [Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church] seminar took the shape of conversation – women and men, lay and religious, clerics and ecclesiastics, young and old – who asked and explored proving questions, cleared new paths and articulated viable options. A critical component of this approach is the readiness to listen to and to learn from one another. The setting of the seminar recalled the African *palaver* model of dialogue and consensus in addressing pertinent theological and ethical issues. This conversation was led by newer African scholars in dialogue with established scholars and ecclesial leaders [including three bishops].<sup>624</sup>

He expands this conversational theological methodology by saying:

Strong, dynamic currents are shaping the flow of theological discourse in Africa. A unique characteristic of this discourse is the widening circle of conversation partners. African theologians no longer content themselves with talking to like-minded theologians; they engage bishops, civil society groups and government representatives as conversational partners in a rational

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<sup>623</sup> One has to be very careful in research and proper usage. Our African Proverbs Working Group discovered that the Sukuma, Tanzania word *susu* is similar to *palaver*. But later we learned that it also means “shit” in Sheng, the popular street language in Kenya. The difference is that the pronunciation of the Sukuma word *susu* is tonal with the first syllable having a higher tone and emphasis.

<sup>624</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice, Building Peace: Conversations in Catholic Theological Ethics in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013, p. 20.

dialogue and critical analysis within society and in the [Catholic] Church. This conversational methodology breaks new ground in theological scholarship in Africa and represents a new way of doing theology in which collaboration and conversation win over confrontation and adversarial positions. The result is a process of mutual listening and learning, a vital ingredient for constructing what veteran African theologian Elochukwu Uzukwu designates “the listening church.”<sup>625</sup>

Tanzanian Jesuit theologian Father Gabriel Mnassi, SJ offers additional insights as he links palaver and SCCs.

The formation of Small Christian Communities as the model of the Church in Eastern Africa is a direct response to particular realities as well as an interpretation of the teachings of Vatican II: it is a move *from* the Church that understands itself first and foremost as the hierarchy and the clergy to a community in which the role of these two (hierarchy and the clergy) are challenged to focus mainly on offering leadership, that is, stimulate, encourage and strengthen the exercise of the many gifts of the Spirit in every Christian community and devise a way of enforcing them practically. In this model, the Word of God enjoys a prominent place for the following reasons: first, as one of the principle elements constituting the church; second, as a direct reflection of the *palaver* model of being Church; third, in a Church where a good size of community, initially unable to participate in the life of the Church in any meaningful way because of its condition of life, is offered a viable alternative.<sup>626</sup> In words of Dieudonné M. Ngona, “the Word of God is among the prominent characteristics of the Small Christian Communities.”<sup>627</sup>

Pope Francis offers an interesting insight into this process of listening and learning from one another as we experience the richness of diversity: “It is important to remember Aparecida [2009 meeting in Brazil], the method of gathering diversity together. Not so much a diversity of ideas in order to produce a document, but a variety of experiences of God, in order to set a vital process in motion.”<sup>628</sup>

There is a connection between African Christian *Palaver* Theology/African Christian Theology as Conversation and African Christian Narrative Theology. They are part of each other. They form a union. One type of inculturation theology is an African narrative theology of inculturation. The starting part is African culture, but specifically African oral literature

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<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>626</sup> George N. Gichuhu, *The Spirituality of SCCs in Eastern Africa*, pp. 51-55. Of note here is the ability to worship even in absence of the Eucharistic celebration; also, the ability of instantaneous prayers by the participants in these gatherings.

<sup>627</sup> Gabriel Mnassi, “*Palaver: A Challenge for African Church Leadership*,” Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, California, USA: Conference on Theology: Local Ecclesiologies in Dialogue, 2009, Santa Clara: Unpublished Paper

<sup>628</sup> Francis, “Francis' Address to Bishops [of Brazil],” 27 July, 2013, in an email message from the *Zenit Daily Dispatch*, 27 July, 2013.

and the wide range of narrative and oral forms: proverbs, sayings, riddles, stories, myths, plays, and songs explained in their historical and cultural contexts. These oral forms especially proverbs and sayings are a very natural and very popular form of African *palaver*, conversation and speech. There is a famous Igbo, Nigeria saying *Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten*. They are a way of life for SCC members especially on the local level.

Kenyan theologian Sister Anne Nasimiyu, LSOSF states: "The oral literature of the African people is their unwritten *Bible*. This religious wisdom is found in African idioms, wise sayings, legends, myths, stories, proverbs and oral history."<sup>629</sup> Kenyan theologian John Mbiti adds: "Proverbs are a rich source of African Religion and philosophy. They contain and point to a deep spirituality, as well as theological and philosophical insights. In this case they form a bridge between traditional African religiosity and biblical teaching."<sup>630</sup>

Waliggo states:

Our [African] theological style is very concerned with narrative, expressing teachings in story. Our people listen better when you give them a story. This means using local expressions and rituals, linking the gospel to their story. Everything is brought into the story, the animals, the plants, the whole environment. It's a way of doing theology that almost dead in the West, but it's very biblical.<sup>631</sup>

American theologian and storyteller John Shea and others<sup>632</sup> have popularized Story Theology, but Narrative Theology is broader and more inclusive of all narrative forms.<sup>633</sup> This is a relatively new type of African theology. Ghanaian theologian Bishop John Pobee states:

The urgent task is the collection of myths, proverbs, invocations, prayers, incantations, ritual, songs, dreams and so on. The collections made so far are rather haphazard and are part of sociological and anthropological

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<sup>629</sup> Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, "Feminism and African Theology," *African Christian Studies*, 9, 2 (June, 1993), p. 22.

<sup>630</sup> John Mbiti, "Children Confer Glory On a Home," *Draft Introduction to African Proverbs Series*, Burgdorf: Unpublished Paper, 1993, p. 2.

<sup>631</sup> John Waliggo in an interview with John Allen, *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 14 July, 2014.

<sup>632</sup> See John Shea, *Stories of God: An Unauthorized Biography* (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1978) and *Stories of Faith* (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1980). See also books by John Aurelio, William Bausch, Frederick Buechner, John Dominic Crossan, Anthony de Mello, Joseph Donders, John Dunne, John Navone, Basil Pennington, Terrence Tilley and Elie Wiesel.

<sup>633</sup> Narrative forms of theology are also found in the novels, short stories, plays, and poetry of African writers. It is significant that the novels and plays of the Nigerian writers Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka contain many African proverbs and sayings.

studies. We are asking for the specific theological mind to be brought to bear on the vast materials of the sources of African Traditional Religion.<sup>634</sup>

Various books of stories, myths, parables, proverbs, sayings, riddles, and other types of African oral literature, the art and symbols, and grassroots experiences are part of the rich cultural history and contemporary praxis of the people of Africa. Mbiti points out that

African oral theology is a living reality. We must come to terms with it. We must acknowledge its role in the total life of the church. It is the most articulate expression of theological creativity in Africa. This form of theology gives the church a certain measure of theological selfhood and independence.<sup>635</sup>

Many oral theology sources come from the African *palaver* and African conversation experience. Proverb conversations and story-telling feed into the open-endedness of *palaver*. These sources are theological raw materials for local African theologians to follow up on. The gems of the culture and the experience of the African people continue to be shaped and honed. African proverbs, stories and other types of oral literature are like diamonds that need theologians and others to cut and polish more incisively to display their richness and beauty. Speaking specifically of the stories and examples in *Towards an African Narrative Theology* Magesa states this book can be "a stimulus for many other works in this line."<sup>636</sup> So we can make a link between the African *palaver* and African conversation in small groups/small communities and the emergence of proverb theology and story-telling theology.

Another dimension of African Narrative Theology as part of African Christian Theology can be found in Magesa's essay, "Endless Quest: The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian," in a book by the same name. His personal theological journey in Africa and the stories connected with it could be described as autobiographical narrative theology. He places his and other theologians' experience in an African context:

Jesus' practical oneness with humanity, his solidarity with the everyday life of the people "in the village," as Efoe Julien Penoukou put it, is the point. Here Jesus is seen as one with the people: he walks with them, knows everyone of them, and is concerned about their successes and failures. As an Ancestor, he can be reached when people need him. Many of the relational qualities of this Jesus of the village, the Elder Brother and Proto-Ancestor of humanity, were incarnated by theologians, albeit imperfectly, by persons who embodied the spirit of human solidarity from different parts of the world. So African Theology became also narrative, bio- or auto-biographical theology.<sup>637</sup>

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<sup>634</sup> John Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p. 21.

<sup>635</sup> John Mbiti, "Cattle Are Born With Ears, Their Horns Grow Later: Towards an Appreciation of African Oral Theology" in *All African Lutheran Consultation on Christian Theology and Christian Education for the African Context* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1978), 49-50.

<sup>636</sup> Laurenti Magesa in Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African*, p. 377.

<sup>637</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *Endless Quest*, pp.18-19.

In explaining the methodology and process of the *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice, Building Peace: Conversations in Catholic Theological Ethics in Africa* seminar and book mentioned above, Orobator states:

Reconciliation, justice, and peace concern concrete situations that affect the continent... Instead of simply enunciating principles and creating scenarios, theological ethics has a narrative task: to give voice to the stories of victims and articulate in uncompromising terms the gospel virtues and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) that offer hope of redress and healing.<sup>638</sup>

Orobator also points out that a useful lesson on the nature and method of theological reflection in Africa emphasizes the necessity of taking experience (an inductive starting point) and context seriously. This means

repositioning theological reflection within the context of community called church and the wider society. Consequently, it becomes clear that it is not enough to theologize exclusively on the basis of the intellectual acumen of the theologian, while he or she comfortably ensconces himself or herself in the protected milieu of academia. “The work of theologizing,” or, according to Tutu, the “exhilarating business” of theological reflection, must spring from the forthright observation and experience of the situation in the life of the believing community wherein echoes the strong but gentle wind of the Spirit.<sup>639</sup>

Nigerian theologian Afe Adogame points out that an important element of “doing theology” in Africa today is a dialogue that is not confined to the seminary or the academy. African churches offer spaces of dialogue that are empowering in themselves:

They engage in theological reflection with grassroots men, women and even children in *Bible* study groups, house-cell fellowships,<sup>640</sup> seminars and workshops. Thus African churches, through their numerous programs based on the specific socio-cultural and political contexts in which they operate, are developing, writing and accessing a theology of their own.<sup>641</sup>

This shift away from the theology of the Academy, of the Library, of the Ivory Tower, and “Laboratory Theology” to African contextual theology on the grassroots,

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<sup>638</sup> Orobator, *Practicing Reconciliation*, p. 20.

<sup>639</sup> Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, “The Sky is Wide Enough: A Historical-Critical Appraisal of Theological Activity and Method in Africa,” *Hekima Review*, 40 (May, 2009), page 41.

<sup>640</sup> The Anglican (Episcopalian) name for SCCs.

<sup>641</sup> Afe Adogame in *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations*. Edited by Diane Stinton (London: SPCK International Study Guide 46, 2010), 170.

to lay people involved in the “local community as theologian” is significant. The emphasis is on praxis not principles.

South African Redemptorist Bishop Kevin Dowling, CSSR of Rustenburg Diocese describes contextual theology in South Africa as “doing theology at the coal face,” that is, the dialog on grassroots issues with people on the local level such as coal miners and day laborers. This means listening to victims of systemic violence and reflecting on the structural causes of poverty, war and violence.<sup>642</sup>

Doing participatory theology with local people on the ground such as SCC members can lead to practical, pastoral solutions. Ugandan theologian John Waliggo calls this “contextual theologies from below.” Kalilombe call this “doing theology at the grassroots.”<sup>643</sup> It involves ordinary people who are not professional or specialist theologians. Members of the believing community actively engage in reflecting on their faith in the context of their everyday life. Following the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” methodology, people use social analysis and the light of the Gospel to transform society. They take responsibility in making their faith bear fruit on the challenges of their personal life and their mission in society. The less formally educated reflect upon and give relevant shape to their faith commitment and then search for appropriate ways of putting it into practice. In this communitarian theology they question the *status quo* and work to change it.

Nigerian Scripture Scholar Sister Teresa Okure, SHCJ emphasizes the importance of African women theologians’ dialogue with people on the grassroots. When someone described Teresa’s own method or process of reading the *Bible* with people who were not Bible experts as “marketplace hermeneutics,”<sup>644</sup> she considered it the “highest compliment” because this was the very method that Jesus used.

An interesting Case Study of how an African theologian has helped to develop the theology of SCCs is described as follows: In June, 2011 I lived at Father Michael Kirwen, MM’s house near Langata, Nairobi, Kenya while participating in an AMECEA Meeting at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). Another house guest was Father Laurenti Magesa who was teaching in the Maryknoll Institute of African Studies (MIAS) at the Tangaza University College. At the time I was writing this present book that eventually became *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications – CUEA Press Double *Spearhead* Nos. 199-200 (2012). 163 pages. The Digital Version updated as of 28 October, 2013 is 321 pages and is available as a free Ebook on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf)

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<sup>642</sup> See Ellen Teague, “Bishop Kevin Dowling: How Do I Tell the Poor that God Loves Them?,” Independent Catholic News (ICN) Website, 29 June, 2014, retrieved on 27 September, 2014, <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=25048>

<sup>643</sup> This theological method is described at length in Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi*, Gweru: Mambo Press. 1999.

<sup>644</sup> Also called “local community hermeneutics.”

I would write drafts of the theological sections of this book in the early morning and then discuss them with Laurenti in the late afternoon. It was a stimulating and enriching experience of theological conversation and dialog – what we now frequently call African Palaver Theology. Laurenti explained that the starting point is the grassroots experiences themselves. Then the theologian reflects on them and articulates them in a more systematic theological way. Laurenti suggested a process in which I would describe specific Small Christian Communities (SCCs) activities, events and case studies – a kind of summary of CCs praxis on the grassroots, local level. Afterwards he would theologize on these experiences. We discussed both the theological implications and the practical applications. We were really using the steps in the Pastoral Spiral (better known as the Pastoral Circle). Then I would enter the fruit of our conversations in the updated draft of my book the next day.

To take a specific example we discussed the growth and justice and peace outreach of SCCs in Eastern Africa in the last 10 years. SCCs have been actively involved in reconciliation in Kenya after the 2008 post-election violence both within individual SCCs and as part of wider reconciliation services and ceremonies especially due to the annual Kenyan Lenten Campaign. The use of the "See," "Judge" and "Act" Process/Methodology of the Pastoral Spiral made a significant difference in helping to analyze the local situation and to decide on practical solutions. Magesa theologized on these new justice and peace outreaches of SCCs in Kenya (presented earlier in this chapter and in Chapter Five). For example, he took the SCCs Case Study on “Reconciliation between the Kalenjin and Kikuyu” that used a *palaver* style of conversation, discussion and dialog to resolve local problems (found on page 96) to develop elements of an African Theology of Reconciliation and Peace.

Both this current praxis and our discussions led me to refocus the aim of my SCCs Seminar at Hekima College to read: “To examine how Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are a New Model of Church and a New Way of Being Church in promoting justice, reconciliation and peace in Africa today.”

Laurenti’s ideas and insights on SCCs have added immensely to this present book. In the “Acknowledgements” Section on page 5 I state: “This book is a team effort, a community effort. Many, many people have contributed anecdotes, data, documents, examples, experiences, ideas, insights, quotations, resources, statistics, stories and suggestions as seen in the extensive list of names in the “Bibliography” and “Index.” I mention...The African theologians who have articulated the theological framework for this new model of church from the bottom up.”<sup>645</sup>

I continue to add to the online version of this book that has now reached 589 pages. I did a “Search” in this book for “Magesa” and found 66 matches. As a tribute to Magesa’s 40 years of priesthood and his professional career as an African theologian I presented some of his ideas and insights on Small Christian Communities in an article published in the *Festschrift* (special volume) for Professor Laurenti Magesa called *The Endless Quest: The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian* edited by Jesse Mugambi and published by Acton Publishers in Nairobi in 2014.

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<sup>645</sup> Page 5 of the online Digital Version of the book on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website retrieved on 5 June, 2013,  
[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf)

Another interesting Case Study of African Palaver Theology/African Theology as Conversation on the grassroots, local level was the time when the author was asked to prepare the Homily Notes for the "Weekly Reflections for the 2012-2013 Election Year" inspired by the *Bible* Readings of each Sunday in the "Yes, Kenya Matters Campaign" that was a new online resource to promote civic education before the Kenya General Election in March, 2013. These reflections were circulated by the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC) Commission of the Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya (RSCK) free every week for personal prayer, homilies and SCC meetings.

I could have prepared these notes in the traditional way –by myself and using commentaries, biblical exegesis, etc. Instead I prepared these notes in an African *palaver*/conversation way with members of my St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in the Waruku Section of St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya. Eight of us (six men and two women) first read the three Sunday Reading ourselves. Then we met together to read and reflect especially on the First Reading and the Gospel. Then we applied the readings to our daily life and local Kenyan context. In the process we theologized – what Schreier called "the local community as theologian." Our secretary wrote a draft of our reflections. Then we revised it. A summary of these Homily Notes is as follows:

The first example is the **FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B) 6 May 2012**<sup>646</sup>

**1. Readings:**

*Acts* 9:26-31

*I John* 3:18-24

*John* 15:1-8



**2. Scripture Focus/Biblical Reflection**

- Let us make our home in Jesus Christ as he makes his home in us. As disciples of Christ we must remain in him as His words remain in us. We are branches united with God in Christ Jesus.
- God is love. We should love one another as we are all God's creation.
- If we are united in Jesus Christ we will see people from other ethnic groups (tribes) in Kenya as our brothers and sisters.
- The peace of the Risen Christ brings healing. We should embrace forgiveness and reconciliation in order to bear more fruit.

**3. Link with Catholic Social Teaching (CST)**

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<sup>646</sup> Published on the Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University Website  
<http://www.kucatholic.or.ke> **ADD**

- “Elections represent a platform for the expression of a people’s political decisions, and they are a sign of legitimacy for the exercise of power. They provide a privileged opportunity for healthy and serene public political debate, marked by respect for different opinions and different political groupings. If conducted well, elections call forth and encourage real and active participation by citizens in political and social life. Failure to respect the national constitution, the law or the outcome of the vote, when elections have been free, fair and transparent, would signal a grave failure in governance and a lack of competence in the administration of public affairs” (Number 81 in *Africa’s Commitment*).
- Small Christian Communities are "Living (or Vital) Christian Communities committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups" (Number 89 in *The Church in Africa*).
- “We have experienced that a properly trained and led SCC adds great value to the promotion of reconciliation. This is because deeper biblical reflection and more regular use of the Pastoral Circle empower our Christians to engage effectively in the social life around them. Here formation in Catholic Social Teaching (CST) at all levels must be a priority” (AMECEA Statement).
- “It can be helpful for you to form associations in order to continue shaping your Christian conscience and supporting one another in the struggle for justice and peace. The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and the ‘new communities’ are fundamental structures for fanning the flame of your Baptism” (Number 131 in *Africa’s Commitment*).
- “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully app to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation” (No. 6 in *Justice in the World*, 1971 World Synod of Bishops).

#### **4. Yes, Kenya Matters (Kenyan Life Focus)**

- As the Kenya National Anthem suggests let justice be our shield and defender and may we dwell in unity, peace and liberty.
- As SCC members we are branches of our Kenya Government on the grassroots to promote peace and unity with our brothers and sisters.
- During this Election Year in Kenya it is our responsibility to promote civic education on the local level.
- We should encourage the equal distribution of resources in Kenya.

#### **5. Questions for Reflection and Sharing**

- How can you participate in the next General Election as an individual/Small Christian Community/Community?
- What is your role to ensure peaceful elections as an individual/Small Christian Community/Community?
- In the light of the Gospel how can we promote forgiveness and reconciliation in Kenya in order to bear more fruit?
- What can we do to bring about peace and unity in our families, communities and country of Kenya?

## 6. African Wisdom

- In the light of the Gospel there is the African story “God Is like a Large Baobab Tree:” “One day my pick-up truck broke down. After I waited for half an hour, a big Coca-Cola lorry came by and the driver, a Muslim named Musa, kindly towed my vehicle to the next town. While we drove into town I sat in his big cab and we talked about, of all things, religion. In commenting on the tensions between Christians and Muslims in East Africa, he said, ‘There is only one God. God is like a large baobab tree with different branches that represent the different religions of Islam, Christianity, African Religion and so forth. These branches are part of the same family of God so we should work together.’ Simply put, Musa taught me a wonderful African metaphor for world religions and interreligious dialogue.”
- “One finger does not kill a louse.”
- “Unity is strength, division is weakness.”
- “If you live in a glass house don’t throw stones.”

A similar example is the **THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (C) 3 March 2013**<sup>647</sup>

### 1. Readings:

*Exodus* 3:1-8, 13-15;  
*I Corinthians* 10:1-6, 10-12;  
*Luke* 13:1-9

### 2. Life Situation:



In Kenya we are in the middle of the 2013 Lenten campaign to prepare for the general elections tomorrow, Monday, 4 March, 2013. After the terrible post-election violence in 2008, can Kenya elect a new president and government in peaceful, just and fair elections? We realize the whole world is watching.

Photo of Maasai woman voting in 2007 election from the *Daily Nation*

- The overall theme of the [2013 Kenya Lenten Campaign](#) is “United and peaceful Kenya: The change I want to see”. The specific theme for this Third Sunday of Lent is “county governance.” The *2010 Kenya Constitution* provides for a devolved governance structure that sets up 47 counties that are guided by democratic principles, separation of powers and reliable sources of income to facilitate local development.

<sup>647</sup> Published as “Weekly Reflections for THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (C) 3 March 2013” in *Yes Kenya Matters Series* on the Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya Website. 2 pages. <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke/index.php/component/content/article/39-yes-kenya-matters/138-third-sunday-of-lent-year-c-3-march-2013.html> and on Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) Website. 2 pages. <http://www.maryknollogc.org/resources/Scripture/third-sunday-lent>

- The Lenten campaign booklet uses a see-judge-act methodology or process to reflect on these issues. Catholics in their local groups, such as the 45,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Kenya, are encouraged to reflect on such questions as: “How can we, as Small Christian Communities, contribute to good governance in the Church and our counties?” We are challenged to participate in civic education programs and to study and reflect on the qualities of good leaders.

### **3. Scripture Focus/Biblical Reflection:**

- In the first reading Moses experiences God in the desert especially in the burning bush. Today do we experience God in the “other” – the person from another ethnic group (tribe)? The person of another color or sex or race or religion? Are we open to meeting Jesus “in disguise:” in an economically poor person; in a person with less education or wealth than we have; and in various outsiders/marginated people in our society?
- Research indicates that 75 percent of the members of Small Christian Communities in Nairobi Archdiocese are women. In interviews Catholic women have said: “In the hierarchical, clerical Catholic Church in Kenya we women feel at the bottom. This is reinforced by traditional African customs and traditions. But in the SCCs we feel that we women are equals and have a voice.”
- In the Gospel Jesus uses the parable of the fig tree that helps us reflect on repentance, reform and renewal during this Lenten season. Are we cultivating our personal and communal “ground,” that is, our simple lifestyle, our good habits, our balanced attitudes, our reaching out to needy people? Or do we tend to be judgmental, promote stereotypes and give labels to other people? Are we using the good fertilizer of prayer, fasting and almsgiving during this Lenten season to change and deepen our lives? Then we will bear the good fruits of community, equality, justice, listening, peace, serenity and silence in our personal and communal lives.

### **4. Pastoral Resources**

The 2013 Kenyan Lenten campaign offers us a special opportunity to use many concrete pastoral resources during this 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, this Year of Faith and in the spirit of the New Evangelization:

- *Africa’s Commitment (Africae Munus):* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation from the 2009 Second African Synod on “Reconciliation, Justice and Peace.”
- *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace)
- *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (commonly known by the Latin title *Gaudium et Spes*)

The opening words of this last document – “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [people] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” – is a permanent challenge to the Catholic Church’s self-understanding as a community in mission.

### **5. Yes, Kenya Matters (Kenyan Life Focus)**

- In this 2013 calendar year the African continent will have general elections in Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. *The New York Times* describes multiparty democracy in Africa as “messy and unpredictable.” But with the help of God and the determination and active endurance of the African people we shall succeed.
- Kenyans marveled at how after the U.S. presidential debates the candidates and their families could shake hands, embrace and talk warmly with each other. A major challenge in Kenya and throughout Africa is that political candidates should sacrifice their pride, desires and ambitions and be good losers if they don’t win the election. An important ----- Swahili (Eastern and Central Africa) proverb applies to elections in Africa: “The person who cannot accept defeat is not a competitor.” The test and maturity of democracy and ongoing good governance in Africa is for the losers to openly accept the results of the public vote (“the voice of the people”).

As we evaluate the above examples of African *Palaver* Theology/African Theology as Conversation we can ask. Is this African? Yes. Is this *Palaver* or Conversation? Yes. Is this Theology? Yes, but in a new way. This is not the traditional classical theology of a science, of a systematic presentation of definitions, theses and propositions, of catalogued truths. This is the lived theology of African SCC members, especially lay people on the grassroots level. This is the lived experience of the Christian Churches in the light of God’s Word.

Narrative Theology from below. Examples from Latin American literature and grassroots storytelling. **ADD**

As I travel around I am always listening, taking notes and learning. In visiting Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish South B, Nairobi, Kenya the Pastor Father Martin Onyango K’owacho, MAfr said that at present the two main problems in SCCs are:

1. Men and youth are not involved. He feels there is an over-emphasis on the prayer side of SCCs (such as the weekly *Bible* Sharing and *Bible* Reflection) that attracts women, but not men. Solutions are first, to connect the *Bible* to our concrete, practical daily life. Men would like to discuss what the Gospel says about the economy, ethnicity and corruption. Second, more emphasis more practical action and outreach including SCC projects. This would help pull the men in.
2. Priests remain too central to the life and development of the SCCs. When a priest visits a SCC this makes it more important. Constant animation can wear the priests out especially if they are too controlling.

Onyango feels that SCCs training workshops can help overcome these problems.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Martin K’owacho, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 19 March, 2016.

## 7. Evaluation of the Impact of SCCs in the AMECEA Region

We can be proud of the achievement of SCCs in the nine AMECEA countries. In commenting on the pastoral relevance and social effectiveness of SCCs in Eastern Africa, Orobator says that “SCCs offer the most viable models and means for the church in Africa to become real, relevant and local in the lives of ordinary Christians.”<sup>649</sup> Some concrete examples of the impact of SCCs in the AMECEA Region:

a. Parish-based SCCs are integrated in the pastoral structures and activities of the Catholic Church. SCCs are an official pastoral structure, an official ecclesial structure in the Church in Eastern Africa church. Archbishop Protase Rugambwa emphasizes that “we need to always think of SCCs as relevant pastoral structures that foster the work of evangelization.”<sup>650</sup> In other words, SCCs are a pastoral model that helps to build the parish structures:

i. Leadership structures. SCCs are directed represented on the outstation, sub-parish and parish councils/parish pastoral councils. This is participation and representation from below, from the grassroots.

There is a Case Study in Nairobi, Kenya where a woman member of St. Jude SCC is the representative on the Olympic Subparish Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. In turn, she is the subparish’s representative on the Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. One of her tasks is to inform and animate SCC members on the process of the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign that usually focuses on justice and peace issues, and most recently on promoting reconciliation in Kenya. This is two-way communications -- from the bottom to the top and from the top to the bottom. Three key insights of the Second African Synod documents are that SCCs members are “agents” of reconciliation and the SCC itself is both a “path” and a “place” of reconciliation.

ii. Celebration of the Sacraments in the SCCs themselves such as the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist (including First Communion), Reconciliation, Marriage and Anointing of the Sick. Of particular note are SCC Masses (*Jumuiya* Masses) celebrated periodically in the homes of SCC members. These masses take place on the annual feast of the Patron/Patroness Saint of the SCC<sup>651</sup>, during Advent, during Lent, Baptism, First Communion, Reconciliation, Graduation, Marriage, for deceased people, Anointing, Blessing of the Seeds, Blessing of the Harvest, Special Collections, Thanksgiving, for special requests of SCC members, etc. Also SCC members participate in planning these sacraments in their outstations, subparishes and parishes.

A good example of how SCCs are a New Model of Church, a New Way of Being Church is how the homily is given in a SCC Mass in a home. This topic usually provokes lively and animated discussion and debate at SCC Workshops for priests. It is generally felt

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<sup>649</sup>Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*, p. 6.

<sup>650</sup> Protase Rugambwa in a letter to the author, Rome, Italy, 5 December, 2013.

<sup>651</sup> This annual mass is an occasion to remember all the members of the SCC and their families who have died in the past year.

that the priest should not stand up and “preach” a homily as though he was in the parish church or outstation church. He should sit and facilitate a shared homily – first give a short reflection on the readings himself and then invite the SCC members to share their reflections.

Archbishop Boniface Lele, the deceased archbishop of Mombasa Archdiocese, told me: “When you give a SCCs Workshop in Mombasa please tell my priests that they should not preach in a SCC Mass in a home as though they were in a regular church.” Other bishops have told me that in this model of church from the grassroots up (in the SCC members’ homes), everyone should be encouraged to share their reflections on the Gospel. It is important to involve the whole community. The pastoral policy in Kitui Diocese, Kenya is described as follows: “The priest or deacon does not preach or give sermon, but participates in the sharing just like any other present member. Thus, it is the entire community preaching to itself.”<sup>652</sup> So it is not up to the individual priest to decide what he wants to do. Shared homilies in SCCs Masses is the pastoral policy of the diocese.

People ask how to interpret the directive in Canon Law and in the Liturgical Guidelines such as the *General Instruction to the Roman Missal* that only priests and deacons should preach during mass. The bishops of Kenya cite the section in Canon Law on “Structures” under the “People of God” about how the Particular Churches (Local Churches) have the freedom to carry out pastoral work in parishes on the local level following their own structures and activities. This is described as “the ordering of the parish on the most local levels.” This means that shared homilies are appropriate for SCCs Masses in the homes of lay members. This was confirmed in a conversation with Bishop Colin Davies, MHM, the former bishop of Ngong Diocese, in Nairobi on 10 March, 2012.

iii. SCCs promote the use of the *Bible*. Many SCCs are called Lectionary-Based SCCs meaning that in their weekly meetings they use the Gospel of the following Sunday following the three-year Lectionary Cycle.<sup>653</sup> Many SCCs in Eastern Africa use the Seven Step Gospel Sharing of Lumko as well as following the more detailed “[13 Steps in the Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Life Connections of Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in Africa](#).”<sup>654</sup> SCC members read and reflect on the Bible in community that is emphasized by No. 86 of Pope Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Exhortation *The Word of the Lord*. Research shows that the main challenge is specifically and concretely to connect, relate and apply the Bible (Gospel) to our daily lives and experience in Africa. This is closely connected to faith sharing/faith reflection.

Ugandan Servite seminarian Gyavira Ntensibe, OSM reports from the SCCs in Bukuumi Parish in Hoima Diocese, Uganda:

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<sup>652</sup> Catholic Diocese of Kitui Website, retrieved 11 August, 2011, <http://www.dioceseofkitui.org/subpage6.html>.

<sup>653</sup> An important resource is a *Calendar with the References to the Daily Lectionary Readings*. Some SCCs read the *Bible* every day. Some SCCs use the readings of the day in their weekly or biweekly meetings.

<sup>654</sup> Booklets and pamphlets containing different versions of these steps are very popular and readily available. *Utaratibu wa Ibada kwa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo* by Leodegard Massawe has had many printings.

Many families faced with some challenges find consolation in the Word of God. Members of SCCs are no longer challenged by Christians of other denominations. This is because the *Bible* has become part of them. Speaking with Mwanajumuiya Maxmila she says, “before the born-again Christians used to challenge me about the *Bible*, but with the knowledge that I have gotten about the *Bible* in my SCC, now I can also challenge them.”<sup>655</sup>

Another challenge is to use silence effectively. Many SCC members don’t know how to “listen to God” in the silent period after the reading of the Gospel. One SCC member in Tanzania admitted that during this silent period her thoughts fly far away and her head is filled with many distractions such as: “When are my children coming home from school?” “What am I going to cook for supper?” African religious especially sisters and brothers have a special ministry in helping lay people to appreciate the importance of silence.

Sometimes a learning experience can be a humorous experience as seen in this true story “Trying to Hijack Our Small Christian Community:”

We gathered for our weekly meeting of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Small Christian Community (SCC) in St. Peter’s Parish, Oysterbay, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. A young woman in her early 20s from the Charismatic Movement stood up at the beginning of the Bible Reflection Step, waved the *Bible* at the members and "preached at" our small community about the meaning of the particular Gospel passage. She went on "teaching" us for about 15 minutes. She tried to hijack our SCC by imposing her prayer style on our meeting. Later our SCC facilitator politely reminded the members that our guidelines are to: Keep seated; speak no longer than five minutes; and use a sharing, not teaching style. Later we agreed that there is a clever way to avoid this happening again. We would stop a person from going on beyond the time limit by clapping at end of five minutes -- and continue clapping until the person stopped speaking. This works! <sup>656</sup>

iv. Nurturing vocations to the priesthood, religious life and lay ministries. SCCs pray for and promote vocations among their members and have special celebrations and sending ceremonies at the different stages of commitment. Recent Case Studies indicate that an increasing number of priests, brothers and sisters attribute their vocations to the SCCs where they grew up.

v. Self-reliance. By organizing fundraising and collections through the SCC

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<sup>655</sup> Gyavira Ntensibe, “Small Christian Communities a New Way of Evangelization: A Case Study of the SCCs in Bukuumi Parish in Hoima Diocese, Uganda,; Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2015.

<sup>656</sup> Africa Story No. 508 in the “African Stories Database”, African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 17 August, 2011, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=527](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=527)

structures, money has doubled and tripled in some parishes.<sup>657</sup> It is more efficient and effective to collect the annual church tax and other collections through the SCCs. Many dioceses organize their annual fund raising appeal by assessing each parish with a certain amount. In turn parishes assess each SCC and the overall collection is much higher. Fund raising (through *Harambees* [a Swahili word meaning “Let us pull together” used for fund-raising events], charity walks, raffles, auctions, etc.) for worthy projects in the parish such as educational needs, feeding programs, elderly programs, counseling services and new church buildings and for national campaigns such as famine relief/freedom from hunger, internally displaced persons and medical research are coordinated through the SCCs. Through SCCs on the grassroots level lay people are taking more initiative and financial responsibility for “their” church and their involvement in the wider society.

At the same time SCC members complain that there are too many collections and their SCCs have turned into funding agencies and “*Michango* (Swahili for “collections”) Churches.” This is a growing problem especially in Tanzania and Kenya where SCCs spend a lot of their meetings on business, especially financial, matters only. I met a SCC member in Tanzania who said if he heard there was going to be a collection at the next SCC meeting he would make sure that he was sick and couldn’t attend.<sup>658</sup> Kenyan layman Michael Orondo, the Prayer Leader of St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi Archdiocese, said that SCC members will stop coming to the weekly Bible Service if there are too many collections. He also described the “trick” of some Catholics who come to their SCC for a short time in order request a SCC collection for their Church marriage and then “disappear” after their wedding.<sup>659</sup>

After a great deal of research in Eastern African our SCCs Training Team has proposed a practical solution: Have only one business meeting a month where finances and collections are discussed. The other meetings are for weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection and for pastoral and social issues. As an example, the *Constitution* of St. John the Evangelist SCC in St. John the Baptist Parish, Riruta, Nairobi, Kenya states: “In addition to the weekly meeting for prayers and *Bible* discussion there will be a monthly meeting held every third Sunday of the month as an open forum for members to discuss matters affecting the SCC.”

- b. The SCC Model of living together, joint prayer and reflection and other activities in

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<sup>657</sup> In Holy Family Basilica Parish in Nairobi, Kenya in August, 2011 25 different parish associations/organizations contributed money to the Nairobi Archdiocese Family Day. St. Jude SCC and St. Francis SCC had the highest amounts.

<sup>658</sup> American Maryknoll Sister Peg Donovan, MM reports from Sengerema, Mwanza, Tanzania: “Here in our parish the JNNKs are mostly ‘fund raisers’ and not spiritually enriching.” Message on Facebook dated 23 May, 2012.

<sup>659</sup> Michael Orondo in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 21 April, 2013.

common is used in our major seminaries, theological institutes and formation houses in Eastern Africa.<sup>660</sup> Seminarians are divided into small sharing groups with saints' names,<sup>661</sup> often according to the dormitories or residence halls or hostels that they live in. In 2008 the AMECEA Office in Nairobi conducted a survey<sup>662</sup> on how Catholic Major Seminaries and Institutes of Theology in the nine AMECEA Countries in Eastern Africa are implementing the resolution of the 2002 AMECEA Study Conference quoted on page 24 above. 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.<sup>663</sup> The survey results stated: "Many seminarians live in some kind of Small Christian Community structure/set-up in the Residence Halls/Dormitories/Hostels of the seminaries and institutes that includes regular prayer, masses, shared reflections and apostolic activities."<sup>664</sup>

The three Catholic seminaries in Zambia have a well-organized and coordinated formation plan through the SCCs. The Spiritual Year takes place at the Emmaus Spirituality Center in Lusaka. This priest has an important role in the formation and advancement of the seminarians in his SCC (following the external forum). Each SCC has its own identity. The

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<sup>660</sup> It is significant that a Kenyan Catholic layman, Alphonse Omolo from Kisumu, was one of the first to stress the importance of courses on SCCs in our major seminaries in Eastern Africa – at an International SCCs Conference at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana in USA in 1991.

<sup>661</sup> Sometimes the same saints name are used year after year, for example, the Passionists Formation House in Nairobi has seminarian SCCs of Saints Gabriel, Gemma and Charles Lwanga. Some Formation Houses choose other names such as: Team 1, 2, 3, 4 (Missionaries of Africa Formation House in Nairobi, Kenya); particular charisms/interests/tasks such as Hospitality Group, Mission Group and Networking/Justice and Peace Group (Comboni Formation House in Nairobi, Kenya); and holy people in the congregation or society like Servant of God Vincent McCauley and Servant of God Pat Peyton (Holy Cross Formation House in Nairobi, Kenya).

<sup>662</sup> The full results of the survey can be found in Joseph Healey, "New Learnings in Animating a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa Today" in *African Christian Studies* (CUEA), Vol. 24, No.2 (June, 2008): pp. 24-26.

<sup>663</sup> In answering this survey Ugandan theologian Father Pius Male Ssentumbwe and Director of the AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba) in Eldoret, Kenya stated: "A great challenge today is to invigorate the SCCs so that they are seen not only as means of strengthening Christian families referred to as the Domestic Church, but also as a means of integral development and holistic evangelization."

<sup>664</sup> We celebrated a *Jumuiya* [Swahili for "Community"] Mass in *Kwetu Kwenu* ("For Us and You Too") Hostel at Hekima College in Nairobi on Easter Monday, 24 March, 2008. This was 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, Cameroon, DRC, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia. The Shared Homily was linked to the Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions). 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."

daily life and many activities and responsibilities revolve around the five SCCs. Each week there is mass, prayers, rosary and faith sharing in the SCCs. SCC members sit together in the dining hall. Cleaning the compound, serving in the dining hall, and cleaning-up after meals is done on a rotational basis. The Sunday Eucharist is organized by a different SCC each week. Zambian Sulpician priest Father Timothy Chikweto, SS explains:

Seminarians at Emmaus are divided into SCCs in order to enhance the quality of formation. Currently in the 2013-2014 Academic Year there are five SCCs namely St. Anne, St. Augustine, St. John, St. Jude and St. Nicholas. These are groups of eight to 10 seminarians, depending on the total number of seminarians in a given intake. Each SCC has a moderator who is a member of staff and is the immediate supervisor as well as the principal formator for the group. The moderator is also the chief evaluator and recommender of the members of his small group.

From among themselves the SCC members elect for themselves a Chairperson/Facilitator, a Liturgist and a Works Minister. The chairperson facilitates the general life of the group; the liturgist takes of prayer and liturgical life; and the Works Minister organizes the group around community chores. Members of an SCC live in close proximity. They have a designated meeting for mass (once a week), faith sharing/Bible sharing (once a week), and liturgy preparation (once a week). SCCs take up weekly chores (such as cleaning ablution blocks and serving in the dining room within the larger community on a rotational basis. The same applies to taking responsibility at mass and other liturgical activities.<sup>665</sup>

^The same overall plan continues during the two years of philosophy in St. Augustine's Major Seminary in Mpima in Kabwe Diocese.

The four years of theology take place in St. Dominic's Major Seminary in Lusaka. In the 2013-2014 Academic Year there were 13 SCCs consisting of 11 seminarians each. Each SCC had a priest-formator advisor. The SCCs are named after saints and special Zambian holy people. SCC members meet three times a week: Monday for sharing; Tuesday for a SCC mass when the seminarians give the homily on a rotation basis; and Thursday for Morning Prayers. The seminarians are very involved in local SCCs during their pastoral ministry in parishes.

The Small Christian Communities in St. Anthony's Major Seminary, Kachebere in Mchinji, Malawi are called "teams" with the staff lecturers as moderators. In the Academic year 2013-2014 the 120 students in the three years of philosophy formed eight teams of approximately 15 student each. Members of the same team live together in the resident halls and are responsible for each other, for example, if one seminarian gets sick the others look after him. They live together as a family in the spirit of openness and sharing. The teams foster the spirituality and prayer life of their members. The leaders of these eight SCCs form the Student Council of the seminary.<sup>666</sup>

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<sup>665</sup> Timothy Chikweto email message to the author dated 4 May, 2014.

<sup>666</sup> See "The Proposed Constitution of the Teams -- St. Anthony's Major Seminary."

Every Tuesday is SCC Day. Morning Prayers are in the different teams using *Bible Sharing*, *Lectio Divina* or the *Breviary*. From 2 – 3 p.m. the teams do community services such as cleaning the buildings and grounds of the seminary and other manual labor jobs. In the evening they discuss various religious and pastoral topics. On 10 December, 2013 I participated in Team 8’s discussion on “Strengthening the Vision of our Destiny,” the 1 December, 2013 Pastoral Letter of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) on the May 2014 National Elections. Recently the SCCs teams discussed the 2012-2013 Year of Faith.

Other more informal activities take place during the rest of the week. The teams also do community services on Thursday afternoons. There are inter-team sports activities. They do charitable works such as visiting the sick in the hospital.<sup>667</sup>

A recent Case Study is St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya. The seminarians studying theology are divided into 10 SCCs, each with its own Patron/Patroness Saint<sup>668</sup> and Priest Adviser (from the seminary staff). These SCCs meet every Thursday night for prayer, reflection and discussion. On the third Thursday of the month there is a SCC Mass. The rector Kenyan priest Father John Oballa (now Bishop of Ngong Diocese) reported on two very positive experiences. When one of the seminarians had a fire in his home that killed two people, the 10 seminary SCCs raised 42,000 Kenyan Shillings (= \$553) as a donation. This vividly expressed the meaning of our Lenten journey of solidarity. When Morning Prayers at the seminary began to become routine and uninspired, the seminarians discussed this issue in their weekly SCCs and then started using more active and inspired prayers.<sup>669</sup>

Two other AMECEA-related examples are as follows: First is the AMECEA Pastoral Institute (API) that is part of the CUEA Gaba Campus in Eldoret, Kenya. The AMECEA Pastoral Institute (API-GABA) was established as a Catholic Pastoral Institute in 1967 in Gaba, Uganda. The institute moved to its current premises in Eldoret, Kenya in 1976. Since its beginning the institute has offered a nine month diploma Pastoral Renewal Program to lay professionals, religious men and women and clergy from the AMECEA Region and other African countries. In July, 2008 at the AMECEA Plenary in Lusaka, Zambia, the bishops elevated the institute to the level of a campus of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). Presently the diploma courses of nine months (August to May) include:

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<sup>667</sup> Summarized from conversations with Fathers Raphael Mbendera and Vincent Mwachwawa, Mchinji, Malawi, 10 December, 2013.

<sup>668</sup> In the first class of the SCCs courses at Hekima College and Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya the students, mainly seminarians, divide into small communities of 8-10 students and chose a Patron/Patroness Saint to model a SCC during the semester. Over the years they have chosen various African saints as well as Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Otunga and Servant of God Julius Nyerere. Following the guidelines of Canon Law “Servant of God” is not used in their titles so they are called Cardinal Maurice Otunga SCC and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere SCC. It is only at the “Blessed” stage that a holy person becomes a public figure in the universal church. Kenyan Canon Lawyer Father Ferdinand Luganzo in a conversation with the author on 11 September, 2013.

<sup>669</sup> John Oballa in conversations with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 25 and 28 March, 2011.

- “Diploma in Pastoral Ministry and Management.” One course is called “Small Christian Communities: A Tool for Evangelization in AMECEA Region.”
- “Diploma in Evangelization and Catechesis.” One course is called “Ecclesial Groups and Movements.”

Student can write their Research Project and other papers on SCCs.

Renewal and Sabbatical Year participants audit 10 units from either of the diploma courses according to their areas of interest. They write three papers and are awarded a certificate.<sup>670</sup>

Right from the 1970s to the present, the life of the students in this Pastoral Renewal Program is organized on the basis of SCCs. For example, in the 2011-2012 academic year the students and staff had four SCCs of 12 members each that met twice a month: St. Agnes, St. Augustine, St. Cecilia and St. Kizito.

Second is the St. Bakanja AMECEA College (BBAC) in Nairobi, Kenya (Regional Theology Seminary and House of Formation for seminarians drawn from the nine AMECEA countries who study at CUEA). The college organizes the major seminarians into four SCCs (St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John) that meet on Thursdays.

Many seminarians also 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 University College in Nairobi have particularly good programs. Other seminarians experience SCCs during their Pastoral Year.

A related example is integrating the SCCs Pastoral Priority in the pastoral activities of the Houses of Formation in the AMECEA Region. Many communities of women and men such as juniorates, novitiates and postulancies have their members regularly participating in the weekly meetings of the SCCs in their geographical area. This continues in the experiences of seminarians, brothers and sisters<sup>671</sup> in their Pastoral Years and other pastoral programs. A number of AMECEA bishops interviewed emphasize the importance of priests being introduced to SCCs in their seminary training and formation years before ordination.

The involvement of African Religious Sisters in SCCs is clearly mixed. Some sisters participate in SCCs, others do not. A good Case Study is the day and a half workshop that took place 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).

We had a lively discussion on African sisters' 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

<sup>670</sup> See the Catholic University of Eastern Africa Gaba Campus Eldoret Website, retrieved on 11 January, 2014, <http://www.cuea.edu/gaba>.

<sup>671</sup> See Francis Njuguna, “Religious Women Take a Leading Role in SCCs Programs,” *National Mirror*, 1:10 (October, 2012), p. 16.

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 material needs of the convent itself. But all four of these sisters should be regular members of one of the parish-based neighborhood SCCs to express their commitment to this new model of church and to better experience the ordinary life of lay Catholics in the parish.

A new dimension is Pope Francis' challenge to pastoral workers to have of more direct contact with the ordinary daily life of lay people, and in particular suffering and wounded people. To use an analogy: how can African sisters smell the sheep and take on the smell/odor/lived reality of sheep. One way is through active participation in SCCs.<sup>672</sup>

But the number of specific workshops on SCCs for African sisters is still few.

Another Case Study is how the process of "SCCs as a New Way of Being Church" was integrated in the annual retreat of the Brothers of St. Martin de Porres in Juba, South Sudan from 25-30 September, 2011. A total of 15 people participated in the retreat: 12 Sudanese St. Martin de Porres Brothers. Two Sudanese Brothers of St. Joseph, and the author. The theme was: "African Brothers: Truly African, Truly Christian" in the context of a personal journey and a communal journey in solidarity. Already the 2002 AMECEA Study Conference "recommended that a program on the theological and pastoral value of Small Christian Communities be included in the houses of formation of both men and women." So why not make this SCCs ecclesiology and pastoral priority part of a retreat that highlights a deeper consciousness and awareness of the small community as a spirituality and a way of life. During the six days we tried to live, pray and reflect together as a small, faith sharing community. Some of the special features were: *Lectio Divina* reading/meditation on the *Bible*; daily shared homilies as a full group and in buzz groups of two each; daily faith sharing/reflection group on special topics such as: "What is my favorite Bible passage and why?" "Who Do I/We Say that Jesus Christ Is?"<sup>673</sup> "How do I/We Feel about Painting Jesus Christ as an African?" "My/Our Identity as an African Brother;" a special SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass); a Bible Service during the middle of the week when we reflected on the Gospel of the following Sunday (2 October); and communal preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (with individual confession). A spirit of mission permeated the whole retreat.

A recommendation of the retreat was how the brothers can integrate the SCC priority, lifestyle and process in their various religious communities in South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda and in their pastoral ministry, for example, starting a SCC of students at the University of South Sudan in Juba.

Ngalula summarizes the overall challenge for Africa in these words:

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<sup>672</sup> Based on the author's conversation with Kenyan Daughter of Charity Sister Teresa Nyawira, DC in Nairobi, Kenya on 28 March, 2015.

<sup>673</sup> One of the commonest Gospel texts used in homilies and religious education talks is the story of Peter's "Profession of Faith" found in all three Synoptic Gospels. Jesus' question to the Apostles, "Who do you say that I am?" is contextualized/inculturated to ask: "Who do you Africans say that I am?" "Who do you SCC members say that I am?"

Unfortunately there are still priests and bishops who do not understand the originality of BCCs. Instead they take them for parish extensions in the villages or for devotional groups, and they take the BCC animators for catechists. This is also due to the fact that in many African faculties of theology, there is no course on BCCs and their ecclesiology. The clergy and the bishops of the new generation have to be empowered theologically and to embrace the theology of BCCs and the important role of the laity.<sup>674</sup>

c. Women's involvement in SCCs: General research indicates that 75% of the members of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Nairobi Archdiocese in Nairobi, Kenya are women. A 2012 research study in Our Lady Queen of Peace (OLQP) Parish, South B analyzed 392 SCC members by gender in 30 SCCs. Overall 65.3 % were women and 34.7 % were men. In the 18 SCCs in the slums 57.7 % were women and 42.3 % were men. In the 12 SCCs in the estates 84.7 % were women and 15.3 % were men.<sup>675</sup> A woman in St. Clare SCC said: "I have neither a brother nor a sister here in Nairobi, but all my SCC members are my brothers and sisters. Therefore, when I have a problem I run to any of the SCC members for help and they are there to help me."<sup>676</sup>

In interviews Catholic women (in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Nairobi, Kenya and other places) have said: "In the hierarchical, clerical Catholic Church in Kenya we women feel at the bottom. This is reinforced by traditional African customs and traditions where women are second class. But in the SCCs we feel that we women are equals and have a voice."<sup>677</sup> Often women take leadership roles in the SCCs and are very active in committees and SCCs activities. Research in Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Sudan indicates that women are better in peacemaking than men. Men tend to emphasize power and control while women emphasize personal relationships.

Nigerian theologian Sister Anne Arabome, SSS points out that "the initiation and deepening of commitment to Small Christian Communities would be a natural place for women, together with men, to work out new collaborative styles of leadership, as suggested in No. 19 of the *Instrumentum Laboris* [of the Second African Synod]. Studying the Word of God and sharing this word would provide a prayerful setting for this experience of collaboration."<sup>678</sup> This is related to the challenge of the equality of women. A new vocabulary is emerging such as Gender Justice and Gender Equality. **CHECK TRANSITION**

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<sup>674</sup> Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 5.

<sup>675</sup> Abrha Tesfay Teare, *Women's Role in Small Christian*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>677</sup> "We Women Are Equals and Have a Voice," African Story No. 538 in the "African Stories Database", African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 13 March, 2011, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=615](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=615)

<sup>678</sup> Anne Arabome, "Women, You Are Set Free! Women and Discipleship in the Church" in Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, p. 126.

American theologian Father Robert Schreiter, CPPS points out that local theologies can be constructed with the local community as theologian:

The experience of those in the Small Christian Communities who have seen the insight and power arising from the reflections of the people upon their experience and the Scriptures has prompted making the community itself the prime author of theology in local contexts. The Holy Spirit, working in and through the believing community, give shape and expression to Christian experience. Some of these communities have taught us to read the Scriptures in a fresh way and have called the larger church back to a fidelity to the prophetic Word of God.<sup>679</sup>

He adds: “Many of the Small Christian Communities have experienced again and again the power of the Word of God as they gather to reflect upon the Scriptures.”<sup>680</sup>

This is the local African Christian community theologizing.<sup>681</sup> Local gatherings of SCCs in Eastern Africa reflecting on their daily lives in light of the gospel can be a real theological locus or theological moment. No. 89 in St. John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa* under “Living (or Vital) Christian Communities” states: “These small communities reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel.” Archbishop Anselm Sanon of Bobo Dioulasso Archdiocese in Burkina Faso emphasizes that “theology becomes again a community affair. African theologians must work with and within the Christian Communities.”<sup>682</sup>

Doing theology with local people on the ground<sup>683</sup> can lead to practical, pastoral solutions. This helps to make theology relevant to the nitty-gritty of daily life and a very practical discipline. Commenting on theology’s engagement with the modern world J.J. Mueller states that if theology cannot take the heat then it must get out of the kitchen. If it cannot address the pain and frustrations of modern people then it has nothing to say to the

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<sup>679</sup> Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 16. This book has 10 references to SCCs.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>681</sup> The Peruvian theologian Father Gustavo Gutierrez, OP says that “the poor have a right to do theology.” We can extend this to say that women have a right to do theology, youth have a right to do theology and African Small Christian Communities have a right to do theology.

<sup>682</sup> Anselme Sanon, “Press Conference,” *The African Synod*, 5, 2 (March/April, 1994, p. 14.

<sup>683</sup> The Loyola Institute for Ministry at Loyola University (Jesuit) in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA has a LIMEX Program that includes two online specialization courses on Small Christian Community Formation: “The Inner Life of Small Christian Communities” and “The Public Life of Small Christian Communities.” <http://lim.loyno.edu/onsite> The process of theologizing is important. The first course explores mutuality and the role of conversation, with its risks and potentials, in the inner work of Small Christian Communities. It explains how conversation is a root metaphor for SCC life.

world. Its relevancy is gone.<sup>684</sup> SCCs members have a unique opportunity to theologize from the grassroots up.

d. The present general impact of SCCs on the parish and diocesan levels can be seen in different ways. Kilaini documents this interesting development in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese:

More than half of the parishes in Dar es Salaam were founded by Small Christian Communities. Normally in new residential places a few strong Catholics would start a Small Christian Community and pray together in their houses. As they increased one faithful person donated an area to build a common prayer shed. The SCC divided as the faithful increased but the shed became common to all. As the Christians multiplied the faithful bought more land around the original plot or found a big plot in the neighborhood and asked permission to build a prayer house and kindergarten. The next step is that it becomes an out-station and later a parish. Through SCCs they develop a solidarity that builds parishes.<sup>685</sup>

Another example is a "One day SCCs Workshop" that took place at the Holy Ghost Cathedral in Mombasa Archdiocese, Kenya on 13 May, 2011. 49 people participated representing the 10 parishes in the Central Deanery and the seven parishes in the Mombasa West Deanery. There were also catechists who minister in the prisons in the Coast Province where there are SCCs of prison staff (warders, etc.) and SCCs of the prisoners themselves that meet weekly.

Archbishop Boniface Lele gave the opening talk and emphasized that we priests should not "preach" or give long reflections during the weekly Bible Service in the SCC members' homes, but rather encourage everyone to share their reflections on the Gospel. This applies to the homily during a SCC Mass in a home as well that should be a shared homily. The archbishop supports SCCs very much. He recalled the strong SCCs in his home parish in Kitui Diocese. This support and encouragement of many bishops is a key factor in the growth of SCCs in Eastern Africa.

During the workshop we identified 18 main obstacles (*vikwazo* in Swahili)/problems/difficulties in the growth of SCCs in Mombasa Archdiocese including: SCCs members come late; there are few men in the communities; lack of youth in the communities; tribalism and discrimination; SCCs are too large and there is a reluctance to divide them into smaller SCCs; and during the Bible sharing/reflection some members tend to preach rather than share. We discussed practical solutions means to overcome these obstacles -- what we call the medicine (*dawa* in Swahili) to cure these problems.

The follow-up plans started with the two deaneries choosing three member committees for coordination and planning. There was a proposal for a Mombasa

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<sup>684</sup> J.J. Mueller, *What Are They Saying About the Theological Method?* New York: Paulist Press, 1984, p. 26.

<sup>685</sup> Method Kilaini, "Small Christian Communities," p. 5.

Archdiocesan SCCs Training Team<sup>686</sup> coordinated by the Pastoral Office. Such a team could give SCCs Workshops in the six deaneries in Mombasa. Members of the team could include the eight people who participated in the LUMKO Workshop in Nyahururu, Kenya in September, 2011.

As part of our ongoing evaluation and revitalization, our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team continues to facilitate *Vikwazo/Dawa* Workshops especially on the local level. On Sunday, 23 February, 2014 we facilitated a SCCs Workshop at Our Lady, Queen of Peace Parish South B, Nairobi, Kenya. Each of the 34 SCCs ("Jumuiya" in Swahili) chose ahead of time three main obstacles/problems/situations they wanted to discuss and find solutions for. During the workshop the 132 participants identified and discussed the 40 major obstacles/problems/difficulties in their SCCs. Then they voted for the most important/most pressing obstacles: "Time" issues (lateness, time management) -- 62 votes; Poor attendance -- 52 votes; Poor/Irresponsible Leadership -- 27 votes; and Lack of Men -- 21 votes. These obstacles are very similar to the results from other workshops. The challenge is to find specific solutions and not just talk "around" the obstacle. Among the solutions/conclusions/*dawa*: a SCC should not depend on/wait for one specific leader to come to the meeting; several SCC members should be trained for specific roles such as facilitating the weekly *Bible Service*; more frequent SCC masses in the communities in addition to the annual Patron Saint/Patroness Saint Mass. This is also an opportunity for the SCC members to talk with the priest and give him a report on the SCC's activities; visit lax SCC members and dropouts in their homes; and more SCC Workshops especially on specific ministries, for example, how to facilitate the steps of the weekly *Bible Service*.

A related example: Before a Formation Meeting of the Pope John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams at the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Regional Center House in Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday, 23 January, 2009 SCCs leaders discussed the question: "What are the different human problems in Kenya that we should reflect on in our SCC meetings in the light of the Gospel?" (St. John Paul II). They identified eight major human problems in Kenya and chose the three most challenging ones: two affecting general society especially ("corruption" and "tribalism"); one affecting the pastoral life of the Catholic Church ("problems in marriage"). Then the 116 participants divided into seven SCCs of around 15 people each. They reflected on these three problems and found corresponding/parallel passages in the *Bible* that offered light and inspiration.

The pastoral care of marriage remains one of the biggest challenges in the Catholic Church in Africa and around the world. Questions and issues include: Abusive and violent husbands due to strong temperament, alcohol and drugs. Patriarchy in African society. Why so many African Catholic couples cannot receive communion because their marriages have not been sacramentalized (blessed in church) because the dowry or bridewealth has not been paid and a church wedding is too expensive. Counseling for couples who struggle in their marriage. Communion for Catholics who have divorced and remarried. Our specific challenge: How do SCCs members respond?

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<sup>686</sup> This is explained very well in the book *Small Christian Communities: Capturing the New Moment*. Chapter 15 (pages 106-109) in the article on "SCC Diocesan Training Team Reaches Out in Uganda" by John Vianney Muweesi and Emmanuel Mwerekande that describes the very good team in Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese in Uganda.

Kenyan Bishop James Maria Wainaina of Murang'a Diocese sees an increasingly important role for SCCs in Eastern Africa. They replace the traditional African culture and family as the “environment” for the support, formation and training of members of African families. He describes the Integrated Christian Formation Program (ICFP) in his diocese.<sup>687</sup> Catechesis takes place throughout life, not just during the Rites of Passage. Much of the formation and training takes place in the SCCs. Archbishop Martin Kivuva of Mombasa Archdiocese supports this plan emphasizing that the traditional African family system of education is “broken” so we need a new model.<sup>688</sup>

It is important to read the signs of the times in Africa today. The Kenyan report for the 2015 Synod of Bishops states: “Christian marriage is not supported by the African traditional cultural structures of marriage. There is need to create Christian structures that will support marriage in Africa...Community and church leadership should to be involved in marriage negotiations along with the family members; if need be the community should be encouraged to help with the dowry.”<sup>689</sup> This has introduced a new term -- the SCCs-based wedding.

In reading the contemporary signs of the times (that includes the growing influence of the social media) in Africa there is a new emphasis on the equality of the man and the woman, the husband and the wife. There is a shift away from patriarchy and terms such as “the man is the head of the family” and “wives should be submissive to their husbands.”<sup>690</sup> This is especially true in urban Africa. The Kenyan report for the 2015 Synod of Bishops states that “the Catholic Church needs to emphasis the equality of partners in marriage.”<sup>691</sup> As stated above, SCCs as the church in the neighborhood can be the environment or setting for Christian values of equality, sharing, mutual respect and joint decision-making in marriage and the family.

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<sup>687</sup> Based on a conversation of James Maria Wainaina with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 8 April 2015.

<sup>688</sup> From a conversation of Martin Kivuva with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 9 April 2015.

<sup>689</sup> Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), “Results of the Consultation in Kenya on the 46 Questions in the *Lineamenta* on *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World*, Nairobi: Unpublished Report, 2015, p. 30.

<sup>690</sup> There is growing criticism of traditional African proverbs and sayings that portray the man as superior to the woman and that describe the woman as a servant, submissive, passive, the weaker sex, etc. For example, there is the striking Swahili (Eastern and Central Africa) saying *Hajapata jiko bado* that means *He has not gotten a stove yet* (literal) and *He has not gotten married yet* (figurative).

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*

## 8. Evaluation of the Influence of AMECEA's SCCs in Africa and around the World

A Ugandan (and other African languages) proverb says: *One hand washes the other*.<sup>692</sup> We try to help each other and share our SCC experiences in the nine countries of Eastern Africa with other parts of Africa and around the world. During this 1973-2015 period SCCs in the AMECEA Region have gradually become known and influential outside of our nine countries. We can be proud of this increasing Eastern African contribution to the World Church.

Some years ago Pengo participated in a SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) Meeting in Rome. He tells the story of a bishop in West Africa who approached him and said that he had heard of the success of the SCCs in

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<sup>692</sup> In turn the SCCs in Eastern Africa can learn from the creative efforts in other parts of Africa such as Lumko and RENEW Africa in South Africa, the long experience of Basic Living Ecclesial Communities (Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base or CEVB in French) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), etc.

An example is how the AMECEA countries borrowed the practice of Buzz Groups from the Lumko Missiological Institute in South Africa. Women were shy would often remain silent in the weekly meetings of the SCCs in South Africa. The men did most of the *Bible* sharing and reflections in the full group. But when Lumko started Buzz Groups of two people each (SCC members sitting next to each other share their reflections on the reading in small groups of two or three each), the women began sharing and reflecting together. A big change occurred in South Africa and there was more active participation. This has worked very well in SCCs in Eastern Africa too.

More information on the technique of buzz groups or “buzzing” that is easy and effective can be found in the section on “The Animator Makes Use of Buzz Groups” on page 9 in Oswald Hirmer, *Our Journey Together: 47 Catechetical Sessions for Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, St. Paul Publications Africa (later Paulines Publications Africa), 1998, 2006. The Swahili version is *Safari Yetu Pamoja*. The Swahili version adapted to Marsabit Diocese, Kenya is *Safari Yetu Pamoja Jimbo Letu*.

Buzz Groups can be effective in increasing participation in many different situations. This example was used in a talk on “Evangelization and Inter-religious Dialogue:” “I ask each to you to think about a conversation or talk that you have had with someone who is not a Christian. This person could be a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Jew, an atheist, an agnostic, whoever. The topic could have been about anything – not necessarily about religion. Looking back how do you feel about the conversation? How did you feel about the other person? In general was it a positive or a negative experience?. Now turn to your neighbor where you are sitting and in buzz groups of two share something about the experience that you had.”

Eastern African SCCs can be enriched by the DRC experience that has been documented in books and booklets such as Bernard Ugeux and Pierre Lefebvere, *Small Christian Communities and Parishes*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995.

Eastern Africa and wanted to learn from our experience. Gradually the AMECEA experience of SCCs has spread to Southern Africa and English-speaking West Africa.

So far AMECEA's SCCs are not well known in French-speaking Central and West Africa. This is clear from reports of conferences that take place in French-speaking Africa. For example, many Catholic Church leaders do not know about the *Bible* reflection methods used in SCCs in the AMECEA Region. Hopefully the Biblical Center for Africa and Madagascar, commonly known as BICAM, that is located at the SECAM Secretariat in Accra, Ghana can spread information about the AMECEA countries' SCCs experiences.<sup>693</sup> As an overall assessment Wirba writes: "The pastoral model of Small Christian Communities initiated and greatly fostered by Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) has slowly gained ground in other parts of sub-Sahara Africa."<sup>694</sup>

Articles like Gilbert Biziyaremye's "The Relevance of *Ecclesia in Africa* for Small Christian Communities in Africa: Case of the Catholic Archdiocese of Kigali, Rwanda" help to bridge the gap between French-speaking Africa and English-speaking Africa. This article was published in *African Christian Studies*, the theological journal of CUEA and has many references to SCCs in Eastern Africa. With the importance of English growing in Rwanda and the country of Rwanda increasing its political, economic and religious ties to East Africa many connections are emerging. The theology and praxis of BECs or SCCs in Kigali resembles closely the model in Eastern Africa.

Ireneus Chia Chongwain reports from Cameroon:

The Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province's Pastoral Plan gives the green light for the creation of Small Christian Communities. It is in this light that during the last Archdiocesan Pastoral Week it was recommended that the clergy, religious and lay leaders should commit themselves and be effectively involved in Small Christian Communities.

This was the umpteenth time the call was being made and shows the importance the bishops of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province attach to Small Christian Communities. Despite these repeated appeals for greater involvement in these groups, more women than men are taking the lead in registering, directing and organizing the affairs of different Small Christian Communities. This is not to say men are not involved, but the majority of men and youths are yet to make up their minds in joining these groups.

At a time life is becoming increasingly difficult for the average Cameroonian, it is but logical to learn from the Kenyan Small Christian Community experience where these groups have shown their burden sharing

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<sup>693</sup> See "Report on Consultation on Methods of Research to Find Out How the *Bible* is Being Used in Small Christian Communities in Africa," sponsored and organized by BICAM, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya, 31 January to 2 February, 1989.

<sup>694</sup> Kenyuyfoon Gloria Wirba, *Women and Inculturated Evangelization in Africa*, p. 180.

propensity and helped the destitute in finding their bearing. Tell me your involvement in a Small Christian Community and I will tell you your faith!<sup>695</sup>

The implementation of *Africa's Commitment*, the Apostolic Exhortation of the Second African Synod has brought new opportunities for sharing SCCs experiences. Kenyan diocesan priest Father Jude Waweru, the AMECEA Justice and Peace Coordinator, gave a presentation on “Small Christian Communities at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace within AMECEA” in a Panel Discussion on the topic “The Response of the Church to the Outcomes of the Second Africa Synod” at a Post-Synodal Consultative Meeting on the theme “Africa Rise Up!” in Cotonou, Benin immediately after the pope’s visit in November, 2011. The meeting issued an action plan, *The Cotonou Resolution*, that identified implementation strategies. Concerning a methodology that takes into account the local environment the action plan states: “Apply the research-action method that stems from social analysis to point out the major axes of an overall social pastoral.”<sup>696</sup>

Some SCCs in Eastern Africa have reflected on *Africa's Commitment* one chapter per week for five consecutive weeks. The dioceses under the Metropolitan of Mwanza Archdiocese, Tanzania had a three day training session on Training of Trainers (TOT) on the implementation of *Africa's Commitment* from 17-20 January, 2012 in Nyakahoja, Mwanza. AMECEA sponsored a three-day Workshop on the “Implementation of the Papal Exhortation Document *Africa's Commitment*” for delegates from the nine AMECEA countries in Limuru, Kenya from 6-8 March, 2012. The theme was: “Shaping the Destiny of the People in the AMECEA Region after the Second Synod for Africa.”

Over the last 40 years an interesting pattern has emerged in official Vatican documents. Venerable Pope Paul VI used the expression Base or Basic Christian Communities that shows the Latin American influence. St. John Paul II<sup>697</sup> used this same expression as well as Living or Vital Christian Communities that shows the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) influence. Gradually the expression Small Christian Communities has become more popular worldwide – in North America, in parts of Asia and in English-speaking Africa. Pope Benedict XVI uses the expression Small Christian

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<sup>695</sup> Chongwain, Ireneaus Chia, “Editorial: Small Christian Communities, Learning from the East African Experience,” *L'Effort Camerounais*, 23 October, 2008, L'Effort Camerounais Website, retrieved on 22 July, 2014, <http://www.leffortcamerounais.com/2008/10/editorialsmall.html>

<sup>696</sup> “General Report on the SECAM Post Synodal Consultation on Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa,” Cotonou: Privately Printed, 23 November, 2011, No. 5.

<sup>697</sup> It took time for SCCs to enter the vocabulary of the official church. Blessed John Paul II visited Kenya three times in 1980, 1985 and 1995. During his first visit he did not refer to SCCs in his speech to the Kenyan Bishops. Such speeches are drafted by his advisers, sometimes added to and revised by the pope and then finally approved by the pope. One Kenyan bishop commented that in the African context when the father does not talk about things important to the children they are puzzled. Fortunately the pope advisors briefed him about on the importance of SCCs in the Kenya Church and he referred to them in his second and third visits.

Communities (as well as Small Communities) more and more. One can assume that this is due in part to the influence of our Eastern Africa SCCs.

During visits to Rome in the 1980s I was told that people mainly knew the Latin American experience of Base or Basic Ecclesial Communities and were wary of this liberation, social action model. When the pastoral, parish-based model of SCCs in Eastern Africa was clearly explained during the 1994 First African Synod a new door opened. We began to publish more articles and books on our Eastern Africa experience such as the two part article on the “Current Reality of the Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa and Their Relationship to the Documentation on the 1994 African Synod” in *Omnis Terra* published by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Documentation on AMECEA’s implementation of the 1994 African Synod was sent to, and published by, the Synod of Bishops Office. Vatican Radio broadcast interviews on the pastoral model of SCCs in Eastern Africa in both English and Swahili. The word was slowly getting around.

Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese in Uganda has very active SCCs. Some years ago Bishop Joseph Mukwaya (who died in 2008) invited the Apostolic Nuncio in Uganda to visit the SCCs during a pastoral visit to the diocese. The nuncio was cautious saying that he was only familiar with the liberation, social action model of the Base or Basic Ecclesial Communities in Latin America. Bishop Mukwaya said: “Come and see our pastoral model that is connected to the parishes.” The nuncio visited these SCCs and was impressed, and even converted, to this Pastoral Model in the AMECEA Region.

Fifteen years ago a priest from Eastern Africa wanted to write his Doctorate Dissertation on “Small Christian Communities in Africa” at a university in Rome. His supervisor turned down the topic saying that there was not enough literature on the subject. Sadly he did not realize that over 100 books and booklets had been written on SCCs in Africa. Now in 2015 over 200 books, booklets and reports had been written in English on SCCs in Africa with many more resources in French. Happily many of these resources are now available in libraries in Rome especially in the Pontifical Urbaniana University. Many are documented in Mikado, the online Mission Library and Catholic Documentation Center sponsored by Missio in Germany. In recent years theses and dissertations on SCCs in Eastern Africa have been written in universities in Rome such as the Alphonsiana, Angelicum, Gregoriana, Lateranensis, Salesiana and Urbaniana as well as many other universities worldwide.<sup>698</sup>

There always has been a close bond between the Local Church in Eastern Africa and the Local Church in Germany. **ADD**

On the global stage a SCC team from Eastern Africa participated in four

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<sup>698</sup> Recent examples are Charles Ddungu, *Fostering the Participation of Laypersons in Pastoral Ministry: Towards Contextual Formation of Lay Ministers and Leaders of Small Christian Communities in Tanzania*, Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2011. Alex Masangu, *The Locality of the Church. Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa and in the Catholic Diocese of Tanga, Tanzania*, Innsbruck: Universität Innsbruck, 2011. Vincent Muhindo, *Reviving Small Christian Communities in the Diocese of Kasese, Uganda*. Rome: Pontificia Universitas Urbana, 2008.

physical international SCCs/BCCs/CEBs meetings: Notre Dame, Indiana, USA in December, 1991 (when Bishop Christopher Mwoleka participated); Notre Dame, Indiana, USA in October, 1996 (when Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki participated); Cochabamba, Bolivia in November, 1999; and Notre Dame, Indiana, USA in November, 2002 (when Bishop Patrick Kalilombe participated). Several international meetings have taken place as International Audio Conferences (by phone). The SCC presentations and additional reports helped delegates to understand our Eastern African experience of SCCs as a new way of being church and new model of church.<sup>699</sup> Sharing experiences of SCCs around the world was an experience of mutual enrichment and mutual illumination.<sup>700</sup> SCC delegates from Eastern Africa have also participated in physical national meetings in England, Germany, Italy and United States.

Future meetings and webinars are planned on Skype, Goggle Hangouts, GoToMeetings, Cisco WebEx and other video conferencing technology.

Ten representatives from Kenya and Tanzania based at our Nairobi Hub (four laywomen, three laymen, two priests and one religious sister) participated in our Fifth International SCCs/BCCs/CEBs Meeting<sup>701</sup> that was a three-hour live, online, virtual, interactive International SCCs Webinar (Web Conference) on "Small Christian Communities: The Church on the Move around the World." It took place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. USA Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, 12 February, 2014 using Cisco WebEx Meetings technology. It was coordinated by the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, USA. There were 40 participants. Participants from the Global South included: Africa (Kenya and Tanzania); Asia (India, Philippines and United Arab Emirates); Latin America (Mexico); and Oceania (Australia).

The first hour and a half was 10-15 minute reports from each of the six continents on "Successes/Accomplishments, Challenges and Future Priorities of SCCs around the World." Each continental coordinator answered these three questions:

1. Name three successes/accomplishments of SCCs in your country/section of the country.
2. Name three challenges (problems, obstacles, questions) of SCCs in your country/section of the country.
3. Name three priorities for SCCs in your country/section of the country.

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<sup>699</sup> Reports on some of these meetings are listed in the "Select Annotated Bibliography of Books, Booklets, Articles, Reports, Papers and Printed Materials."

<sup>700</sup> *Faith Sharing for Small Church Communities: Questions and Commentaries on the Sunday Readings* edited by Art Baranowski and the National Alliance for Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC), Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1993 presents life focus commentaries and questions on the Lectionary Cycles ABC from 7,500 members of SCCs around the world including African SCCs.

<sup>701</sup> The seeds for this meeting were sown at the "Second International Consultation on Small Christian Communities," University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, October, 1996. See the papers recommendations in Robert S. Pelton, ed., *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.

Key topics (listed alphabetically) that surfaced around the world are: “Formation and Training of SCCs Leaders;” “Getting a Greater Commitment from Catholic Bishops and Priests to Support SCCs;” “How SCCs Can Promote Family and Marriage;” “How to Attract more Youth Leaders and Members;” “How to 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;” “How the National SCCs Organizations Can Collaborate More Closely Together;” “Importance of Lectionary-Based (*Bible*) Faith Sharing;” “Importance of Social Media/New Media in SCCs,” “Importance of Youth SCCs” (“How to reach out to youth/the young generation”) and “SCCs Promote Justice and Peace.” The information, answers and reports are helping us in our ongoing evaluation, assessment and revitalization of SCCs in Eastern Africa.

At the beginning of the webinar Mrs. Rose Musimba (Kenya) asked the 10 participants at our Nairobi Hub to introduce themselves. She mentioned that Alphonse Omolo (Kenya), a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team, is presently based in Bochim, Germany finishing his graduate studies. She then presented the report on the Africa Continent that included the 180,000 SCCs in Eastern Africa:

#### Successes/Accomplishments:

1. Centering SCC meetings around *Bible* Sharing has made SCCs a way of life that enhances formation in the spiritual life and sacramental life of its members.
2. With the increased sense of belonging to the Church Family of God achieved by SCCs in Eastern Africa, SCC members participate more readily in the development of our parishes including fund raising and development activities.
3. Emergence of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs)<sup>702 703</sup> and Online SCCs.

#### Challenges

1. Men and youth are leaving the SCCs to women.

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<sup>702</sup> Reference to YSCCs can be traced back to Joseph Healey, “Twelve Case Studies of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa” in *How Local is the Local Church: Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa*. AMECEA Gaba Publications *Spearhead* Numbers 126-128 (1993), pp. 59-103 with the following Case Studies:

- “Youth Small Christian Communities in Kisumu.”
- “Three Youth Small Christian Communities in Bukoba (Bunena, Rubya Parish and Hekima Secondary School).”

<sup>703</sup> Various Protestant Churches especially Evangelical Churches have pioneered in promoting effective Student Small Groups. See “Effective Student Groups: Disciple the students in your ministry through intentional small groups.” SmallGroups Website, [http://www.smallgroups.com/training-tools/e/effective-student-groups.html?tCode=35E0E2AD0D&dCode=5E6A34C02B&utm\\_source=buildingsmallgroup\\_s-  
html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=9077722&utm\\_content=348703385&utm\\_campaign=2013](http://www.smallgroups.com/training-tools/e/effective-student-groups.html?tCode=35E0E2AD0D&dCode=5E6A34C02B&utm_source=buildingsmallgroup_s-<br/>html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=348703385&utm_campaign=2013)

2. Most SCC members come to the meetings late thus prolonging the length of the meetings and discouraging attendance.
3. The current program and process of SCC meetings leaves little time for discussion and implementation of AMECEA and Papal documents.

#### Future Priorities

1. Formation and training of all SCCs members including clergy and religious to reduce the misunderstanding of different roles and responsibilities.
2. Networking of SCCs in the parishes for joint pastoral action.
3. SCC members include issues of unity and justice and peace in their actions in order to deal with the true local reality (*hali halisi*) in their communities.

Sister Rita Ishengoma (Tanzania) presented the African Continent's "Plan of Action: Where do we go from here?"

Goal: The use of internet to promote SCCs in Africa and to attract especially the youth. Through the social media/new media and social networking online access will be a big help for SCC members who have their own internal communications networks. We will try to start and strengthen Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in Eastern Africa. Our one specific concrete action is to offer three scholarships to young people in Eastern Africa (committed young adults under 30 years old) to the three-week Lumko SCCs Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya in September, 2014. The three young people are:

1. Miss Albina Chishimba Chishimba (Zambia):  
Present work of ministry: The Archdiocese of Lusaka Youth Chairperson and Zambia National Council for Catholic Youth (ZNCCY) Vice Chairperson from 2013 to 2015. "I am a member of St. Maximillian Kolbe YSCC, Cathedral of the Child Jesus Parish, Lusaka, Zambia."  
My hope following the Lumko course: "Continue working with the volunteer Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team."

**NOTE:** She hopes to take the Lumko Course in the future.

2. Mr. Meshack Nzioki Mbola (Kenya):  
Present work of ministry: "I am currently working as a catechist in one of our parish outstations in Makindu Parish, Machakos Diocese, Kenya. I am a member of St. Sylvester SCC."  
My hope following the Lumko course: "I expect the course to make me a better instrument of evangelization through the skills of the SCCs."

3. Miss Renata Dalmat (Tanzania)  
Present work of ministry: Parish secretary at Itahwa Parish in Bukoba Diocese. I am a member of St. Barnabas SCC."  
My hope following the Lumko course: "I hope to get an education about theology and pastoral ministry and to impart that education to others especially to the Small Christian Communities."

**COMMENTS** (from members of the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team)

1. Mrs. Rose Musimba (member of St. Martin de Porres SCC in Nairobi, Kenya and St. Maria Goretti SCCs in Makindu, Kenya) and Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH (member of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus SCC in Bukoba, Tanzania):

A. Positive:

- The theme was relevant and articulated by all participants throughout the presentation.
- All animators shared ways on how SCCs participate in their own areas that were connected through the web conference.
- Designated coordinators who could not attend found means of sending their sharings that were read. This was very appreciated and encouraging.
- Viewing our friends from a far distance on the screen and also listening to their talks enhanced that this “New Way of Being Church” being applied in the Catholic Church worldwide.
- More Webinars (Web Conferences) are recommended for the future.
- The use of the Vatican II Documents on the background of SCCs by the facilitators of the Web Conference, Fr. Robert Pelton and Jeff Miller, proved how well we are connected with the Catholic Church at large.

B. Critique (used instead of “Negative” or “Weaknesses”):

- It was sad that Alphonse Omolo from Germany was not given a chance of sharing at the Web Conference which he attended from the beginning.
- Although designated coordinators were told to follow a general outline of questions, some didn't follow this. It was difficult to follow their sharings. We thank Rose Musimba, Barb Howard, and Bob Pelton (PowerPoint presentation) for their reports that were so clearly arranged.
- Time during the webinar was not given to our concrete plans of action regarding "SCC into the Future" that we think is very important. We thank the Eastern Africa participants' recommendation: “To get involved in the Catholic Church and general society through the Social Media.”

2. Mwalimu Simon Rurinjah (member of St Anne SCC in Nairobi, Kenya):

A. Positive:

- The webinar was a very good conference and encouraged us SCC members. Our problems are the same the worldwide over and we can learn from each other.
- We were happy to work as an African team.
- We were challenged to look squarely at the problem of the lack of a new generation of SCC leaders and animators who will take over in future.

B. Critique:

- The conference ended before time, three minutes before the hour. This discouraged many participants from sharing their plan of action.
- The representatives from Germany did not have time to contribute because Europe's 10 minutes was up. But then Latin America was given a longer period.

### 3. Father Joseph G. Healey, MM (member of St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi, Kenya)

#### A. Positive:

- First, I feel that it was a minor miracle that the internet and cell phone technology worked here in Nairobi, Kenya. Though a Video Projector we showed the webinar on a large screen for all 10 of us on the African Team to watch and participate in together.
- A physical meeting would have cost upwards of \$50,000. This webinar costs only \$3,000.
- The key learning and challenge for me was Scott Appleby's historical and social analysis of SCC leaders and activists. Looking at the three generations after Vatican II:

1965-1985

1985-2005

2005-2025

Most of the participants in the webinar came into SCCs ministry in the 1965-1985 period. For example, of the five members of our Eastern African SCCs Training Team three are in their 70s, one in her 60s and one in his 40s. Scott rightly challenges us with the question: For SCCs to be a permanent and ongoing force and influence in the Catholic Church in the world where is the new generation of SCCs leaders and activists (people in their 20 and 30s)? We need to reflect more on Scott's excellent observations.

- Several participants mentioned Pope Francis' support and encouragement for SCCs/BCCs/CEBs. See Scott's reference to the renaissance of SCCs during the present papacy, Pope Francis's letter to CEBs in Brazil. This is very important for the future.
- It was nice to see familiar faces from previous International SCCs Meetings and hear their updates.
- The Coordinating Team at Notre Dame especially Bob Pelton, Tony Oleck and Jeff Miller did wonderful work.
- Concerning our African Continent's "Plan of Action" we have added two young people to our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team. 28-year-old Kenyan Mr. Peter Kyalo (member of the St. Joseph SCC, Doonholm Parish, Nairobi), the Assistant Administrator of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, has joined the team especially for tech support. 22-year-old Zambian Miss Albina Chishimba Chishimba (member of St. Maximilian Kolbe YSCC, Cathedral of the Child Jesus Parish, Lusaka), the Vice Chairperson of the Zambia National Council for Catholic Youth (ZNCCY) has joined the team for outreach to youth especially in Zambia. Much of their SCCs ministry will be done online.

#### B. Critique:

- We tried hard but were largely unsuccessful to get good representation from Asia and Latin America.
- The sound was uneven. For those of us in Nairobi it was excellent from Notre Dame but less than average from Manila and Melbourne.
- Several presentations were overly long, winding and hard to follow without following the three-part format.

- Latin America and North America (with Bill D’Antonio’s input) went over their time limit while we didn’t get to hear from Germany at all.
- Not enough time was given to the Lectionary-based Faith Sharing on the Gospel of the following Sunday.

After the webinar Indian Bishop Thomas Dabre, Bishop of Pune, India wrote:

I wish to thank you for the report of the Web Conference on SCC. I am so sorry that because of my own difficulties I could not participate in the conference. I thank you very much for the report which I read carefully.

1. I am very happy that for the last so many years SCC work has been going on in different countries of the world.
2. The SCCs are establishing committed leadership which is emerging at the local levels.
3. There are leaders with a vision and mission who have been continuing the work steadfastly.
4. There is an atmosphere of joy, interest and commitment around the Word of God.
5. There is a strong sense of the importance of lay people and their leadership.
6. Regarding the difficulties that you have mentioned in the report, they are the same also here in India namely the majority are women, late beginnings of the meetings, etc.

Let me conclude by saying that your report will help me in the three talks that I am going to give in Germany in the month of May.<sup>704</sup>

Let us hope that there are more similar SCCs Webinars in the future.

One concrete follow-down/follow-up in Eastern Africa was the one-day Eastern Africa Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya on Saturday, 30 August, 2014. There were 31 participants (22 men and 9 women) from six countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia. These included two young people from Kenya and Tanzania who received scholarships to the three-week Lumko SCCs Workshop. It was the first time for this kind of workshop. Ten participants said they heard the acronym YSCCs (Youth Small Christian Communities) for the FIRST time.<sup>705</sup> The basic process/methodology of the workshop was "See," "Judge" and "Act" pioneered by youth around the world.

Highlights were:

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<sup>704</sup> Thomas Dabre email message to the author dated 1 April, 2014.

<sup>705</sup> A Search on Google for "Youth Small Christian Community" (using the quotation marks) gives 99 hits (visits) as of 5 February, 2015. Many examples are part of the name of the YSCC preceded by a saint’s name. Examples come from Australia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, USA and Zambia. Many comments on YSCCs are on Facebook.

- Presentation on the nine SCCs of university students<sup>706</sup> in Christ the Teacher Catholic Parish at Kenyatta University (KU)<sup>707</sup> in Nairobi, Kenya. Kenyan student Kevin Arori, the Parish Chairman, emphasized in addition to the weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* special SCC activities such as:
  - - a. Charity work such as visiting children homes and hospitals that included cleaning the compound, washing clothes and out giving food.
    - b. During SCC meetings having prayer partners.
    - c. Smaller family-type groups in the SCCs where students visit each other in their rooms to pray and share about their daily problems and challenges.
    - d. Door to door visitations to get more students to join the SCCs.
    - e. Helping new students to get settled on the KU campus, to foster a good spiritual life and to cope with various challenges.

He stated:

Generally the Small Christian Communities are of great importance to the youth since they help us to learn, to share and to grow spiritually. These small groups have helped to bring people together and to understand each other no matter where one comes from. Indeed this has facilitated living in peace with each other. SCCs have also helped students to create an impact on the community through charity work services.<sup>708</sup>

- Presentation on the six Youth SCCs (YSCCs) in Holy Cross Parish, Dandora in Nairobi, Kenya.<sup>709</sup> Kenyan youth leader Anthony Adoyo emphasized special SCC activities that make this parish so unique in Kenya:
  - a. Structure: the six YSCCs are formed within the five geographical regions or phases of the parish and are linked to the 59 general (adults) SCCs. Once a month the youth meet with their parents in the general (adults) SCCs. Each SCC has two representatives on the Parish Central Youth Committee. Together with the representatives of the Youth Fellowship and Youth Choir and this makes 15 members. The chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary are members of the Parish Pastoral Council. They are guided by the Youth Chaplain who is appointed by the Parish Priest.

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<sup>706</sup> There are many examples of YSCCs in high schools, Teachers Training Colleges, seminaries, theological consortia, catechists' school, colleges, universities and other educational institutions/institutions of learning. These are called school-based YSCCs.

<sup>707</sup> As an example, St. Dominic SCC has about 70 members that meet all together on Wednesday evenings in one of the classrooms for prayers and discussion. It has four smaller groups called "families" that meet on another day for prayer, faith sharing and *Bible Reflection*: Saints John, Jude, Maria Goretti and Patrick.

<sup>708</sup> Kevin Arori, "Christ the Teacher Catholic Church Kenyatta University Small Christian Communities Report," Nairobi: Unpublished Report, 2014.

<sup>709</sup> Described in other sections of this Ebook.

- b. There is a careful plan of combining individual meetings of the six YSCCs and youth fellowship of all the communities together.
  - c. The YSCCs produce and sell the parish leaflet of the Sunday Readings as a means of self-support.
  - d. The youth in the six YSCCs support each other in times of trouble especially in sickness and death. This is both financial support and physical presence to the bereaved family.
  - e. There is a general Parish Youth Facebook Page and individual YSCCs have their own pages.
- Online demonstration of basic computer and internet skills like searching for content within a long .pdf document, e.g. searching information in Ebooks using Ctrl + F was taught. Online demonstration of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and Facebook Page and other Youth Facebook Pages. The JPII Evangelizing Teams Facebook Page was officially launched.

In connection to one session of *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection on the Gospel of the following Sunday in small groups of five or six people, there was a stimulating and challenging discussion on the importance of regular lectionary-based reading and reflecting on the *Bible*. Only four of the 31 participants had read the following Sunday's Gospel in advance. Some participants said that they read the Gospel every Saturday evening. It was pointed out that at least four types of Catholics read the Sunday Scripture readings in advance, ideally starting on the previous Monday or Tuesday:

- Priest or deacon preparing the homily for the following Sunday Mass.
- Catechist preparing the homily for the following "Sunday Service without a Priest."
- Prayer Leader of a SCC preparing the readings of the following Sunday for the midweek *Bible* Service.
- Religious Education teachers preparing their *Bible* lessons for the following weekend.

It was emphasized that this lectionary-based *Bible* reading and reflection should be "a regular way of life" of serious Catholics. If the following Sunday's Gospel can be read on Monday or Tuesday, key words, phrases and verses (like a *mantra*) and themes can be rich sources of prayer and meditation during the week.

During the workshop we discussed ways of promoting a SCCs model of church of church among youth in Eastern Africa. This connects to what Pope Francis said to the DRC Bishops on 12 September, 2014 about pastoral outreach to young people:

The most effective way to overcome violence, inequality and ethnic divisions is to equip the young with a critical mind and to offer them the opportunity to mature an understanding of Gospel values. It is also necessary to strengthen pastoral care in universities and in Catholic and public schools, combining education with the clear proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> Francis, "Pope to DRC Bishops: Work for Society Based on Respect for Human Dignity: Shares His Concerns for Congolese Youth, Urges Fidelity to the Gospel in Ad Limina Message," *ZENIT International News Agency The World Seen from Rome*, email dated 12 September, 2014.

The "See," "Judge" and "Act" process/methodology helps young people to develop a critical mind. YSCCs can be an important part of pastoral care in universities. The weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* is an opportunity to connect the Gospel to our daily lives.

One concrete fruit of the workshop was the establishment of the Kenyatta University Catholic Community (KUCC) Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC) Facebook Page described as "a small family under the Catholic Church whose purpose is to bring Catholic youth together in spiritual and social growth, pray together and share challenges that face us as the young generation."<sup>711</sup> The founder Arori said: "Let's use the time that we spend in social media for our YSCC as this will help us share a lot as young people in the Catholic Church. All of us in this family will be identified as 'WANAJUMUIYA'."<sup>712</sup>

The next day we had a special Youth Small Christian Communities Mass in Christ the King Outstation (Subparish) in St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Kangemi. There was a shared homily in buzz groups of two followed by sharing highlights of the small *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflections* groups of the previous day's workshop. Stories included St. John Paul II explaining why Baptism was the most important day of his life, Blessed Mother Teresa's famous quotation "God does not ask us to be successful but to be faithful," the heroic example of the young Kenyan woman who donated her kidney to her sick uncle and then died herself of medical complications and why YSCCs bring something new to the Catholic Church in Africa.

RENEW International coordinates national and international "online/virtual conferences" through GoToMeetings video conferencing software and Skype.<sup>713</sup> The Marianist Lay Formation Initiative (MLFI) uses Google Hangouts.

Recent research indicates that there are "around" 52,000-55,000 Small Christian Communities (also called Small Church Communities and Small Faith Communities) in the United States – slightly more than the number in Kenya alone. This figure is based on the significant research done in a late 1990s study (see Bernard Lee with William V. D'Antonio, *The Catholic Experience of Small Christian Communities*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000) and new research and projections by William V. D'Antonio in 2011. The figure could go even higher. D'Antonio says. "There are some areas of the country where Hispanic Catholics flock to Small Christian Communities." This is within the context of the lack of the network of Catholic schools that were in place even one generation ago. Regarding these thriving Hispanic communities in the USA he adds: "Our survey indicates that 28% of Hispanics are

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<sup>711</sup> KUCC Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC) Facebook Page, retrieved on 20 October, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1549609615274202/>

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>713</sup> The Missio (Aachen, Germany)'s 2012 volume in their book series "Theology of the One World" is on the topic "Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities around the World." Writers from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America treat: "Historical Development," "Foundations and Biblical Reference," "Spirituality," "Ecclesiological Comprehension" and "Pastoral Vision." The historical section covers the whole African continent: English-speaking Africa, French-speaking Africa and Portuguese-speaking Africa.

or have been active in SCCs.” William V. D'Antonio in an email message to the author dated 8 November, 2011. Similar research indicates that Black Catholics in the USA do not respond well to this SCCs model, but Africans and African American Catholics in the USA do.

Commenting on the influence of the Cursillo movement in the USA, American theologian Timothy Matovina states: “One of the primary concerns of the [Second Vatican] Council Fathers was the spiritual renewal of the [Catholic] Church, particularly in response to the new circumstances of the modern world. Concurrent with the era of the council, apostolic movements [such as Cursillo] eclipsed pious societies as the primary small faith groups among both Latinos and non-Latinos in the United States.”<sup>714</sup>

Some of these SCCs could be classified as the Small Apostolic Group Model of Church. One interesting example is the 60 active Chapters of Maryknoll Affiliates throughout the world. These are Small Mission Communities (SMCs). One chapter is in Mwanza, Tanzania. Another example is the Small Weekly Group Reunions that are part of the Cursillo Apostolic Movement. Joliet Diocese in USA has between 40 and 50 of these groups.

There are many things that Eastern Africa SCCs can learn from the United States experience.<sup>715</sup> Some USA parishes use faith reflection starting with prayer as a “way of life” as seen in the style of their meetings,<sup>716</sup> workshops, seminars, staff reflections, board reflections, ministries reflections, RCIA, even the committee to count the weekly collection, etc. The United States Catholic Bishops suggest: “Every parish meeting can begin with the reading of the upcoming Sunday’s Gospel, followed by a time of reflection and faith sharing.” See the experience of Hartford Archdiocese, Connecticut. The Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities states: “Our mission is to promote and support small church

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<sup>714</sup> Timothy Matovina, “Latino Contributions to Vatican II Renewal, Origins, 20 December, 2012 (Volume 42, Number 29), p. 467.  
<http://bellarmine.lmu.edu/media/lmubellarminesite/bcladepartments/theology/theologygradprograms/theologygradprogramsdocuments/CasassaLecture%20Matovina.pdf>

<sup>715</sup> The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has a Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth and uses the term “lay ecclesial ministers:”

These men and women of every race and culture who serve in parishes, schools, diocesan agencies, and Church institutions are identified by many different position titles. In *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* they are identified in a generic way as “lay ecclesial ministers.” This reflects on what they have in common and to propose some understandings of lay ecclesial ministry situated within our social and ecclesial environment and within the framework of the Church's belief, teaching, and pastoral practice.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Website, retrieved on 13 November, 2014, <http://www.usccb.org/about/laity-marriage-family-life-and-youth/lay-ecclesial-ministry/index.cfm>

<sup>716</sup> Some conferences and meetings use “Home Communities” that are small group gatherings (10 to 12 people) for sharing, reflection and insights gained that take place after Keynote Presentations.

communities and the doing of every parish activity in a reflective and relational way for the sake of building parishes where people regularly help each other connect life and faith.” <http://www.sccquest.org>. Ron Rolheiser said, “It seems that the time is right to take small communities in parishes seriously and do what we can to gather our younger generations into groups that allow them to engage with Christ through scripture, prayer, support, learning and action.”<sup>717</sup>

The Pastoral Department publishes *Quest*, a seasonal reflection booklet for SCCs that has valuable resource material for every Sunday of the liturgical year. The weekly sessions model an exercise of practical theological reflection. It centers on a two-fold movement: “Hearing the Lord’s Gospel” and “Hearing the Gospel of the Lord,” in other words, hearing Jesus Christ’s message and hearing him. We in Eastern Africa can learn from this approach that is an invitation for our SCCs to go deeper: to hear and receive the gospel more attentively and to listen and respond to Jesus Christ ever more deeply.

Along with Hartford Archdiocese, Connecticut and St Petersburg Diocese, Florida, San Bernardino Diocese, California has been a pioneer and leader in SCCs in USA described as follows:

In 1998 our diocese visited the concept of Small Faith Communities. Since then we have experienced a renewal among many of our people. We choose this concept as a way of restructuring our Local Church as cited in the Diocesan Vision statement: *Our structures will empower participation, promote networking and facilitate collaboration...small communities of faith will support our commitment.* Together, let us vigorously take on this new task of developing each of our parishes into a “community of Small Faith Communities.” This will renew our families, neighborhoods and society in hope.<sup>718</sup>

“Restructuring our Local Church” certainly resonates with the AMECEA pastoral priority of developing SCCs as an official ecclesial structure in the parish. Experiments of pastoral restructuring have taken place in Eastern African dioceses such as Same Diocese in Tanzania. The Diocesan Synod in 1988-91 was an important turning point for Same. It was an experience lived by the people on the grassroots. The starting point was the questions and felt needs of families and SCCs from the bottom up, not discussion from the top down. An important result was more autonomy and decision-making on the local level.

The then Bishop Josaphat Lebulu of Same and his pastoral co-workers restructured the diocese according to a “Communion of Communities Ecclesiology” and the geographical reality of the Northeastern part of Tanzania. The traditional structure of Diocese/Parish/SCC did not seem to fit the local reality that includes large, disparate and unwieldy parishes and a physical geography of many hills and small mountains.

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<sup>717</sup> Ron Rolheiser, Mid-Atlantic Congress, 7 March, 2013. Quoted in “November 2015 Monthly Message from Small Christian Communities,” email message dated 2 November, 2015.

<sup>718</sup> Susan DeGuide and Steven Valenzuela, “Development of SFCs in San Bernardino Diocese, California,” *Small Christian Communities Today*, p. 46.

The new structure was Diocese/Center/SCC. Rather than focusing on the 17 traditional parishes they created 55 Centers (similar to sub-parishes or outstations) and around 250 SCCs. The priest(s) and other full time pastoral workers lived in one of the centers and not in what was formerly called the "parish headquarters" where the rectory, convent and primary school are located. In this new pastoral paradigm Same Diocese became a network of 55 Mass Centers made up of the local neighborhood SCCs. In this model the diocese is a "Communion of Centers" and the center is a "Communion of SCCs." The pastoral animation and service try to get down to the grassroots where the people live and work. Eight lay ministries were started in the SCCs and continue on the center and diocesan levels. These ministry leaders form a team of coordinators/formators on the SCC, center and diocesan levels.<sup>719</sup>

An interest example of *we create the path by walking* in the USA is the SCCs that have developed out of the Cornerstone retreat program. Cornerstone is a 26-hour weekend retreat experience in a parish allowing adults to become more actively involved in their spiritual development by examining and perhaps sharing their own stories, reflecting upon others' stories, forming meaningful relationships and building community with God. The goal of Cornerstone is for each retreatant to develop a stronger connection to God so that he or she may live the life that God wants him or her to live. There's no big mystery to a Cornerstone weekend. It is simply ordinary people sharing stories and experiences of trying to live the Gospel amidst the challenges of the modern world. It's a simple but moving experience. Afterwards participants often form ongoing faith sharing Small Christian Communities in their parishes to continue their spiritual growth in the knowledge and love of God while helping others do the same. The name of one such SCC in Newark Archdiocese, USA is Faith Circle. <http://www.cornerstonexp.org> Yet it is clear that faith sharing is not for everyone. Certain people find it too personal and too intimate. Their sensitivities need to be respected. The USA model is that men and women have separate faith sharing Small Christian Communities. This seems to work better.

St. Austin Catholic Parish in Austin, Texas, USA fosters the involvement of its members in Small Christian Communities, reminiscent of the early Church. The larger parish church then experiences itself as a communion of communities. This image is expressed most concretely as the communities come together in service of others, care and concern for one another and in the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. Names to show the creative diversity of these SCCs include Contemplative Prayer Community, Moms of Small Children Community, Seekers Community ("for us the Scriptures are always fresh because our experiences each time we read them are always different from those of the previous occasions"), Sunday with the Word Community (intergenerational -- grandparents, parents and children), Vincentian Community I, Visitation Community and Wednesday Night Family Community (community of different denominations, Catholic, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran). All these small communities have some kind of *Bible Sharing*, *Lectio Divina* and faith sharing. Each SCC has a wide variety of celebrations and activities.

<http://www.staustin.org/index.cfm?load=page&page=223>

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<sup>719</sup> See Joseph Healey, "Diocesan Structure of Small Christian Communities in Same" in "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: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* 126-128, 1993. pp. 59-103.

St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia, USA describes its SCCs vision as follows:

In many ways the Second Vatican Council got us back to basics by underscoring who we are as church: The church is the whole People of God. Baptism and Confirmation really do give each one of us the calling and the power to be holy, to be responsible for the Church's inner life and to take responsibility for the mission of the church in the world. The greatest unfinished task of the council, however, is to translate this vision into the ordinary Catholic parishioner's daily consciousness, to make the church "we" instead of "they"—and every day, not only on Sunday.

The plan developed at St. Lawrence for restructuring into Small Christian Communities (SCCs) allows us to affirm this sense of our identity as church. In the process we discover that what we are really doing is dusting off and polishing up the treasure we always had as the Catholic Christian community. SCCs have helped all of us to "be who we are better." So wanting to restructure the present parish into smaller units is not really a departure from our tradition but a return to it. Our goal is the same "old" Catholic Church where the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit will continue to operate—but in a way most effective in our time and place. All kinds of longstanding small group associations or sodalities make a big difference for the parish. It's hard to imagine any parish without parishioners relating at some smaller group level.

What's different in our vision? We imagine *all* parishioners relating that way as the normal course of parish life. More than 20 Small Christian Communities are already active at St. Lawrence. New SCCs are formed following each Christ Renews His Parish weekend. Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) retreats are held twice a year for men and twice a year for women.<sup>720</sup>

One model is Intentional Eucharistic Communities (IECs) that are small faith communities, rooted in the Catholic tradition, that gather to celebrate Eucharist on a regular basis. Born in the enthusiasm flowing from Vatican II for a church of the people, some IECs were instituted in parishes, some were created as alternatives to the parish, some retain close ties with the institutional church and some function independently. The diversity of models is remarkable:

- alternative prayer/liturgy models within conventional parishes (with priest and/or lay presiders)
- splinter parishes (separated for legal or protest reasons)
- woman priest-led communities -- parishes led by priests from offshoot Catholic denominations
- independent lay-led communities

An example in Kenya is the Catholic Intentional Community (CIC) located at Loretto School, Msongari and connected to St. Austin Parish in Nairobi.

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<sup>720</sup> St. Lawrence Catholic Church Website, retrieved on 7 December, 2015, <http://www.saintlaw.org/small-christian-communities>

Presently there are 125 IECs in North America. In the face of this diversity, there is also a remarkably consistent desire to learn the theological rationale for a community's mission, practice uplifting and welcoming ministry and manage operations effectively using best practices learned from others or experience.<sup>721</sup>

That SCCs in the USA are creatively responding to the contemporary signs of the times is seen in this statement by Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, the Archbishop of San Francisco, California and chairman of the US Bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage: "Yes, we do need something to support newly married couples. Singling out successfully married couples is a way to do that. We do that before the wedding to help prepare them for marriage, so, those older, more experienced couples could be mentoring them after they are married -- maybe in Small Faith Communities. There's been this movement in parishes for a long time now to form these Small Faith Communities around different themes, different ways of reflecting on the faith. Maybe this could be one such theme -- to have newly married couples in a Small Faith Community led by a more experienced married couple." Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, retrieved 30 March, 2013. <https://www.Facebook.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

Some USA parishes use websites and social media/new media as described in this report: "I am the 'marketing director of St. Charles Borromeo Parish'[Brooklyn Diocese, USA] and we have been using social media techniques for the past three years to not only spread the word, but to increase neighborhood awareness that we exist. We created our own YouTube channel where we make use of the ability to tape a "from the pastor's desk" message. It costs us nothing to create and we upload a different message each week to the website. We upload the bulletin each week and together we create new fresh content for the website. This allows us to keep the website current with new information and also sends the message that we are viable as a faith community. For so many years we had become just a Catholic building and not an active faith community as was our past history in the neighborhood. John O'Malley, "Collaboration on Information Technology", Catholic Standards for Excellence forum Website, retrieved on 21 July, 2012, [http://catholicstandardsforum.org/forum/topics/collaboration-on-information-technology?xg\\_source=msg\\_mes\\_network](http://catholicstandardsforum.org/forum/topics/collaboration-on-information-technology?xg_source=msg_mes_network)

The Evangelical Churches in the USA are pioneering new forms of small groups. Menlo Church in Menlo Park, California is affiliated with the Presbyterian denomination called ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. It has a wide variety of 320 Life Groups<sup>722</sup> described as follow:

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<sup>721</sup> See William D'Antonio, "Communitas Celebrating Twenty Years of Building Community" in Healey and Hinton (eds.) *Small Christian Communities Today*, pp. 49-54.

<sup>722</sup> See also CityLife Church that is a multi-site, Pentecostal megachurch in Melbourne, Australia that has 520 Life Groups and 9,800 church members that meet in four different locations each week. 92% of the people who attend weekend services are connected into these small groups that serve as kind of Home Church. They are described as "small groups of people who meet together regularly in an informal environment." There are Life Groups for young people, campus students, young adults, young marrieds, singles, parents, adults, families, business people and a variety of age groups. Life groups generally meet two to three times a month. The church has a saying: "As we get bigger, we have to get smaller at the

Our mission is to help anyone and everyone become a follower of Jesus. Because people matter to God. Because life is better in community. Because there is no problem in the world that apprenticeship to Jesus cannot solve. There's a difference between having a network and having a friend. Life Groups are small communities of people who want a place to be themselves, ask hard questions, and grow in their life with God.<sup>723</sup>

While the priorities for every Life Group are the same, their form and frequency vary. Adult Life Groups include: Couples' Groups, Men's Groups, Mixed Groups (couples and singles), Singles Groups, Women's Groups, Special Interest Groups and Young Adult Groups. In general there are ten members in each Life Group and they meet weekly or twice a month – primarily in the evening. 10% of the groups use a Study Guide with discussion questions based on the televised sermon of the previous Sunday. The dynamic of the Life Groups is described as “up/in/out.” The groups have a service dimension (practical outreach in the church, in the community and in the world) based on the saying *because everyone can make a difference*.

Life Groups for Middle and High School students are available through Student Ministries. Menlo Church believes that the best place for connection and growth is in a Life Group. A Life Group is a small group of students who meet together weekly with one or two adult leaders. Girls match with girls and guys with guys by grade level.<sup>724</sup>

Eastern African universities can learn from the campus ministry programs<sup>725</sup> and the rich variety of school-based SCCs and especially the Youth<sup>726</sup> Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) on USA campuses. Take the example of the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, USA. One staff person emphasized: “The 14 small faith communities are central to the whole ministry at Yale.” Faith sharing in small groups at Yale is described as follows: “Small communities are powerful vehicles for adult

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same time.” CityLife Website, retrieved on 30 December, 2015, <https://www.citylife.church/life-groups>.

<sup>723</sup> Menlo Church Website, retrieved on 5 December, 2015. <http://menlo.church/#life-groups>

<sup>724</sup> Based on conversations with Sue Kim-Ahn, Central Ministry Leader – Life Groups Eff Martin and Patty Martin in Menlo Park, California on 1-2 December, 2015.

<sup>725</sup> American lay theologian Kevin Ahern estimates that 70 % of the university and colleges in the USA do not have an organized Catholic Campus Ministry Program. He distinguishes between the schools with excellent programs like a Yale University or any of any Jesuit Universities and a Bronx Community College in New York with no program. There is also economic inequality and opportunity gaps among the students. Interview with the author at Maryknoll, NY on 16 December, 2015.

<sup>726</sup> The views of youth in the United States are very complex. In a discussion with the staff of St. Paul Inside the Walls Evangelization Center in Madison, New Jersey, USA, they commented that youth are connected but not committed. Young people like words such as “chat” or “event” rather than “group” or “community.” Conversation with the author on 3 December, 2014.

faith formation, providing opportunities for learning, prayer, mutual support, and the shared experience of Christian living and service to Church and society.”<sup>727</sup> A further explanation:

On any given evening during the week, groups of five, twelve, or fifteen gather in seminar rooms of the Thomas E. Golden, Jr. Center to prayerfully read and discuss the readings for the coming Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The leader welcomes those gathered and prays an opening prayer, then invites different members to read a small section of the readings. Using a journal with commentary and questions prepared by the chaplains, the members consider the passage in relation to its historical context, its thematic relationship to other readings for that Sunday, and possible application for our lives.

Sometimes the conversation meanders into such heady questions as string theory or foreign policy (this is Yale, after all!), but at the end of the discussion members consider ways to put their faith into action. The leader for the evening writes down a short summary and gives it to the chaplains, who answer any outstanding questions or incorporate the insights into the Sunday homily.

One goal of the SCCs is that participants join the Sunday assembly better prepared to hear the readings, having prayerfully considered them earlier in the week. Each semester students form relationships through these groups with students they might not otherwise have met at Yale – Forestry students with Divinity students and Timothy Dwight students with Pierson students. The interactions formed in these groups invite peer ministry in a new way. As each group fills out their summary of the discussion each week they are also invited to bring to the chaplains' attention students who were missing or might need help in some way -- empowering care for one another on a deep level.

Our chapel setting is an intimate gathering of busy people who recognize the need to develop a spiritual life. Through the SCC structure we hope to give students, faculty, staff and community members an experience of church that is small in scale and that helps each member see the relevance of faith for their everyday lives. A freshman coming to Yale learns to be an active participant in classroom discussion and research. So too at the chapel, students learn to share their unique perspective and faith experience with others. The Small Church Community structure began in the spring of 1996 and today over 150 people are taking part each week, mainly students.

Participants broaden their understanding of God's Word. Small Church Communities help persons grow in living their faith by reflecting on God's word in their lives and their response to the world around them. The gatherings are a time for bringing people together for personal reflection, faith

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<sup>727</sup> Saint Thomas More Website, retrieved on 22 October, 2012, <http://stm.yale.edu/FaithSharing.php>

sharing based on scripture, responding to individual and family needs, and socializing.<sup>728</sup>

Campus Ministry of the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA directly sponsors two undergraduate faith sharing groups to help students strengthen their faith, meet new friends and worship with others. First, Compass Freshman Fellowship is a program for freshmen Catholic students. The Compass Freshman Formation program is designed to deepen students' faith through monthly large group and weekly small group sessions. The goal of the program is for students to learn what it means to be a Catholic young adult at Notre Dame and continue their formation as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Second, Iron Sharpens Iron (ISI) Christian Fellowship is a community of Christians from many denominations who meet for a weekly praise and worship service in addition to men's and women's *Bible* studies groups and other fellowship events. Anyone seeking genuine Christian fellowship is welcome to attend.<sup>729</sup>



Campus Ministry regularly hosts Catholic CAFE (Conversation and Faith Exploration), undergraduate student groups in residence halls and off campus at Notre Dame that share their faith and address the many ways in which the Catholic faith and their everyday lives intersect. Groups meet on various evenings at convenient times and locations for hour-long conversations to discuss their faith in a casual, safe and engaging environment. Students can come and go as they please or stay for the entire semester-long series. Catholic CAFE groups are led by a pair of students who serve as conversation facilitators, guiding the group's discussion and inviting all to share their insights, with the leaders drawing from

<sup>728</sup> Ibid., retrieved on 8 December, 2015, <http://stm.yale.edu/SmallChurchCommunities.php>

<sup>729</sup> Notre Dame Website, retrieved on 8 December, 2015, <http://campusministry.nd.edu/undergraduate-resources/faith-sharing-group>

Scripture and the Catholic Church's tradition as necessary to aid in the group's understanding.<sup>730</sup>

Catholic and Protestant graduate students participate in an Ecumenical Bible Study Group every Friday.

At Boston College<sup>731</sup> in Boston, Massachusetts, USA Cura groups are student-led Small Faith Sharing Groups that meet once a week for an hour to pray, share highs and lows, and uncover where we see God in our lives. *Cura* is the Latin word for care as in *cura personalis* ("care of the whole person"). Goals of Cura are "Community," "Ignatian Reflection," "Spirituality," and "Care for Others." This name was chosen to express the distinct Jesuit identity and charism at Boston College.<sup>732</sup> Cura groups include groups of a mixture of undergraduate students as well as specific special interest groups such as rugby players and nurses.

The process of a weekly session is described as follows:

Articulate a particular instance in which a decision he/she made was a direct result of shared prayer and/or group reflection and will develop a language of discernment in his/her life. Learn a variety of spiritual prayer practices (*Lectio Divina*, contemplation of place,<sup>733</sup> praying with art, centering prayer, meditation, etc.) that will serve to instill a habit of prayer and deepen your relationship with God.<sup>734</sup>

Cura members have the opportunity to attend retreats and other activities throughout the year.

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<sup>730</sup> Ibid., <https://campusministry.nd.edu/about-catholicism/sacramental-preparation/cross-examination-investigating-the-catholic-faith>

<sup>731</sup> Other Jesuit Colleges in the USA with good Small Faith Sharing Groups of college students are (alphabetically): Georgetown University, Washington DC; Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California; Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California. Some use the Christian Life Communities (CLCs) Model.

<sup>732</sup> Based on a conversation with American laywoman Ellen Modica, Assistant Campus Minister, Boston College, Boston Massachusetts, USA on 19 November, 2015.

<sup>733</sup> Ignatian contemplation is suited especially for the gospels. In the Second Week of the Exercises, we accompany Jesus through his life by imagining scenes from the Gospel stories. Let the events of Jesus' life be present to you right now. Visualize the event as if you were making a movie. Pay attention to the details: sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings of the event. Lose yourself in the story; don't worry if your imagination is running too wild. At some point, place yourself in the scene. See more at: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/ignatian-contemplation-imaginative-prayer#sthash.SzpLba5D.dpuf>

<sup>734</sup> "Cura -- Christian Life Community," Boston College Website, retrieved on 21 September, 2014, <http://www.bc.edu/offices/ministry/faithcommunities/cura.html>

The RCIA sessions at Boston College includes weekly lectionary-based faith sharing in the Spring Semester. A question can be asked: after being baptized do these new Catholics have the desire to continue in small groups in their parishes?

The Arrupe International Immersion Program at Boston College includes small intentional and faith sharing communities both before and after immersion trips to countries in Central and South America. Since participants come from different religions, Protestant denominations and even outside institutional religion, as well as from different political and social backgrounds, they reflect on their experiences in the immersion program that can have both an explicit and implicit faith dimension. So it is not sharing of the Catholic faith specifically, but sharing values and priorities connected to solidarity with a suffering world, social analysis of Global South issues and encountering people from another country who struggle in poverty. It is interesting to compare and contrast the students' reflection before and after their immersion experiences in Central America.<sup>735</sup>

Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, California, USA has 30 Christian Life Communities (CLCs) of seven to 10 students each. 70 % are women. A careful formation plan is based on Ignatian spirituality and the principal of finding God in all things. It includes Phase 1 for Freshmen focusing on support groups: "Friends in God." Phase 2 for Sophomores focusing on faith sharing: "Finding God in All Things." Phase 3 for Juniors and Seniors focusing on vocation discernment: "Vocation Discernment."

The weekly meetings include a selection from a wide variety of activities (alphabetically):

- Breathing Meditation.
- Discussion on key reflection questions for Santa Clara students.
- Draw your image of God.
- Our covenant with God.
- Draw an image of your inner journey.
- Draw your life path.
- *Lectio Divina*.
- Prayer time.
- Share highs and lows of previous week.

Participants take their faith seriously as they explore questions about God and their own faith life.

On Monday evening, 30 November, 2015 the author participated in one of these small groups at Santa Clara composed of juniors. The senior student facilitator announced that two members texted that could not come because they were busy preparing for exams. In the touchdown period one junior said that she "needed" to be there. She wanted and needed this period of prayer and faith sharing before her busy round of exams.

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<sup>735</sup> Based on a conversation with American student Chris Colgan, Boston College Senior, Boston Massachusetts, USA on 19 November, 2015.

Living out a CLC way of life includes journaling, serving the poor and marginalized regularly such as teaching in nearby school for deprived children and campus wide CLC events such as BBQ, bowling and Agapa Latte

A key part of this campus ministry program is training juniors and seniors as facilitators of the small groups/YSCCs.

CLCs alumni groups are being formed.<sup>736</sup>

The nine member Liturgy Team meets as a “Breaking Open the Word” (BOW) Group every Tuesday from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. They reflect on the three readings of the following Sunday, select the songs and organize the Sunday Eucharist. They send their scripture notes to the Presider for his homily.

Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey, USA has Small Christian Communities that are small groups (6-8 students) that meet regularly throughout the semester and create a supportive faith community through sharing, prayer and discussing faith. Through the St. Paul Inside the Walls Evangelization Center in Madison, New Jersey, USA teams of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) do evangelizing ministry on the nearby campuses of Farleigh Dickinson University and Drew University.

Many USA colleges and universities participate in [Campus RENEW](#) sponsored by RENEW International as part of its young adult outreach programs and young adult evangelization. There are three components of Campus RENEW’s unique approach:

**Process:** Campus RENEW collaborates with the current campus ministry to offer a structure which facilitates the growth of Small Christian communities on the campus. The structure includes leadership and invitation training over two and a half years to create a campus-wide initiative which is

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<sup>736</sup> Based on conversations with Vietnamese Jesuit Father Manh Tran, SJ and student leaders in Santa Clara, California on 29-30 November, 2015.

ultimately self-sustaining. Campus RENEW is a two and a half year (or five semester) process which facilitates renewal and transformation on college campuses. [Small Christian Communities](#), groups of eight to 12 students who come together weekly to share faith, are the building blocks of this process. These communities create opportunities for students to experience [community](#), [spirituality](#), and be challenged outward to [service](#).

**Resources:** Campus RENEW offers a variety of resources for reflection which have been written for the campus population: *The Word on Campus*, a lectionary-based series, and *As I Have Loved You*, a service-focused series. RENEW also offers justice-based, Catechism-based and thematic resources.

**Pastoring:** The process is accompanied by onsite and offsite pastoral support from a RENEW staff member, including workshops, retreat days and ongoing mentoring.<sup>737</sup>

Georgetown University in Washington DC, USA adapts Campus RENEW to its own local context in a process of liturgical spirituality. American layman President John DeGioia commented that “in our RENEW faith sharing groups on campus our Catholic students are so grateful for the opportunity to deepen their faith through discussion with fellow participants.”<sup>738</sup> Ideally members of the Small Faith Sharing Groups read and reflect on the upcoming Sunday Gospel on the previous Saturday. After participating in the Sunday Eucharist and reflecting on the priest’s homily they meet in the middle of the week to share on this same Gospel using the steps in *The Word on Campus*, a lectionary-based series. In the step “Faith in Action” they share their experiences (highs and lows) of the past week. In the step “Questions for Reflection” they reflect more deeply on the meaning of Gospel text. In the step “Beckoned to Action” participants chose an action for the coming week that flows from their thoughts and reflections.<sup>739</sup> Sometimes the Campus RENEW groups use the

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<sup>737</sup> RENEW International Website, retrieved on 21 September, 2014, <http://www.renewintl.org/Renew/Index.nsf/vpages/CampusRENEW?opendocument>

<sup>738</sup> John DeGioia, letter to the author dated 26 July, 2013.

<sup>739</sup> As of October, 2014 there were only three Campus RENEW Groups composed of eight students each that meet weekly – a small number. At a meeting of Campus RENEW student facilitators on 7 October, 2014 it was pointed out that at Georgetown there are many different ways of coming to God. There are dozens of ways of developing one’s spirituality and exploring one’s relationship to God (alphabetically): *Bible* study groups, discussion groups, immersion programs, lecture series, LGBTQ prayer groups, prayer groups, retreats, spiritual direction and various student organizations.

A few groups use the Small Faith Sharing Group model. Conversations with Roman Catholic Chaplain American Jesuit Greg Schenden, SJ, American layman Ennio Mastroianni, the Director of Adult Faith Formation, and some the Georgetown undergraduate students on 6-9 October, 2014 gave some of the reasons. The students are very busy and have many other competing priorities for their time. In a success-oriented culture campus life inhibits small group sharing of one’s struggles and weaknesses. *Bible* sharing and *Bible* Reflection are not a daily habit.

sessions of *The World on Campus*, the six-part global justice reflection series from Catholic Relief Services and RENEW International.

Other Small Faith Sharing Groups at Georgetown in the context of adult faith formation include:

- The weekly Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) Group. Students participate in a process that leads to Baptism.
- The weekly “Georgetown Group” that is part of the medical school and hospital. It starts with reflecting on the scripture readings of the following Sunday and concludes with a “how are you doing” catch up.

Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey, USA promotes a variety of small groups. In the four weeks of Lent, 2015 students came together in 14 small groups in the “Faith of Our Fathers” program that was developed by Princeton graduate students and lead by faithful undergraduate students on some of the basics of Catholicism. The sessions combined prayer and discussion. In Fall, 2015 this tradition continued with 12 small groups participating in the seven week program called *Papal docs*, a discussion about Catholic teachings based on the encyclicals and exhortations from which they were originally promulgated. All of the material was prepared for Princeton undergraduates by the graduating Class of 2015.<sup>740</sup>

The RCIA Small Group at Princeton begins each week with prayer by reflecting on the scripture readings and homily of the previous Sunday. The meeting closes by reading and reflecting on the scripture readings of the next Sunday. A good combination.<sup>741</sup> Princeton also has Opus Dei’s Circle, a weekly small group meeting of spiritual formation.

There are different models on college campuses according to the specific context and situation. Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, USA has seven Small Faith Groups in a ministry called Encounter Christ (EC) that is coordinated by Evangelical Catholic (one of

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In the wider context of American society the Small Faith Sharing Group model is not a priority in Adult Faith Formation and Catholic life. Contemporary American culture emphasizes individualism, privacy and multi-tasking over community models. American Catholics are “busy about many things” and have trouble slowing down, being quiet, being silent. Most young Catholic lay adults (young parents with children, single mothers) live hectic life styles and have little or no time beyond their immediate families. Also the SCC model is not popular in parts of the Catholic Church that emphasize clerical control and the institutional church.

In the United States there are literally hundreds of books on the *Bible*, faith sharing, and lectionary-based small group resources, etc. but research shows there are “relatively” few small groups of any kind in the Catholic Church using them on a regular basis.

<sup>740</sup>See the Aquinas Institute Princeton University’s Official Catholic Campus Ministry Website, retrieved on 30 May, 2015, <http://princetoncatholic.org>

<sup>741</sup> Material provided by the Catholic Chaplain Father Brian Page.

the new programs answering the Catholic Church's call for a new evangelization), and are described as follows:

The beginning of the 2015-16 year sees the Catholic Community @ Stanford embracing a new model of small group fellowship, based upon inviting others to encounter Jesus through trusting relationships. We are doing this because knowing Jesus and walking with him transforms our lives into one of joy. Once we experience this joy, we will want to share it with others: a joy shared is twice a joy!

Undergrad student leaders were trained by our partners at Evangelical Catholic to learn to reach out to peers and form small groups to reflect on scripture, share, and pray. People in these groups will walk intentionally with each other leading to a deeper encounter with Jesus. Lent will see the program expand. It will later expand to the entire community. Even if you cannot immediately join a group, you are invited to take steps to deepen your relationship with Jesus through developing trusting relationships with others in the community.<sup>742</sup>

The groups of eight to 12 students meet once a week in the dorms and focus on their relationships to Jesus Christ. The Training of Trainers (TOT) program of student leaders is coordinated by Evangelical Catholic.<sup>743</sup>

American Freshman Carlyne Manion belongs to the Thursday evening Small Faith Group. She explained that she has many extra-curricular activities to choose from at Stanford, but she wants to focus on deepening her faith life and Catholic identity on the Stanford campus. Sometimes her group uses *Lectio Divina*. She feels a close friendship with the other members of her group. They even study together in the Catholic Community “space” on campus. The weekly meetings include creative group dynamic activities such as each participant writing on a piece of paper “a deep question on my faith.” These questions are drawn randomly from a hat and discussed by the whole group. She says that maybe she will become an undergraduate student leader in her Sophomore Year.<sup>744</sup>

In interviewing students who participate in these university and college small groups -- most of whom are young women -- a question emerges: After college what? After a positive experience of participating in a wide variety of campus Small Faith Sharing Groups and Small *Bible* Study Groups, how can they find a similar experience in their parishes and

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<sup>742</sup> Catholic Community @ Stanford Website, retrieved on 28 November, 2015  
<http://catholic.stanford.edu/ministries-programs/small-groups>

<sup>743</sup> Based on a conversation with American Dominican priest Father Xavier Lavagetto, OP, Stanford University Catholic Chaplain, Palo Alto, California, USA on 27 November, 2015. He pointed out that the Evangelical Catholic program or approach is the right fit for Stanford. The more directly evangelical and “apologetic” Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) program or approach does not fit the Stanford context.

<sup>744</sup> Based on a conversation with Carlyne Manion in Palo Alto, California, USA on 28 November, 2015.

other pastoral and spiritual settings? Our research indicates that a large number of graduates cannot find a good fit/a spiritual home in Catholic parishes in the USA.<sup>745</sup> Parish-based SCCs especially for young adults are few and far between. Some graduates continue in Alumni SCCs. Some graduates connect with the various new ecclesial movements in the Catholic Church. Some graduates gravitate to Small *Bible* Study Groups in Protestant Churches.

Specialists continue to study the complex social and cultural reality of the USA. In the follow-down to the two sessions of the Synods of Bishops in Rome in October, 2014 and October, 2015 on “Family and Marriage” it was proposed to emphasis SCCs composed of the following specialized groups:

- Youth (Generation Y<sup>746</sup> 18-22 year olds)
- Young Adults (Generation Y 23-35 year olds)
- Engaged Couples
- Newly married Couples
- Married Couples with Little Children

These small communities combine lectionary-based faith sharing and being a support group. The engaged couples and newly married couples can consult married couple pastoral companions (mentor couples) when necessary.<sup>747</sup>

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<sup>745</sup> The National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, an organization of Catholic lay and clergy leaders, is training college students to move into church leadership roles the moment that they graduate with a program called ESTEEM (Engaging Students to Enliven the Ecclesial Mission). The program is designed to keep young adults from drifting away by giving them the knowledge, confidence and skills to change and improve their churches -- right after college when they're still revved up and raring to go. ESTEEM is now a church leadership development program at a dozen public, private and Catholic colleges and universities nationwide. <https://www.faithandleadership.com/esteem-prepares-catholic-college-students-church-leadership-now>

<sup>746</sup> Generation Y are the Millennials and also known as the Millennial Generation. They are the demographic cohort following Generation X. There are no precise dates when the generation starts and ends. Researchers and commentators use birth years ranging from the early 1980s to the early 2000s. Authors William Strauss and Neil Howe believe that each generation has common characteristics that give it a specific character, with four basic generational archetypes, repeating in a cycle. According to their theory, they predicted that Millennials will become more like the "civic-minded" G.I. generation with a strong sense of community both local and global. A similar portrait is that these young people emphasize family values, a strong sense of community both local and global and civic-mindedness.

<sup>747</sup> For Parent (Adult) Faith Sharing/Small Christian Communities: Lectionary-based booklets see the Strong Catholic Family Faith Website, retrieved on 20 December, 2014, <http://www.catholicfamilyfaith.org/parent-faith-formation.html> and “Hosting Small Faith Groups: A Summary of Links” and “Loyola Press Resources for Small Faith Groups,” Joe Paprocki’s Catechist’s Journey Website, retrieved on 20 December, 2014, <http://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2014/12/hosting-small-faith-groups-a-summary>

Research<sup>748</sup> shows that a variety of small groups are more common in Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. American Amy Jackson, the Managing Editor of SmallGroups.com states:

While small groups were pretty rare 30 years ago, most churches today have some form of groups. But there's a big difference between being a church *with* groups and a church *of* groups. Some churches offer small groups as one of their ministries—they're one of the many ways to get involved. But a [church of groups](#) sees small groups as central to the church—they're *the* way that the church accomplishes its mission.

There's nothing wrong with being a church *with* small groups, but there are limitations to what you'll accomplish in small groups. Becoming a church *of* groups will require a culture shift and a new plan, but it will allow you to do a lot more through your group ministry.<sup>749</sup>

The SmallGroups Website documents this case study by M. Scott Boren, Carolyn Taketa, Mark Ingmire, and more, *Become a Church of Groups*:

In 2001, *Building a Church of Small Groups* was released, and we learned the story of Willow Creek, Indiana, USA transitioning from a church with groups to a church of groups. In other words, they went from a church with many ministries—which included small groups—to a church centered on small groups as the way of doing life and ministry.

Nearly 10 years later, the terms have stuck, and countless churches have embarked on the journey of becoming a church of groups. Rather than offer a buffet of ministries for church members to choose from, these

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<sup>748</sup> The Small Groups Website provides interesting data:

Most churches in America struggle to have a significant percentage of their adult attendance in small groups. According to recent research done by Lifeway Research, only “33 percent of churchgoers attend classes or groups for adults (such as Sunday School, Bible study, small groups, or Adult Bible Fellowships) four or more times in a typical month. Fourteen percent attend two or three times a month.” Life transformation happens best within the context of community, so if a church is going to be intentional about discipleship they have to develop on-ramps to small groups that reach people on the fringes and beyond. If we continue to offer small groups to the normal church attenders, a majority of the people who show up to church are never reached.

Retrieved on the Small Groups Website, 21 November, 2015, [http://store.faithgateway.com/small-groups-for-the-rest-of-us?utm\\_source=ct&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=sgftrou-post20151119](http://store.faithgateway.com/small-groups-for-the-rest-of-us?utm_source=ct&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=sgftrou-post20151119)

<sup>749</sup> Amy Jackson, “Become a Church of Groups,” *Small Groups Newsletter*, 17 December, 2014.

churches are clear upfront: small groups are the core of our ministry and the way we develop disciples.<sup>750</sup>

Jackson adds:

The disciples' relationship with Jesus changed them forever in countless ways. And the same should be true for us today. But sometimes when we look at our small group experience, we don't see a lot of life change. We don't see people living on mission. We see a lot of lukewarm. Now is a great time to assess your group—and help your group members assess themselves—when it comes to transformation. In light of Easter, we can reexamine our lives for signs that God is working in and through us. I recommend using a book such as *Do You Lead a Life-Changing Small Group?* This resource includes assessments for leaders as well as assessments that group members take. Then talk through your responses and plan some concrete next steps.<sup>751</sup>

In the United States reports on SCCs in Africa are regularly published by *Gatherings, Small Christian Community Connection*, RENEW International,<sup>752</sup> Orbis Books, Paulist Press and posted on many SCC-related websites and blogs. People in the United States are especially interested in the structure of our Eastern Africa parish-based SCCs and school-based SCCs: How the election of lay leaders in parishes starts at the level of SCCs and move upwards. This insures that the parish council leaders are chosen from those who were already leaders in their SCCs – thus true representation from below. Our Eastern Africa weekly Lectionary-based SCC meetings, family-based model and Patron/Patroness Saints identity are creative challenges to American SCCs. African communitarian values can also challenge the excessive individualism, privacy and super-activity/"busy-ness" of American culture.

A Case Study of Eastern African SCCs' influence on the Catholic Church in the USA comes from Malawi. Through the visit of a Montfort Missionary Priest to the USA a sister/twinning/partnership relationship developed between St. Joseph's Parish, Namitembo in

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<sup>750</sup> Small Groups Website, retrieved 25 February, 2016, [http://www.smallgroups.com/training-tools/b/become-church-of-groups.html?tCode=35E0E2AD0D&dCode=5E6A34C02B&utm\\_source=buildingsmallgroupS-  
html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=9077722&utm\\_content=418845744&utm\\_campaign=email](http://www.smallgroups.com/training-tools/b/become-church-of-groups.html?tCode=35E0E2AD0D&dCode=5E6A34C02B&utm_source=buildingsmallgroupS-<br/>html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=418845744&utm_campaign=email)

<sup>751</sup> Amy Jackson, "Become a Church of Groups," *Small Groups Newsletter*, 4 April, 2014.

<sup>752</sup> In the online Catholic Standards for Excellence Forum Deirdre Trabert Malacrea writes: "RENEW International is dedicated to fostering the vision of the parish as a 'community of communities' per Pope John Paul II, and small communities as settings in which people encounter God and connect faith to daily life. I would like to suggest to interested forum members that they can consider two resources for this endeavor. *Sowing Seeds* offers tips for how to lead small group faith sharing. And *PrayerTime* provides the weekly Sunday Gospel readings in a format conducive to faith sharing. Retrieved on 18 August, 2012, [http://catholicstandardsforum.org/forum/topics/prayer-and-faith-sharing?commentId=6426509%3AComment%3A8014&xg\\_source=msg\\_com\\_forum](http://catholicstandardsforum.org/forum/topics/prayer-and-faith-sharing?commentId=6426509%3AComment%3A8014&xg_source=msg_com_forum)

Zomba Diocese, Malawi and St. Bridget's Parish in Seattle Archdiocese, USA. This parish twinning is described as follows:

St. Bridget has had a very active sister-parish relationship with the people of Namitembo Parish in Malawi since 1997. Our involvement began when Fr. Owen O'Donnell and Fr. Harold Quigg (our pastor at the time) met while both were on sabbatical in Ireland. As they talked, the idea arose of having some kind of relationship between the two parishes. Both parties were somewhat careful at first, and St. Bridget invited Fr. Owen to visit Seattle so that the Pastoral Council could speak directly with him. The visit was very fruitful, and after a matter of a few months, there was a signed agreement between the two Pastoral Councils.

Over the last 50 or 60 years, the Montfort missionaries have developed the network of Small Christian Communities that is the heart and life of the Church. Namitembo has perhaps 10,000 people in the parish area, with three priests, a couple of catechists, and a couple of religious sisters. The "neighborhood Church" of 76 small faith communities makes it all work. The small groups meet together every week, to share the Scriptures, pray, and talk about the ongoing work within their local area. Neighboring groups will come together for worship at one of the seven outchurches.<sup>753</sup>

When parishioners from St. Bridget visited their sister/twin parish in Malawi, they learned about the importance of SCCs especially how they bring families together. So they "borrowed" the idea and started SCCs in their American parish especially focusing on the social, interpersonal and family values.<sup>754</sup>

It is valuable to track how people in the USA take the praxis and theory of Eastern Africa SCCs and apply them to local contexts. American Benedictine Dom Damian Kearney, OSB discusses how SCCs offer a possible remedy for the alarming decline in church attendance and the steady attrition of priests in Western countries. He sees SCCs as a model for the apathetic congregations of the church in the countries of the First World. In studying the SCCs in the USA he asks why committed Catholics feel the need to belong to such groups. The two reasons are a desire for more religious nurture than the parish normally provides and a hunger for community with relational depth.<sup>755</sup>

In two long conversations of Kearney and the author we envision the restructuring of USA dioceses so there are central Parish Centers that coordinate and link together a number

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<sup>753</sup> St. Bridget Parish Website, retrieved on 5 September, 2012, <http://www.stbridgetchurch.org/namitembo.htm>. For the Winter, 2015 Update and an update on the 2015 Elephant Stampede Picnic see Namitembo Mission, retrieved on 19 December, 2015, <http://stbridgetchurch.org/namitembo>

<sup>754</sup> Malawian Archbishop Thomas Msusa, Archbishop of Blantyre, Malawi and formerly Bishop of Zomba Diocese in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 4 September, 2012.

<sup>755</sup> Damian Kearney, "Joseph G. Healey '56 Missionary Priest of Maryknoll," *Newsletter of the Abbey of St. Gregory Portsmouth R.I.*, July, 2015, Vol. XXXVI, No. 7, pp. 3-4.

of local Sunday Mass Centers/Sunday Worship Center that are undergirded by a network of SCCs led by laypeople. It is key that these SCCs are not be just administrative units and social support groups but spiritually and pastorally active through weekly lectionary-based faith sharing and pastorally accompanying their members in their sacramental life.<sup>756</sup>

American Patrick T. Reardon envisions the Catholic Church of the future in a crystalball-gazing essay that pictures Chicago Archdiocese, Chicago, Illinois, USA in 48 years:

CHICAGO, MARCH 13, 2063. Today St. Gertrude is one of only 42 full parishes. Over the past five decades, successive Chicago cardinals, working closely with lay Catholics and using a model developed in Europe, closed nearly 90 percent of the traditional parishes in Cook and Lake Counties in Illinois...Pastoral centers, dating from 2025 in Chicago, have been part of a two-prong approach by clerical and lay leaders in the archdiocese to provide for the spiritual needs of Catholics. The other prong is the full parishes...Often a pastoral center is formed by a faith sharing group whose members are looking for a site to serve as a meeting place and a base for community service...A parallel trend throughout Catholicism is faith sharing groups that meet in homes on a regular basis.<sup>757</sup>

An interesting model is the Church of the Nativity in Lutherville-Timonium, Maryland, USA. The parish has 300-400 Small Groups that meet weekly. Small Groups are where the great big church becomes a great small church. There are Adult Small Groups, three types of Teen Small Groups (called Ascent, Resurrection and Uprising) according to the grade) and Kids Small Groups. Nativity University is the ministry for young adults 19 -- 30 years old. This is an opportunity for young adults looking to connect with people their own age, explore their faith and a relationship with Jesus Christ. Online Small Groups for college students living outside the parish are being explored. With the motto *grow your faith in a circle* the dynamic in the parish is that intentional faith-based relationships are key to spiritual growth. This is described in their book *Rebuilt*<sup>758</sup> and the website <http://churchnativity.tv/#/small-groups>

Nativity's Online Campus livestreams the Saturday afternoon mass and the four Sunday masses. There is an interactive chat feature.

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<sup>756</sup> Damian Kearney conversations with the author, Portsmouth, RI, USA, 22 and 24 May, 2015.

<sup>757</sup> Patrick T. Reardon "A Church Refreshed: A Dispatch from an American Catholic Future," *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, May 22--June 4, 2015 print issue. *NCR* Online Weekend Edition, 23 May, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/art-media/church-refreshed-dispatch-american-catholic-future>

<sup>758</sup> Michael White and Tom Corcoran, *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, and Making Church Matter*, Foreword by Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2013. See also Michael White and Tom Corcoran, *Tools for Rebuilding: 75 Really, Really Practical Ways to Make Your Parish Better*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2014 and Christopher Wesley, *Rebuilding Youth Ministry: Ten Practical Strategies for Catholic Parishes*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2015.

This represents a new trend<sup>759</sup> and pattern worldwide: the combination of a megachurch and a network of small groups. The big Sunday liturgies of thousands of people have an “entertainment,” charismatic style and the small groups in the middle of the week focus on faith sharing, *Bible* Reflection and an interpersonal approach. What began as part of the evangelical movement (Rick Warren and others) is now a trend in the Catholic Church in the USA especially in the South and Southwest. Can these small groups especially among Hispanic Catholics be the new face of SCCs?

At the RENEW Gala<sup>760</sup> in West Orange, New Jersey, USA on 6 June, 2013 RENEW International gave its annual Msgr. Thomas Kleissler Award to Father Joseph Healey on behalf of the 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the nine countries of Eastern Africa.<sup>761</sup> This was a special teaching moment to share the rich experiences of SCCs in the

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<sup>759</sup> What are the top five trends in small groups? *Small Groups Newsletter* product innovation team spent over a year in 2014-2015 conducting focus groups with small group leaders and participants to determine what trends exist in small groups...and how to better resource changing needs. What we discovered during those focus groups both surprised and inspired us.

1. We heard most churches are in a state of decline and that fewer small groups are being started.
2. Existing groups told us that they are slowly losing members and it is becoming increasingly more difficult to add new people.
3. Small group participants desire more authentic and relevant conversations about the challenges they're facing in life.
4. Participants are fatigued by existing content and are looking for something fresh and new that fosters relationships.
5. Small groups are moving more into the digital age. Fifty percent are consuming content on traditional DVDs, while the remaining 50 percent are streaming video content.

Small Groups Newsletter [newsletter@lists.christianitytoday.com](mailto:newsletter@lists.christianitytoday.com), retrieved 28 February, 2015.

<sup>760</sup> The net profit from the evening was over \$230,000. The money is being used to help various RENEW Small Christian Community projects including Campus RENEW that is a pastoral process for faculty, students and staff on campus designed to help students connect their faith to their daily decisions, large and small. It is a two and a half year (or five semester) process which facilitates renewal and transformation on college campuses. See the RENEW International Website [http://issuu.com/renew-international/docs/catalog2013fall-renew\\_issu?utm\\_source=2013W29\\_subscribers&utm\\_campaign=Digest&utm\\_medium=email](http://issuu.com/renew-international/docs/catalog2013fall-renew_issu?utm_source=2013W29_subscribers&utm_campaign=Digest&utm_medium=email)

<sup>761</sup> See “AMECEA: Communication Veteran Receives Award for Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa,” *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, No. 15 (13 September, 2013). [http://amecea.blogspot.com/2013/09/amecea-communication-veteran-receives.html?utm\\_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=67938ed69c-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_85fa866553-](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2013/09/amecea-communication-veteran-receives.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=67938ed69c-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-)

AMECEA Region with promoters, supporters and members of SCCs in the USA. Highlights included:

Display of Africana including maps, carvings, posters, books on SCCs and magazine articles on SCCs. A colorful SCCs bookmark called “Celebrating 180,000 Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa” was given to everyone at the dinner.

- Powerpoint Presentation in a Slide Show format (as a pdf file) on “We Are the Church: The Life and Activities of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa” with an African music background ran all evening on a continuous loop. <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/north-america/united-states-of-america/245-pp-presentation-on-sccs-in-eastern-africa-at-the-renew-gala-in-west-orange-nj-usa-on-6-june-2013.html>. Later slides of the RENEW Gala itself were added to produce a 49 slide show called *We Are the Church: The Life and Activities of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa Including Highlights of the RENEW Gala 2013 in New Jersey, USA*. <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/north-america/united-states-of-america/251-renew-gala-pdf--final.html>
- Two lap computers demonstrated the features of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website including the opportunity to vote in the SCCs Poll on “The best part of my Small Christian Community is: ...”
- Five minute video of the honoree’s acceptance speech on “[Celebrating 180,000 Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa.](#)”
- Sister Ann Mutinda, MM, a former Kenyan Maryknoll Sister from Machakos Diocese led a Swahili clapping song called “*Iende Mbele Injili*” in Swahili that means "Let the Word of God Go Forth" and is used during our *Bible Processions* in Eastern Africa.
- The RENEW International Dinner Gala Program referred to the St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi, Kenya and the St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC.

In the Africa Room at the RENEW Gala guests donated \$776 in cash to support SCCs in Eastern Africa. Half of the money was used to help the St. Agatha Joy Women’s Training and Tailoring Group, the women’s group in St. Kizito SCC who have a sewing club. The money was used to buy a Singer Sewing Machine and African fabric materials. The women produce very nice African shirts and accessories, but have trouble finding good markets/good outlets for their products.

The other half was used to help the nine student SCCs in Christ the Teacher Parish at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya. A report is as follows:

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[67938ed69c-6746297](#) and “An Icon of SCCs and Communication Veteran Receives Award,” *The News Dispatch with Omolo Beste*, Email Message, 14 September 2013.

During the 2013-2014 Academic Year at [Kenyatta University](#) funds from the RENEW Gala were used for the following:

- Seminar on “Training of SCCs Leaders,” stipends for three trainers (\$188)
- SCCs Recollection Day, Facilitator Father John Muragu, stipend for facilitator (\$50)
- Three joint SCCs meetings with invited speakers, stipends (\$150)

Yet we still have a long way to go. In the past 25 years during frequent trips to the USA I have a pastoral hobby. I visit Catholic parishes and ask: “Do you have Small Christian Communities?” I get a variety of answers: “Yes, we have a few small prayer groups.” We used to have RENEW groups but only a few have continued.” “Individualism and privacy are so strong in the USA that small community efforts don’t succeed well.”

Then the parishioners will ask me: “Do you have Small Christian Communities in Africa?” I look down, dramatically pause, hesitate a little, and finally say. “Well, yes. We have 180,000 SCCs in Eastern Africa.” People are very surprised and even amazed. We didn’t now,” they say.<sup>762</sup>

In an interview in Rome in 2014 Tanzanian Bishop Bernadin Francis Mfumbusa of Kondoia Diocese, Tanzania was asked: “What do you think are the particular gifts of African Catholicism—and can they benefit the Church in the West?” He answered:

I think one of the greatest gifts of Tanzanian Catholicism is unity. Despite ethnic, regional and other differences, the faithful, for example, accept pastors and bishop from other parts of the country or from other ethnic groups without a problem. Another gift which can be emulated elsewhere are our

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<sup>762</sup> More serious that the lack of knowledge about Africa is lack of interest in Africa. American writer Jim Keane comments:

When I was living at *America Magazine* (2007-2009), we were talking one day at table about the way Jesuits embrace some topics and ignore others (or only have interest in their own preferred topics). For example, one of the men at the table complained that the Jesuits teaching in universities tended to glaze over when the talk turned to high school work; similarly, when men came back from the missions, they often found that the men involved in the high schools and universities would not even bother to ask them how their work was going. One of my housemates, [Father] Peter Schineller, said that he had found this to be very true of American Jesuits in the case of Africa. If a man based in Africa came back to New York (because the West Africa province had been a NY Province region for many years, a great number of NY Jesuits had served in Nigeria, Lagos, etc.) and began talking at his work at table or mentioned something about Africa at preprandials, he would often be met by silence. Not because the men disliked Africa, but simply because they had no interest in it.

Jim Keane, email to the author, 16 October, 2015.

“Small Christian Communities,” which have become a strong embodiment and expression of the Local Church in our country.<sup>763</sup>

The influence of Eastern African SCCs can be seen in a rather unique way in the World Church. The large number of African Catholic immigrants in Europe and North American carry with them their rich African Christian experience and values. Africans can go with joy, color, music and dance to enliven other churches in the rest of the world. Catholics in Eastern Africa (who have experienced SCC in their home African countries) are contributing to the revitalization of parish life and pastoral and missionary outreach in the Western countries where they now live. They now share their family and community values with the World Church.

A concrete example is Westminster Archdiocese in London, England. Demographic and sociological data indicate that over the last 20 years the English-born members of parishes in the London area have decreased and gotten older with the subsequent slowing down of Catholic parish life and energy. Now African and Caribbean Catholic immigrants are bringing a new dynamism to these parishes including more lively liturgies with singing and dancing and more participation in church activities. They are also participating in the over 2,000 SCCs that were started during the 2003-2005 “At Your Word, Lord” Renewal Program in the Diocese of Westminster.<sup>764</sup>

Another example are the Catholics from Kenya living in floating communities/informal networks in cities in the United States such as the Baltimore, Maryland Area, the Boston, Massachusetts Area and the Sacramento/San Francisco/San Jose, California Area. Beyond having monthly or bi-monthly masses in their communities, plans are underway to form SCCs where these Kenyan Catholics would meet regularly in small groups in their homes for faith sharing, Bible reflection and socializing.

SCCs in the AMECEA Region challenge the American and European experience<sup>765</sup> where family life and parish life are weakening. Africa’s model of family-based SCCs with

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<sup>763</sup> Bernadin Francis Mfumbusa, “Is Tanzania the Next Target for Radical Islam?,” “The World Seen from Rome,” 6 February 06, 2014, *ZENIT News Service*, email message dated 6 February, 2014.

<sup>764</sup> See Stuart Wilson, “At Your Word, Lord’ Renewal Program in the Diocese of Westminster” in Healey and Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today*, pp. 90-95. This program has evolved over the past 10 years. Presently it follows the Small Apostolic Group Model of Church rather than the Small Christian Communities Model of Church even in its name. See the Diocese of Westminster, England Facebook Page, Dow Smallgroups, <https://www.facebook.com/dowsmallgroups>. While the program provides valuable small group faith sharing resource materials such as the Lent 2014 booklet called *Come, Follow Me* the SCCs are not an official ecclesial structure in the parishes.

<sup>765</sup> A popular joke in Europe goes like this: “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are like flying saucers. Everybody is talking about them, but nobody has seen one.” This can’t be said about Africa. We have “seen” many Small Christian Communities in Africa. We have participated in them. We have experienced SCCs as a new model of church in Africa today.

an emphasis on community values and relationships can give a positive message and influence to Western society that is witnessing the break-down of family structures.<sup>766</sup>

English diocese priest Mgr. James Cronin points out:

World Mission Sunday is an opportunity for parishes to create an awareness of our practical expression of faith rooted in community. In Africa, Latin America and Asia Small Christian Communities meet weekly to pray, study the Sunday readings and reflect on their application for their lives. These small communities break down the anonymity of the large parish, encouraging faith sharing and building stronger bonds of friendship. In our more individualistic society [Europe and North America], the wider church sometimes struggles to model community and friendship in this way.<sup>767</sup>

The Eastern African SCCs are part of the growing influence of SCCs/BCCs/BECs in the Global South. Filipino Comboni seminarian Caspiss Jemboy, MCCJ, wrote a fine Final Paper in our 2013 SCCs Seminar Course at Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya on "Missionary Life and Outreach of SCCs in Africa and around the World." It is a good comparative study of SCCs in three countries: Kenya,<sup>768</sup> Mexico and the Philippines.

Since Latin America is mainly Spanish and Portuguese-speaking our Eastern Africa SCCs are not well known. Online resources such as the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and Facebook Page are helping to bridge this gap.

There are many things that Eastern Africa SCCs can learn from the long and rich Latin American experience. The official name in Spanish is *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs). The English translation is "Base or Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs)." The word "base" indicates that the communities are from the grassroots -- the social and economic "base" of society. They are also characterized by being the preferential option for the poor. The word "ecclesial" emphasizes that these communities are in themselves "church" – church at the most local level.<sup>769</sup>

Periodic national and continental CEBs meetings are a notable feature of the Latin American Church. Eastern Africa SCCs could follow this example. Brazil is famous for its Inter-ecclesial Meetings of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEBs). Pope Francis' support and advice for the latest meeting was significant. The Holy Father wrote a letter dated 17 December, 2013 to the 13th Inter-ecclesial Meeting of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) that was held from 7 to 11 January, 2014 in the city of Juazeiro do Norte in the Brazilian state of Ceara. It was the first time a pope has ever sent a message to this assembly

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<sup>766</sup> For a Case Study of the Eastern African model see Cieslikiewicz, "Pastoral Involvement," pp. 100-101.

<sup>767</sup> James, Cronin, "One Faith, One Family." *Tablet*, 19 October, 2013, p.14.

<sup>768</sup> Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 28 April, 2013 at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/kenya/237-missionary-life-and-outreach-of-sccs-in-africa-and-around-the-world.html>

<sup>769</sup> Healey and Hinton, *Small Communities Today*, p. 7.

in its 39 years of existence. Pope Francis talked of the base communities' "most important role in the Church's evangelizing mission." The Vatican communique stated:

The pope conveys to the participants his wish that "the light of the Holy Spirit help you live with renewed enthusiasm the commitments of the Gospel of Jesus within Brazilian society," and, recalling the Aparecida document, remarks that the CEBs constitute a tool for ensuring "greater knowledge of the Word of God, social commitment in the name of the Gospel, the appearance of new lay services and education in faith for adults."

He goes on to reiterate that the CEB must be characterized by "a new evangelical impulse and the capacity to relate to the world for the renewal of the Church", and that it is therefore necessary "not to lose touch with the rich reality of the local parish, and to integrate the organic pastoral [ministry] of the Particular Church".

Pope Francis concludes the letter by mentioning that evangelization is the duty of all the Church, of all the People of God: "we must all be pilgrims, in the field and in the city, bringing the joy of the Gospel to all men and women. May the words of St. Paul resound in our hearts: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!'"<sup>770</sup>

The meeting was dedicated to the theme: "Justice and Prophecy in the Service of Life." 4,000 people, including 72 bishops, participated in the assembly. The president of the Brazilian Bishops' Laity Commission, Bishop Severino Clasen, who is responsible for links with base communities, said, "The base communities have never had a stronger ally [than the pope]." One commentator wrote:

There are also questions about the culture of the base communities. With their straw hats and country music [from the rural areas], are they reliving a rural past that has long gone? That was certainly the view of a young woman from Manaus: "CEBs need a real makeover if they are to deal with the issues facing young people today rather than those of young people of 40 years ago!" Cue Bishop Clasen: "The Brazilian Church hasn't worked out how to deal with urban issues."<sup>771</sup>

## **COMMENTARY**

This is the first full statement that Pope Francis has made on SCCs/BCCs/CEBs since becoming pope. Taken in the wider context of SCCs in the World Church it is significant for three reasons:

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<sup>770</sup> "Basic Ecclesial Communities: Committed To Transmitting The Gospel," Vatican Information Service (VIS), Vatican City, 8 January 2014, retrieved on the *Vatican Information Service Website*, 9 January, 2013, <http://visnews-en.blogspot.com/2014/01/basic-ecclesial-communities-committed.html>

<sup>771</sup> Francis McDonagh, "Banging the Big Base Drum," *Tablet*, 18 January, 2014, pp. 13-14.

1. The statement emphasizes four important activities of SCCs/BCCs/CEBs:
  - a. They are a tool for ensuring greater knowledge of the Word of God. (**weekly lectionary-based faith sharing**)
  - b. They provide social commitment in the name of the Gospel. (**service to reconciliation, justice and peace**)
  - c. They provide new lay services. (**new inculturated lay ministries**)
  - d. They provide education in faith for adults. (**adult faith formation**)

This is relevant for Eastern Africa too. This Ebook documents many examples of these four activities in the AMECEA Region. The Eastern Africa equivalents are listed in **bold** above.

2. It highlights the close link between SCCs/BCCs/CEBs and the parish and its rich pastoral reality on the local level. Pope Francis emphasizes this connection in *The Joy of the Gospel* especially No. 28.

3. Pope Francis emphasizes that SCCs/BCCs/CEBs members should be characterized by a new evangelical impulse and the capacity to relate to the world for the renewal of the Church. Evangelization is a duty that belongs to all of the People of God.

Eastern Africa could well imitate the plan of using printed materials in the small reflection groups in Latin America. Lobinger writes: "Week by week, the whole year through, a leaflet is published with the *Bible* passage, a life story, and the reflection questions for the small reflection groups. The publication of these leaflets is easy since in Latin America there is practically only one language in each country, either Spanish or Portuguese. A central office is therefore able to produce this reflection outline for the whole country."<sup>772</sup>

An interesting comparative Case Study comes from St. Ann Small Christian Community in Phase III of Dandora Parish in the Eastlands Section of Nairobi Archdiocese:

One Sunday during the weekly *Bible* Service the Scripture passage chosen was *Luke* 1: 39-56 (the Visitation and the Magnificat). Most of the shared gospel reflections focused on the values of personal relationships and community in the story of Mary's visit to Elizabeth. The members of St. Ann SCC mentioned Elizabeth's hospitality in welcoming Mary. Mary helping Elizabeth around the house especially because she was six months pregnant. The two women helping one another and sharing with one another. One reflection related to the Magnificat itself: Mary's joy and happiness in being chosen to give birth to Jesus the Savior. The St. Ann SCC members reflected on the Visitation in the light of important African values such as visiting, hospitality and sharing together. But there was no mention of the "liberating elements" of the Magnificat that are so central to the *Bible* reflections of the Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) in Latin America.<sup>773</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> Fritz Lobinger, "What SCCs and CEBs Can Learn from Each Other," *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 2013/3, p. 287-297.

<sup>773</sup> Radoli, *How Local is the Local Church*, pp. 59-103.

Eastern Africa SCCs can learn from the dynamic SCCs in Asia especially in the Philippines and South Korea. For example, the pastoral structures of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) in Cebu Archdiocese in the Philippines. The archdiocesan seminary is designed on the small communities model. The Archdiocesan BEC Office has a staff of 10 people to coordinate SCCs activities.

As a country Philippines has a different pastoral structure that is chapel-based (similar to the outstations in Eastern Africa). This is the meaning of “ecclesial” in the name BECs. These chapels are composed of neighborhood cells (individual SCCs). This is similar to the Latin America model. The Committee on Basic Ecclesial Communities was set up by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) after the BEC National Assembly in 2005 in Cebu. It is made up of a chairman and the heads of eight episcopal commissions and assisted by an executive secretary and several consultants who work as a team. The office assists the bishops and their dioceses to realize the vision of renewed church through the building of BECs. See the official website of the office of the CBCP-BEC Committee called the CBCP-BEC Cyber Office <http://cbcpbec.com>.

The strong support of the bishops is seen in this summary of the views of Filipino Cardinal Orlando Quevedo, Archbishop of Cotabato, after he was made a cardinal in Rome:

The Asian vision of church is built on basic ecclesial communities with a collaborative leadership style. Asia's vision of church is relevant to the vision of Pope Francis who is looking at the periphery rather than at the center. The "main pastoral priority" in Cotabato is the building of basic ecclesial communities in which the idea of forming persons of dialogue is being implemented. The idea of leadership that is shared, not just a dictate from above, but collaborative, consultative -- what is called a participatory church -- is being built in the basic ecclesial communities. This is a participatory church, a church of the poor, an inculturated church and a church of authentic disciples -- true followers of Christ, not only in name but in deed.<sup>774</sup>

Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Archbishop of Manila’s talk during the Manila Archdiocesan General Pastoral Assembly (MAGPAS) on 14 June, 2014 has many implications and applications for Eastern African SCCs. He called on the Catholic faithful to manifest the characteristics of a renewed church through the promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) in every Catholic household. In his talk Tagle stressed the importance of BECs as the "expression of a renewed church. Basic Ecclesial Communities, under various names and forms,” Tagle said, quoting the words of the **2001** CHECK Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) – “must be vigorously promoted for the full living of the Christian vocation in both urban and rural areas.”

According to Tagle, PCP II emphasizes the need for BECs to rally the faithful behind

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<sup>774</sup> Orlando Quevedo in Joshua J. McElwee, “New Philippines Cardinal Calls for Church to Turn Toward Poor.” *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR) Website, retrieved 25 February, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/news/global/new-philippines-cardinal-calls-church-turn-toward-poor>

the Second Vatican Council's "vision of a renewed Church" and "for the full living of the Christian vocation." "PCP II does not tell us to establish BECs only in places where it would be easily accepted. What the PCP II urges us to do is promote it, regardless if it would be easy or hard," he said.

Noting the different characteristics of a renewed church, the Manila Archbishop called on the faithful to live in communion with one other, noting that individual differences should not serve as a hindrance to achieve unity in diversity. "Communion opens our hearts and doors to anyone," he said.

"In the renewed Church of Communion, regardless of who you are and what you have become, we are all equal because we are all created with dignity, baptized Christians in the name of the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and the Almighty Father," Tagle said. And the "Year of the Laity" is a very timely opportunity to fulfill this mission.

"Participation comes in two ways -- everyone gives, everyone receives...Participation in the Philippines means enabling the lay people to participate more fully in the life of the Church and its task of mission," Tagle said. "The vision of PCP II of a renewed church in the Philippines is a more active participation of the laity in the life and mission of the Church. Live a life of serving and following Christ in your respective [basic] communities," he added.<sup>775</sup>

The influence of our SCCs website is seen in this email message from the Philippines:

I am Frater Joel L. Magpayo, a first year theologian at Saint John the Evangelist School of theology in Palo, Leyte, Philippines. One of the requirements of our school is to make a thesis proposal and it is done by a group. Our group's thesis is about the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC). On the SCCs Website the "Timeline in the History and Development of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa" is parallel to our on-going thesis. I would like to ask more information about your work especially on how to organize well Small Christian Communities and their effectiveness.<sup>776</sup>

Very effective coordination in Asia takes place through the AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach) of FABC. Max Stetter describes a National SCC Rally in Sri Lanka:

Hundreds of enthusiastic SCC members from many dioceses came to Colombo Basilica, Our Lady of Lanka. They were waiting outside the cathedral until we, the delegates of 15 Asian countries and some representatives from Europe and South Africa, arrived. A band accompanied us to the basilica, which was filled to capacity in minutes. The Cardinal of Sri Lanka, a staunch supporter of SCCs and the AsIPA (Asian Integral Pastoral Approach), presided over the Eucharist joined by a good number of bishops and very many priests. After mass, there was the rally with witnesses to

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<sup>775</sup> See Luis Antonio Tagle's comments in **ADD**

<sup>776</sup> Joel L. Magpayo in an email message to the author dated 30 July, 2011.

*jumuiya* life, plays, songs and dances. All in all, a wonderful experience of a new face of the church that the rest of the world can learn from.<sup>777</sup>

A positive influence of the SCCs model in Asia is seen in the growth and spread of the Parish Evangelization Cell System (PECS) whose roots are in a model that came from a Pentecostal Korean cell church and has been adapted for Catholic parishes and life in USA, Italy, England and other countries. Its cell method is now established on five continents and there are many thousands of evangelization cells in Catholic parishes across the world. For example, PECS turned St Eustorgio Parish in Milan, Italy from a moribund inner city parish with fewer than 100 massgoers into a vibrant community with 1,000 people (about 60 per cent of the parish) involved in 150 weekly cell meetings with a multitude of outreaches.

PECS groups differ from other parish small groups in that they are part of the built-in structure of the parish. The cell leaders share in the pastoral ministry and responsibility of the parish priest and have regular feedback and meetings with him. Each cell, which operates for the members like an extended family, creates a sense of belonging. Here prayer, practical help and evangelization are encouraged through the personal witness of the cell members.

Cell members are motivated to evangelize their *oikos* (the ancient Greek equivalent of a household, house or family) through one-to-one faith sharing and service. Family, friends, neighbors and work colleagues are then invited to participate in a local cell and experience the joy of Christian fellowship. This model of people meeting in their homes for worship, teaching and fellowship is not something new; it was what Christians did for the first 300 years of Christianity (see *Romans* 16:4-5<sup>778</sup>).<sup>779</sup>

Another learning from Asia is the growing importance of Basic Human Communities (BHCs) in the context of challenges faced by SCCs/BECs in interreligious dialogue. Asia is the cradle of the world's major religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. It is the

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<sup>777</sup> Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 24 October, 2012, <https://www.face-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

<sup>778</sup> The greeting after “to Prisca and Aquila” says: “Greet all the churches at their house.” The footnote in *The African Bible* says: “This formula does not confirm the existence of house churches alongside of or in opposition to the Local Church. The Local Church in NT times was the house church because the faithful came together in private houses. A house church is the place for personal assimilation of God’s Word, for some kind of liturgy and for intimate communication among Christians.” *The African Bible*, Nairobi: Paulines Africa, 1999, p. 1908.

<sup>779</sup> Kristina Cooper, “From the Cell to the World,” *Tablet*, Vol. 269, No. 9107 (4 July, 2015), p. 18, *Tablet* Website, retrieved on 4 July, 2015, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/040715issue.pdf> . The article recommends: “Consider joining a PEC or some other kind of Small Christian Community group to share your faith.”

birthplace of many other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism and Shintoism. Millions also espouse traditional or tribal religions, with varying degrees of structured ritual and formal religious teaching.

Basic Human Communities promote Neighborhood Human Communities (NHCs) with people of all religions and thus promote inter-religious harmony. The focus is on the dialog of life rather than one particular religion's sacred scriptures like the *Bible*, *Torah* or *Koran*. These communities are particularly important and numerous in Asia where only 4.5% of the total population is Christian and less than 3% of the total population is Catholic.

The VII Asian Integral Pastoral Approach (AsIPA) General Assembly in October, 2015 stated:

Besides strengthening the already existing SCCs/BECs, there is a need to form and encourage Basic Human Communities (BHCs) that can be a powerful means for communal peace and harmony and help us to move from religiosity to spirituality in action (*FABC Papers*, No. 48, 1987).<sup>780</sup>

Through the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC)<sup>781</sup> African SCCs are getting better known in Asia and Oceania. 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 SCCs and the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA or the adult catechumenate). Pengo beamed. His response was immediate: "It is good that we can be missionaries from Africa to the world!"<sup>782</sup>

The bond between the SCCs in Eastern Africa and India is seen in many ways including the emphasis on SCCs as local family units and a communion of families. Lobinger reports:

From 19 to 21 November, 2013 the First National Convention of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) was held in Goa, India. It was the culmination of 40 years of systematic efforts to build up SCCs. The bishops of India could proudly state at the Opening Mass that there are now 68,000 SCCs in the 120 dioceses in India that now has 14 million Catholics. The Bishops Conference of India supports SCCs and over 70 bishops were present at the convention. The cardinal and the bishops did not come alone but came with delegates of

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<sup>781</sup> As *Fidei Donum* priests and later as bishops in South Africa, Bishop Oswald Hirmer and Bishop Fritz Lobinger did remarkable missionary ministry in promoting the Lumko SCC Methods and Materials in Asia. Later they animated a revival of SCCs in Germany.

<sup>782</sup> "We Can be Missionaries from Africa to the World," African Story No. 529 in the "African Stories Database", African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 21 July, 2011, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=616](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=616)

their SCCs and with some of their priests. Seven thousand leaders of SCCs were present.<sup>783</sup>

This is also a challenge for us to have similar national meetings in the AMECEA Region. Another challenge is to have a National Service Team for SCCs headed by a committed bishop such as in India. The continuing support of the Indian bishops for SCCs is an inspiration. The final communiqué of the 31st Assembly of the Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), held at Palai, Kerala from 5 to 13 February, 2014 states: "In the internal dynamics of the church, the bishops intend to enhance "the Small Christian Communities born in many places, rooted in the Word and in the Eucharist" that "are a sign of vitality and an instrument of formation and evangelization."<sup>784</sup>

In summary, worldwide SCCs networking and sharing is illustrated on the SCCs Website (described in Chapter 9) and in the book *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* that has editions printed in the United States, Africa and India as well as a digital version (Ebook). The book has separate sections on Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and International. The "Dedication" reads: "To Christian leaders around the world who have committed themselves for many years to Small Christian Communities as a prophetic new way of being church, especially José Marins, Carolee Chanona, and Teo Trevisan in Latin America, Bob Pelton in North America, Ian Fraser, Jim O'Halloran, and Peter Price in Europe, Christopher Mwoleka (deceased) in Africa, and Jim Cranswick in Oceania.

A thought about the possible future influence of Small Christian Communities on our World Church. SCCs are not specifically mentioned in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, but are clearly implied. SCCs are not specifically mentioned in the revised *1983 Code of Canon Law*, but are indirectly referred to in the section on "Structures" under the "People of God." The Particular Churches (Local Churches) have the freedom to carry out pastoral work in parishes on the local level following their own structures and activities. This is described as the ordering of the parish on the most local levels. Canons 515-516 state:

A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a Particular Church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (*parochus*) as its proper pastor (*pastor*) under the authority of the diocesan bishop. It is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes. He is neither to erect, suppress, nor alter notably parishes, unless he has heard the presbyteral council. A legitimately erected parish possesses juridic personality by the law itself.

Unless the law provides otherwise, a quasi-parish is equivalent to a parish; a quasi-parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful in a

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<sup>783</sup> Fritz Lobinger, "Celebrating the First National Convention of Small Christian Communities in India," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 26 December, 2013, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/asia/india/266-celebrating-the-first-national-convention-of-small-christian-communities-in-india.html>

<sup>784</sup> "ASIA/INDIA - "To Be Truly a Church of the Poor:" The Final Message of the Assembly of Bishops," *International Fides News Service*, 14 February, 2014, Email message dated 14 February, 2014.

Particular Church, entrusted to a priest as its proper pastor but not yet erected as a parish because of particular circumstances. When certain communities cannot be erected as parishes or quasi-parishes, the diocesan bishop is to provide for their pastoral care in another way.<sup>785</sup>

Also lay people (Christ's Faithful") may freely establish and direct associations. Important canons are: 204; 215; 230; 298; 372-374; and 517-518.

Just as the Universal Church has Universal Canon Law, the bishops, dioceses and parishes have Particular Law:

Next to the pope, the bishops united in local councils, and each of them individually, are sources of law for their common or particular territory; canons of national or provincial councils, and diocesan statutes, constitute local law. At the present day and for a long time past, the law has laid down clearly the powers of local councils and of bishops.<sup>786</sup>

Different weight is given to the results/legislation of Diocesan Synods and other juridical mechanisms that create church laws on the local level. There are

- Canons
- Decisions
- Directions
- Directory
- Guidelines
- Mandates
- Policies
- Recommendations
- Regulations
- Statutes

Three examples of Particular Law in Africa: In its pastoral planning and coordination that emphasizes SCCs Blomfontein Archdiocese in South Africa states: "If the pastor in a parish with active SCCs is transferred, there is an archdiocesan policy that his successor should also be committed to SCCs." The booklet on the Synod of Mwanza Archdiocese in Tanzania in 2002 contains 105 references to *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo* (JNNK), the Swahili expression for SCCs. The *Pastoral Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Nairobi 2013* state: "All Christian faithful in the Archdiocese of Nairobi should be members of SCCs."

Tanzanian canon lawyer Father Augustine Mringi (who died in 2001) states:

By directing that the traditional parish should be composed of Small Christian Communities the AMECEA Bishops [in 1979] are simply saying that Canon Law should not continue to take the traditional parish as the basic

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<sup>785</sup> *Code of Canon Law, Vatican Website, retrieved on 8 March, 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM)*

<sup>786</sup> "Sources of Canon Law," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Wikipedia, retrieved 6 August, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon\\_law\\_\(Catholic\\_Church\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_law_(Catholic_Church))

juridical unit of the Church, because it has now become an association of the communities of the Christian faithful and is no longer a “a community of Christian faithful” in the primary sense of community. The parish priest is now a coordinator and animator of a community of internally self-governing communities.

The Small Christian Communities in the parish are now in reality the actual centers of pastoral work, from which all basic ecclesial activities commence and receive their validity and strength. On this account, the Small Christian Community has *de facto* become a “juridic person” because it is internally autonomous in the sense that it elects its own leaders, raises its own funds for self-support and promotes its own evangelization and catechesis. Thus the *Code of Canon Law* is challenged to recognize this *fait accompli* and formally include Small Christian Communities in the structures of the church.<sup>787</sup>

English diocesan priest Father Gerry Proctor states that while there is no explicit mention of SCCs in the code, “those of us involved in developing this level of being church can find a number of significant references which will give some solidity and juridical basis to all we are doing.”<sup>788</sup> He goes on to explain:

“The code appears to encourage a different model of church, where each Catholic is aware of their ‘right’ and recognizes their ‘duty’ to become active members at their local level bringing the message of salvation to every person without exception. It is the BEC process that most appears to be enabling the Local Church to realize this new model envisaged by the code...There is a rich seam of pastoral theology underpinned by the code that has been little explored to date.”<sup>789</sup>

Democratic Republic of the Congo diocesan priest Father Dieudonné Ngona points to the future in a commentary called “Towards a Juridic Status of the SCCs:”

The SCCs can be considered “churches” not in themselves, but as most basic localizations or furthestmost prolongations of the Universal Church through the mediation of the diocese and of the parish to which they are to be open or better, within which they have to be formed and operate...We need to live the experience of SCCs with success. If the experience could be lived successful, it would certainly be sanctioned later on. In fact, life always come first. Other provisions, be they juridic or other, follow.<sup>790</sup>

<sup>787</sup> Augustine Mringi, “Small Christian Communities and Canon Law,” in *Communio at the Grassroots: Small Christian Communities*, Bangalore: Indian Institute of Spirituality, 1995, pp. 326-327.

<sup>788</sup> Gerry Proctor, “BECs/SCCs Both Spirit and Law,” *Buena Vista Ink*, 18:5 (Sept/Oct 2004) and 18:6 (Nov/Dec 2004).

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>790</sup> Dieudonné Ngona, “The Small Christian Communities and the Internal Organization of the Local Churches: A Juridical Point of View,” *African Christian Studies*, Vol.19, No.3

Ngona goes on to say:

SCCs have been made a pastoral priority by our Bishops' Conferences. And they have the competence to do so, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity. Furthermore when they are formed or established, the coming up of SCCs inevitably has an influence on the pastoral activities of the parish. Thus SCCs have juridic implications.<sup>791</sup>

Nigerian Canon Lawyer Father Cosmas Aluede Ojemen states:

The structure of the parish is not static. It is evolving in an ongoing manner accepting inputs from different parts of the world. Recent papal documents recognize that the Principle of Subsidiarity implies accepting genuine initiative of Local Churches disperses around the world... The establishment of Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) is one area where the church is experiencing some renewal in the parish today. Since Vatican Council II there has been greater recognition for this informal way of structuring the parish to effect greater pastoral results.<sup>792</sup>

So hopefully a future revision of the *Code of Canon Law* will specifically mention SCCs. We in Eastern Africa feel that our model of pastoral, parish-based SCCs from below is a new pastoral structure within a communion of communities ecclesiology. A network of SCCs on the grassroots is a new way of being parish. Already some changes are happening. Years ago the diocesan statistical reports sent yearly to the Vatican did not include the number of SCCs and the lay ministries coming from SCCs. Now the reports cover this growing part of church life. Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa. Tanzania alone has over 60,000 SCCs. Kenya alone has over 45,000 SCCs. In part these numbers are calculated from the many dioceses and parishes in Eastern Africa's detailed statistics on the names, numbers and activities of SCCs that are sent annually to the Vatican. These statistics are also used as part of the bishop's every five-year report during his *Ad Limina* visit.

In light of the evaluation of SCCs and their future importance there is a very challenging article called "Analyzing the Present Moment: Latin American BECs in 2004" compiled by Proctor on behalf of the José Marins Team. After nine years its critique and insights are still very relevant to the future of the World Church:

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(2003), pp. 11-12. Ngona writes on this subject at length in his book *Small Christian Communities, A Source of Renewal for Parish Life: A Theological-Canonical Approach*, Nairobi: St Joseph Printing Press, 1995. It is important that such books on SCCs are printed and made available widely.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>792</sup> Cosmas Aluede Ojemen, "The Parish as the Primary Place for the Mission of the Church in Africa," *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 55, Nos 1 & 2 (March-June, 2013), pp. 64, 68-69.

The Second Vatican Council gave the church an extraordinary breath of fresh theological and ecclesiological life, but failed completely to create the new structures necessary to maintain this development... This trend was particularly noticeable in the absence since 1985 of any reference in magisterial statements to church as the People of God. There had been a greater stress on hierarchy, an increase in clericalism, an undermining of the collegiality of bishops... It was a curious moment when the [Latin American] BECs felt themselves to be the ones who were faithful to the council, obedient to the Magisterium, and defending the re-structuring of the Latin American Church achieved at Medellin (1968), Puebla (1979) and Santo Domingo (1992). It is possible that this was the only church to respond to Vatican II by creating new structures corresponding to the new theology. Their ecclesial intuition has been under attack ever since, and yet the BECs continue to be the major source of renewal in the church at the grassroots level. This expression of church at the base is a genuine experience of communion and participation.<sup>793</sup>

In a recent message Proctor states:

One of the things little written about in English is the reflection on the BECs being a structure of Church particularly in way they are described by CELAM in their major documents as noted in the article I wrote. However that structure was actually put into Canon Law in a number of dioceses by the creation of diocesan laws/regulations (sometimes after Diocesan Synods) which incorporated the pastoral option of the diocese into a fully legitimate recognition by the Local Church of the agreed theological/pastoral position of the continental church as expressed by the episcopal conferences. This happened in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, for example. I met bishops/priests/BEC leaders in those dioceses, but little was known and even less written down about these choices because of the desire not to bring them to the attention of the Vatican because of the fear of renewed persecution.<sup>794</sup>

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<sup>793</sup> Gerry Proctor in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 and Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, pp. 32-33.

<sup>794</sup> Gerry Proctor in an email message to the author, 17 June, 2013.

It is noteworthy that Peruvian theologian Father Gustavo Gutiérrez, OP, a great supporter of SCCs/CEBs and their close link to “the preferential option for the poor,” has been investigated and criticized by the Vatican over the years. Yet in 2014 he was welcomed back to Rome in a rehabilitation/redemption of sorts. His “updated Liberation Theology” has been supported and promoted by Cardinal Gerhard Mueller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In fact, they have written a book together *On the Side of the Poor* to be published by Orbis Books in Spring, 2015. This bodes well for the Vatican support of SCCs/CEBs. Pope Francis’ language is even stronger when he says that for the Catholic Church the option for the poor is a “must.”

Fortunately, Pope Francis is bringing new winds of change. In a talk on “Some Temptations Against Missionary Discipleship” during the 2013 World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in July, 2013 he said: “The spread of *Bible* study groups, of ecclesial basic communities and of Pastoral Councils is in fact helping to overcome clericalism<sup>795</sup> and to increase lay responsibility.”<sup>796</sup>

Reflecting on SCCs as a pastoral structure in the Catholic Church the following anecdote from the Introduction to the “International Section” of *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* is significant:

In January, 1986 Joe Healey participated in the South African Missiological Conference in Pretoria, South Africa. The keynote speaker of the congress was Hans Kung. Joe gave a lecture on “Basic Christian Communities: Church-Centered or World-Centered?” mainly from the pastoral experience of SCCs in Eastern Africa. After his talk he received a message that Hans Kung wanted to see him at the next coffee break. Kung explained that in his latest research he had been studying different paradigms of the church: House Churches in the First Century, monasteries in medieval times, the parish in recent centuries. He wondered if the parish model was no longer appropriate in different places in the world, and if the model or paradigm of the future is the Small Christian Community (SCC)? Joe has often wondered if this was prophetic. Prophetic in the sense that Yves Congar’s quote in the “Foreword” by Cardinal Murphy-O’Connor is prophetic [related to “renewal in the church has come about, time and time again in its history, in and through the inspiration of small communities – monastic, evangelical, missionary, lay communities, communities of women – fired by the Holy Spirit”].<sup>797</sup>

What is the new structure or model or paradigm? Clearly SCCs are a significant part of a new way of being parish from below. Many Catholics (and others) around the world including SCC leaders are very hopeful in the changes being introduced by Pope Francis. He is using the expression “People of God” in his talks and is emphasizing more collegiality,

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<sup>795</sup> Unfortunately clericalism is still “alive and well” in Eastern Africa. An example is titles such as “Rev. Father,” “Rev. Sister” and “Rev. Brother.” Similarly are the holdovers from British colonialism such as titles for bishops such as “My Lord” and “Your Grace.” Pope Francis calls this being “self-reverential.” He is trying to steer the Catholic Church away from the hierarchical language of the cardinals being “Princes of the Church” to being servants of the People of God with Pope Francis himself being the servant of the servants. Many times, the pope has called for “pastoral bishops, not princes.”

<sup>796</sup> Francis, “Address of Pope Francis to the Coordinating Committee of CELAM, the Latin American Bishops’ Conference, 28 July, 2013.” WYD Central Website, retrieved on 29 July, 2013, [http://wydcentral.org/pope-francis-meeting-with-the-coordinating-committee-of-celam/?fb\\_comment\\_id=fbc\\_1403649499846873\\_67169\\_1403771713167985#f1720970793522c](http://wydcentral.org/pope-francis-meeting-with-the-coordinating-committee-of-celam/?fb_comment_id=fbc_1403649499846873_67169_1403771713167985#f1720970793522c)

<sup>797</sup> Healey and Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today*, p. 155.

collaboration, consultation and subsidiarity. We are optimistic that the experience of SCCs as a New Model of Church from below as witnessed by SCC members in Latin America, Africa and Asia<sup>798</sup> will bring significant changes in new pastoral structures corresponding to our contemporary communion ecclesiology and the ecclesial reality on the local level.

It is important for visitors to Eastern Africa to share their experiences of SCCs in the AMECEA Region when they return to their home countries. American Catholic layman Dan Heuer sent his impressions of visiting St. Kizito Small Christian Community in Nairobi, Kenya to his friend and relatives:

After the Mass we accompanied Fr. Joe to a Small Christian Community meeting in a low income informal settlement housing area in Waruku. This was a very memorable experience. The group meets weekly in a different home each week. About twenty people were there in the small homemade of corrugated metal. The group members read scripture passages, shared thoughts and concerns, and prayed together for about two hours. The scripture reading is central to the discussion. After the reading there is a period of silence before the discussion continues. For Africans these meetings are not a project but are a “way of life.” People freely share their lives in these group discussions. The groups are instrumental in identifying needs in the communities and developing ways to meet the needs.

Small Christian Communities are a staple of Christian life in Africa. There are 180,000 of them in Eastern Africa including 45,000 in Kenya. While providing a strong means of spirituality and support for Christians, they are also an important means to overcome tensions that might arise between people of different ethnic groups. Individuals from different ethnic groups form deep human relationships through the communities that help them transcend their differences. Some Small Christian Communities are based in schools and are oriented to students.

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<sup>798</sup> To show how this is a worldwide phenomenon especially in the Global South, Korean diocesan priest Father Bartholomew Jun Won, pastor in Seoul, South Korea said: “The question of ‘Is it possible to realize the pastoral care of SCCs in the Church in Korea?’ sounds like an appeal for changing the paradigm of the Church in Korea, turning away from the long clericalism and secularism.” He stressed that “we should consider the SCCs not as a solution that brings us some pastoral effectiveness, but as a pastoral vision for the local Church which realizes the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.” This is a key insight that stresses the pastoral priority of SCCs in this new model of church." *International Fides News Service*, 22 June, 2013. Also published in CBCK News, “Priests’ Workshop for Developing Small Christian Communities in Korea,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 6 August, 2013, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/asia/korea/250-priests-workshop-for-developing-small-christian-communities-in-korea.html>

Further background is explained in the excellent article by Bibiana Joo-hyun Ro on “Reflecting on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church of Korea” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 2 July, 2013, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/korea.pdf>

Some of the articles on SCCs in Africa have been translated into other world languages such as French, German, Italian, Polish and Spanish. These texts are available on the SCCs Website and through hyperlinks. Polish priest and canon lawyer Father Robert Leżohupski OFM Conv comments that an article in a Polish theological journal introduces SCCs to Polish readers and this a positive development.<sup>799</sup>

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<sup>799</sup> Robert Leżohupski's phone conversation with the author on 17 June, 2015.

## 9. The Future is Now: Using the Internet to Promote SCCs in Africa and Around the World

In the 55 year (1961-2016) history of AMECEA we have always been challenged to respond to the contemporary signs of the times. Today we have the growing importance of, the internet, cyberspace, blogosphere, websites, the digital arena, the social media/new media and social networking. There are interactive websites specifically about SCCs and referring to SCCs in Africa<sup>800</sup> and many other online SCCs resources. A quick summary of the resources to promote SCCs in Africa and around the world is as follows:

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<sup>800</sup> Some examples by diocese, deanery, parish, SCC are:

Arua Diocese, Uganda (<http://www.tualu.org/ARUA%20DIOCESE/index.htm>);

Jinja Diocese, Uganda ([jinjadiocese.org](http://www.jinjadiocese.org))

Kitui Catholic Diocese, Kenya (<http://www.dioceseofkitui.org/subpage6.html>);

Malindi Catholic Diocese, Kenya (<http://www.malindicatholicdiocese.org>)

Marsabit Diocese, Kenya (<http://www.marsabitdiocese.org>)

Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya (<http://www.archdioceseofnairobi.or.ke>)

Ngong Diocese, Kenya (<http://www.ngongdiocese.org/programs/pastoral-programs/lay-apostolate-associations.html>);

Exodus Kutoka Network: Catholic Parishes Network in Informal Settlements in Nairobi, Kenya (<http://www.kutoka.org> and <http://www.kutokanet.com/content.html>);

Christ the Teacher Parish (Catholic Chaplaincy Center) at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya has a drop-down menu that includes web pages for the eight SCCs in the residence halls and one SCC off campus (<http://www.kucatholic.or.ke>);

Christ the King Catholic Church, Kibera, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya  
<http://www.christ-kibera.com>

Holy Family Minor Basilica, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya

[http://holyfamilybasilica.info/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=58](http://holyfamilybasilica.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=58));

Holy Ghost Cathedral, Mombasa Archdiocese, <http://holyghostcathedral.org>

Holy Trinity Catholic Parish, Kariobangi North, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya

(<http://www.holytrinitykariobangi.org>). The parish is divided into four Zones under three Mass Centres. Each Mass Centre has a number of Small Christian Communities: In the Western Zone we have St. Daniel Comboni with 18 Small Christian Communities. In the same direction we have Huruma Zone with 10 small Christian Communities. The Central Zone, where the main Church is situated, has 20 Small Christian Communities. The Eastern Zone comprises of St. John's Church-Korogocho with 26 Small Christian Communities;

Regina Caeli (Our Lady Queen of Heaven) Catholic Church, Karen, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya  
<http://reginacaelikaren.org>

Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco Catholic Church, Upper Hill, Nairobi City, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya

<http://www.donboscochurch.org>

St. Austin's Catholic Church, Nairobi City, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya

<http://staustinchurch.or.ke>

St. Joseph Catholic Church Diani Ukunda, Mombasa Archdiocese, Kenya

<http://www.ukundacatholicparish.com/index.php/ministries/the-small-christian-communities>

Browsers: Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Opera Mini, Safari, Torch.

Content Management Systems (CMSs): Drupal, Joomla, Mailchimp, Wiki, WordPress.

Ebook format: PDF or EPUB.

Ebook Readers: Amazon Kindle, Barnes and Nobel Nook, Kobo, Sony.

Editing: Track Changes.

Online Surveys: SurveyMonkey, 360Reach.

Search engines: Ask, Bing, Google,<sup>801</sup> Yahoo.

Social media and social networking<sup>802</sup> websites/platforms/applications/services/tools: AOL, Bot, Boxbe, Instant Messenger, Blogspot, Buzzfeed, ChatOn, Facebook, Facetime, Flickr, Google+, Google Drive, Google Hangouts, Google News, Instagrams, Imo, iTunes, LinkedIn, MySpace, Pinterest, Quora, Siri, Skype, Slack, Snapchat, Spotify, Tango, Tidal,

St. Joseph Catholic Parish, Tudor, Mombasa Archdiocese, Kenya (23 SCCs of which five have their own web pages) (<http://tudorcatholic.org/index.php/what-is-new-in-1-5550266308>):

St. Joseph's Parish, Namitembo and St. Bridget Parish Website, Zomba, Malawi  
<http://www.stbridgetchurch.org/namitembo.htm>

St. Mary Magdalene Parish, Kariokor, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya  
[http://stmarymagdalenekariokor.com/?page\\_id=12](http://stmarymagdalenekariokor.com/?page_id=12)

St. Patrick's Catholic Parish, Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi  
([http://stpatricksmalawi.org/main.php?page\\_id=Mphakati](http://stpatricksmalawi.org/main.php?page_id=Mphakati)).

St. Augustine SCC, Karen, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya  
[http://cathparishkaren.com/?page\\_id=24](http://cathparishkaren.com/?page_id=24)

Christ the King SCC, St. Joseph Kanyama Parish, Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia (made up of Catholics of Rwandese origins. It was initiated by the then Lusaka Archbishop, the late Joseph Cardinal Mazombwe, in 1997 in order to save souls of the first asylum seekers in Zambia that were found in Kanyama being the most affordable Lusaka township)  
<http://ikazeiwacu.fr/2013/11/24/the-christ-the-king-small-christian-community-of-st-joseph-kanyama-parish-of-lusaka-archdiocese-has-celebrated-rhe-christ-the-king-feast-on-this-sunday-in-lusaka>

<sup>801</sup> Google has become a sort of an oracle of the information age. Today many Catholic parishioners consult Google for information rather than parish priests or catechists on such topics as Catholic Church laws, the sacraments. The Liturgical Calendar, etc. Websites such as Wikipedia and the local parish or diocese are also frequently consulted.

A search on Google for the exact words “Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa” on 8 November, 2015 produced 1,120 results (hits or references).

<sup>802</sup> At the beginning of 2014 there were more than 1.5 billion Africans on social media. Africa has the fast growing smartphone market in the world. In 2012 an estimated million people use social media in Kenya, such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and WhatsApp. It is the eagerness to interact in social media that drives the start of internet usage. The Communication Commission of Kenya shows that there are currently 14.3 million internet users in Kenya, which increased from 12.5 million. Also, 36.3 per cent of the population has access to the internet, increasing from 31.8 per cent. This growth is attributed to the spread of mobile phones throughout the country.

Tumblr, Twitter, Yahoo Chat, YouTube, Viadeo, Viber, Vimeo, Vine, WhatsApp, WhatsApp Chat, WhatsApp Messenger, Zoom.<sup>803</sup>

Storage (file hosting service): Dropbox.

Video Conferencing Technology: Blue Jeans, Bright Talk, Cisco WebEx, FaceTime, Goggle Hangouts, GoToMeetings, GoToWebinar, MeSkype.

Virtual/digital (smartphone) personal assistant: Cortana, Google Now, Siri.

Other internet resources/applications/platforms (in alphabetical order):

Audio CD, apps (special applications),<sup>804</sup>

*Bible App*, blog posts, blogs, bots,

cellphones, chat rooms, Christian prayer apps, Chromebooks, cloud, cloud computing, cloud computing systems, comment box,

Dashboard, databases, data storage, digital files, discussion forums, domain-based email, Dropbox, DSpace, dumb phones, DVDs,

Ebook readers, Ebrary, Elibrary, email mailing lists, email messages, Ereaders (also written as e-reader, e-book reader, e-book device),

Facebook Messenger, Facetime, facetime(s) with, feature phone, fiber-optic cable, fonepad,

Google AdSense, Google Chat, Google Docs, Google Glass, group chat apps, handheld mobile devices,

instant messaging, instapray, institutional repositories, intercloud, internet domains, internet enabled phones, internet meetings, internet TV, iPads, iPhones, iPods,

Li-Fi, list-servs,

Massive Online Open Course (MOOC), message boards, microblogs, MissioApp, mobile broadband, mobile data services, mobile devices, mobile networks, mobile phone app, mobile networks, mobile phone services, mobile service providers, mobile virtual network operators (MVNO), mobile web,

net book, networking, networks,

office messaging app, online book, online chat, online distant learning sites,<sup>805</sup> online journals, online locker, online Powerpoint presentations, online storage,

phablets, Photo Shop, platforms, plug-ins, podcasts, PopeApp, portable Wi-Fi,

PrayerMate,

Quick Response (QR) Readers,

radio live streams/streaming,

Scribd, selfies, Skype, smart cards, smartphones, smartwatches, smsing, Snapchat, social media apps, social media platforms, social network, social networking, spiritual apps,

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<sup>803</sup> Zoom unifies cloud video conferencing, simple online meetings, and cross platform group chat into one easy-to-use platform.

<sup>804</sup> Two examples are: The PopeApp. The Missio Phone App, the first official App for the Vatican, created by the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) and FIDES. Missio is the perfect Catholic app for staying up-to-date on the latest Catholic news from the Vatican and around the world.

<sup>805</sup> The Loyola Institute for Ministry at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA has a LIMEX Program that includes two online specialization courses on Small Christian Community Formation: “The Inner Life of Small Christian Communities” and “The Public Life of Small Christian Communities.” <http://lim.loyno.edu/onsite>

tablet PC, tablets, teen internet, text chat, text messaging (also called texting, Short Message Services [SMS], Multimedia Messages [MMS]), the Net, touchphone, touch screen devices, Tutor, twar, twitting<sup>806</sup>

Y phone,

VCDs, Video CD, video clips, videosharing, videotelephony, Vine, Viper, virtual book, virtual memoir, virtual rosary/mobile rosary, vlogs, voice-activated software, voice app,

WEB 2.0, WEB 3.0, webcasts, web conferences, web conferencing, web seminars, webinars, webinar software applications, weblibliography, WiFi hotspot, wiki, Wikipedia, wireless network.

We have a new language such as:

“access technology,”

“active online presence,”

“activeSync,”

“Africa's data revolution,”

“age of connectivity,”

“all digital access,”

“always-now world of social media,”

“Android App development,”

“app development,”

“app-like site,”

“app-powered service companies,”

“application to optimize a document for viewing,”

“Background App Refresh,”

“backlinks”—having your website name mentioned and hyperlinked by other websites,

“balancing privacy and security in the digital age,”

“baptizing the digital world,”

“bibliographical manager,”

“binge listening,”

“blended format,”

“bloatware,”

“bloggers see things differently,”

“blogging,”

“blog – online diary,”

“blogsphere,”

“blogs – personal websites,”

“Born Before Computers (BBC),”

“brave new digital world,”

“bring the content of the Word of God to people who use digital means,”

“Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Principle.”

“broad-scale digital counterinsurgency,”

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<sup>806</sup> Some SCCs have their own internal communications networks: Email Addresses, Email Mailing Lists, text messaging (also called texting, Short Message Services [SMS], MMS messages) networks such as the John Paul I SCC SMS Link in St. Ignatius Parish, Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia.

“browser-based reading,”  
 “buy an app,”  
 “Catholic Church’s online presence,”  
 “Catholic Church’s digital engagement,”  
 “Catholic Church’s digital reality,”  
 “Catholic Church Priority – web designer, programmer, developer,”  
 “Catholic social media editors,”  
 “Catholic Social Network Teaching,”  
 “challenges of internet connectivity,”<sup>807</sup>  
 “chat apps,”  
 “cellphone cameras,”  
 “cellphone ministry,”  
 “cellphone technology,”  
 “cellular bandwidth,”  
 “Christianity in a Digital Age,”  
 “Christianity in the Digital Culture,”  
 “citizen journalists,”  
 “church-based online news agencies,”  
 “Church and communication in an E-Age,”  
 “cloud backup,”  
 “cloud backup provider,”  
 “cloud-based hub,”  
 “cloud-based software,”  
 “cloud-based video conferencing service,”  
 “cloud care,”  
 “cloud computing,”  
 “cloud services (online storage),”  
 “cloud storage,”  
 “cloud video conferencing,”  
 “coders/coding,”  
 “collective cellphone memory capacity,”  
 “communicating thru YOUCAT (short for *Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church*)”  
 “communication platforms,”  
 “communication tools,”  
 “compatible with all mobile devices,”  
 “competitive keyword phrases.”  
 “comprehensive, multidisciplinary full-text database,”  
 “computer instruction,”  
 “computer technology field  
 “connected devices talking to each other,”  
 “consciousness of information technology,”  
 “consecrated life in the digital age,”  
 “constant digital connectedness,”  
 “consumer culture of Facebook ‘friendships’”

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<sup>807</sup> The adage of *the rich get richer and the poor get poorer* still hold true in many places in Africa. While active networking communities is the ideal, people in rural areas have poor or inconsistent connectivity. People without personal computers, tablets and advanced smartphones are severely limited in their communications capability.

“content driven,”  
 “content optimization,”  
 “content provider,”  
 “content-rich apps,”  
 “content writing,”  
 “contextual apps,”  
 “cookie policy,”  
 “corrupt files in the registry,”  
 “create a culture of encounter,”  
 “cross platform group chat,”  
 “cyber-crime,”  
 “cyber discipleship,”  
 “cyber-encounters,”  
 “cyber-fold,”  
 “cyber liturgy,”  
 “cyber media,”  
 “cyber office,”  
 “cybersecurity,”  
 “cyberspace world,”  
 “cyberstalking,”  
 “cybertheology,”  
 “daily gospel online,”  
 “data visualization” (“data viz”),  
 “deadlock,”  
 “dedicated support team,”  
 “desktop and mobile versions of websites,”  
 “Developer vis-vis Maintenance Person  
 “device-to-device communications,”  
 “digi forum,”  
 “digital age,”  
 “digital archives system,”  
 “digital areopagus,”  
 “digital arts,”  
 “digital book”  
 “digital channel,”  
 “digital chat room,”  
 “digital church,”  
 “digital church and E-culture in the New Media Age,”  
 “digital city,”  
 “digital communication(s),”  
 “digital company,”  
 “digital connectivity,”  
 “digital contact,”  
 “digital content,”  
 “digital contexts,”  
 “digital continent,”  
 “digital conversations,”  
 “digital culture,”  
 “digital culture is changing our world,”  
 “digital democracy,”

“digital detox zone,”  
“digital disciple,”  
“digital divide.”  
“digital documents library,”  
“digital downloading,”  
“digital edition,”  
“digital environment,”  
“digital era,”  
“digital evangelism,”  
“digital evangelization,”  
“digital footprint,”  
“digital forum,”  
“digital generation,”  
“digital identity,”  
“digital immigrants,”  
“digital is the norm,”  
“digital learning,”  
“digital libraries community,”  
“digital library,”  
“digital library systems,”  
“digital life,”  
“digital life is our new normal,”  
“digital literacy,”  
“digital literacy program,”  
“digital marketing,”  
“digital marketing strategy,”  
“digital means,”  
“digital media,”  
“digital media platform,”  
“digital media (social networks, email) are 21<sup>st</sup> century town square,”  
“digital migration,”  
“digital ministry,”  
“digital missionaries on the electronic continent,”  
“digital movies,”  
“digital, multimedia and transmedia from the beginning,”  
“digital nation,”  
“digital native,”  
“digital news,”  
“digital news,”  
“digital notebook,”  
“digital-only future,”  
“digital overload,”  
“digital partnership,”  
“digital platforms,”  
“digital privacy,”  
“digital reformation,”  
“digital religion,”  
“digital repository,”  
“digital revolution,”  
“digital set-up box,”

“digital seminary,”  
 “digital set-up box,”  
 “digital social media”  
 “digital social networking”  
 “digital space,”  
 “digital streets,”  
 “digital subscription,”  
 “digital support group,”  
 “digital technology,”  
 “digital technologies,”  
 “digital theology,”  
 “digital transformation of books”  
 “digital video stream,”  
 “digital wireless system,”  
 “digital world,”  
 “digital world is a network not of wires, but of people,”  
 “digital world is a public square,”  
 “digitally emergent new generation,”  
 “digitalized documents,”  
 “digitized documents,”  
 “discover the web once click at a time,”  
 “dot.com Catholic,”  
 “dot.com Christian,”  
 “dot.com priest,”  
 “download Sunday,”  
 “E-Age,”  
 “earbuds,”  
 “ebook (electronic book),”  
 “ebook platforms,”  
 “ebook revolution,”  
 “e-courses,”  
 “E-culture,”  
 “e-learning,”  
 “e-learning,”  
 “eNotice,”  
 “electronic address,”  
 “electronic book,”  
 “electronic data interchange (EDI),”  
 “electronic publishing,”  
 “email editor,”  
 “embedded mobile compatibility,”  
 “embedded content,”  
 “embedded viewing,”  
 “emerging virtual community,”  
 “emoticon,”  
 “empowerment of social media,”  
 “end-to-end encryption,”  
 “engaging with people in the digital realm,”  
 “enhance internet and wi-fi connectivity,”  
 “Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP),”

“ethesis,”  
 “evangelization of the digital continent,”  
 “evangelizing in cyberspace,”  
 “evangelizing online,”  
 “evangomercials,”  
 “Every solution starts with sharing a problem. Technology thrives in the open,”  
 “evidenced-based content,”  
 “experiencing God in the internet age,”  
 “extreme blogging,”  
 “facebook apostolate,”  
 “facebook fanpage,”  
 “facebook ministry,”  
 “Facebook page looks even better on mobile,”  
 “facebooking,”  
 “faith-based website design company,”  
 “fear of missing out (FoMO),”  
 “first message in the thread,”  
 “flash features,”  
 “4G LTE (Fourth Generation Long Term Evolution) standard,”  
 “5G Is a New Frontier for Mobile Carriers and Tech Companies,”  
 “full-text content,”  
 “the future is now,”  
 “gaining traction,”  
 “gated [restricted] content,”  
 “gchat.”  
 “evolution of our society from the industrial age to the information age,”  
 “giant digital space,”  
 “give the internet a soul,”  
 “global livestream,”  
 “GSM (global system for mobile)”  
 “global text messaging system,”  
 “global digital brand,”  
 “global village,”  
 “going viral,”  
 “Google classroom,”  
 “Google trendspotters,”  
 “Google webmaster tools,”  
 “Gospel in the digital age,”  
 “Gospel of the New Media,”  
 “group video calling,”  
 “grey literature,”  
 “growing the Church through new media,”  
 “growth hacking,”  
 “hacker ethic,”  
 “handheld electronic devices,”  
 “handmade web design,”  
 “hashtag activism,”  
 “#hashtag ‘Kenyan on Twitter’ (#KOT),”  
 “highly globalized, highly digitalized 21<sup>st</sup> century world,”  
 “high speed fiber-optic network,”

“high-speed 4G mobile internet connectivity puts Africa on fast track,”  
 “hyper commerciality of the new media,  
 “inbox me,”  
 “ICT compliant,”  
 “ICT & evangelization,”  
 “ICT for evangelization/spreading the Good News to others.”  
 “ICT is not a game changer, it is a life changer.  
 “ICT is the new DNA,”  
 “ICT is the tail wagging the dog,”  
 “ICT literacy,”  
 “ICTs skills,”  
 “ICT Training Forum,”  
 “IMO (in my opinion),”  
 “infographics,”  
 “infographic world,”  
 “informatics specialists,”  
 “Information Communication Technology (ICT),”  
 “Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a tool to evangelization,”  
 “information drive,”  
 “information systems,”  
 “information technology (IT),<sup>808</sup>  
 “innovative multimedia,”  
 “instant mobile chatting services,”  
 “institutional repository services,”  
 “Integrated Management Information System (IMIS).”  
 “intelligent personal assistant,”  
 “interactive communications,”  
 “interactive website,”  
 “internet activism,”  
 “internet addiction,”  
 “internet address,”  
 “internet as a new way of being church,”  
 “internet is a gift from God,”  
 “internet apostolate,”  
 “internet compliant,”  
 “internet connectivity as a daily and conscious need,”  
 “internet directory,”  
 “internet directories web page,”  
 “internet evangelization,”  
 “internet -- huge network of computers all connected together,”  
 “internet is a lawless space,”  
 “internet is the new city for youth,”  
 “internet is the new home of youth,”  
 “internet now is invisible and ubiquitous,”  
 “internet livestream,”

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<sup>808</sup> We do surveys of young people in cities such as Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Five years ago the answer to the question “What is the dominant youth culture in cities in East Africa?” was “American TV.” Today the answer is “IT.”

“internet ministry,”  
 “internet networking,”  
 “internet or digital future,”  
 “internet.org app,”  
 “internet outreach,”  
 “internet revolution,”  
 “internet/social media are going to save us,”  
 “internet, text messages and social networks are a gift from God,”  
 “internet theology,”  
 “internet world.”  
 “iPhone App development,”  
 “iPhone and laptop generation,”  
 “iPod Shuffle,”  
 “IT era,”  
 “IT mantra: ‘If you don’t’ use it, you lose it,’”  
 “Joomla Migration,”  
 “Journalism of Assertion,”  
 “life in the digital space,”  
 “live.church,”  
 “livestream” or “live stream,”  
 “livestreaming Sunday,”  
 “livestreaming video/live streaming television feed,”  
 “livestream online,”  
 “live stream watch online,”  
 “long journey in the ICT world,”  
 “journalism in the age of smart phones,”  
 “junk computing,”  
 “mainstream media,”  
 “marketing databases,”  
 “massive open online courses” (MOOCs),  
 “mass mobile telephony,”  
 “media freedom activists,”  
 “media platforms,”  
 “media sensitization,”  
 “Memorial Service on Skype,”  
 “message exchange system,”  
 “messaging application,”  
 “messaging service,”  
 “Meta tag updates,”  
 “micro or palm-sized desktop,”  
 “Microsoft Word is hanging,”  
 “mobile algorithm change,”  
 “mobile app development,”  
 “mobile apps,”  
 “mobile compatibility,”  
 “mobile compliant,”  
 “mobile connectivity,”  
 “mobile data roaming,”  
 “mobile devices compatible,”  
 “mobile digital revolution,”

“mobile digital technology platform,”  
 “mobile friendly,”  
 “mobile friendly sites,”  
 “mobile friendly website,”  
 “mobile phone app,”  
 “mobile platform provider,”  
 “mobile readiness check,”  
 “mobile reading platform,”  
 “mobile-responsive website solution,”  
 “mobile revolution’ (spread of mobile devices)  
 “mobile search provider,”  
 “mobile technology,”  
 “mobile web,”  
 “more digital-friendly Vatican,”  
 “more globally connected than ever before,”  
 “more user-friendly interface,”  
 “most active platform for communication and networking,”  
 “multi-colored layers,”  
 “multimedia content,”  
 “multimedia platforms,”  
 “multi-platform,”  
 “multi-platform media ministry,”  
 “multiple platforms,”  
 “‘multiplication system’ through apps and social media,”  
 “networked social journalism,”  
 “netizens (citizens of the net),”  
 “network effect,”  
 “networks of social relationships,”  
 “new areopagus of our contemporary age,”  
 “new data ecosystem,”  
 “new digital wireless system,”  
 “newest buzzword: IoT (internet of things),”  
 “New Evangelization in the Digital Age,”  
 “new media technology,”  
 “new media technology as an effective tool for evangelization,”  
 “new place for evangelization,”  
 “new spaces for evangelization,”  
 “next generation small groups,”  
 “next is now,”  
 “nones are alright,”  
 “one all-purpose device,”  
 “one stop IT solutions provider,”  
 “ongoing networking,”  
 “online campus,”  
 “online communications,”  
 “online community,”  
 “online congregation,”  
 “online crime,”  
 “online education,”  
 “online electronic database,”

“online evangelization,”  
 “online friendships.”  
 “Online House Churches,”  
 “online journalism,”  
 “online journal via the internet,”  
 “online learning,”  
 “online learning community,”  
 “online marketing,”  
 “online meetings,”  
 “online platforms,”  
 “online powerpoint presentations,”  
 “online presence,”  
 “online publications,”  
 “online publishing,”  
 “online tools and resources,”  
 “online voices,”  
 “online writing,”  
 “open source commercial version,”  
 “open source repository application/software package,”  
 “open source software,”  
 “open source theology,”  
 “optimization,”  
 “organic search engine traffic,”  
 “organic search results,”  
 “our incredible shrinking attention span,”  
 “P2P (person to person talks),”  
 “parish app as a faith resource,”  
 “Pastoral Sub-domain on Word Press,”  
 “periscoping,”  
 “Personal Device Entertainment System,”  
 “phablet-only life,”  
 “photo-driven social network,”  
 “photo-sharing social network,”  
 “place holder for a valid handle prefix.”  
 “popular online instant messaging tool,”  
 “posting on walls,”  
 “powerbank,”  
 “powered by WordPress,”  
 “preaching the Gospel to people on their iPhones and computers,”  
 “predictive, actionable dashboard,”  
 “Premier Service Provider (PSP),”  
 “premium domain names,”  
 “presence of the Catholic Church in the new technologies”  
 “print on demand protocols,”  
 “priority of File Management,”  
 “Publish4All Print Centre,”  
 “QR Code,”  
 “real-time translator,”  
 “relationships in the internet age,”  
 “responsive template,”

“rich, multimedia digital content that can be streamlined for particular broadcast media,”  
 “scan app,”  
 “SCCs networking platform or forum,”  
 “search engine marketing” (SEM),  
 “search engine optimization” (SEO),  
 “search engine performance,”  
 “search engine rankings matter,”  
 “second machine age,”  
 “seismic generational gap,”  
 “server migration,”  
 “sexting,”  
 “share on your own timeline,”  
 “sharing apps,”  
 “shift to a whole new way of virtual thinking,”  
 “Skype Mass,”  
 “skyping,”  
 “smart city,”  
 “smartphone capability of mobile website,”  
 “smartphone – early 21<sup>st</sup> century’s defining technology,”  
 “smartphone messaging service,”  
 “smartphone parish app,”  
 “smartphone platform,”  
 “smartphone, smart photography,”  
 “smartphone technology,”  
 “smart photography,”  
 “social presence,”  
 “social media – a new mission language.”  
 “social media as an anti-corruption tool,”  
 “social media as an important tool for evangelization work,”  
 “social media as a new platform,”  
 “social media as a paradigm shift,”  
 “social media conversations,”  
 “social media interactions,”  
 “social media is the new CV,”  
 “social media networks,”  
 “social media optimization services,”  
 “social media platforms,”  
 “social media platforms as vibrant tools for promoting the works of evangelization,”  
 “social media presence,”  
 “Social Media SCC,”  
 “social media strategist,”  
 “social-media-wired,”  
 “social networking media,”  
 “social networking sites (SNSs),”  
 “social networks are the great digital continent,”  
 “social platforms,”  
 “socially networked world,”  
 “spirituality of technology – the internet as life-giving,”  
 “screen culture,”

“storefront to the world,”  
 “streaming live on YouTube,”  
 “streaming outlets,”  
 “streaming TV,”  
 “streaming video content,”  
 “supported device,”  
 “surfing the net,”  
 “switching from digital reading to digital listening,”  
 “tablet devices,”  
 “tech lifestyle,”  
 “tech literacy,”  
 “Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED),”  
 “technology and spirituality are compatible,”  
 “technology-driven world order,”  
 “technology is not for work but for life,”  
 “technological interconnectedness,”  
 “techo-savvy church,”  
 “tech-savvy,”  
 “telecommunication platforms,”  
 “tethering,”  
 “text messaging service,”  
 “textalyzer,”  
 “textspeak,”  
 “text stop,”  
 “tokenization,”  
 “traditional media outlets,”  
 “trending worldwide,”  
 “true digital platforms,”  
 “turning a hashtag into movements,”  
 “twerking,”  
 “Twittersphere,”  
 “Twitter Theology,”  
 “Uniform Resource Locator (URL),”  
 “unimaginable opportunity for evangelization,”  
 “unlimited digital subscription/unlimited digital access,”  
 “unplugged but connected,”  
 “updating operating systems is not clean,”  
 “use of ICT in evangelization,”  
 “user friendly on mobile devices,”  
 “user friendly websites,”  
 “video editing software,”  
 “video embedded in Ebook text,”  
 “video-link form,”  
 “view this email in a web page,”  
 “viral mechanism,”  
 “virgin message form,”  
 “virtual civic space,”  
 “virtual audience,”  
 “virtual communities,”  
 “virtual dioceses,”

“virtual language,”  
 “virtual mind rather than a geographical mind,”  
 “virtual papal audience,”  
 “virtual parishes,”  
 “virtual private networks (VPNs),”  
 “virtual reality,”  
 “virtual reality check,”  
 “virtual reality device,”  
 “virtual reality systems,”  
 “visual platforms,”  
 “visual voicemail,”  
 “voice mail transcribed into text,”  
 “VoIP – phone services over the internet,”  
 “web and mobile ready,”  
 “web as sort of life environment especially for the young,”  
 “webathon,”  
 “web-based activism,”  
 “web-based fidelity watchdogs,”  
 “web browsing,”  
 “web design,”  
 “web development,”  
 “web-friendly,”  
 “web-linked TV,”  
 “web presence,”  
 “web service provider,”  
 “website broker,”  
 “website designing,”  
 “website design service,”  
 “website optimization services,”  
 “website optimizer,”  
 “website visibility and traffic,”  
 “websites can act like apps,”  
 “websites that are not user friendly,”  
 “working smart in ICT,”  
 “World Emoji Day,”  
 “World Wide Web -- collection of webpages on network of computers,”  
 “writing on the wall,”  
 “you are only as good as your last post,”  
 “young people as digital natives,”  
 “young people like text messaging.”

Thus the internet and the social media/new media revolution are changing the way the world – and the Catholic Church – communicates. Many church people have responded to the challenges of the internet, websites and the social media. Others lag behind and don’t appreciate the great potential. Thus the internet is being called the “new sleeping giant.”<sup>809</sup>

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<sup>809</sup> A term used for the Catholic laity after the Second Vatican Council.

Kenyan seminarian John Siyumbu, the Moderator of the SCCs Facebook Page, describes the internet/cyberspace as a two edged sword.<sup>810</sup> Another metaphor is the two sides of a coin. Both are situated in the context of the mantra: *We have to evangelize ourselves first before we can evangelize others*. So one edge or one side is the receiving/the learning/the taking in. With regard to social media some commentators have pointed out that it is crucial for the Catholic Church to first of all be a listener. We shouldn't talk from the top down, but first listen to people's worries and questions. The other side is the giving/the teaching/the proclaiming/the going out/the being sent/the evangelizing. Both are necessary.

In this digital age, in this digital culture we can dramatically expand our knowledge and understanding on three levels. First, the internet and the social media/new media can help in the formation and training of SCC leaders/animations/facilitators/coordinators in Africa. Second, the internet and the social media/new media can help members of SCCs in Africa especially in the AMECEA Region to share their experience with the rest of the world.<sup>811</sup> Through the internet and other forms of this new information technology and digital world, members of African SCCs can also feel part of the Global Church, the World Church. Third, the internet and the social media/new media can help people around the world learn about SCCs in Africa.<sup>812</sup>

In summary, we are challenged to learn to use social media to connect, network, mobilize SCC members as well as inform, form and educate them. Think of the power that could be unleashed if the 180,000 SCCs in Eastern Africa could be networked through the social media.

Some concrete examples:

- a. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website  
[www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

We started the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website in 2004 as the sister website of the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website that started in 1998. The SCCs Global Collaborative Website Coordinating Team includes 12 women and men, different nationalities, different religious denominations, different ethnic groups and different

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<sup>810</sup> John Siyumbu, "Talk on Online Resources Available to Evangelizers," at the Formation Meeting on "Evangelizing in Cyberspace," Blessed John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams, Maryknoll Assembly Hall, Nairobi, Kenya, 17 January, 2013.

<sup>811</sup> A concrete example is on 15 August, 2013 I participated in an online Video Conference Call on Google Hangout including an accompanying audio conversation with the Marianist Lay Formation Initiative (MLFI) whose members are scattered through the United States. I facilitated a training session on "Learning from African SCCs' Community Building Experiences." The background reading was "Examples of Demonstrations, Role Plays, Questions and Exercises on the Meaning and Importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa" (pages 237-246 of [Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa](#)).

<sup>812</sup> See the numerous examples in Joseph Healey, "Promoting SCCs via the Internet" in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton, editors. *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*. Orbis Books, 2005 and Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, pp. 177-187. Available as an Ebook.

ages. This global networking website for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) worldwide shares SCCs contacts information, events, materials, articles, reports and news for each of the six continents: Africa (16 countries), Asia (six countries), Europe (five countries), Latin America (three countries), North America (two countries) and Oceania (one country).

The Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team includes seven Africans from Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia and one expatriate missionary based in Nairobi, Kenya. We regularly consult SCCs Coordinators at the diocesan and parish levels.

The Africa Continent Section includes a lot of continent-wide material (35 entries as of 8 May, 2016) and specific national material from the Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya (35 entries as of 8 May 2016), Malawi, Rwanda, Nigeria, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe so far. It contains many articles, reports, Case Studies, stories, talks and other resource materials on SCCs in Africa that can be useful to SCC practitioners in the field, researchers and writers.

The online, up-to-date Joomla Content Management System (CMS) Counter statistics lists the number of hits (visits) that each article and event has received on the right hand side. In our ongoing evaluation these statistics are very valuable to assess the effectiveness and influence of different parts of the website. All hits (visits) are of 8 May, 2016.

The overall most popular article is the [“1961-2015 Timeline in the History and Development of Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in Africa Especially Eastern Africa”](#) that has 7279 [809] hits (visits). This timeline has proven very useful to many people and is quoted in books, articles, reports and talks.

This is followed by [“The Role of Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in the Implementation of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa”](#) that has 5553 hits (visits), [“Applying the Eight National Priority Concerns of SCCs in America to the Catholic Church Context in Africa”](#) has 4101 hits (visits) and [Checklist of 14 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in Africa Today](#) has 4274 hits (visits). The most popular article right now is [Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa](#) that was first posted in May, 2012 and has 3609 hits (visits). The most popular Archive Event is “Recently we analyzed the data...” 4637 hits (visits).

Other features on the website are: Academia.edu<sup>813</sup> (29 papers as of 8 May 2016 including:

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<sup>813</sup> The research questions or keywords entered into the Search Engines that link to academia.edu reveal the specific interests of inquiring people such as: “The role of the chairman of a Small Christian Community.” “Small Christian Communities in Africa.” “What is theological empowerment of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church?” “How to influence people to join in the meeting of Small Christian Community?” “Ethio publicly SCC video.” “Small Christian Community structure.” “Development and management of SCCs in parishes.” “AMECEA bishops Small Christian Communities.” “Domesticism in African theology.” “Nairobi Kenya Christian community.” “Joseph Healey Small Christian Communities.” “African ecclesiology.” “Catholic men vocation in East Africa.” “Small Christian Communities by AMECEA.” Challenges facing Small Christian Communities today.” “Small Christian Communities in Catholic Church Botswana.”

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"Sharing Gospel in Small Christian Communities." "History of St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Church Regiment Parish." "St. Agata Catholic Church in Nairobi." "Buleya banned from Baptist fellowship." "Small Christian Community Chairperson's Speech." "How KCCB has promoted theology in Africa." "The family of God in the light of African Christian Theology." "Training and research job opportunities in the nine AMECEA countries." What is special about the first born or first fruit in biblical and African cultural contexts? "What does the Catholic Church teach on empowerment of Small Christian Communities?" "The AMECEA Study Conference on "Deeper Evangelization in the Third Millennium" took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in July, 2002." "Supreme being by Sukuma Bujora." "Soul in myth narrated from the Sukuma." "Small Christian Communities leading in Catholic Mass." "CV of Fr. Titus Amigu." "Factors to consider when writing magazines about Small Christian Community." KCCB Lenten Campaign theme 2016!" "Malula lay ministry." Bujora books research on Sukuma by Fr..." "PMC Catholic Diocese of Kakamega." "Small Christian Community Africa...how many families." "Joseph Healey, Basic Christian Communities." "The richness and complexity of contemporary African ecclesiologies in Uganda." "Vatican II and Small Christian Communities." "Basic Christian Community as Means of Evangelisation." "Joseph G. Healey, Maryknoll Missionary." "African family in crisis AMECEA." "Small Christian Communities Annual General Meeting." "How to write more minutes for Lenten Campaign for Small Christian Community." "Christian advice for discordant couples." "Small Christian Communities NJ." "Examples of local Christian community in Kenya." "History of my local Christian community in Kenya." Discuss RCEA Ushirika Church, Eldoret." "Origin of Small Christian Communities." Relationship between Small Christian Communities and Lay Movements and Associations in the Parish." "Basic Christian Community in Latin America and Uganda." "7 Lures in Small Christian Community." "Research on marriage and pastoral ministry in Africa." "How do BCCs or Small Christian Communities in Catholic Church celebrate Galilee feast on Easter Monday?" "The parable of the two brothers Tanzanian story." "Small Christian Communities are a new way of being/becoming church in Africa today; give five concrete reasons." "How to promote Youth Small Christian Communities." "Role of the church in empowerment of Small Christian Communities economically in Catholic Churches." "How can Small Christian Communities promote pastoral conversion." "Vatican 2 Small Christian Communities." "Relationship between Small Christian Communities and lay apostolic movements and associations." "A biblical approach to marriage and family Africa pdf download." "How to manage Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church in Kenya." "Eastern Deanery AIDS program community health volunteers." "Sukuma sayings and their meaning pdf." "Sukuma oral narrative." "pdf collaborative ministry in the context of inculturation." "Activities of Basic Christian Communities." "Researches of Sukuma language." "pdf za methali za Wasukuma." "Challenges of Small Christian Community." "In Kenyan context importance in using prayer and faith reflection in a local community." "Research done on traditions and customs among Sukuma people." "Small Christian Communities pastoral concerns." "Origin of Small Christian Communities in Catholic Church ppt." "What is Small Christian Communities in Catholic Church in Africa ppt." "Google books, African ecclesiology." "SCCs as a New Way of Being Local Church."

On a random day such as 11 January, 2016 inquiries came from Germany, India, Italy, Philippines, South Africa and USA. On 6 February, 2016 inquires came from India, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa.

[Small Christian Communities as Domestic Church in the Context of African Ecclesiology](#) leading with 986 all time page views (hits or visits),

“Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa” (200),

“Three Case Studies of African Christology among the Sukuma People in Tanzania” (184),

“Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa in the Light of ‘The Joy of the Gospel’” (130),

“Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa” (130).

Frequency of access by countries: Kenya, United States, Italy, Tanzania, India, Philippines, Nigeria, Rwanda, United Kingdom, South Africa and Zambia.

Archives,<sup>814</sup> Book Reviews (15), Reports and Announcements), Calendar of Events, Ebooks (four), FAQ, Links to other SCCs Websites, Photo Gallery, SCC Polls, SCCs Resources (including Radio Programs), SCCs Stories Database, Search Engine, Videos [also on YouTube] and Presentations (eight), Vision and What’s New.

The first Ebook posted on the SCCs Website is the free Online Digital Version of the *Double Spearhead* Nos. 199-200 (2012) Book [Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of SCCs in Eastern Africa](#) published by AMECEA Gaba Publications -- CUEA Press in Eldoret, Kenya. This online version is updated every month with new statistics, quotations, stories and examples. The latest version of 8 May, 2016 has 11,440 hits (visits)<sup>815</sup> as of 8 May, 2016.

The power and influence of the internet and our SCC Website are seen in this email message from a Tanzanian Missionary of Africa Father Wilbert Gobbo, MAfr who is doing is research for a doctorate on the Social Trinity with a Case Study on Small Christian

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As of 11 February, 2016 “All-time Views” have come from: Kenya (586), United States (264), Italy (185), Tanzania (105), India (94), Philippines (66), Rwanda (49), United Kingdom (45), Nigeria (35), Zambia (34), Germany (29), South Africa (24), Australia (24), Zimbabwe (23), Canada (20), Malaysia (17) and Uganda (16).

The top search engines are Google and Bing.

<sup>814</sup> Through Joomla all past “Calendar of Events” items are automatically stored in the “Archives Section.” As of 29 January, 2016 there are 55 items.

<sup>815</sup> Combined with the 3609 hits (visits) directly to this Ebook via the Africa Continent Page of the SCCs Website, 130 page views on [Academia.edu](#) and 28 reads on [ResearchGate](#) makes a total of 15,207 hits (visits) as of 8 May, 2016. This Ebook is also accessed directly through links on other websites including libraries, archives, universities, institutional repositories like DSpace, ERepositories, search engines like Google Search, special web search engines like Google Scholar, social media platforms like Facebook, academic websites, individual websites and citations. A complete analysis is found on the Website Traffic Report on the Control Panel on the SCCs Website.

Communities in Tabora Archdiocese, Tanzania<sup>816</sup> at Heythrop College, University of London, England.<sup>817</sup>

Thank you a million for this information! I do not consider your email and the information as a "coincidence" but rather as a "God-incidence"! May the good Lord bless you and all your activities! Since yesterday I have been reading different things on the site [www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org) and more especially in your Ebook! It is really a treasure in the domain of Small Christian Communities!

The SCC Polls encourage participation<sup>818</sup> and interaction. The first poll began in April, 2009 and uses the statement -- **The best part of my Small Christian Community is...** -- followed by five choices that are taken from 444 important characteristics or features of SCCs. Based on research (surveys, questionnaires, interviews, visits to SCCs and conferences on SCCs) we identified these 444 important characteristics or features of SCCs around the world: 222 on the dynamics of SCCs and 222 on the activities of SCCs. We change the poll every two months. Tops is January – February, 2016 that had 305 votes. July -- August, 2010 and January -- February, 2014 had 233 votes.

The results (highest number of votes) of the first forty-one rounds are as follows:<sup>819</sup>

SCCs as a way of life. 86  
 Relationships. 85  
 Field hospital. 85  
 Connecting *Bible* to life.<sup>820</sup> 80  
 Strengthen each other in our faith. 77  
 Community of missionary disciples. 75  
 Sharing the **Word of God**. 75  
 Prays together for the needs of others. 67  
 Family Communities. 63  
 New model of church. 63  
 Proclaiming the **Good News of Jesus Christ**. 61

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<sup>816</sup> The exact title is: "Critique of the Trinitarian Social Model of Leonardo Boff: Small Christian Communities of the Archdiocese of Tabora, a Case Study."

<sup>817</sup> Wilbert Gobbo, email message to the author dated 1 May, 2013.

<sup>818</sup> For SCC members in Eastern Africa who do not use electronic devices such as Smart Phones, tablets and computers we poll them verbally and by paper surveys.

<sup>819</sup> Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 24 August, 2013, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/polls.html>

<sup>820</sup> It has been said that we should preach with the *Bible* in one hand and the newspaper in the other hand. This is based on the famous quotation of Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth: "Take your *Bible* and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your *Bible*." We can update this to say: We should preach with one eye on the *Bible* and the other eye on the BBC World News that can be found on the radio, TV and the internet that includes video clips. The SCCs Website has links to the BBC RSS FEEDS for African News.

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Training for SCC leaders. 59  
 Families support one another in times of need. 59  
 Faith sharing grounded in **scripture**. 57  
**Gospel**-centered faith. 57  
 Applying **Gospel** to our everyday life. 56  
 Breaking open the **Word of God**. 55  
 Network of SCCs. 55  
 Center of communion and outreach. 54  
 New way of being church. 54  
 Helps me to go deeper in my faith. 53  
 Networking Communities. 53  
 Spirit of belonging. 53  
 Practical action and service. 52  
 Sharing ideas and ways to evangelize. 52

It is interesting of these 25 top rated characteristics 16 are the activities of SCCs and nine are the dynamics of SCCs. Seven of the favorite activities are related to the *Bible*.

This information gives us a clear picture of the priorities, interests and activities of SCC members around the world. Results of Google Analytics surveys and Facebook surveys also help us to know and understand more about people interested in and involved in SCCs on the different continents. Visitors to the SCCs Website come from 81 countries/territories. The largest number of visitors comes from Kenya, United States, India, Philippines, United Kingdom and South Africa in that order.

As an example, the access to, and use of the website for the period 1- -31 December, 2015:

Language Sessions: % Sessions (by language, country, hits/visits, percentage)

1. en-us 339 72.90%
2. en-gb 48 10.32%
3. en 28 6.02%
4. de 8 1.72%
5. it-it 8 1.72%
6. de-de 6 1.29%
7. it 4 0.86%
8. fr 3 0.65%
9. pl 3 0.65%
10. es 2 0.43%

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) services such as Alexa and Attracta give information on how our SCCs Website is ranked in the most important search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing. This helps to increase our brand recognition, web traffic, etc. Helpful information is the top-ranked inbound links to <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>. This serves as a measure of our website's reputation. No. 1 is <http://www.Ebookbrowse.com>, No. 2 is <http://www.catholicweb.com>, No. 3 is <http://www.balancingact-africa.com> and No. 4 is <http://www.afriprov.org>.

As of 11 March, 2013: In entering “Small Christian Communities” in these three search engines, our SCCs Website ranks No. 1 on Google, Yahoo and Bing. Our SCCs Facebook Page ranks No. 5 on Bing, No. 9 on Yahoo and No. 17 on Google.

Some individual SCCs in Africa have their own websites, Facebook Pages and email mailing lists. This activity is growing fast.

- b. Small Christian Communities Facebook Pages and Groups<sup>821</sup>  
[www.Facebook.com/pages/Nairobi-Kenya/Small-Christian-Communities/289921983315](http://www.Facebook.com/pages/Nairobi-Kenya/Small-Christian-Communities/289921983315)

It is noteworthy that after China and India, Facebook is the third largest “nation” in the world – over 1.59 billion monthly active users. Latest worldwide research shows most of these people log into Facebook on a mobile device.

We started the Small Christian Communities Facebook Pages and Groups on 2 February, 2010. The overall goal of our SCCs Facebook Page is to be interactive and participatory with as much two-way sharing and exchange as possible. The Scripture motto of this Facebook Page is *Matthew* 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” One of the purposes of this social networking page is “to unite all Christians who may want to be members.” Some introductory comments were: “We invite you all to share your experiences as believers, pour forth your encouragement, and keep aflame the Gospel. Post a verse and we’ll all share. Just like early Christians used to do in their communities.” “Let us hope that this Facebook Page will help more young people to get involved in Small Christian Communities (SCCs).” After six years the page provides a wonderful history of SCCs and an important Archive/Record.

As of 8 May, 2016: Of the first 1,664 “likes” or friends (called the Facebook Fanpage) on the SCCs Facebook Page, 65.6% are male and 34.4% are female. 70.4% are in the 18-44-year-old age bracket. By country, the largest number of fans come from Kenya followed by United States, India, Germany, Tanzania, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, Poland and Philippines in that order. By city, the largest number of fans comes from Nairobi followed by Mombasa, Nakuru, Dar es Salaam, Kampala, Nyeri, Lagos and Eldoret in that order.

People post a wide variety of comments on the Facebook Page both under “Notifications” and under “Messages.” Request for prayers for people who are sick or who have died. Spiritual reflections. Spiritual reading. *Bible* reflections.<sup>822</sup> Visits to, and activities of, particular SCCs. Requests for information on SCCs. Financial reports. Reminders of updates on the SCCs Website. The wall is particularly active during SCCs courses, workshops, meetings and retreats. An interesting part of the SCCs Facebook Page is the

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<sup>821</sup> This is documented in Francis Njuguna, “Small Christian Communities Now Meet on Facebook,” *The Seed*, December, 2012 (Volume 24, No. 12, Issue 252), retrieved on 28 December, 2012 <http://www.consolatamissionarieskenya.co.ke/?p=468>

<sup>822</sup> Feedback indicates that some people like to read the reflections on the Scripture Readings of the following Sunday so that they participate in various Sunday services well prepared and well informed. However many people walk into church “cold.”

“Share” Feature where the original message is shared/passed on to other Facebook fans and internet groups.

Some comments on the wall of the Facebook Page during the first few months. “At the end of the [Second African Synod](#) of Bishops held in Rome, the *Message to the People of God* uses the African proverb that goes: *An army of well-organized ants can bring down an elephant*. SCCs are an army of well-organized Christians who can help alleviate evil in society.” “The SCCs can be an avenue for environmental care. ‘Going green’ has been a slogan in many commercials. SCCs can make their neighborhood ‘go green.’” “SCCs should play the role of reminding our government leaders and appeal to them for security of life and alleviating poverty. Life is sacred and must be protected and secured. Let’s stand up and talk without fear about the lack of good order. If we don’t talk, who will talk?” “Today’s challenge: How do we use the Social Media/New Media for evangelization especially in Small Christian Communities?”<sup>823</sup>

“Our new Facebook Page look makes the page look more social and the graphic support is just excellent especially for posting our SCC meetings photos. “It is interesting to see the many people posting on this page and telling us about their SCCs. It is time we created SCC Twinning networks.” “Our new Facebook Page look makes the page look more social and the graphic support is just excellent especially for posting our SCC meetings photos.” “I like the Dandora Youth SCCs in Nairobi and their commitment to evangelization. These are young people evangelizing themselves and others.” “Our SCCs in St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi will have an outdoor Stations of the Cross on Good Friday starting at 8:30 a.m. and walking through the whole parish to reach the main church at 12 Noon.” “May our SCCs spread the Good News of the Risen Christ.”

Then in the past seven years here is a sample of the wide variety of comments:

“Let us celebrate with the Zambian members of our SCCs Class on Zambia's exciting 1-0 win over Ghana in the semi-finals and sympathy to the Ghana supporters.” “Thank you for taking this SCCs Class photo at Tangaza University College in Nairobi and posting it on our SCCs Facebook Page.” “I feel a terrible loss this evening for the death of our brother Francis Mwangi. He was an active and jolly member of our Small Christian Community at Riruta Parish in Nairobi. May God rest his soul in peace.”

"SCCs in Hekima Secondary School in Bukoba, Tanzania that started in 1992. As of 2012 there eight SCCs of Catholic girls and one SCC of girls of different Protestant denominations. These SCC members met every Monday to read and reflect on the *Bible* passages related to formation of youth and liturgical themes. These students are very active in participating in various religious activities and helping one another."

“Today in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania I participated in the Saints Cosmas and Damian SCC of Medical Students at Muhumbili Hospital. About 30 members shared reflections on today's Gospel. These kinds of Youth SCCs are very important. “

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<sup>823</sup> SCCs Facebook Page retrieved on 1 November, 2011

<http://www.facE-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

“I arrived in Jinja, Uganda one month ago and right now I am inserting myself into the program. I already started work at Holy Cross Lake View Senior Secondary School. We have about 900 students. They are soon closing. I intend to begin the SCCs next term when they come back. Already the idea is received well by the chaplain of the school.”

“The new SCCs book good news for us. We will make good use of it here in building faith sharing communities in the townships of South Africa where they are stricken by poverty, crime, unemployment and faith crisis.”

“SCCs started in the Archdiocese of Lagos, Nigeria in 1977 through the effort of the priests at Regina Mundi Catholic Church. However by late 1980s the SCCs nosedived. In 1992 they became alive again.”

“University Students SCC gathering in Bochum, Germany: We now have five meetings since February, 2012. The attendance averages six but we are about nine students. The meeting takes place in the Church premise at 7 p.m. on Thursdays. Our initial meetings were every three weeks. Recently the group decided to meet every week and I encouraged them to do.”

“The July, 2012 issue of the *National Mirror* (monthly newspaper of the Kenya Catholic Bishops Conference) on page 13 has a full page spread of eight photographs of SCCs in Nairobi. Can be seen on online in the "Photo Gallery" Section of the SCCs Website at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/photo-gallery.html>.

“On the CORO FM Radio Program in Nairobi on Sunday, 1 July the hour devoted to ‘Mwaki’ (Gikuyu name for SCCs) is ‘Civic Education in Kenya Before the 2013 General Election’ (Swahili is *jukumu la kuelimisha raia*). Please tell your friends to listen.”

“Father Aloysius Bukonya, AJ, the Rector of the Apostles of Jesus Major Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya, writes: ‘The SCCs at our seminary have already started [for this semester]. Last Thursday we met and prayerfully reflected on the Gospel reading of the 19th Sunday B. I am a regular participant with the SCC of St. Monica. This is my base SCC, but I feel indebted to visit other SCCs. We start our prayer meetings at 6.30 am and end at 7.15 am when we move to the main church for Mass. Please come and support this new way of being church any Thursday.’”

“At our Local Church in Bungoma, Western Kenya when hundreds were confirmed, the bishop encouraged all Christians to take SCC activities seriously as they form the backbone for the growth and development of our Faith.”

“I am glad to be a member of an SCC. I not only grow spiritually but also socially, emotionally, morally and academically. Our SCC is about brotherhood and sisterhood. It is the most appropriate group to join while in college and I urge all Christian youth to join a SCC. We also need to choose groups and friends wisely. Join and stick to a SCC and God will take an upper hand in your life.”

“Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr, Bishop Emeritus of Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi and one of the founding fathers of SCCs in the AMECEA Region, died on Monday, 24 September, 2012. May he rest in peace. One Malawian priest said: "Surely, Kalilombe will be remembered locally and internationally as a visionary bishop and dedicated African

theologian. He endeavored to see the Local Church grow and mature so as to live the life of communion and to be self-reliant, self-propagating and self-ministering. I am very confident that the new way of being Church which he championed in implementing the Vatican Council II's ecclesiology of communion will be revitalized by the new position he will acquire in heaven of interceding for us who living in 'a new way' in the Church."

"On 13 October 2012 we had a Day of Recollection at the Capuchin Novitiate with some Youth SCC members from Good Shepherd Parish in Lusaka, Zambia. These youth came from St. Vincent's SCC. The parish is run by the Missionaries of Africa. The theme of the recollection was Mary and the rosary bearing in mind that the month of October is the month dedicated to Our Lady. The animator was Friar Augustine Mwape, a Capuchin priest and a former student at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya. The church is indeed alive in Zambia."

"I'm a mainline Protestant pastor but this looks great...can I join?"

"Here are some concrete suggestions and ideas on how Small Christian Communities (SCCs) can emphasize and promote the 2012-2013 Year of Faith in the Catholic Church: Through SCCs we can share among members the various pillars of our faith such as the Creed, meaning of the saints, Mass and life after death. We can read and analyze additional *Bible* study materials after every meeting."

"To increase interest in our SCCs Website the 'BBC RSS Feeds for African News' is now permanently on the bottom left hand side of the 'Africa Page.'"  
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa.html>

"As we continue to hear of war, tribalism, violence and death in Africa (DRC, Egypt, Kenya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and so on) may our SCC members pray extra hard that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, transform hearts and minds to bring about a new lasting peace this Christmas."

"Hello, guys. Due to the death of Brian Jnr., brother to Vicky, Linet and Nicole in St. Gonza SCC phase 2 in Nairobi, we meet every day at their home, near the Co-op Bank for prayers and to console the family @ 6pm. Let's us keep Jnr and the family in prayers. God bless."

"How do you find out what JNNKs mean to the local folks? I invited several folks from the Kamati Tendaji of the parish council over for dinner in the rectory here in Dar es Salaam. The M/kiti, who is a really fine man, said that JNNKs are a good thing because that way the "Church" (meaning the hierarchical, institutional church) can reach the lay people more easily and tell them what they should be doing! It's occurs to me that that's probably the operative understanding for a lot of people. But how can the JNNKs become what they're meant to be?"

Alphonse Omolo ([alphonseomolo@gmail.com](mailto:alphonseomolo@gmail.com)) has written a very interesting message to Members of the FISH (that originated in Kisumu, Kenya) and the FISH Alumni saying: "I would like to invite you to join an online group to evangelize one another and the world just the way we do in FISH group or other SCCs but now using the cyberspace. I am aware that most of the current members or Alumni members are spread nationally, regionally

and even internationally, but all can benefit from an online Skype *Bible* sharing meetings just as it is done in the FISH and our ‘*Duondes*’ and ‘*Tienges*’ (SCCs)."

“The Official Launch of the 2013 Kenya Lenten Campaign (like a huge “Peace Rally” to prepare for the General Elections on 4 March, 2013) will take place on Saturday, 9 February, 2013 at Nyayo Stadium in Nairobi, Kenya starting with a concelebrated Mass at 10 a.m. We hope many SCC Members will participate.”

Father Harrison Yaa in Mombasa Archdiocese, Kenya writes: "At our Annual General Meeting the 80 priests were quite positive on the pastoral activities and the current performance of our pastoral team in the archdiocese. All the priests agreed that we have to do a lot of training in our parish SCCs."

“Another good example of the SCCs' involvement in justice and peace in Africa is that SCC members in Kenya are volunteering to be Observers (Monitors) in the 4 March, 2013 General Elections in Kenya.”

“By using the three steps of "See," "Judge" and "Act" the SCC members can go deeper in analyzing the key Kenyan election issues and try to elect leaders with good morals and integrity (as stated in the "Kenya Lenten Campaign Booklet").”

Belza Elia Ramos in San Antonio, Texas, USA writes: “In this Year of Faith and following Pope Benedict’s call to a New Evangelization in the Catholic Church, a group of parishioners at St. Brigid is in the process of starting a School of Evangelization using the St. Andrew Pastoral Project model. These parishioners have participated in two of the courses of the St. Andrew School of Evangelization on “New Life” and “Emmaus.” Members of our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are involved.”

“The Installation Mass of Pope Francis will take place at St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican (Rome, Italy) on Tuesday, 19 March, 2013. May our SCC members around the world watch and participate using our TVs, radios, laptops, tablets, cellphones, etc.”

“The members of St. Francis SCC in St. John the Evangelist Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya clapped and jumped up and down when they heard about the name of the new pope -- Pope Francis.”

“As an example of practical action our special Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team Fund (*Mfuko wa Jumuiya* in Swahili) has helped Samuel Mbiti of St. Francis Assisi SCC in Kitui Diocese, Kenya to buy one cow for ploughing to help the self-reliance of his farming project.”

“Today I assisted to preside over the elections of new officials at St. Anthony Abbot Small Christian Community at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Nairobi. The elections of the officials were mainly unanimous, with the top leadership (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) going to women while the men took up assistant positions. It is interesting how the basic church in the neighborhood continues to take shape with women at the center stage of leadership.” And a response: “This is an interesting shift and shows how SCCs are evolving as a ‘new way of being church.’ I have just finished correcting the SCCs Course Papers at Tangaza University College in Nairobi. A number of the papers show men in Kenya resisting

women in leadership roles. These men have to be challenged to understand equality and democracy in leadership at the SCCs level.”

From RENEW International: “What a wonderful opportunity for sharing across cultures!” (on a Skype Video Chat of four children, two Franciscan Religious Sisters of the Immaculate and one SCC lay leader from the *Amani na Wema* ["Peace and Goodness"] Home in St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi, Kenya sharing with 37 children and two teachers from the Fifth Grade at St. Patrick's School, Chatham, New Jersey, USA on 30 April, 2013).

Wilbert Gobbo, MAfr in Abidjan, Ivory Coast writes:

“THE COPERNICAN ECCLESIAL REVOLUTION: THE SCCs PARADIGM SHIFT

1. St. Cyprian: “Outside the Church there is no salvation” (*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*)!
2. Karl Rahner: “Outside Christ there is no salvation” (*Extra Christum nulla salus*)!
3. Edward Schillebeeckx: “Outside the world there is no *salvation*” (*Extra mundum nulla salus*)!
4. I believe where SCCs are active, a Christian can feel that living “outside the SCC there is no salvation” (*extra SCC nulla salus*) and that where there is the SCC there God is present (*Ubi SCC, ibi Deus est*)! A Christian who participates actively in the life of the SCC is “not far from the Kingdom”!

SCCs are the present and the future of the Church. According to many thinkers, the SCCs entail the rebirth of the Church (*ecclesiogenesis*<sup>824</sup>). The SCCs are the reinvention of the Church. The SCCs are a new way of being Church. The SCCs are a new model of the Church. I have an insight (a “startling strangeness”) that the SCCs can be considered as a *Locus theologicus* just like the *loci theologici* of Scripture (*Scriptura*) and Apostolic Tradition (*Traditio Apostolica*)! I am very much interested in doing research on SCCs!”

“Today I fly to Rome and then on to the USA. I am carrying a packet of rosaries (including the World Mission Rosary) of members of my St. Kizito SCC here in Nairobi. I will attend the General Audience of Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica Square on Wednesday, 8 May and hold up these rosaries to be St. by our new Pope.”

From Dela Caesar in Sunyani, Ghana: “Here in Sunyani the SCCs concept has not yet been fully developed. They are still practicing the larger type of SCCs, but gradually I am sharing the idea with the pastoral team.”

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<sup>824</sup> This is the theme of Leonardo Boff's important book *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*. In commenting on the CEBs in Latin America, Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga stated that they have to reinvent themselves in the light of the new historical, political, social and economic realities of Latin America. American Maryknoll missionary priest and theologian Father Steve Judd, MM says that “this is a different moment, a transitional moment for the CEBs in Latin America. There is no cookie cutter model. We need plasticity in the parish structure.” Conversation with the author, Maryknoll, NY, 16 December, 2014.

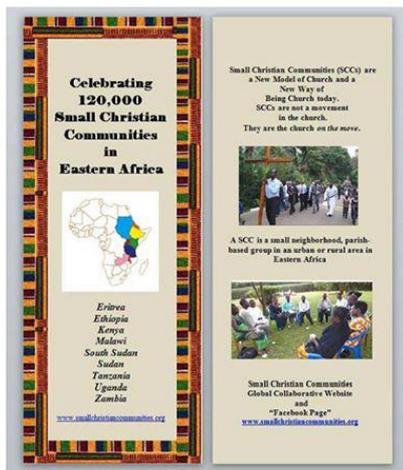
Applied to Africa and the whole world, SCCs are challenged to reinvent/reinvigorate/renew themselves in the context of new local and global realities. This is a key part of ongoing contextualization and inculturation.

Sharing from the St. Gonzaga Gonza SCC Youth Group (Nairobi, Kenya) Facebook Page: "Thanks a lot guyz for making PENTECOST FEAST a success. We celebrated the birth of the early church and more especially the birth of Small Christian Communities. As a St. Gonzaga Gonza SCC member I thank you for the role you've played in building it and growing it. Just know that it is your responsibility to make Gonza grow more. Therefore ask yourself what role you've played to make our *jumu* better. A simple phone call/visit to a 'lost' member can go a long way. It's in the simple things we do that shows how much we care for our brethren. Therefore what will you do? Apart from that there's a prayer request from our colleague Janice. Her mom is very sick, therefore keep her in prayer."

From Michael Meyer: "The next Sunday is the feast of the Holy Trinity. In Bolivia it was the national day for the CEBs. God is communion, communication – that's the basic idea of the CEBs."

Sharing from the St. Gonzaga Gonza SCC Youth Group (Nairobi, Kenya) Facebook Page: "On a sad note, Janice's mom passed away on Thursday 23 May and will be laid to rest this Friday 31 May. The least we can do is to ensure that we send representatives to be there at the burial. Fare to and from Chuka is 1,200 Kenyan shillings per person. Feel free to give your contributions by Thursday."

"The RENEW Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Gala in West Orange, New Jersey, USA was a big success. Here is the SCCs bookmark that was given to everyone at the dinner. The Powerpoint Presentation that ran all evening on a continuous loop is entitled "PP Presentation on "SCCs in Eastern Africa" at the RENEW Gala in West Orange, NJ, USA on 6 June, 2013" and can be found under "United States of America" under "North America" at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/north-america/united-states-of-america/245-pp-presentation-on-sccs-in-eastern-africa-at-the-renew-gala-in-west-orange-nj-usa-on-6-june-2013.html>



"Next Sunday, the 7th of July, is the Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time and the Gospel reading is *Luke* 10:1-12, 17-20. Our online Skype SCC will be meeting this Tuesday to reflect upon this Gospel reading. Please join us via Skype, leave us your

comments/reflections on Facebook below, or email Alphonse Omolo at: [alphonceomolo@gmail.com](mailto:alphonceomolo@gmail.com).”

“Prayer is important for SCCs members. In the SCC Polls on our SCCs Website <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/> since we started in April, 2009 the third highest vote has been for: ‘Prays together for the needs of others.’ Let us pray for peaceful elections in Zimbabwe on 31 July, 2013.”

New book in English: Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church*, Volume 2, "Theology of One World" series of Missio Aachen, Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2013. It has five chapters on Africa including Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects;” Joseph Healey, “Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa” and Pius Rutechura, “The Pastoral Vision of Basic Christian Communities/Ecclesial Communities.”

From Frans Wijzen: "The bishops in the Netherlands chose SCCs as their priority for the Lenten Campaign."

From Irene Wilson in Melbourne, Australia: "There are some signs of new SCC growth coming out of Perth, the capital city of Western Australia. It is being driven by one Fr. Paschal Kearney, an Irish born priest who was in Nigeria and Sierra Leone for many years, now involved with the Adult Catholic Faith Formation Center in Perth. Therese Denny who works in the Broome Diocese up north did a Masters on this very subject in New Orleans with our friends there. And here in Melbourne I perceive a new flush of groups, perhaps still in the early days of formation -- those interested in participating would be after renewal and reform in the church."

“A valuable lectionary-based faith sharing resource is: *Fall Quest 2013: A Reflection Booklet for Small Christian Communities*. This is a Sunday Scripture-based reflection booklet for use by those who gather weekly in Small Christian Communities. Each weekly unit offers the elements for a complete small community session.”

“Here at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA Father Bob Pelton and Father Joe Healey are working on plans for a live, online, virtual interactive International Video Conference on “Small Christian Communities: The Church on the Move Around the World” involving 50 people in 18 countries. It will be a three hour conference that uses WebEx Meetings Technology and is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, 12 February, 2014. Suggestions are welcome.”

Someone wrote from Nairobi, Kenya: "I am getting more involved with the SCCs. I find that they are so dominated by elderly women that the men and the youth do not want to be involved." Any suggestions and ideas?

Report from Mrs. Joanne Miya in Mwanza, Tanzania. "In Tanzania we would appreciate if you could also share some of the challenges facing SCCs (JNNK in Swahili) especially for our folks coming to Tanzania. I wish the JNNK were all like the stories in the books, but they are not. In some parishes of Tanzania the JNNK are experiencing poor attendance because they are being seen as mere instruments the Catholic Church uses to

collect financial contributions (*michango* – contributions for ordinations, building cathedrals, for seminaries, development funds, to pay for meetings of the bishops, etc.). The parishes or bishop assign a set amount to be raised by each *jumuiya* and before one collection is finished another one is being asked for. This is a major reason that many people have stopped attending JNNK. Also in many parishes you cannot take a leadership position in a JNNK if you are not married in the church so it eliminates a lot of good people from ever being in leadership. They elect leaders who have all the necessary *cheti* but not necessarily the best people for the job. This is the reality that our lay missionaries walk into when they join a JNNK. So it is important that they know the whole story. JNNK have great potential and I'm sure that things vary from parish to parish but this has been our experience, especially in the Archdiocese of Mwanza where we all work."

We want to make this SCCs Facebook Page a forum for discussion on SCCs topics. Chripin Onyango from Kenya writes: "Many people tend to leave SCCs because some of their pastors are using them as a means of getting their own money. Some Xtians say that SCCs have changed to be groups for pastors to use to enrich themselves. And I think that's why most men do not attend SCCs. So what is your take on this matter?"

"The Annual Walk in Support of the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Otunga flagged off at approximately 8 a.m. on Saturday, 28 September, 2013 at the Holy Family Basilica, Nairobi, Kenya. Nine members of St. Kizito SCC sponsored Annastasia S. Muli with a donation of 2,300/= Kenya Shillings (approximately \$4)."

"SCC members in Kenya are invited to participate in the "October Missionary Month"<sup>825</sup> Activity Calendar." For 2013 this includes the following:

1st – 6th October: WEEK OF PRAYER  
 7th -- 13th October: WEEK OF SUFFERING  
 14th – 20th October: WEEK OF SOLIDARITY  
 21st -- 27th October: WEEK OF THANKSGIVING

The highlight will be World Mission Sunday on 20 October, 2013 with the theme: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18 –20). You are invited to share your experiences and reflections on this SCCs Facebook Page."

"Here is an interesting pastoral exchange:

Writer No 1: "These small groups [SCCs], breaking open the word of God in more consistent and extended ways every time they meet, help believers experience the power of the word through reflection, discussion, personal sharing and common prayer. Making *Lectio Divina* a part of small group sharing can be a way to link Catholics to experiences of contemplation and adoration, as the Word leads them to fuller awareness and acceptance of God's action in their lives."

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<sup>825</sup> October was chosen as a missionary month to commemorate the discovery of the American continent that opened a new page in the history of evangelization. Columbus Day that is annually on the second Monday of October remembers Christopher Columbus' arrival to the Americas on 12 October, 1492.

Writer No. 2: "Question: From your experience, is *Lectio Divina* more a time for listening to, receiving and sharing how the Word is experienced by anyone individual, or does it include a discussion of faith issues that might surface? My concern is that the gatherings might become a means of 'churchy' discussions and not a listening to, and sharing of, the experience of God's Word in one's life. Any thoughts how we might address this potential conflict? Maybe it is not even a conflict!"

Writer No 1: "You raise a very important question that I have reflected on and researched extensively.

The weekly (ideally) "lectionary-based faith sharing" of a SCC should have a prayerful, reflective style/quality/spirit. This is enhanced/deepened by the *Lectio Divina* style or approach. But what can often happen is that this prayerful, reflective style changes into a discussion group style. I can tell when this is happening by the tone of voice of the speaker and the words used. It happened several times during our four week Pilot Project in July, 2013. We left our faith sharing and went into discussing pastoral issues in the parish. Then, exactly as you say, a "churchy" discussion takes over rather than a listening to, and sharing of, the experience of God's Word in one's life.

The key is that the facilitator has to bring the small group back "on track." This is why training the facilitators in how to lead the group and in basic group dynamics is so important. The facilitator has to regularly remind his or her group (and especially new members) of the prayerful, reflective style of faith sharing that they want to model.

What works for us here in Eastern Africa is that **AFTER** the "lectionary-based faith sharing" on the Gospel of the following Sunday is over, we might have a short discussion of pastoral issues in the SCC and parish, for example, a young couple wants to have their baby baptized."

**NOTE:** Please add your own comments below.

1. "It takes a good accompaniment by the pastor."
2. If the "lectionary-based faith sharing" in a SCC is weekly, it is richer and deeper following the readings of the liturgical cycle.

"Seven representatives of Ngong Diocese, Kenya participated in the 2013 Lumko East Africa Course: three catechists, two religious sisters, one laywoman and one priest.<sup>826</sup> They are planning a follow-up Training the Trainers (TOT) SCCs Workshop in early 2014. The three representatives from the Ngong Diocesan Pastoral Office wrote: "It is through applying the pastoral methodology like the Seven Steps, Group Response, Look-Listen-Love and Life-Bible Notes that we internalize the Word of God and solve situations affecting the life of a Small Christian Community."

"The AMECEA Countries have starting preparing for the Extraordinary World Synod of Bishops on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization," to

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<sup>826</sup> Kenyan diocesan priest Father Edward Mashua said that the workshop was "of great assistance to me and my parish of Mulot" that presently has 70 SCCs. Conversation with the author in Ngong, Kenya on 15 April, 2014.

take place in Rome from 5-19 October, 2014. We are working on the answers to the questions at the end of the eight-page "Lineamenta." The Vatican has asked national bishops' conferences around the world to conduct a wide-ranging poll of Catholics asking for their opinions on church teachings on family, marriage, contraception, same-sex marriage and divorce. Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri, secretary general of the Vatican's Synod of Bishops, asked the conferences to distribute the poll "immediately as widely as possible to deaneries and parishes so that input from local sources can be received." Our SCCs can give their comments and input through their parishes and directly to Rome."

"We ask prayers for six African members of the Holy Cross Congregation who will be taking their perpetual profession of vows and diaconate ordination in Kampala, Uganda on 4/5 January, 2014. They are alumni of our SCCs Class at Tangaza University College in Nairobi including Alex Okidi, CSC and Francis Mukasa, CSC. Wanajumuiya, oyee!"

"We describe our weekly SCCs meetings as 'lectionary-based faith sharing.' Practically, during this just closed 'Year of Faith,' how has our faith as a small community deepened during the past year? How have we supported and inspired each other in living our Christian faith and sharing it with others? How have we reflected on the challenges of our daily lives in the light of the Sunday Gospel readings?"

"The lectionary-based *Bible* sharing in our St. Mary's SCC in Lusaka, Zambia was so enriching. We realized that Zambian youth today are so busy preparing for Christmas without understanding the meaning of Advent and what to do during this period. In fact, preparations for the coming Christmas celebrations have hijacked the meaning of this Advent season. A challenge to us all is: Do we understand the meaning of Advent and how can we take Advent to the secular world?"

"Archbishop Tarcisius Ziyaye opened the SCCs Workshop with a talk on 'SCCs as the AMECEA Pastoral Priority.' It was touching to know that he was part of the Lilongwe Diocesan Mini-Synod as a seminarian in 1973-1975 when the SCCs were established in Malawi."

"On Christian Eve I joined three leaders of our St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin Parish, Nairobi, Kenya to bring gifts of flour, sugar and cooking fat to five needy families in the local area."

"Prayers, please, for our course, "Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today," that begins at two theological colleges in Nairobi, Kenya on 8 January, 2014. We will begin by asking all SCCs to pray for 'Peace in South Sudan.' Let us be thankful that our bishops and church leaders in Eastern Africa see the value of SCCs courses in our seminaries and theological institutes."

From Amie Ilva Tatem in New York City, USA: "The *Bible* Study (primary group) should, I believe, be in the Church, as a weekly offering. I know of one Lutheran church in Manhattan (St. Peter's) that does *Bible* Study & dinner. Anyone is welcome. Could we be so creative? Home groups could branch off from the primary Church group. In Manhattan, with the multitude of Catholic churches....where is the *Bible* Study...perhaps in one or two. Rare. As the article points out, with church closures, shortages of priests and nuns...the laity (deacons...including women deacons) will be used more. Could this be a message from God?"

“How are our SCCs celebrating the great missionary feast of the Epiphany on 5 January, 2014? We begin the year by celebrating that” all nations shall come to God’s light.” This can be the annual celebration of Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) Day. Please post reports of what you are doing?” Some answers:

1. In the Shared Homily at the Maryknoll Society House in Nairobi, Kenya we referred to the missionary outreach of SCCs to needy people, to the homeless and to those Pope Francis calls “the marginated and those on the periphery of society.” “Periphery” is not a geographical or locational word – as in far out in the rural area or in the boondocks. It can be at the “center” – meaning in the middle of a city. It is where the *anawim*, the especially needy and vulnerable people are living, or better, surviving.
2. The homily at St. Austin’s Parish in Nairobi, Kenya emphasized the missionary spirit of the Feast of the Epiphany and encouraged SCC members to love one another and to help to poor.

“Here in Saint James Catholic Church, Moshono Parish, Arusha Archdiocese, Tanzania we have SCC meetings every Saturday at 6.30 a.m. in order to allow people to be free in the afternoon. It is also due to the fact many people are business people so they cannot make to attend *jumuiya* services in the evening. Today I had mass with St. Joseph the Worker SCC. This mass was intended to pray and ask God to journey with all the members, and to ask the gift of the Holy Spirit to lead and empower them throughout this new year 2014. *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo oyee!*”

“FACEBOOK is not just about socialization...it is rather a very important means for EVANGELIZATION.....especially the youth who are main stake holders of the same.”

“SCCs are the root of the church in Zambia and the world over. At St. Anthony of Christ the King Parish in Livingstone we meet every Sunday afternoon as young people for *Bible* sharing and other spiritual activities. May God bless all SCCs. If you are not going, give it a try. It’s interesting.”

"The SCC are the units that have the Word of God as the center. Around them the Christian families ‘learn to live ecclesial life and reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel’ (*EIA*, 89). So last Saturday 11 January, 2014 we reflected on the orphans and their problems. So at the end of our SCC meeting we decided to visit some orphanages in Arusha, Tanzania so today we went to visit *Kituo cha Afya* Orphanage supervised by a Catholic couple. We were like God-sent messengers. We were 69 members from different SCCs of our parish. The majority were women (35), 15 men and 10 children. Dear brothers and sisters, let us live the gospel in word and actions.”

“Thank you all for your prayers. Our wedding in Doonholm Parish in Nairobi was a big success.”

“Just gave a talk on YSCCs (Youth Small Christian Communities) to the Lusaka East Deanery, Zambia during a Leadership Workshop.”

“I am positive that all members of St Bakhita SCC are looking forward to tomorrow's SCCs class of training of trainers! See you!”

“From the Bishop-elect Moses Hamungole of Monze Diocese, Zambia: ‘Thank you so much for the message and for your friendship. As you know I will need your prayers and help to meet the challenges of building active Small Christian Communities. I am also aware that of the expectations of colleagues in the communications apostolate. Please, pray for me!’”

“Our International SCCs Webinar (Web Conference) went well. Getting the technology to work at our Nairobi Hub was a minor miracle. Ten representatives from Kenya and Tanzania (four laywomen, three laymen, two priests and one religious sister) participated. Many challenges and opportunities especially promoting Youth SCCs.”

“It is wonderful to be on the St. Isidore Small Christian Community Skype platform. Last week, this week and always, we have had wonderful and insightful sharing on the ensuing Sunday Gospel readings. The sessions have always reawakened in me the need to do more in my service to Christ and humanity. Thanks team St. Isidore and God bless. We meet again on Tuesday next week.”

Magazine Just Published in Nairobi, Kenya: “Small Christian Communities,” Dossier in *New People*, No. 149, March-April, 2014, 20- 26. Includes Laurenti Magesa, “The Joy of Community in Small Christian Communities;” Joseph Healey, “Pope Francis: SCCs: Word of God, Social Commitment, New Lay Services and Education in Faith;” and Joseph Healey, “The Role of the Youth in the SCCs.” Enjoy!

“Three scholarships are available to young people in Eastern Africa (committed young adults under 30 years old) to the three-week Lumko SCCs Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya in September, 2014. You are welcome to apply.”

From Beatrice Odera: "Consolata seminarians went to the Langata West Prison in Nairobi, Kenya and were able to talk to the prisoners on "2014 Kenyan Lenten Campaign" and shared with them the booklets as well. They also met the prison staff at the chapel where they had sufficient time to share with them the weekly topics and the booklets."

“As ‘follow-down’ to our 12 February, 2014 International SCCs Webinar, concerning our African Continent’s ‘Plan of Action’ we have added two young people to our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team: 28-year-old Kenyan Mr. Peter Kyalo (member of the St. Joseph SCC, Doonholm Parish, Nairobi), the Assistant Administrator of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, has joined the team especially for tech support. 22-year-old Zambian Miss Albina Chishimba Chishimba (member of St. Maximillian Kolbe YSCC, Cathedral of the Child Jesus Parish, Lusaka), the Vice Chairperson of the Zambia National Council for Catholic Youth (ZNCCY) has joined the team for outreach to youth especially in Zambia. Much of their SCCs ministry will be done online.”

Jumuiya ndogo ndogo, oyeeee!!!!!! Wanajumuiya, following the delegation I was given to help collect some money and gifts towards this year Lenten Campaign in Tangaza University College Nairobi towards supporting starving and suffering people in the Marsabit Region, we managed to collect Kenya Shillings. 2, 100. We presented it to the office and the receipt is with us. Thank you very much for your contributions and may God bless you all as

we go out to put into practice all that we have learned in class through Father Joseph Healey, *kijana wa zamani*, and the many visitors who shared with us their practical experience in the various SCCs. God bless us all.”

**Announcement:**

1 to 27 September, 2014  
Lumko East Africa SCCs Workshop  
Mary Ward Centre  
Nairobi, Kenya

For the invitation letter, application form and more information, please contact:  
Sister Ephigenia W. Gachiri IBVM (Coordinator)  
Email: [ephigachiri@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ephigachiri@yahoo.co.uk)

From Bishop Thomas Dabre of Pune, India: “I wish to thank you for the report of the Web Conference on SCC. I am so sorry that because of my own difficulties I could not participate in the conference. I am very happy that for so many years SCC work has been going on in different countries of the world.”

“SCC members in Kenya are praying for the repose of the soul of Archbishop Boniface Lele who died this week. He was the Emeritus Archbishop of Mombasa, Kenya and a very caring, pastoral bishop who supported SCCs very much.”

“On Sunday, 27 April, 2014 (two weeks from today) Popes John XXIII and John Paul II will be canonized saints in Rome. Please post your memories and reflections of these two great people on this Facebook Page. Are any SCCs named after them? How do they inspire SCCs members? Welcome.”

“In 2014 the monthly ‘*Mwaki*’ (Gikuyu for ‘SCC’) Radio Program on CORO FM (KBC) in Nairobi is focusing on ‘SCCs Promote the Pastoral Care of Family and Marriage.’ The 20 April, 2014 radio program had a panel of five SCC members talking about ‘helping marriages with problems.’ Also the *Miaki* (SCCs) in Kenya are invited to contribute to the Cardinal Otunga Beatification Fund.”

“Today, 25 April, is World Malaria Day (WMD). WMD is one of eight official global public health campaigns currently marked by the World Health Organization (WHO), along with World Health Day, World Blood Donor Day, World Immunization Week, World Tuberculosis Day, World No Tobacco Day, World Hepatitis Day and World AIDS Day. How are our SCCs in Africa involved in the campaign to eradicate malaria?”

From Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH: "Greetings from Mwanza, Tanzania where I participated in the Mission Awareness Committee (MAC) Meeting and Seminar at the Nyegezi Retreat House. My talk was on "SCCs and MAC." When I will arrive in my own Bukoba Diocese we have the meeting with Bishop Method Kilaini. We proposed a team of two Sisters, two priests and one layman to see how we can improve our SCCs and start MAC.”

“47 people participated in a Mwanza Metropolitan Workshop on the theme ‘Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Embrace the Word of God’ at the St. Dominic Pastoral Centre in Mwanza, Tanzania from 19 to 22 May, 2014. Participants included representatives from

the eight dioceses of the Lake Victoria Zone in northwestern Tanzania (Mwanza Archdiocese and the dioceses of Bukoba, Bunda, Geita, Kayanga, Musoma, Rulenge Ngara and Shinyanga): one archbishop, one bishop, 11 priests, 5 religious sisters, 21 laymen and 8 laywomen.”

“Congratulations to all the fans of the Kenya Harambee Stars National Football (Soccer) Team in our SCCs Courses and Workshops. They settled for a 1-1 draw with Comoros Islands in a 2015 African Cup of Nations qualifier on Friday, 30 May. This result was enough for them to progress into the second round of the qualifiers to be played at the end of July/beginning of August. Harambee Stars, oyee!”

At the request of some people we have revised and updated the

"1961-- 2015 Timeline in the History and Development of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Especially Eastern Africa"

on the SCCs Website. You can find it at the top of the Home Page as No. 1 under “Africa Continent” under “Africa.” The link is:

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/timeline.pdf>

“Today is the feast of the Holy Trinity. Many analogies exist to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Here is a modern one. Imagine the Father as the invisible CPU in a computer; the Son is the visible monitor and the manifestation of their deeds is the printed output. Where are we then? Of course, the blank paper that was willingly fed into the printer. If we subject ourselves to the will of the Trinity we will be transformed from emptiness to substance.”

Report from Bishop Method Kilaini after the Mwanza, Tanzania Metropolitan SCC Workshop in May, 2014: "Since I came back to Bukoba from Mwanza I have going around the parishes for pastoral visits. I can assure you that everywhere the SCCs were foremost in my activities and instructions."

“Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Workshop  
30 August, 2014 to 1 September, 2014  
Maryknoll Society House (near Lavington)  
Nairobi, Kenya

This workshop especially for young people will focus on two topics:

1. Increasing Online SCCs Networking.
2. Starting Youth SCCs in Eastern Africa.

On both Saturday, 30 August and Monday, 1 September we will meet from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Lunch is included. Your are welcome to participate in both days or just one day. Please tell other young people about this workshop. Welcome!”

“Am right in Lilongwe, Malawi and will attend the mass for the launch of the AMECEA Plenary on 16 July. Some bishops have begun arriving. The president of Malawi will give the opening speech. Parishes in Lilongwe have been appointed a bishop who will

celebrate one Sunday mass. Archbishop Ziyaye is encouraging the lay people to attend the opening of the AMECEA meeting.”

During the Zambia Episcopal Conference group discussion at the AMECEA Plenary in Malawi on the topic presented by Father Clement Majawa whose emphasis was on the role of family and Small Christian Communities, it was discussed that SCCs should be forums to share the main realities of life and society and not be a lecturer theatre. Christians should have the opportunity to evangelize to each other, share light moments such as birthdays, discuss real issues such as youth unemployment, violence and how they can curb certain vices of society. For it is in these SCCs that people should feel a sense of belonging hence SCCs being a pastoral necessity in Africa today for they make Africans feel at home.

From a priest in Rosary Church, Kowloon, Hong Kong: "I am giving your Ebook on 'SCCs in Eastern Africa' to the Nigerian community here. They don't have much access to news about the church anywhere in Africa. Now with the Ebola outbreak, they are postponing trips back home and worried about their families. Maybe your book will give them some clues about how to gather and support one another in prayer."

“During our Second Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA II) in Nairobi, Kenya. 6 --8 August, 2014 the Prayer Services and Masses focused on our deceased African theologians and African leaders whom we call our revered ancestors in Christ. We mentioned Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr, the Bishop of Lilongwe Diocese in Malawi who died in 2012, Bishop Christopher Mwoleka, the Bishop of Rulenge Diocese in Tanzania who died in 2002 and Cardinal Joseph Malula, the Archbishop of Kinshasa Archdiocese in DRC who died in 1989. All three were pioneers in developing SCCs in Africa.”

From Bishop Fritz Lobinger in Mariannhill, South Africa: "For me it was a bit shocking to hear how the population in all rural dioceses is dwindling, also in the area of my former diocese Aliwal North. School classrooms are getting empty because the families move away into the cities and churches are also getting empty. And I also hear that the priests are no longer as enthusiastic about Small Christian Communities as they were thirty years ago. The bishops know about the value of SCCs and try to promote them but they find it difficult."

From Peter Kyalo: “Bringing SCC Members Closer:” Congratulations to the congregation of Kinyambu Parish in Machakos Diocese for their active involvement in SCC Meetings. With every SCC made smaller to accommodate four homesteads, people are now able to meet at each homestead on a shorter rotation cycle and each member is more aware of the welfare of the other members. There are now more SCCs and the interactions are now closer. Working this way, the sick shall never be forgotten and the needy are easily identified. Now this reminds us vote and redefine SCCs more in our poll  
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

From a SCC animator in Cairo, Egypt: "I thank you for your excellent service of SCCs networking. Personally I have been in Sudan and there the Small Christian Communities were well very committed. Since almost 10 years I am in Cairo with the Sudanese people (schools, pastoral commitments). By now I am inspiring my confreres and the different communities of Sudanese people to renew the Small Christian Communities. I thank you from my heart for your commitments. As soon I could get some possibilities, I'll try to order some communications media for the Small Christian Communities."

From Cyprian Okuye Atar in Torit, South Sudan:

“Find here is pictorial report on the progress of the SCCs formation in the Catholic Diocese of Torit, South Sudan.

Just to recaptulate the events:

- (1) AMECEA Pastoral Department workshop held in Nairobi from 23 to 27 June 2014.
- (2) Awareness creation through all Sunday announcements in the two Catholic Parishes of Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church in Torit.
- (3) Meeting of the Catholic Priests and Brothers convened by the Vicar General, Fr. Arckangelo Lokoro on 16 July 2014. A Plan of Action was adopted that included a training.
- (4) The first training commenced on 1 to 15 August 2014.
- (5) The graduation of the first 115 members and Animators of Small Christian Communities took place on Sunday, 17 August 2014 officiated by Msgr. Thomas Oliha Attiaya, A.J. Apostolic Administrator. Catholic Diocese of Torit.

We are planning the Second Training.

We would like to thank all of you for the training my wife and myself had in Nairobi from 23 to 27 June 2014 that was the basis for the initiation of this program in the Diocese of Torit. We are also planning to extend this training to all the parishes of the Diocese.

Once more as we remember with great appreciation the time in Nairobi. We would like to request your continued prayers for this mission to reach all the faithful in the Diocese and the Catholic Church in South Sudan.”

“Thirteen members of St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi (three lay leaders from Waruku – Jackline Oduor, Catherine Muhatia and Dominic Ayienda -- and ten Franciscan Religious Sisters of the Immaculate Novices from the Amani na Wema ["Peace and Goodness"] Home) participated today, Saturday, 6 September, 2014, in the fundraising walk for the Beatification Process of the Servant of God (SOG) Maurice Cardinal Otunga at Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi, Kenya.”

Three comments followed: “It is great to see this commitment from our SCC.” “Faith with action. It is good to lead by example.” “The efforts and commitments will receive divine rewards.”

“The Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) in collaboration with the Missio Aachen (Germany) organized a theological symposium to discuss the pastoral challenges and opportunities of evangelization in Tanzania at Mbagala Spiritual Centre in Dar es Salaam from 8-9 September, 2014. Bishop Almachius Rweyongeza of Kayanga Diocese emphasized that the Catholic Church has to invest in families and Small Christian Communities. This is because without strong families the Catholic Church is unlikely to be a One, Holy and Apostolic.”

**NOTE:** This SCCs Facebook Page can be an opportunity to exchange reflections on the previous Sunday’s Gospel as seen in this example:

“How did ‘you’ interpret and apply yesterday (Sunday, 21 September, 2015)'s Gospel story of the “Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” (Matthew 20:1-16). I will never read this story in the same way again after hearing a lay woman during a Shared Homily in Morristown, New Jersey, USA say: ‘Reminds me of the poor immigrant workers (mainly Spanish-speaking) standing near the train station in Morristown, New Jersey in the morning waiting for someone (like from a Construction Company) to hire them for a day laborer job. Passing by the train station in the middle of the day I saw some of these same workers still waiting to be hired.’

“I am reminded of driving on James Gichuru Road in Nairobi, Kenya around 7 a.m. and passing hundreds of men (called "kibarua" or casual workers) waiting for someone (like a truck from a Road Construction Company) to pick them up and carry them to a construction site. Some of these casual workers wait the whole day hoping to get a day laborer job.”

“PRAISE AND GLORY BE TO YOU LORD JESUS CHRIST,  
AMEEEEEEEEEN!!”

“We congratulate Father Nicholas Segeja, a diocesan priest of Mwanza Archdiocese, Tanzania and the Head of the Pastoral Theology Department at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi, Kenya for his appointment by Pope Francis as a member of International Theological Commission. Father Segeja is a big promoter of SCCs and has written extensively on SCCs’ theology and practice. See the references to his writings in our free, online Ebook at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>”

Sunday, 28 September, 2004 is a worldwide day of prayer for the World Synod of Bishops on the “Family and Marriage” that starts in Rome on 5 October. Part of the prayer provided by Pope Francis says:

“Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that our families too  
may be places of communion and prayer,  
authentic schools of the Gospel  
and Small Domestic Churches.”

From Father Vincent Mwachwawa in Malawi: "Those interested to learn and be reminded about Mission Month (October) and Mission Sunday -- 19 October (*Chibalalitso cha Mpingo*) -- tune into Radio Maria Malawi. There will be some programs on Mission Month and Mission Sunday in the coming days of October on Radio Maria Malawi. As you may be aware, from Sunday, 28 September we will start Mission Sunday animation/reflections in parishes, outstations, Small Christian Communities (*Miphakati*) and in our families."

“In my homily and other SCCs gatherings this weekend I am using this mission-related story: ‘After giving a group of second grade children a complete tour and explanation of the inside of a church (altar, tabernacle, statues, Stations of the Cross, Baptismal fount, pews, etc.) Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg, South Africa asked: ‘What is the most important thing in this church?’ After some silence, a little girl raised her hand and said, ‘The exit sign.’ Taken aback, the bishop asked her to explain. She replied, ‘Well, aren’t we supposed to take what we learn in church out into the world?’”

“Praying the World Mission Rosary (where each decade has colored beads that represent the continents of the world: White for Europe, Yellow for Asia, Blue for Oceania, Red for the Americas and Green for Africa) in our SCCs is a concrete way of celebrating October as both ‘Missionary Month’ and the ‘Month of the Rosary.’”

From Renata Dalmath in Bukoba, Tanzania: “I and members of my parish benefited from the Lumko Course b'se now we have Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs). We meet once per week on Sunday at 9 p.m. in my YSCC. God is good. Many thanks to my Bishop M. Kilaini and Mwanajumuiya Fr. Joe Healey whose care and sponsorship helped me to join the Lumko Course to get knowledge of pastoral and theological issues in SCCs. I was educated and I educate others. God bless those who sponsored me.”

From Bishop Fritz Lobinger in South Africa: "It was with great joy that I received your letter, your report, and your photos of the 2014 Lumko East Africa Course on Nairobi, Kenya. Your lines shows me that the Church in East Africa is firmly on the path of community building, exactly following the path on which the Early Church has put us. You have left your parishes and communities for several weeks in order to learn more about ways of becoming a community in Christ, as brothers and sisters.

What would make my joy even greater would be to see how some of you are developing new materials for further developing this aim of becoming a Community Church. Times are moving on and we have to move on with them. The present Lumko materials were developed and designed a few decades ago and we have to move beyond them. I pray and hope that this will happen. In two weeks' time I will reach the age of 86 years and it is time that young talents are now building on the things that were designed long ago. I pray and hope that some of you will take this step.”

The Catholic Diocese of Ifakara, Tanzania is observing the "Year of Catechesis" that started on 19 March, 2014 and will end on 19 March, 2015 when they will be celebrating the 3rd Anniversary of the diocese. Bishop Salutaris Melchior Libena said that the "Year of Catechesis" basically entails intensive catechism throughout the diocese on various levels. “All Christians are encouraged to attend various sessions regardless of whether they have received the training on the catechism before or not. The sessions are carried out in the Small Christian Communities and on other parish levels.”

From layman Abel Muse in Ethiopia: "The AMECEA Laity Meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania was very good. Many have come up with strong recommendations of keeping up Small Christian Communities (SCCs) where they are active and establishing them in the countries where they are not active and not existing. If SCCs would be there, families would have been strengthened. SCCs are the basis for building up the Catholic Church. In Ethiopia we too have to work actively on SCCs.”

“Today we gathered for our weekly St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC Meeting. Although we face challenges around the world within our own lives as well as with our internet connectivity, we were lucky enough to take a photograph with five of our members present, representing 3 different continents: Africa, Europe and North America.”

“Yesterday in the African Culture Classes at Notre Dame Prep in Baltimore, MD, USA we discussed setting up YSCC Twinning or YSCC Partnership between schools in USA and schools in Kenya. We agreed the best method would be through Skype calls.”

“At the end of this Year 2014 please give a short evaluation (strengths and weaknesses) of the development of our SCCs in Eastern Africa:

- Sylvester Ben Chasweka: “As much as there is growth of youth involvement in SCCs, youth involvement still leaves a lot to be desired. The kids are often times left out. I have observed that some SCCs are too big to be truly local and foster a truly personal encounter. All in all, SCCs are on the move in the right direction in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi.”
- Joseph G. Healey: “One strength was the growth of our Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in Eastern Africa. One weakness was that many Catholics cannot receive communion because they have not had their marriages sacramentalized (they have not been married in the Catholic Church).”

“I am the chairman of St. Veronica Small Community in St. Catherine Catholic Church in Nyahururu Diocese. I am happy to present the humble request of a young girl who has been ailing for quite some time and needs an operation on the growth on her neck. The total bill is 68,900/=. Out of this St. Veronica SCC has contributed 18,500/=. the parish priest raised 17,000/=. the parish assistant gave 5,000/=. The total contributions in our treasury are 40,500/= The balance required to save the life of this helpless young girl is 28,400/=”

Bishop Paul Kariuki of Embu Diocese, Kenya: "I have been able to visit every Small Christian Community in this diocese. I know exactly where they are, what they are doing, what is happening there. I am in touch with the reality on the ground."

As SCC members celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus Christ let us reflect on Pope Francis' challenge in "The Joy of the Gospel:"

In virtue of their Baptism all members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization.

Father John Lange, MM reports on the "Jumuiya" (Swahili for "SCC") Masses in Mwanhuzi Town in Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania. About 20 people participate. A nice meal usually follows. These SCC masses usually occur on the Feast of the Patron/Patroness Saint, at Harvest Time and at the end of Lent.

From Chishimba Chishimba in Zambia: “Today 60 youth leaders from various parishes in Lusaka gathered at Pope Square for a leadership work and one of the topics discussed was SCCs. It was so interesting to see the passion in these leaders for SCCs. They all want to have Youth SCCs where they can be free to discuss their own issues unlike when they combine with adults. One major concern brought out was that youth still don't understand the importance of attending SCC, of what help it is to them especially in this generation where everyone is struggling for “identity.” I have another workshop with a different group next Saturday.”

“The course at St. Andrew Kaggwa Catechetical Training Center in Mumias (also called the Mumias CTC) in Kakamega Diocese, Kenya begins this week. During the two year residence course the 15 couples (the catechist and spouse) form a SCC. Each couple has a specific ministry in the SCC, for example, Marriage Counselor. This couple counsels the other couples if problems arise in their marriages. If there is tension between couples themselves the chairperson (another catechist) tries to bring about a reconciliation. During the course talks are given on SCCs and family catechesis. It is gratifying that two of the books required for the catechists’ training are *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* and *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*.”

From John Musonda: “If a SCC is a communion of families how are our SCCs involved in family pastoral ministries. Three years ago I witnessed something that I had never seen in my life. In our youth group at our Salesian Parish in Hwange, Zimbabwe we celebrated three marriages from within the youth group within the period of one year. Amazing! We can read from Pope Francis: to fix the crisis in this world is a call to return to family.”

Pope Francis' prayer intention for evangelization in February, 2015 is: “That married people who are separated may find welcome and support in the Christian community.” What are our SCCs doing to reach out to these people? Some posts:

- Alfred Magero: “Move along with them as they strive to attain fullness of Christ in their lives. Move along with them means that we don’t discriminate against them. We share the life challenges together with them and tackle issues faith and spiritual in best way possible.”
- SCCs Website Moderator: Another word for "move along with" them is to "accompany" them that is used frequently by Pope Francis who says in No. 169 of *The Joy of the Gospel*: "The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. *Exodus* 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life."
- Murori Lawrence: “I gathered 180 SCC leaders in the deanery to talk about it and it was received with great appreciation. Today about 150 leaders from Laare parish in Meru are meeting to deliberate on their SCCs’ progress.
- Kim Patrick Maxmilian: “Kindly send me a copy of the 13 steps of conducting a Small Christian Community gathering.”
- Peter Kyalo: “I have never heard of this topic in the many SCC meetings that I have attended. I think all SCCs need to take this intention seriously and try reach out to them.”
- Joseph Healey: “Think of one specific married couple whom you know who are separated and pray for, and with, them.”

From Peter Kyalo: “Today I was invited to attend a class at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya where we discussed Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs). I gave a presentation on the activities of YSCCs at Kenyatta University Catholic Community. We also had a report from Dandora Parish in Nairobi which was represented by

three youth. It is important that the Catholic Church now recognizes the role of YSCCs and promotes the establishment of the same in all Catholic schools and institutions in the world.”

“During the Commission for Missions of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB)’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Watakatifu Wote (All Saints) Pastoral Centre, Ngong Diocese we discussed the close links between Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) and SCCs in Kenya. Hopefully some of the fruit of our reflections will get into the answers to the questionnaire on "Family and Marriage" for the October, 2015 Synod of Bishops.”

“The new Cardinal of Ethiopia, Berhaneyesus Souraphiel who is also the Chairman of AMECEA, spoke to Vatican Radio’s English Service for Africa. He said that the AMECEA pastoral program of Small Christian Communities should be used to deepen African family values.”

Please share specific, concrete examples of how your SCC is involved in and participating in Lent this year 2015:

- From KUCC Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC) Facebook Page: “Lord, it feels like we are embarking on a Lenten journey together, you and I. The beautiful words in the today's prayer talk about the "quiet remembrance of our need for redemption.””
- Our four SCCs in our SCCs Class at Tangaza, Nairobi answered the question in the "2015 Kenya Lenten Campaign" booklet: “What can we do as family or Small Christian Community to promote Christian values in our families?”
- From Michael Orondo: "We in St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi started our Lenten reflections yesterday. Since we prepare the Gospel of the following Sunday we read Week Two (2nd Sunday of Lent) in the "2015 Kenya Lenten Campaign" booklet on the theme on "Security."
- Members of St. Felicity SCC at Kahawa West, Nairobi shared on the Second Week of Lent. Very interactive sharing. To the question "What are you doing as an individual or Small Christian Community to improve security in the society? The members stressed the need to continue to know each ones’ neighbors (having amicable relationships with them). Also to be closer to their children as they enter the teenage stage so that they may not engage in illicit practices that brings anxiety to the neighborhood.
- "9 Ideas to Celebrate Easter with Your Small Group" is an excellent and practical online resource for your SCC from the [SmallGroups.com](http://www.smallgroups.com) Website at: <http://www.smallgroups.com/.../9-ideas-to-celebrate...>
- From Lusaka, Zambia: "Each of our Small Christian Community in my parish, (The Cathedral of the Child Jesus, Pope Square, Lusaka, Zambia) has been given a Friday to lead in the Way of the Cross during this Lenten Period. May God guide us through."
- “On Friday, 3 April 2015 the Way of the Cross came to an end with the Good Friday Liturgy at our parish St. Austin’s Church near Lavington, Nairobi at around 4:30 p.m. Earlier in the morning we started in a very unique way from Waruku towards St. Austin’s. As St Kizito SCC members we walked as normal but at the first stations we were joined by other Small Christian Communities, i.e. St. Charles Lwanga, St. Bakhita, St. Petro Mwamba and St. John from Lavington respectively. Also we were joined by three priests, i.e. Padri Mwanajumuiya Joe Healey and then Fr. George

Wambua the parish priest and Fr. Steve Kariuki the assistant priest who started with St. John SCC from Lavington side. Out of all these SCCs St. Kizito led three quarters of the station events, i.e. Sammy Ngunga and Michael Orondo facilitating the prayers and helped others to follow easily. Finally the first Way of the Cross through the neighborhood came to an end at around 12:30 p.m. to lead into the main one at the parish church that started around 1.15 p.m. So I take this opportunity to thank all those who participated and wish them happy Easter Season.”

“I’m Brother Patrick, a theology student at Tangaza University College. I do my pastoral work by animating 20 Small Christian Communities in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Charles Lwanga Parish in Nairobi. I usually visit a different SCC on a rotational basis each Sunday. The program I’m taking to all these SCCs currently is showing the DVD entitled *The Church in the Neighborhood* that I got at our Small Christian Community Class with Fr. Joseph Healey. I always go with a video projector as I visit all these SCCs in their homes and play the DVD after which I invite all the participants to share what they have seen, what they have heard being said by the presenters, what they have learnt, the challenges they have gotten as a SCC and what they are to do to implement all this in their SCCs. So far I have shown the DVD seven times.”

“As part of the Missio, Aachen Team three of us visited St. Theresa of the Child Jesus SCC in Karinde Outstation of Queen of Heaven Parish, Karen, Kenya on Sunday, 8 March, 2013. 17 participants (13 women, four men). As a ‘first’ we read the Gospel in four languages: Swahili, Gikuyu, English and German. The success of the SCCs in Queen of Heaven Parish is a result of: one, the pastoral vision of the pastor and the parish team; two, flexibility in adapting to changing social, economic, political, cultural and religious trends in Kenya ; and three, commitment of the Catholic laity to this model of church.”

A Study Guide has been published in Kenya on *Ad Gentes*. One of the Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR) questions is: "*Ad Gentes* emphasizes that through Baptism all Christians are called to be missionaries and evangelizers. 99% of the members of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are lay people. How are they promoting missionary awareness and sharing their faith with others?" Please give your answers and your SCC's answers here.

- By holding prayers together and visiting members in their homes and encouraging them to read the *Bible* and pray regularly.
- Encouraging people in the neighborhood who are not Catholics to join the RCIA (the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults or the adult catechumenate) and go through the steps until being baptized.
- Encouraging those who have lost hope and helping the needy/the wounded so they feel loved also.
- Our free online Ebook has several sections on the importance of lay people in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and how they can be missionaries and evangelists. One choice in our poll on "The best part of my Small Christian Community is:... "community of missionary disciples."
- The April, 2015 issue of *The Seed* Magazine says that this Study Guide helps us to reflect on missionary activity and it is enriched with questions for sharing in small groups or in Small Christian Communities.

“I am David Angelo Ngombu from Sierra Leone. I am interested in SCCs in African countries and especially Sierra Leone. I am the Chairman of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help SCC in the St. Theresa's Catholic Church, New Gerihun Road in Bo City, Southern Region, Sierra Leone, West Africa. It is one of the 13 SCCs in my parish. I have also served as a Councillor of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC).

There are many SCCs attached to the various parishes in Bo Diocese. There are several problems faced by these SCCs ranging from knowledge, functions and importance to administration. I have decided to prepare a two-day workshop inviting representatives from the groups to train them on the above mentioned issues. Please supply me with the necessary facts of SCCs that will be transmitted to the participants in the workshop.”

“Our sister and friend Ms. Mary Nives Kizito died in Nairobi, Kenya on Saturday, 21 March, 2015 at 12 Noon. A Memorial Mass will be celebrated at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, 24 March in St. Francis of Assisi SCC at her house in Ngumo Estate. She was a faithful member of this SCC. Prayers please.”

“On Easter Sunday, 5 April, 2015 we have the final match in our ‘Playing for Peace’ football (soccer) tournament in Elburgon, Molo Subcounty, Nakuru County in the Rift Valley in Kenya. The tournament is an effort to restore peace in the area that was among the most affected in 2007/08 post-election violence. Please pray that the games may go well, and that this will lead to a peaceful co-existence among the different ethnic groups in the area. May Kenyan youth of different ethnic groups witness to peace, equality and fair play through football and other sports. May SCCs support this initiative.”

“At 2:30 p.m. on Easter Sunday, 5 April, 2015 we just joined the SCC members in the eight SCCs in St. Brigid Outstation in St. Timothy Parish to watch the final match in our ‘Playing for Peace’ football (soccer) tournament in Elburgon, Molo Subcounty, Nakuru County in the Rift Valley in Kenya. The match is between Lelechwet FC (mainly Kalenjin ethnic group players) and Intercity (mainly Kikuyu ethnic group players). Hopefully the results will bring harmony and peace among these young Kenyans.”

“The match called the *Kombe la Amani* (Cup of Peace) was played on the football pitch of Michinda Secondary School. The final score was Intercity 4 and Lelechwet 0. After the game the players shook hands and participated in a Kalenjin ethnic group dance of peace and reconciliation with the sharing of specially prepared milk in a gourd. There was a good spirit of joy and friendliness. The local government chief said the ceremony brought harmony among all the ethnic groups. Such sports events keep the Kenya youth busy and off the streets and thus they avoid the risk of crime and other bad activities. The winners received a cup inscribed with the words ‘Peace Champions.’”

“Please pray for the Holy Spirit to guide the team that is meeting at the JJ McCarthy Centre, on Riverside Drive, Nairobi to consolidate the responses received so far for the *Lineamenta* for the October, 2015 Synod of Bishops. The eight team members include Kenyan Bishop James Maria Wainaina of Murang’a Diocese (who together with Cardinal John Njue will represent Kenya at the synod in Rome), one priest, two religious sisters, one married laywomen, two married laymen and one single man. The responses include many references to SCCs.”

“It has been said that we should preach with the *Bible* in one hand and the newspaper in the other hand. This is based on the famous quotation of Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth: Take your *Bible* and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your *Bible*.’ We can update this to say: We should preach with one eye on the *Bible* and the other eye on the BBC World News that can be found on the radio, TV and the internet that includes video clips. The SCCs Website has links to the BBC RSS FEEDS for African News. On the internet version of the BBC World News today I saw a powerful video on the 140 survivors of the shipwreck in which about 400 migrants are feared to have died off Libya this week. It was caused by excitement at the sight of rescuers.”

“Youth Family Life Seminar at Dandora Holy Cross Nursery Hall in Nairobi starting at 9 a.m. on Sunday, 19 April, 2015. This forum has been organized by family life ministries for the youth to get teachings about marriage as a sacrament, the essence of marriage, courtship, how to deal with break ups and many more topics so don’t dare miss! Charges are 100 Kenyan Shillings only. The Youth SCCs are involved because they are the ones who form the Youth Group and choose the topics to be discussed. This seminar connects nicely with the process, consultation and search for pastoral solutions for the October, 2015 Synod of Bishops on Family and Marriage.”

“The Fresh Expressions initiative (with a team and website based in Coventry, England) encourages new forms and styles of church for a fast changing world. It works with Christians from a variety of denominations and traditions. The Fresh Expressions Website and Monthly Newsletter (<http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk>) has a creative exchange of ideas on new expressions or forms or styles of being and becoming church. Many are a SCCs model of church.”

*America* – The National Catholic Review published on 17 April, 2015 a Blog entitled: "Kenya and the Survey for the Synod on the Family" <http://www.americamagazine.org/.../kenya-and-survey-synod-fam...> Besides the Direct Link above it can be found on the *America* Website (<http://www.americamagazine.org>) under “Dispatches: A Blog on National and International Affairs.” There are several references to SCCs.

Intentional Eucharistic Communities (IECs) in the United States will be gathering in June in St. Paul, Minnesota to share ideas and techniques and prayer. Please join us! [www.intentionaleucharistic.org](http://www.intentionaleucharistic.org)

Xavier Thelakkatt’s weekly Homily Bog: “Usually I don’t share the tricks of the trade” said Fr. Dennis. He was a highly successful pastor in his parish community. He has been ministering to a community of nearly three thousand faithful for quite a few years. I knew he was highly respected and deeply loved. I asked what made him so successful. His response was rather intriguing. As Fr. Dennis continued, he asserted, “The real trick is not to treat it as a trade.” As a pastor he was not doing a job or working for his pay. “The pastor’s responsibility is ministry and it requires undivided attention and wholehearted commitment.”

The word “pastor” is a modern equivalent for “shepherd.” Jesus referred to himself as “the good shepherd” (*John* 10:11). The hallmark of a good shepherd is his total commitment, to the extent of laying down his life for the sheep (*John* 10:12). A hired hand need not have that kind of loyalty and dedication for the cause of the sheep, however, every Christian is called to be a shepherd or a pastor to those entrusted to his/her care. “Feed my sheep” is

Jesus' commandment (*John 21:15-17*), and it is thrice repeated in the Gospel. For a Christian pastor there is no better shepherding technique than wholehearted commitment."

"Congrats to the St. Agatha Joy Women's Tailoring and Training Group of St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi, Kenya for preparing a new shipment of African shirts, dresses, purses and bags to be sold in the USA. The core team models different ethnic groups working together. There are two Luhya women, one Kamba woman, one Taita woman and a Kikuyu financial advisor."

"SCCs are a new model of church and a new way of being church today. SCCs are not a movement in the church. Spiritually they are the church on the move. That is why we are in Tororo, Uganda today for this SCCs Workshop."

Now available as a 46-page booklet and soon to be posted online:

*Family and Marriage in Kenya Today: Pastoral Guidelines for a Process of Discussion and Action* (based on the Relatio Synodi 2015 and the "Results of the Consultation in Kenya on the 46 Questions in the Lineamenta on 'The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World'"). There are 23 references to SCCs in this booklet.

"Celebrating an Extended Family Home Mass in Baltimore, MD, USA reminds us of the House Churches in the 1st Century AD. We had about 30 people in what I call the Sheehan House Church. The little children were actively involved and even acted out the Ascension story. The homily was on members of the extended family celebrating the seven sacraments. Part of the weekend was the baptism of James Miller Sheehan. The link to the ceremony in the Church of the Nativity on Saturday, 16 May is:  
<https://www.facebook.com/emi.../videos/10152862483707055/...>

From Mwangi Kamau in Boston, Massachusetts, USA: "I belong to a group in Boston, Massachusetts that calls itself the KENYA CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND FRIENDS. We are struggling to establish Jumuiyas. I want to request for any assistance that can help us grow in capacity and knowledge. Like "Utaratibu wa Jumuiya" or "Mwongozo wa Jumuiya."

Our St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC reflected on the Gospel from Mark 14 for Sunday, 7 June, 2015: "Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ." We used the quote of Pope Francis in No. 47 of "The Joy of the Gospel": "The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak."

At the recent Workshop on "Building Christian Fellowship in Institutions of Learning through SCCs" at the Donum Dei Retreat Centre, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya, 21 to 24 May, 2015 the 28 participants were introduced to the "Let's Do It! World" Website (<http://www.letsdoitworld.org>) to show an example of people-centered advocacy. In light of the coming papal encyclical *Laudato Si* ("Be Praised") -- "On the Care of Our Common Home" may our SCCs start reflecting on ecology and environmental issues. I recall the different ecology/environmental campaigns in St. Kizito, SCC Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya during Lent especially tree planting and garage and waste/refuse collection in the neighborhood. These are documented in our free online Ebook at:  
[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../Build_new.pdf)

In light of the new papal encyclical *Laudato Si'* ("Be Praised") -- "On the care of our common home" may our SCCs start reflecting on ecology and environmental issues. Our free online Ebook "Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" (<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../47-ebooks-.html>) has 8 references to "ecology" and 43 references to "environment."

From Ben Wanjala: "During the priesthood and brotherhood Jubilee Celebrations at Maryknoll, New York USA on Sunday 28 June 2015 visitors bought the women's African handbags and other gifts made by the St. Agatha Joy Women's Tailoring and Training Group in St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi, Kenya. Congratulations St. Agatha Joy Women's Tailoring and Training Group! Hoyeee!"

Excellent article on SCCs: Kristina Cooper, "From the Cell to the World," *Tablet*, Vol. 269, No. 9107 (4 July, 2015), p. 18. The article recommends: "Consider joining a PEC or some other kind of Small Christian Community group to share your faith." On the *Tablet* Website, retrieved on 4 July, 2015, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/040715issue.pdf>

We sent books on SCCs in Eastern Africa to the Catholic Student Center, Rice University, Houston, Texas, USA. The Director replied: "It is so important to give students an opportunity to see and learn about the many ways we are Christians all over the world and eventually know that 'there is just one of us.' Thank you for your contribution to the process."

The powerful personal witness of Kenyan laywoman Pamela Adinda:

"The aspect of "solidarity" in the Small Christian Community is something that I recently experienced firsthand. At St. Paul's University Chapel in Nairobi, Kenya that is my parish, our Small Christian Communities are the various groups in the parish in which parishioners are obliged to join. There are about 18 groups or SCCs including CWA, Community Choir Group, Friends of St. Paul's Group, St. Paul Prayer Group, Men of St. Paul Group, Lectors, Altar Society, PMS, St. Paul Youth Group, Self Help Group, Eucharistic Members Group, Bible Study Group, Mass Servers, Liturgical Committee Group, CJPC Group, Renewal Group, Family Life Group and Ushers and Helpers Group.

I belong to the Lectors SCC. Three weeks ago my two babies were admitted at Gertrude's Children Hospital when both had throat infections. We stayed in the hospital for six days and trust me the SOLIDARITY that I got from my Small Christian Community, the Lectors Group of St. Paul, was amazing. Each day SCC members called, texted, and used all sorts of social media to keep in touch with me. We prayed together over the phone and they encouraged me a lot. I felt like I really belonged and that was very important to me. The Lectors SCC members journeyed with me throughout the time my children were admitted and they continued supporting me even after we left the hospital. That's why SOLIDARITY in the Small Christian Community is very important to me."

From Alphonse Omolo and others: "Our Skype SCC *Bible* Reflection session is live as we speak -- connecting SCC members in Germany, Kenya and USA. Belza Ramos in Texas, Simon Kwabena Dankyi in Germany, Joseph G. Healey in Nairobi and myself visiting Nairobi! We had a nice time sharing the Scripture text for coming Sunday, more especially the discussion around Eucharistic Hunger for divorced and remarried couples -- the motivation towards finding a creative pastoral solution while treating each case as special.

Also, the lessons from the Word of God concerning food wastage and how to care for, and nurture the resources that are available to us. Very inspirational!!!”

From Johnte Ndiawo: “You just came back from work and as you enter your house you see rats eating your vital documents:

The 1st rat is eating your Degree/College certificate.

The 2nd is eating your Marriage certificate.

The 3rd rat is eating the title deeds for your house.

The 4th rat is eating your passport with business visa for a multi-billion project.

The 5th rat is eating your *Bible*.

Please be honest with your reply.....

Which rat will you kill first? 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th...??? And why?”

SECAM launched the continent-wide African Year of Reconciliation (AYR) in Accra, Ghana on 29 July, 2015 that will run until 29 July, 2016. The theme chosen for this opening event was “A Reconciled Africa for Peaceful Coexistence.” All the African Episcopal Conferences are invited to organize during this year “programs and initiatives of reconciliation in collaboration with the respective commissions of Justice and Peace in their countries.” The promotion of reconciliation will involve all the other religions in Africa and will have an ecumenical outreach. SCC members are invited to participate in a day or week of reconciliation, particularly during Advent or Lent. How can we prioritize the actions and practices of Small Christian Communities in genuine reconciliation (*Africa’s Challenge*, No. 21) anchored in truth (*Africa’s Challenge*, No. 20)? Can each SCC choose one concrete practical action of reconciliation on the local level?

Some suggested responses:

From Mwanajumuiya Joe Healey: “I propose a concrete action: Join several SCC members to visit a Muslim family in your neighborhood and pray together to our One God for reconciliation and peace to happen in a particular place in Africa, for example, in a needy slum near you, the Kenya-Somalia border, South Sudan, etc. Choose your own example.

From Mwanajumuiya Rose Musimba: “It is helpful to emphasize the “hali halisi” (Swahili for the local reality or the facts on the ground) in our reconciliation actions.”

From Mwanajumuiya John Siyumbu. “A modest workshop on some common elements of faith found in both Christianity and Islam followed by an informal get-together session in an SCC would be a good way of commemorating the African Year of Reconciliation. We need both the unity workshop idea and the social interaction.”

From SCC members in Nairobi: “In visiting our Muslim friends in the neighborhood, even next door, we find that the Christian and Muslim children playing together is the best icebreaker. It comes naturally to them. The children don’t see the problems, the differences.”

“During our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from 5 – 10 August, 2015 we three delegates from Eastern Africa (AMECEA Region) are learning a lot about West Africa. For example, the Catholic Church in Burkina

Faso has 15 dioceses, 177 parishes with CCBs and 8,162 CCBs (in French *Communautés Chrétiennes de Base*).”

Dear Trainers of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa.

Greetings to you. I am the Chairman of St. Kizito SCC, Parish Our Lady Consolata in the Catholic Diocese of Maralal. We are glad to learn of the Small Christian Community Website. Thank you for the good work. We have constructed a library at our church which is still lacking roofing materials, doors and internal fixtures, i.e. chairs and reading tables.

All this would cost us Shs 90,500/=

So far we raised as follows.

St. Kizito SCC 22,500/=

Parish of Our Lady of Consolata 20,000/=

Other Small Christian Communities 20,000/=

Total Sum raised 62,500/=

Request 28,000/=

Your consideration to enable us complete this library will be highly appreciated.

Yours in Christ's Love

Eickson Erickson Lokwe

From Ben Wanjala: “Members of St. Josephine Bakhita SCC in Waruku, Nairobi Kenya serve food to Christians after family day celebrations at St. Austin’s Catholic Church in Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya on 08/08/2015.”

From Gordon Okumu: “PREPARATION FOR THE PHILADELPHIA, USA TRIP IN SEPTEMBER. Preparation for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia has started in earnest as the group of 19 participants representing part of the Kenyan delegation met at the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) main boardroom to deliberate upon the forthcoming trip to the USA. The meeting started with thanksgiving prayers for those whose visa application was successful and prayer for strength and consolation for those whose application wasn’t successful. Members shared experiences they had during the visa interview. It came out clear that though we were all attending the same interview, everyone was asked a different question. Other than the most obvious question of: ‘Will you come back to Kenya after your visit to the USA, the consular section was more concerned on why people had to travel to the US to attend the meeting rather than watching live coverage of the event on television from home. Different answers were given to this question but thank God, 19 out of 29 applicants who had applied through KCCB got their visas approved. The meeting had different agendas and several agreements were reached upon including the Kenyan Delegation meeting with John Cardinal Njue, Rt. Rev. Salesius Mugambi, Fr. Daniel Rono, and Kenyan students in the USA who will be working at the conference in the afternoon of 25 September. It was also agreed that members should try and attend to local parishes while in Philadelphia and ask their hosts if they are members of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and if possible attend the Small Christian Communities with them and share their experiences with communities back here at home. On issues of the travel day the group coordinator reminded members to ensure that their travel documents are in good shape and other required documents prepared and carried at all times. Individuals are also to download the Conference Program from the World Meeting of Families Website for proper planning. On issues of branding Team Kenya, members agreed that the Family Life Office prints T – SHIRTS, CAPS & SCARVES to wear and as give away gifts, but members will purchase these items according to their order. Gordon was mandated to design the said products for

printing. Also, the Kenyan song during the Philadelphia event was agreed to be the famous *Nibaraka Kutoka Kwa Mungu*. About the travel insurance and airline to use, members were free to travel with any airline of their choice and purchase insurance for the length of their proposed stay as this was not a group requirement. However, members were advised to keep in touch with one another while in Philadelphia and share with the group coordinator their residential addresses while in Philadelphia for ease in communications. The meeting ended with prayers and congratulations messages from Fr. Rono the General Secretary of KCCB. God bless Kenya!”

“Prayer intention: For the return to good health of SCCs Coordinating Team Member Caroline Adam's husband who lives in Ohio, USA.”

“New projects include setting up a SCCs Networking Team Page and Blog on the SECAM Website and a SCCs Networking Library at the SECAM Secretariat in Accra, Ghana (both a physical library and a “virtual” online library). Similar libraries will be set up at the AMECEA Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya.”

“Please indicate if you know any SCCs that are using the social media platform WhatsApp to communicate together. Thanks.” Some responses:

1. From Damana Fidelis Kpeenbata: “The Catholic students in Mzumbe and Mbeya University of Science and Technology in Tanzania have started Facebook Groups and Whatsapp Groups. Communication is very easy. We post church teachings and reflections.”
2. From Joseph Healey, MM: “We have started a WhatsApp Group called "African Small Christ Comm" for Eastern Africa. Please join and share your SCCs experiences.”
3. From Jacob Jeketule Soko: “St. Rita Small Christian Community in Christ the King Catholic Church, Embakasi, Nairobi, Kenya is using WhatsApp.”
4. From Deacon Sylvester Chimenge, MAfr: "St. Paul SCC in Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, South B, Nairobi, Kenya effectively uses WhatsApp as a means of modern evangelization. Every day the secretary posts the readings and reflections of the day as well as the teachings of Pope Francis, Gospel songs and other religious teachings.”

From Paul Baraza: “The Spec Training and Consultancy Centre is holding a Family Accompaniment workshop this weekend (Saturday and Sunday) in Karen, Nairobi, Kenya. We are using the Small Christian community as an entry point. We aim at promoting better upbringing of children by providing a forum for family heads and caretakers (househelpers) to share. Please keep us in your prayers.”

From Wellington Irungu:

“Dear Small Christian Communities Training Team,

Greetings to you from St. Christopher Small Christian Community, St. Francis Parish Nyahururu Diocese, Kenya. We are humbly and passionately requesting you to help us meet

the medical bill of a young girl Veronica Nyambura who is to undergo a Growth Operation on her neck. The total sum of Kshs 82,500/= is needed.

The following are our contributions.

St. Christopher SCC 20,500/=

St. Francis Parish 16,000/=

Other seven SCCs 15,000/=

Total in treasury 51,500/=

Balance 31,000/=

We pray that may God provide a way through the Eastern African SCC Training Team to save a life by raising the balance.

United in prayers, with kind regards,  
The Chairman, St. Christopher SCC.”

Receive greetings from St. Monica Small Christian Community, St. Paul Catholic Parish, Kericho Diocese. We are humbly requesting the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities Training Team to kindly assist us with some financial support to save the life of Susan Yengo who was bitten by a snake in meeting her medical hospital bill. In total we need cash Kshs 98,600/= . So far this is our contributions.

St. Monica SCC 23,500/=

St. Paul Catholic Parish 18,000/=

Other SCCs contributions 14,000/=

Total amount in Treasury 55,500/=

Balanced to be raised 43,100/=

Any contribution given to us will be very highly appreciated

Thank you in advance

Yours sincerely in christ

The chairman St. Monica SCC

Mr. William Ruto.

“We members of St. Kizito SCC in Waruku, Nairobi congratulate Agnes Alitsi and her husband Ben Wanjala on the birth of twin boys. One is named Joseph. Hongera. Pongezi. Congratulations Mama twins. Two new members of our SCC! Our new name for Agnes is Mama Joseph. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous to us.”

“During our online Skype SCC *Bible* Reflection today we quoted from one of the email commentaries on next Sunday’s Gospel (*Mark* 8:27-35): ‘When Jesus equated discipleship with the cross, he was not commanding fatalistic endurance of life’s pains and injustices. He was calling for a shocking identification with the lowest of the low in Rome’s empire: subversives, violent criminals and rebellious slaves. Jesus identified discipleship with contesting the status quo, not conforming to it.’ This viewpoint has interesting connections to Pope Francis’ emphasis on the wounded, the marginated and those on the peripheries of our human society.”

“South Sudan FA Hopes Football 'Can Stop the War'”: Football can help bring peace to war-torn South Sudan, the president of the country's FA believes. Chabur Goc Alei was speaking after the widespread celebrations that greeted a first competitive victory for the world's newest nation. On Saturday South Sudan, which became independent in 2011, beat

this year's Africa Cup of Nations semi-finalists Equatorial Guinea 1-0 in Juba. "Through football, we can stop the war," Chabur told BBC Sport. SOUTH SUDAN FACTFILE Achieved independence in 2011. Became a FIFA member in 2012. Ranked 198 of 209 FIFA members. Nicknamed the 'Bright Star.' "In football, we are talking about a peaceful nation because we don't have tribes or political parties." The victory for South Sudan, a FIFA member since 2012, came in a qualifier for the 2017 Nations Cup.

Today's First Reading (Epistle) from *Colossians* 3:11: "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all" can be rewritten to say: "Here there is not Dinka and Nuer, government troops and rebels, South Sudanese, foreigner, Catholic, Protestant, rich, poor; but Christ is all and in all."

From Paul Baraza: "The Family Accompaniment Workshop finished well over the weekend organized by [www.spectcc.net](http://www.spectcc.net) with eight families taking part and a total of 31 participants for the two days. We had family heads on Saturday and mainly caregivers/house helpers<sup>827</sup> on Sunday. Topics discussed included child protection, working relations, work-family balance, positive discipline and orientation to First Aid. For example, a trainer in First Aid instructed a house helper on how to do first aid on a choking baby. Our entry point was Small Christian Communities. We aimed at promoting better upbringing of children by providing a forum for family heads and caregivers/house helpers to share their experiences. Thanks so much for your prayers."

A parish priest in Hong Kong writes: "Yet it seems to me that it is vital for parents to support one another, to share stories and suggestions, to consult one another and pray for one another. Christian parents need to form support groups. In today's competitive world, giving God one hour a week (Sunday Mass) is no longer enough."

We answered: "This is exactly what we do in our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Eastern Africa. We have a whole variety of weekly SCCs for Catholic parents:

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<sup>827</sup> The complexity of the English language can be found in the many approved spellings:

house help (can refer to one person or as a collective noun)  
house helps  
house helpers

house-help  
house-helps  
house-helpers

househelp  
househelps  
househelpers

Can also refer to female domestic servant; governess; nanny; child care nanny.

- Regular SCC where both parents (husband and wife) try to participate in a SCC together. This models family participation for the children.
- Newly married couples.
- Young parents with children.
- Single mothers.
- Parents or grandparents form a SCC support group after a child/grandchild has left the Catholic faith and even become atheist or agnostic.
- Parents with children who have special needs (such as disabilities).

Information on all these SCCs can be found on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and Facebook Page: [www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

From Sophia Chebet: “St. Cecilia Jumuyia of St. John the Evangelist Parish meets on Sundays at 3 p.m. at the Shrine compound in Langata, Nairobi, Kenya and after that we normally join the Benediction hour from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. We share the joy and the strength we draw from being with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! We encourage all the member of SCC to create time to be with the Lord at least once a week in this special way!”

From Peter Mabiya Kwalya: “To the Training Team of Small Christian Communities of Eastern Africa. Peace. Congratulations for this Global Collaborative Website. We desire to write on this Small Christian Community Facebook Page. I am the Chairman of St. Charles Lwanga Small Christian Community in St. Andrew Catholic Parish, Tororo Catholic Archdiocese, Tororo, Uganda. We are appealing for assistance to enable one of our members to undergo a kidney transplant in India that is very expensive. We have contributed the following:

St. Andrew Catholic Parish-----	Ushs.3,300,000/=	Kshs.100,000/=
St. Charles Lwanga SCC-----	Ushs.1,000,000/=	Kshs.38,000/=
6 other SCCs -----	Ushs.660,000/=	Kshs.20,000/=
Other parishes -----	Ushs 2,000,000/=	Ksh. 65,000/=
Total collected-----	Ushs. 6,960,000/=	Kshs 223,000/=

The operation is estimated at a cost of Kshs. 470,000/= Any contribution that comes in our will be highly appreciated. Wishing you God's Special Blessings.”

“Belza Ramos, the USA Story Coordinator of our SCCs Website and the Lay Coordinator for SCCs in St. Brigid Parish in San Antonio, Texas, USA reports that on Saturday mornings she facilitates a meeting of the eight lectors for the four masses the following Sunday (three English masses, one Spanish mass). They read, prepare, reflect on and deepen the scripture readings. Some of the lectors have already read the Gospel in their SCCs during the middle of the week. Let us hope that the priests and deacons of this parish join this weekly group to get some concrete pastoral ideas and applications for their Sunday homilies.”

From Emmanuel Nzenze Epie:

“Spiritual Renewal at Christ the King Parish, Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya: For the past one month the SCCs of Christ the King Parish have been experiencing a spiritual reawakening. The parish, through the coordination of the pastoral office have organized

recollection days for all SCCs in the parish. The theme for the recollections is “*Kuishi imani yetu katika maisha yetu ya kila siku*” (“Living our faith in our daily lives”). The recollection days started on 23 August 2015 and are being facilitated by Deacon Emmanuel Nzenze, MHM, a Mill Hill Missionary deacon from Cameroon serving in the parish. The following SCCs have already had their recollection days: Shilanga Outstation 23/8/15; St. Andrew, St. Augustine, St. Bernadetta 13/9/15; St. Peter, St. Francis, St. Joseph Laini Saba: Main Parish Centre 20/9/15; St. Martin de Pores, St. Benedict, St. Charles Lwanga, St. Kizito. This Sunday 27/9/15 will be the turn for St. Dominic and St. Stephen of Shilanga.”

Bishop John Oballa Owaa of Ngong Diocese, Kenya has written a nice article, “Make Small Christian Communities Shine,” in the October, 2015 issue of the *Catholic Mirror*. Key points include:

1. SCCs seek how to put the Word of God into practice to witness to the Gospel of Christ.
2. Catholic Christians come together as families in the neighborhood.
3. SCC members reach out to the marginalized of the community and mediate conflicts.
4. A major challenge [problem] is that some people think that SCCs are avenues for *Harambee*.
5. To meet youth where they are, we could create Youth SCCs.

“In Houston Texas, USA I am visiting Spanish-speaking SCCs that are called *Pequeñas Comunidades de Fe* (PCFs) or in English Small Faith Communities (SFCs). Belza Ramos of our SCCs Global Collaborative Website Coordinating Team is advising me. We are studying how to develop SCCs among the migrants and the immigrants (two different groups of people) coming into Texas. Today I met a Hispanic couple who help to coordinate three SCCs in St. Cyril of Alexandrina Parish: Love is Our Mission, Disciples of Jesus Christ and Messengers of the Light. After the Jubilee 2000 small group-style Spiritual Renewal Program some Catholics decided to continue meeting in their small communities. It is interesting that these three Spanish-speaking Small Communities of Faith (SCFs) use both Face Time and Skype to connect with members living at a distance -- even one woman who lives in Bogota, Colombia.”

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“From St. Brigid Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas, USA:

Small Christian Communities:

Ecclesial communities meet in various homes at different times and are a source of renewed self-understanding and hope for the entire Church. Rooted in scripture and small in size (6 to 12 persons), these Small Church Communities provide opportunities to reflect deeply on the Christian message and the call to respond in service to the Small Community itself as well as to the larger faith community and the universal church. Many of the Small Christian Communities study the Sunday readings together and share thoughts, fellowship and prepare for the upcoming Mass. SCC members may include persons who are single, married, families, or intergenerational. The members gather as a large community on special dates throughout the year. For more information, please contact Belza Ramos at (210) 415-1540.

On Saturday, 17 October, 2015 (4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) and Sunday, 18 October, 2015 (7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) the parish will host its annual Ministry Fair. Parishioners will be able to join existing and new SCCs in either English or Spanish.”

“In his Homily on World Mission Sunday on 18 October, 2015 retired Bishop Frank Rodimer of Paterson Diocese, New Jersey, USA referred to the importance of happily married couples during the discussions at the Synod of Bishops in Rome on the theme “Family and Marriage” and told this true mission story:

### ***We Wanted To Be Like Them***

A striking story is told about one remote area in South Sudan. Expatriate missionaries, especially priests, Brothers and Sisters had labored there for many years with few visible results. Then expatriate lay missionaries -- married and single -- came to the area and soon many South Sudanese become Catholics.

A South Sudanese elder explained: "When we saw the priests and Sisters living separately and alone we didn't want to be like them. But when we saw Catholic families -- men, women and children -- living happily together, we wanted to be like them." In the family-oriented African society married missionary couples with children have a powerful and unique witness, presence and credibility.

Sources: Healey, Joseph, *African Stories for Preachers and Teachers*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, p. 40.

Healey, Joseph and Donald Sybertz (eds.), *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996 and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997, p. 353. Available as an Ebook on Amazon (for Kindle), Google and Barnes and Noble (for Nook).

The African experience has a lot to contribute to the meeting of the Synod of Bishops that is presently going on in Rome. May our SCCs continue to pray for its practical fruits.”

An important part of this SCCs Facebook Page is that it is a "Prayer Corner," that is, a person is welcome to post a request for prayers of any and every kind. I just received this prayer request from Bishop Antoine Kambanda, the delegate of Rwanda to the Synod of Bishops meeting on "Family and Marriage" in Rome. He writes: "Thanks. Please accompany us with prayer. +A. Kambanda." So SCCs members, please pray fervently for the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire the final two days of the synod in Rome.

The Maryknoll Sisters Congregation (Religious Community of Catholic Missionaries) is sponsoring an International Bazaar of Crafts and Homemade Items on Saturday, 24 October, 2015 at the Maryknoll Sisters Center, Maryknoll, New York, USA. A benefactor has bought and donated to the bazaar some African Batik Shirts, Dresses and Handbags made by the St. Agatha Joy Women's Tailoring Group in St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in Nairobi, Kenya. Sales in, and donations to, other International Craft Fairs and Events in Eastern USA will take place during the rest of this year and next year.

From Cynthia Kayla: “The training of Pastoral Coordinators on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) from all the dioceses of South Sudan has begun today 20 October, 2015 in earnest in Juba. In an informal sharing during breakfast, the participant from Yambio Diocese shared a heartbreaking story on how he had to pass through roadblocks mounted by different groups of rebels. At times he had to be taken through bushy paths in order to avoid any harm to his life. Thank God he got to Juba safely. Hmmm! Makes me wonder how we take peace for granted. Don't we?”

From Ketty Nemwa: "I am the youth who represented Tororo Archdiocese, Uganda at the LUMKO COURSE in Nairobi. Am writing to thank you with much pleasure for having given us an opportunity to be part of that wonderful course where we learnt among many things the pastoral use of the Bible which enlightened us more on how we can relate the Bible to our daily life, learnt more on the various stages of church growth where we also got light on the importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in our various churches, we learnt about the various gospel sharing methods, inculturation, and many more. The course ended well and I must say it was the best experience.

We arrived safely in Uganda and are now drawing plans on how we can start our mission in the archdiocese but so far we have organised together with the youth chaplain to conduct a training on Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and this is starting next week on 5 November, 2015 with the diocesan executive."

From John Bosco Odongo: “WhatsApp groups are a means of evangelization in Small Christian Communities today. Currently I belong to about nine WhatsApp groups: Some of them are family groups and others are directly SCCs that I have lived and worked with and in most cases I facilitated their days of prayer and pilgrimages to the National Shrine of Mother Mary at Subukia within Kenya. They are really a new way of being church as the SCCs essentially are.

Thus WhatsApp groups are a new way of being Small Christian Communities. These groups pass on faith, open opportunities for people to share their sorrows and joys, developments, organize meetings, raise funds for church developments and support the poor among us, etc. This is where the Spirit is taking us today. The following are the WhatsApp groups that I belong to today: St. John the Baptist SCC, J.B and Family International, St. Kizito Catholic Youth, St. Anne SCC Tassia Group, The Kizitos, Depaulians, Royal Class, Tangaza Charismatic Group and St. Teresa Donor Club. Through these groups we share the Word of God every day of our lives. You can't miss the touchdown sharing, the evangelization programs, service and help to the poor, sick and elderly.

Yes, it is a new way of being the family of God. I love them. These days I am on sick leave, but I am as effective in evangelization as ever before right from my room. Hahahaha. I just reflect on a text of the gospel or when I receive any inspiring message from one group I transmit to the others as well. If there is need to create awareness about employment opportunities, issues to do with health or anything going on in the society I just post to all the groups. I can't share all here for sure.”

From Jennifer Mertens, "10 Tips for College Freshmen: Staying Connected to Your Faith," *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 5 November 5, 2015:

1. Catholic campus ministers may coordinate weekly prayer services or Small Faith Communities.

2. Join a Small Faith Group or intentional community. It's a great way to meet other students interested in reflecting together and growing closer to God. Small groups can focus on any sort of topic such as Scripture or prayer, and they can be a specific women's or men's group. Your school may also offer the chance to live in community with students who share similar values or interests.”

From Bibiana Joohyun Ro: "Your message of the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team to the participants of the VII GA in Bangkok, Thailand was announced on the second day. It showed us solidarity of SCCs between Eastern Africa and Asia. I hope we can continue to interact, enrich and strengthen each other for SCCs."

From Father Michael Li, a priest from China, currently studying at the John Paul II Institute in Washington DC, USA and living at the Theological College in Washington. “I am from Ningbo Diocese near Shanghai, China. Our Cathedral Parish of the Assumption has 26 Small Bible Study Groups (SBSGs) that meet weekly. These SCCs are the basic structure of the parish and are supported by the local Chinese bishop. The leaders attend a training once a week and provide support and feedback to the pastor. There is a priest and three volunteers who visit these Small Communities regularly.”

Deacon John Bosco Odongo, CM explains his ministry in Nairobi, Kenya:

"I am asked to present on these topics in formation meetings of our Associate Seminarians: Seven steps of prayer in SCCs, activities in the SCCs, leadership in SCCs and in our Vincentian Congregation, introduction to Skype SCC-St. Isidore, website of the SCCs and Facebook for the SCCs' How to prepare homilies (here I want to emphasize the importance of listening to the sharing of the SCCs Members so as to inform our homily preparations and presentation), Vincentian virtues and vows (for the passing on of the Vincentian heritage and identity). These are the topics we agreed with the formation director of the associates to start with. May God help me to pass the right message to his people. As you know these are seminarians and their director are also involved in ministry in SCCs every weekend. So training them will help them to facilitate better the SCCs' life and pastoral ministry. Pray for me to be the instrument that the Lord wants me to be. Most importantly, to be bold and creative, and to lead his people to enter deeply into a new way of being church, the Church in the Neighborhood.

The SCCs are the most important aspect of our formation since some of our guys will be working in the parishes and popular missions. This can only be effective when done in collaboration with the SCC leaders and members. Moreover, these ministries can only be done and perfected within the context of the SCCs. This is a good example of how the formation and training of Catholic seminarians is "different" in Eastern Africa as compared to the West (Europe and North America). SCCs are a priority.

Our free, online Ebook states: “Another learning from Asia is the growing importance of Basic Human Communities (BHCs) in the context of challenges faced by SCCs/BECs in interreligious dialogue. Asia is the cradle of the world's major religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. It is the birthplace of many other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism and Shintoism. Millions also espouse traditional or tribal religions, with varying degrees of structured ritual

and formal religious teaching. Please share your experiences in Asia and Africa of forming BHCs with Muslims. Positive experiences and examples can overcome the division and disunity in the world today.”

SCCs are described as the "Church on the Neighborhood." In our African SCCs some of our neighbors are Muslims. How are we relating to them/interacting with them/working with them on common interests? Please give your answers below:

From Joseph G. Healey: “In our SCCs let us visit our Muslim neighbors and pray with them for peace and good relationships on the local level and on the world level.”

From Ben Wanjala: A few bad Muslims do not represent Islam. Many are good and they are our brothers and sisters. We should pray for them for better understanding.”

From Mary-Queen O. Griffith: “In our SCCs @ Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Parish in Lagos Archdiocese, Nigeria we encourage Muslims around us to be faithful to their prayers and live as brothers and sisters.”

From San Bernardino Diocese: "Working alongside local Hispanic parish leaders, Ana Garcia has launched Small Faith Communities (SFCs) in various parishes in San Bernardino Diocese, California, USA that were struggling to begin a Hispanic ministry. Now Hispanic Catholics have a place where they can come to deepen and share their faith with others in the parish. They now feel like they have a place where they belong and can worship God in their own language and with their own cultural traditions. Small Faith Communities allow for volunteers to invest in the development of leadership at a local level. More importantly, Small Faith Communities become local advocates for community development. They have a profound impact on bringing in new families, developing new innovative outreach ministries and supporting the local pastor to grow the Catholic Church in their area.”

From Joseph G. Healey: “In the USA I am continuing to do research on Small Groups and their many types and distinctions. Recently I am studying specific Secular Small Groups. The bottom line is that I am trying to demonstrate that Small Christian Communities (capitalized for a reason) are an official pastoral priority and structure in the Catholic Church in different parts of the world such as Eastern Africa and different from the many other Small Apostolic Groups.”

“On 30 November world leaders will inaugurate the Paris Climate Summit (called COP21) and sign a treaty to tackle the climate crisis. On 29 November what are our SCCs going to do as millions of Catholics join the Global Climate March to call for climate action. Marches will take place in over 3,000 locations around the world including Nairobi, Kenya. Let world leaders know we stand behind Pope Francis in his call to defend Mother Earth!”

From Mary-Queen O. Griffith: “Am new to Small Christian Communities. SCCs were introduced in my parish in Lagos, Nigeria a few months ago. The meetings are held in my house every Tuesdays for one hour. We had election on Tuesday and I was elected as one of the coordinators. I want to learn more about the SCCs.”

From Kimori Forer: “It was a grace for us members of St. Kizito SCC, the Catholic Church and the country of Kenya at large to have had a chance of being visited by Pope Francis. The Pope stayed with us for three days. On the third day he met the poor people from

the slums at St. Joseph the Worker Parish. On his way to Kangemi most of us of St. Kizito SCC, in particular the small boy Richard Quinn junior, were blessed at the Emmaus gate. In all the three days the St. Kizito members mainly Orondo, Sammy, Ben, Paul, Joshat, Annastasia and Kimori were given responsibilities of taking care of the guests' luggage. In return we received rosaries from the Pope. Indeed it was blessed moment to St. Kizito SCC. God bless Kenya.”

From Joseph Healey: “After a visit to the San Francisco Bay Area of California, USA here are some of my findings on Small Christian Communities. I am using “Small Groups” as the umbrella term for those 5,000+ groups that we have researched and talked about (based on the original Notre Dame research). The term “small groups” appears 133 times and “small group” 222 times in my Ebook. The three main patterns on this present visit and research are:

1. Rich diversity of small groups. Many, many names, varieties and experiences.
2. The *Bible* is read and reflected upon in many small groups, but mainly *Bible* study with few groups reading the Gospel of the following Sunday.
3. Optional style. Most small groups are not part of a structured and prioritized pastoral plan.

One classification of small group is:

Small Apostolic Group/Small Church Group/Small Prayer Group/Small Spiritual Group/Small Religious Group

Small Christian Communities (capitalized for a reason) are an official pastoral priority and structure in the Catholic Church in some parts of the world and different from the many other Small Apostolic Groups. SCCs are part of the official theological, pastoral and ecclesial structure. In the Eastern African experience they are Small Neighborhood Parish Based Groups and described as Small Lectionary-based Faith Sharing Groups.”

From Alamanjames Omondi: “Special attention folks!! This coming Sunday, 6 December, St. Silvester SCC in-conjunction with the Youth Committee invites you to participate in the St. Silvester SCC Super 8 football (soccer) Tournament. Simple rules: 8 players from each jumuiya consisting of (1 Seminarian, 2 ladies and 5 gents) failure of which you will play with less people. 3,000/= shillings prize money to be WON. Note: Each game will only be played for 15 minutes of 8 min in each half. Venue: Holy Cross Catholic Church Dandora grounds, Nairobi, Kenya. Time: 2 pm--6 pm. If you are seeing this, just think hard and consider, what 3,000/= could do for your jumuiya in this FESTIVE SEASON!!”

From Alphonse Omolo: “SCC members are in solidarity with suffering and struggling people around the world. So Alphonse Omolo, the Moderator of the St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC, and based in Kisumu, Kenya can write: ‘We remember, in prayers 14 people who died and 17 who were critically injured in a shooting in California, USA which took place a few days ago.’”

From Irene Wilson in Australia: "I wanted to share with you some developments in my own SCC journey over the past 12 months. This year I became quite enthusiastic about applying to the Centre for Religious Studies at Monash University to undertake a PhD on the Catholic experience of SCCs in Australia. The marvelous thing about Monash is that PhDs

are free, in that doctoral candidates have their expenses covered by the myriad of grants on offer!

This proposed project of mine was partly motivated by the new growth I was able to uncover for the 2014 web conference. However, as I did the ground work I was made aware that small groups, especially that new flush in W. A., had become "visionless." And I know from experience that other small groups closer to home are more like well-meaning prayer groups than anything else. Feeling pretty flat I pushed the pause button on the project. Then recently a circle of women friends suggested that I should write a book about my SCC experience. It was an instant boost! At the very least I must synthesize the material I have, and all the valuable resources that Jim Cranswick passed on to me during his life time. Perhaps it will shape into a book - maybe even a PhD eventually! Who knows! So that's my aim for 2016."

From retired Bishop Colin Davies: "The implementation of having Small Eucharistic Communities is based on the whole concept of SCCs. There is some hope of progress, but it is not sufficiently understood that the New Evangelisation needs a great number of very active ordained priests with a SCC mentality and an involved laity. The Catholic Church in Kenya has grown impressively though it needs a deep SCC spirituality."

#### OPEN LETTER FROM YOUNG ADULT CATHOLIC LEADERS TO POPE FRANCIS: "BEING CHURCH AT THE PERIPHERIES:"

"Without denying the role of the parish, we know the value of the faith-sharing groups and Small Christian Communities. These communities give our daily lives meaning and support. But we know that Small Communities cannot do it alone. We must join our local communities together in broader networks and movements. As you recently pointed out, 'the future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize.' We want to organize."

From Sophie Chebet: "At St. John the Evangelist Parish, we have family day next week. We prepared also a skit to showcase the importance of Small Community (Jumuiya) and the power of prayer. Karibuni wote."

St. Agatha's Joy Women's Tailoring Group in St. Kizito SCC in Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya received a nice message from Sr. Catherine for the Maryknoll Sisters at Maryknoll, NY who were missioned to Africa: "Thank you for the African crafts for our International Bazaar. We were so delighted to have such lovely things and most everything was quickly sold. The baskets were beautiful and so were the dresses and shirts. Please express our deep gratitude to the women who spent their time making the baskets and sewing the clothes. May God bless them."

What are you and your SCC doing to celebrate the Jubilee Year of Mercy from December, 2015 to November, 2016? Please give your concrete examples below.

Part of the official prayer reads:

"Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and that your Catholic Church, with renewed

enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind."

From Bob Pelton, CSC at Notre Dame, Indiana, USA: "I am gradually transforming my Latin American library to our Moreau Seminary Library. I am placing with those resources the important early documents about the SCC meetings we have sponsored from here, and in Colombia. You have seen these sources. They would be in a safe and secure place. Also, as I continue my research into Blessed Oscar Romero, I have discovered some interesting information about Romero and his relationship to the SCCs. If this might provide interesting to your work, I'll check this further and prepare an article which might be of interest for your archives."

"As we read the Christmas Gospel of St. Luke I was struck by verse: 2:2: 'This taxing was made when Cyrenius was the Governor of Syria.' Now over 2000 years later we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace while modern-day Syria has a civil war and millions of Syrian refugees walk the planet earth."

From the NEWMAN CATHOLIC STUDENT CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, USA: "You've probably heard some of your friends talk about going to a "Bible Study." SCCs are like a Bible Study, but instead of just reading a part of Scripture to try and understand it intellectually, we're going to ask the question: "And how does this apply to me as a 21st Century Christian living on a college campus?" We'll start with a passage from the Bible, read a brief reflection, and then discuss how that week's readings hit us. Groups will be 8-10 students and will meet on a night and time that work best for your schedule! Some will even meet right in the dorms!"

"Ethiopia is hit by worst drought in decades. The UN says about 8.2 million people need emergency food aid in Ethiopia, nearly double the number six months ago. May our SCCs be in solidarity with the people in Ethiopia and pray for and with them in this New Year of 2016."

"This week I visited relatives in Our Lady of Peace Parish, New Providence, New Jersey, USA. The parish has started the "Be My Witness" program presented by RENEW International. It invites all parishioners to become partners in the New Evangelization using parish-based small groups — a proven way to encounter Christ, reawaken faith, and motivate missionary outreach. In the first phase in 2015 during the first six months RENEW International guided the parish leadership (staff, pastoral councils, and key leaders) through the transformation process with training and consultation. In the second phase in 2016 small group members will explore key insights from *The Joy of the Gospel* and develop the attitudes and behaviors of missionary disciples. The 12-session book and DVD work together seamlessly to highlight the attitudes and behaviors of disciples. "In all its activities, the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities ... and a center of constant missionary outreach" (Pope Francis in *The Joy of the Gospel*).

From Alphonse Omolo:

Dear Members of our St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC,

Lots of New Year's blessings with hopes that you are all doing well. I welcome you to our meeting after a Christmas and New Year's break.

I would also request that you to pray for Fr. Febian Pikiti (a member of our AMECEA SCC Training Team) who lost his mother on 24 December. Fr. Febian traveled to Zambia to be with the mother in her final moments. May her soul rest in eternal peace!

The next meeting, on Tuesday, 5 January 2016 at 8 am in Texas; 9 am in New Jersey; 3 pm in Germany, 2 pm in the UK, 2 pm in Accra and 5 pm in Kenya and Tanzania. Next Sunday, 9 January, 2016 is the Baptism of the Lord, the Gospel reading is Luke 3:15-16, 21-22.

Kindly let us know if you will attend.”

“Father Bernard Balun from Indonesia is presently writing his thesis at the Collegio San Paolo Apostolo in Rome on co-responsibility and participating structures in the parish. A major part of his thesis is to talk about how the Small Christian Communities determine the structure in the parish as a communion of communities. He is writing the historical background of the SCCs and found the article on the web: “Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa.” Restructuring parishes into a SCCs pastoral model of church is very important today.”

"Reforming Parish Structures to Create a Participatory Church of SCCs in Pangkalpinang Diocese, Indonesia"  
By Bernard Balun

Link: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/asia/indonesia/356-reforming-parish-structures-to-create-a-participatory-church-of-sccs-in-pangkalpinang-diocese-indonesia.html>

This article is now posted on our SCCs Website under “Indonesia” under “Asia.” It is an important contribution. Our new research indicates that restructuring is the BEST way to build this new SCC Pastoral Model of Church.

[Reforming Parish Structures to Create a Participatory Church of SCCs in Pangkalpinang Diocese...](#)

With a vision to establish a global networking website for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) worldwide, we intend to share SCCs contact information, events, materials, and news for each of the six continents.

SCCs in St. Bridgid Parish, San Antonio, Texas, USA will be the topic of the CTSA show hosted by the Maryknoll Mission Educator: "Hispaos en Mision." Belza Ramos, Lay Coordinator for SCCs at St. Brigid will be interviewed. The show will air Thursday, January 14, 2016 at 6:30 PM and again on Sunday the January 17, 2016 at 4:30 PM. You must have Time Warner Cable TV to view.

Yesterday I spoke with layman Josphat Mulinya, Chairperson of St. Kizito SCC, in Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya about how our SCCs can celebrate the 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy. We can choose specific “Corporal Works of Mercy:”

- Feed the hungry.
- Give drink to the thirsty.

- Clothe the naked.
- Shelter the homeless.
- Visit the sick.
- Visit the imprisoned.
- Bury the dead.

and specific “Spiritual Works of Mercy:”

- . Instruct the ignorant.
- Counsel the doubtful.
- Admonish sinners.
- Bear wrongs patiently.
- Forgive offences willingly.
- Comfort the afflicted.
- Pray for the living and the dead.

A SCC in Machakos Diocese, Kenya has put this into practice by buying a wheelchair for one of its members who has a disability and cannot walk.

From Sophia Chebet: “Happy New Year 2016 to all the SCCs Team and members of SCCs. Am very grateful for your encouragement, prayers, support and accompaniment since I started this project of building a little house in Kiserian, Kenya. We moved in on 1 January 2016. It is not yet complete and so many things still pending, but we are so grateful to God and all our friends who have stood by us to date. May God bless you all abundantly. My new Small Christian Community is St. Josephine Bakhita of St. Mary’s Parish, Kiserian in Ngong Diocese. At the moment we are trying to adjust ourselves to this new environment. Soon we get a chance for our jumuiya members to visit us for our house warming, Eucharistic celebration and official blessing. I will invite you all to come and witness what the Lord has done for us. Indeed, this is our 2015 Miracle. Those who are doubting Thomases, please believe and trust in the Lord Jesus because there is NOTHING IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM!!!

From Joseph Healey: “Written reflection sent to members of our St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC that will meet online on Tuesday, 12 January, 2016: Here is my reflection on *John* 2:1 – 11:

This wedding feast of Cana is a clear reminder of the importance of the Sacrament of Marriage and how we need to promote sacramental marriages more among the young people in our SCCs. Our free, online Ebook Appendix 3 on “Lay Ecclesial Ministries in Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa” includes this ministry:

Marriage Minister that goes by many names (alphabetically):

1. Marriage Pastoral Accompanier (before and after marriage). Also referred to as Marriage Mentor after marriage.
2. Single Mother Pastoral Accompanier.
3. Marriage Animator (before marriage like a Formation Animator).
4. Marriage Counselor (after marriage).

May our SCCs choose the right Marriage Ministers who take their accompaniment services seriously.”

Special prayers for:

**Program of Elections in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya (and other dioceses in Kenya) from 17 January 2016 on following the Pastoral Guidelines.**

1. Small Christian Communities: 17 or 24 January, 2016
2. Out-station Councils: 31 January or 7 February, 2016
3. Parish Pastoral Council: 14 or 21 February, 2016
4. Deanery Pastoral Council: Weekend of 5 or 12 March, 2016
5. Archdiocesan Pastoral Council: Deanery Executives will meet on Saturday, 23 April, 2016

This includes the proper handing over from the out-going leaders to the in-coming leaders before the commissioning of the new leaders as stipulated in the Pastoral Guidelines. Here we see the principles of subsidiarity and decentralization in action starting from below.

From Hailu Adalo: “I humbly ask you to remember us here in South Africa in your prayers on Sunday, 17 January 2016. We have a special gathering to discuss our SCCs’ spiritual and social issues during this year 2016. The Ethiopian and Eritrean SCC members will join from three diocesan parishes to show their Christian unity in this foreign land because our SCC life comes from the verse in *Psalms* 133:1 "How good it is, how pleasant, where the people dwell as one!" We are expecting a chaplain from the Ethiopian Capuchin Congregation sent by H. E Cardinal Berhanyesus and Capuchins of Ethiopia Council of good will. Since 2010 our SCC members have been struggling a lot to understand the local language because we are so unique in Africa. NOTE: Language is very important to organize well our SCCs here in South Africa. The *Bible* says "but in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, so as to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue." (1 *Corinthians* 14:19). Wishing a “Merciful 2016” to you all!”

From John Siyumbu: “Yesterday, Fr. Healey and I attended the St. Kizito SCC session in Waruku, Nairobi. The vibrancy of our faith in the SCC was a witness of the presence of God among His people.



From Ed Schreurs: "In the Netherlands we have 50 Small Catholic Communities (SCCs). Shortly I will send them information about your marvelous website. You may include our country under the button Europe. The small community in my village Best is called Antonius in Beweging. You can have a look under the link Anthony: <http://www.antoniusinbeweging-best.nl/>

I myself attended the Council 50 Conference on "Towards a Church – Inspired by the Gospel – for the World" in Rome in November, 2015. With 100 participants we committed ourselves to revive the ideas of Vatican II by signing a pact. I attach the relevant links. I accepted the job of collecting as many addresses as possible of likeminded associations. I wonder what we could do together. Personally I organize dialogues as you can read on my website: [www.jhn-23.info](http://www.jhn-23.info)

Links:

The Pact 6 pages

Summary for the press 3 pages

Sign the pact

Quotation from the "Council 50 Declaration/Pact:"

“Towards a Church Inspired by the Gospel for a World of Peace, Justice and Solidarity: A Pact of Disciples of Jesus”

Includes this section on BECS/SCCs:

## 2.2 BASE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

Aware

- of secularization processes in the modern world
- of Pope Francis's call for all the faithful to be involved in the church's evangelical mission, and
- of the need to replace the model of the church presently organized as a hierarchical pyramid;

#### Encouraged

- by the growing numbers of lay people all over the world who are engaged in building a more horizontal and inclusive church, and
- by the growing relationships of dialogue and friendship among Christians ecumenically and with other religions,

#### We commit ourselves

- to build a church that embraces Base Ecclesial Communities as its fundamental model for being church
- to focus our communities on action for justice, peace and the integrity of creation
- as church to ask publicly for forgiveness from all who seek to be recognized as members of the People of God but who have been marginalized or rejected and hurt by our doctrines or practices, and
- to work actively for ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, collaboration and friendship.

From Malraff Jiminez Mendivil: "My visit to the SCC of St. Luke in Mukuru, OLQP South B for the election of their new leaders was a wonderful experience. Let us continue praying for all of them so they will be ONE..." "Special thanks to our SCC members for electing new leaders last Sunday in Nairobi Archdiocese. Let's support them, accompany them and pray for them..." "May God bless all the leaders of our SCCs!"

"Students in our SCCs Classes at Tangaza University College and Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College in Nairobi, Kenya are welcome to join our SCCs Facebook Family to share their SCCs experiences and insights."

"Most of the attention is on the election of the new chairperson of the SCC, but the election of the leaders in the other lay ecclesial ministries is important too. The pastor of Kiserian Parish in Ngong Diocese, Kenya points out that Catholics who have not been married sacramentally can still be chosen for certain SCCs leadership positions such as

- Justice and Peace Animator
- Good Neighbor/Good Samaritan/Promoter of Community Spirit
- Servant of the Poor/Helper of the Needy
- Health Servant/Volunteer Community Health Care (CHC) Worker or Minister
- Projects/Development Coordinator"

"Congratulations to the newly elected leaders in our SCCs in Kenya. Of the 21 future challenges, priorities and actions of SCCs in Eastern Africa, Priority No. 3 is: 'Train SCC leaders/animators/facilitators/coordinators in animation, facilitation and coordination skills.' This is an on-going process. Those who facilitate the *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection Services* need regular updating and renewal. Also new people need to be trained to facilitate groups. Our research shows that bad habits can creep in and the sharing and reflection can change

into a teaching mode (where one person takes over) or into a discussion mode. Thus training SCC leaders in group dynamic skills is important.”

From Benard Wajala: “I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my SCC members of St. Kizito for their commitment throughout the year 2015. On Sunday 24/1/2016 we had elections whereby fifteen members were elected as per the list below:

1. **Chairman** *Paul Mboya*  
**Vice chairman** *Dominica Musyoka*
2. **Secretary** *Catherine Mbaluka*  
**Vice secretary** *Fansisca Pamella*
3. **Treasurer** *Salome Musili*
4. **Liturgy Leader** *Benard Wanjala*  
**Vice Liturgy** *Gabriel Mwatela*
5. **Leader of Good Neighboring** *Michael Orondo*  
**Vice Leader of Good Neighboring** *Annastacia Syombua*
6. **Matrimony Leader** *Jacklyne Oduor*  
**Vice Matrimony Leader** *Sammy Ngunga*
7. **Youth Leader** *Berita Nzula*  
**Vice Youth Leader** *Justus Muasya*
8. **PMC Leader** *Joyce Atanus*  
**Vice PMC Leader** *Paul Makau*

Elections were conducted by Father Stephen Mukami together with Sister Mary Nelsa.

From Deacon Charles Ndumbi, SVD: “Sunday Reflection: Paul says as our body has many parts with different functions, so too our Christian calling requires of each one of us to discern the ministry that we are called to carry out in the Catholic Church such as: Leaders of SCCs, prophets, apostles, parish priests, etc. God has given everybody gift, use it to contribute to the growth of Christ’s body, the church. Let’s pray that the spirit of God may give us strength to be faithful to the word of God. Amen!”

“The theme of our SCCs Classes in Nairobi this week is: “The Importance of Lay Involvement in the Missionary Outreach of SCCs in Eastern Africa.” We are studying the Triangle of Laity/SCCs/Mission. Two Kenyan laymen spoke. We discussed key obstacles and problems in the growth of SCCs and their pastoral solutions. We gave many examples of Youth SCCs like the Fish Group in Kisumu, Kenya and and the active involvement of women in SCCs and Catholic Church.”

From Michael Orondo: “As leaders and members of SCCs we have one goal: To convey the love and tenderness of Christ to those who are most in need.” This is a very important comment from the former Liturgy Leader of St. Kizito SCC. How do SCC members live/put into practice the 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy? Pope Francis urges to practice and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in our SCCs. How many works can we name? How do we live them on a daily basis -- especially in reaching out to the marginalized and those on the peripheries.

In our SCCs Class at Utume (Salesians) today we reported on the elections taking place in the SCCs this month. We evaluated both the successes and failures as a "learning

moment." We studied the importance of the chairperson stepping down after two terms. This sets an example for government and other organizations' elections.

"In our SCCs Class at Tangaza today when the internet connectivity went down, the students with Smartphones used my Samsung Galaxy Mobile Hotspot to connect to our SCCs Website and we analyzed some of the free, online E-Resources."

"During our Theological Symposium at Tangaza today our Small Discussion Group (Small Breakout Session) reflected on this question: '*Ad Gentes* emphasizes that through Baptism all Christians are called to be missionaries and evangelizers. 99% of the members of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are lay people. How are they promoting missionary awareness and sharing their faith with others?' We used a Group Dynamics Method/Tool to involve everyone in the discussion. When one person finished sharing, he or she called on another person in the group and so on until everyone had shared at least once. This improved the quality (richness) and the focus of the sharing. Our Breakout Session focused on how SCC members learn from each other and grow by sharing their grassroots experiences together."

"No. 5 under "Checklist of 15 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today" is: '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.' A SCC could study the six chapters of *Ad Gentes* in six consecutive weeks. One recommendation from the symposium: Publish a simplified booklet on *Ad Gentes* for lay people in English called "Mission to All People."

From Vincent Rotich, Isiolo Diocese, Kenya: "In the SCCs Poll I voted for 'relationships' because SCCs bring us together as members of the Family of God to love one another."

"SCCs Involvement in the 2016 Kenya Lenten Campaign on the theme 'Peaceful and Prosperous Kenya...My Responsibility:' Two weeks ahead, our SCCs Classes in Nairobi will be studying "Week 3 (Third Sunday of Lent – 28 February, 2016) on "Family Values:" The key discussion question in Step Three ("Act") is: "As a communion of families in the neighborhood what basic family values can Small Christian Communities emphasize and promote? How?"

Some responses:

From Ben Wanjala: "By helping the couples who live together but go to different churches. Also help those who have not married in church to do so." NOTE: These are two challenges in Kenya today. Mixed marriages (Catholics married to Protestants or those of other faiths). Catholic couples not married in a Catholic Church yet. Let us pastoral accompany both situations.

From the Moderator: "The drawing (cartoon) on page 18 shows a happy family eating together that is a perfect setting to share family values."

From Joseph G Healey: “A key is to answer this question in the context of performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy in the extended family during this 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy.”

From Peter Oakalet, the Coordinator of SCCs in Soroti Diocese, Uganda:

“Below is our Pastoral Plan in Soroti Diocese, Uganda:

1. Prioritize the establishment of Youth SCCs.
2. Encourage Lay Ecclesial Ministries of different Pastoral Companiers of SCCs.
3. Lay basic strategies for authentic SCCs.
4. Compilation of Small Christian Communities statistics.
5. Relevance of Small Christian Communities.
6. Restructure the existing Small Christian Communities in our diocese.
7. Introduce the Word of God by Bible Sharing in Small Christian Communities meetings.
8. Introduce the Word of God and Small Christian Communities Masses in the Catholic Diocese of Soroti.
9. Emphasize forgiveness in Small Christian Communities because the SCCs form a Big Church; staying at peace with each member brings a sense of grassroots evangelization.
10. Encourage every Catholic Faithful to become an active member of a Small Christian Community in the Church in the Neighborhood.
11. Encourage Missionary Vocations so that there are capable and holy men and women still willing to take the faith beyond their homeland.
12. Implore the parish priests to participate in the SCCs meetings so that they can know what the community members are doing. This is the only way they can guide the Small Christian Communities in their parishes.
13. Build Small Christian Communities as grassroots evangelization.”

An interesting online conversation was triggered as follows:

From SCCs Website Moderator, Nairobi: “After our SCCs Class at Tangaza yesterday the question was asked: ‘What parish in Africa has the most SCCs?’ Our SCCs Research Team does not know so we welcome answers from members of this SCCs Facebook Page. We do not know the exact answer, but it is over 200. We have heard of a parish with 305 SCCs in Moshi, Tanzania, a parish with over 225 SCCs in Machakos, Kenya, etc.”

From Raphael Okusaga, Lagos: “We have over 50 parishes in Lagos Archdiocese that have SCC Centers. My parish of St. Matthew Amukoko has 48 SCC Centers.”

From SCCs Website Moderator, Nairobi: “Thank you, Raphael. The Nigerian students (and others) in my two SCCs classes here in Nairobi, Kenya are asking the meaning of ‘SCC Centers.’ Is this the same as a SCC in Eastern Africa that is about 15-20 people?”

From Raphael Okusaga, Lagos: “Yes, the same in operation and philosophy, but with some variations based on environment. Our SCC groups meet at a specific location in the neighborhood with 20 To 30 members. It is not rotational, i.e. the SCC members meet in the same place each week. By the way, our parish priest is from Kenya, Fr. Emma Likoko, SPS.”

From SCCs Website Moderator, Nairobi: “In our Utume Class in Nairobi we learned that these “centres” in Nigeria refer to small groups -- like SCCs and small devotional groups.

From Moses Ndolo: “We salute you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. I am Moses Ndolo, the chairperson of St. Veronica Small Christian Community, St. Paul Catholic Parish, Mombasa Archdiocese.

We are kindly appealing to the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities Training Team to support us with any contribution to help us save the precious life of one of our members called Mr. Eric Kimath who needs a wheelchair to help him move. The total cost on the wheelchair is Kshs 86,500/= The following are our contributions:

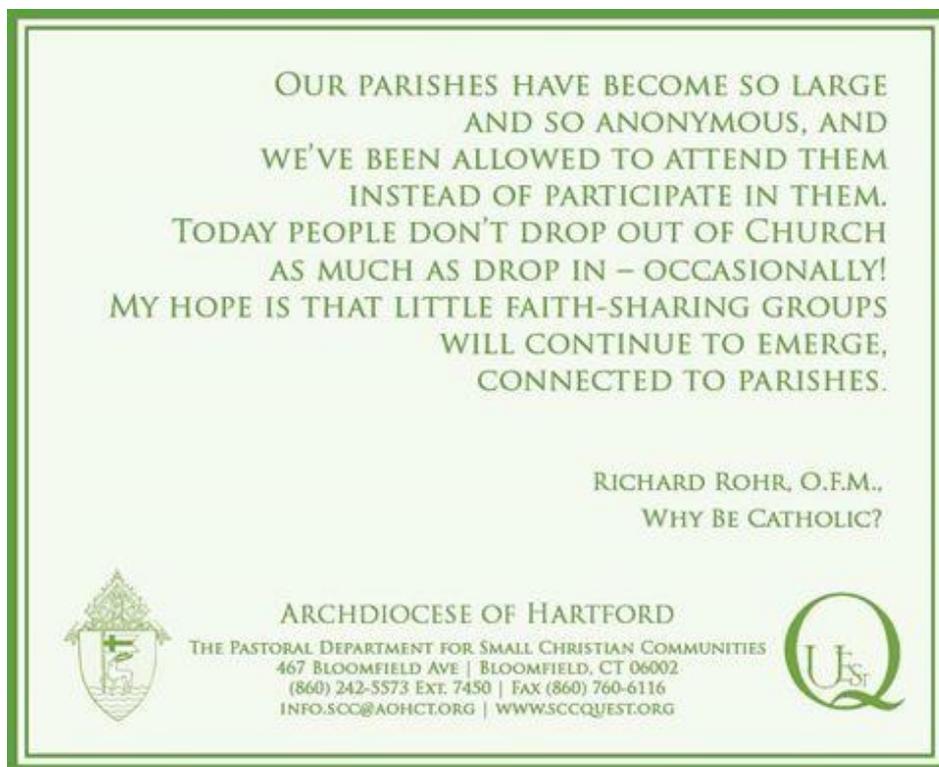
- St. Veronica SCC contribution Kshs 20,000
- St. Paul Catholic Parish contribution Kshs 15,000
- Other 8 SCCs contribution Kshs 18,000

Total collection raised Kshs 53,000  
Balance required Kshs 33,500

Any contribution extended to us as per our humble request will be very much highly appreciated as we wait to hear from you soon.

Yours in Christ  
Moses Ndolo  
Chairperson St. Veronica SCC”

“Here is a good quotation on the importance of SCCs:”



“A reminder to SCC members in Kenya: Today in the 2016 Kenya Lenten Campaign

on the theme of Week 3 on ‘Family Values’ we are reflecting on the the key discussion question in Step Three (“Act”): ‘As a communion of families in the neighborhood what basic family values can Small Christian Communities emphasize and promote? How?’ Two basic family values are two of the spiritual works of mercy: bear wrongs patiently and forgive offenses willingly. It is interesting that in our SCCs Poll on: The best part of my Small Christian Community is: ... most SCC members vote for relationships.’”

“During this 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy one of the seven corporal Works of Mercy” is to "visit the imprisoned." Deacon Sylvester Chimenge, MAfr. is a member of our SCCs Class at Tangaza University College in Nairobi. As part of his MPM Thesis he is writing about his diaconate ministry in the three Kamati Prisons. Presently the Main Prison has 10 SCCs that serve as spiritual support groups and places of transformation. The Medium Prison has five SCCs. All the catechetical instructions, all the liturgical preparations and all the spiritual arrangements are done at the level of the SCCs.”

“Please pray for the repose of the soul of George Leandro Abok, the Father of Deacon John Bosco Odongo, CM who was a student in our SCCs Class at Tangaza University College in Nairobi in 2015 and presently is doing pastoral work in Kitale Diocese. He died on Friday, 4 March, 2016 and will be buried on Monday, 7 March, 2016. He is now one of our revered ancestors in Christ. May his soul rest in eternal peace.”

From Thomas Pouya: “Jumuiya members of St. Padre Pio Jumuiya in Tangaza University College during a sharing on the Gospel of the following Sunday:”



Coming soon: "Good Shepherd," a new biannual journal of the Department of Pastoral Theology of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (JDPT -- CUEA) in Nairobi, Kenya. Mission: "To promote pastoral conversion and missionary renewal by inspiring and empowering the People of the AMECEA Region and beyond through research and publication relevant to putting the faith in practice at the domestic and Small Christian Communities levels within the parish and Local Churches."

Reflection for Lent 2016:

"For centuries, Christians have engaged in spiritual disciplines to invite God to speak into their lives. From fasting to *Lectio Divina*, and from prayer to rest, the spiritual disciplines place us at God's feet—both when we practice them individually and with others. Spiritual disciplines are the secret to staying refreshed for ministry, so leaders especially gain from integrating them into life. But SCCs and other small groups benefit, too, when they practice together, often experiencing intimacy and growth."

"When are we going to have another Small Christian Communities (SCCs) National Convocation in the USA? These gatherings are important for sharing new ideas, support and networking." This post elicited these comments:

- I hope RENEW International can take the lead.
  -
- These convocations provide unique opportunities for gathering 'new knowledge' on the current development of SCCs and what measures are being implemented to improve SCCs all over the world.
- These gatherings are important for sharing new ideas, support and networking.
- We need another convocation.
- This can be an online (via the internet) convocation including a SCCs webinar.

From Joseph Healey: "Today I gave two lectures in the Ecclesiology Class at Hekima University College in Nairobi. There were 58 Second Year Theology students. My four-page handout covered "Important Quotations Related to African Ecclesiology" (11 on "Content" and 2 on "Process/Method"). I presented the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa today following on Avery Dulles' six models. I received a generous stipend of 4,000/= Kenyan Shillings (\$40) that I will give to my St. Kizito SCC for the marginated people and people on the peripheries (Pope Francis' words) in our economically poor, informal settlement of Waruku, Nairobi."



Group Photo of the 2016 SCCs Class at Tangaza, Nairobi, Kenya

From Abel Muse of the Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat: “Let us keep each other in our prayers. You are in our family prayer agenda. We ask you to remember the Ethiopian drought and hunger where millions of people are suffering. It is a hard time for many Ethiopians in different parts of the country. Still no rain in most parts of the country. The National Pastoral Activities Commission (PAC) had a meeting from March 20-23, 2016. The meeting was a Consultation on the Five Year Pastoral Activities Strategic Plan 2017-2021. The draft copy was prepared by the Pastoral Coordinators from 13 ecclesiastical jurisdictions together with the Bishop in Charge of the Pastoral Commission. In the SP the issue of SCCs was one of the top agenda especially how to activate and make the Biblical Apostolate live in the faithful. It is agreed that SCCs are the basis for Bible sharing, prayer and deep spirituality. We will communicate to you from our pastoral office for your suggestions about on how to go about it. We are planning to organize one workshop in July/August, 2016.”

“Yesterday I visited Deacon Sylvester Mimbululu Chimenge, M.Afr. who wrote his Master’s Thesis in Pastoral Ministry on "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a Platform for Continuous Catechesis in Eastern Africa -- Opportunities and Challenges: Case Study of Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish South B, Nairobi, Kenya." We participated in a Class of Adult Catechumens who will be baptized on Holy Saturday night including one woman from St. Paul SCC. We continue to explore the link between SCCs and the RCIA (Adult Catechumenate) and other celebrations of the sacraments such as matrimony. The SCC is an important "home" and support group for faith formation.”

From Sylvester Chimenge: “Here are the adult catechumens of Our Lay Queen of Peace, South B Parish who will be baptized this coming Saturday night, 26 March, 2016. We had a good discussion with them about the importance of Small Christian Communities in their spiritual growth. Our guest of honor was Mwanajumuiya Father Joseph Healey.”



From Alloys Nyakundi: 3/28, 05:18]: 1st Reading - *Acts 2:14, 22-33*.

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

22 Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know --

23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the ...’ [See More](#)”

From Charles Ndumbi Douglas: “Five different SCCs are involved in infant baptisms during Easter at St. Cecilia Church, Ruai, Nairobi, Kenya.”



From Sammy Ngunga: “St. Kizito SCC members helped Agnes Alitsi and Benard (Ben) Wanjala to finish the steps of their marriage preparation over a period of several years. Their sacramental marriage finally took place during the 8 a.m. Mass on Easter Sunday at St. Austin’s Parish on 27 March, 2016 followed by a lively reception in the parish hall. They choose a married couple in Waruku – Herbert and Jacinta Nabangi as the Best Man and Matron of Honor. Hopefully they will actively accompany the new couple in their marriage. Congratulations are now in order, Ben & Agnes! We are proud of you, Ben. We are happy to have u as our Jumuiya Liturgy leader.”



From Alloys Nyakundi: “Am proud of St. Dominic SCC. We were voted the 2nd best SCC out of 9 SCCs at Kenyatta University (KU).”



Party party party of St. Patrick Small Christian Community Family of our larger St. Dominic SCC. You are all welcome to our celebration on Monday, 4 April, 2016. Brothers and sisters if u miss it, u miss a lot. Come and move to a different episode of your life. Welcome welcome.”

From a seminarian in our SCCs Class in Tangaza: "I am happy to say that my vocation and desire to serve in the Catholic Church as a priest and religious root back to my participation in St. Stephen SCC, Mabanga Sub-Parish in Kibabii Parish, Bungoma Diocese, Kenya. The SCC plays a major role in the formation of the child together with the family that instills family values."

From Alloys Nyakundi: 4/5, 05:28]: 1st Reading - *Acts* 5:17-26:

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. 36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

From Alloys Nyakundi: “Am much humbled for the wonderful welcome we three students of KU got at Don Bosco Utume in presenting two topics:

1. ‘Participation of Youth in Small Christian Communities in Africa.’
2. ‘Forming Specific Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in Africa.’

May God bless us and help us make the SCCs strong. I can’t forget to say *pongezi* to Father [Joseph G. Healey](#) who is working day and night to ensure that the SCCs are strong in Africa. *Makofi.*”

From Nancy Njehia: “I hope to get back to my former high school (Our Lady of Consolata Mugoiri Girls High School in Murang’a Diocese) and encourage the YCS to form Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) where the students can get spiritual growth and get to share as a small group.”

Comment: “This is very important, Nancy. If there are 500 Catholic girls in the YCS group, I hope you can help to form a number of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) that combine faith sharing and Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection.”

“The April, 2016 issue of "The Update," a publication of Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya, has a nice article on our SCCs Class called “Our Course Was Different” (pages 6-7 with three photos). It can be accessed in three ways:

1. A printed copy has been posted on different bulletin boards at Tangaza.
2. A File Attachment containing the issue has been sent out to the Tangaza Email Mailing List.
3. The online version can be accessed on the Tangaza Website at the top right hand

side of the Front Page under “Tangaza Updates”: The direct link is: [http://tangaza.org/wp-cont.../2016/04/Tangazaupdate4-16.pdf...](http://tangaza.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Tangazaupdate4-16.pdf...)

“From 11-14 April, 2016 I will be visiting Meru Diocese, Kenya with diocesan priest Father Moses Muriira. We will visit St. Massimo Parish, the site of his SCC Practicum for his Master's Degree in Pastoral Ministry at Tangaza and animate a one-day SCCs Workshop on “Finding Pastoral Solutions to Ongoing Challenges in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Meru Diocese” at St. Michael Retreat Centre. Prayers please.”



SCCs workshop in Meru Diocese organised by SCCs Diocesan Coordinator Father Lawrence Murori and facilitated by Father Joseph Healey and Father Moses Muriira. This great photo shows participants from one deanery praying together as a SCC.



Facilitator Father Joseph Healey (Father *Menda* meaning in Kimeru “the one who is loved”) gives his last word on the last day of the Small Christian Community Workshop in Meru.

“Radio Jangwani (the Swahili word for "desert"), is the Catholic FM Radio Station of Marsabit Diocese in northern Kenya. Every Saturday evening from 7 to 8 p.m. Bishop Peter Kihara has a one hour radio program when he reads and reflects on the Scripture Readings of the following Sunday and applies them to our daily lives. Let us hope that many SCC members are listening.”

Adapted "Prayer for Vocations 2016:"

“Father of mercy, who gave your Son for our salvation and who strengthens us always with the gifts of your Spirit, grant us Small Christian Communities which are alive, fervent and joyous, which are fonts of fraternal life, and which nurture in the young the desire to consecrate themselves to you and to the work of evangelization. Sustain these Small Christian Communities in their commitment to offer appropriate vocational catechesis and ways of proceeding towards each one’s particular consecration. Grant the wisdom needed for vocational discernment, so that in all things the greatness of your merciful love may shine forth. May Mary, Mother and guide of Jesus, intercede for each Small Christian community, so that, made fruitful by the Holy Spirit, it may be a source of true vocations for the service of the holy People of God.”

“New SCCs experiences are presented in our SCC classes. Today at Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College in Nairobi, Kenya a Salesian seminarian described his one year of pastoral ministry in St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Gumbo, Juba, South Sudan. The parish has four SCCs and he visited St. Peter SCC on four different occasions. The priests celebrate mass in the SCCs once a month.”

Anthony Dela Acquaye: “32 students of Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College, Nairobi, Kenya underwent a two credit course of 2 hours per week for 14 weeks with Mwanajumuiya Padre Joseph G. Healey. We brought the course to a successful end on Friday, 29 April, 2016.”



“We hope that this SCCs Facebook Page can be a "forum" for analysis, discussion, exchange, information, questions and answers, quotations and updates including brainstorming on pastoral and missionary issues and proposing pastoral solutions to particular challenges/problems. As a concrete example, a Spiritan Deacon wrote a Reflection Paper on “How to Divide a Large SCC into Two Smaller SCCs" in St. Mary's Mukuru Kwa Njenga Catholic Parish in Nairobi. He came across an active St. Basil SCC with 97 committed members. Two pastoral solutions: meet three times a week so that 30 people can participate in the Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection each time. Start a YSCC for young people.” Our SCCs research clearly shows that the "key" is not the number of families or individual members registered in the small community. The key is the normal participation in the weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection. It should be 15-20 members.”

Alloys Nyakundi: “Actually since I joined this page I can confess that my faith has grown and become more active in SCC issues. **NOTE:** One of the purposes of our SCCs Facebook Page is that it is an "important "space" (“place”) for spiritual, pastoral and theological conversation, discussion and sharing such as Faith Sharing.”

Moses Muriira. “May I humbly thank all the wanajumuyias for their support and prayers especially this year's Small Christian Communities class. I have completed my course work and practicum at Tangaza. Much gratitude to Mwanajumuyia Joe Healey for his support and encouragement. I need your prayers as I embark on writing my thesis in Meru, Kenya. I love you all. Wanajumuyia oyeee!!!”

Robert Mosi reports from Iramba Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania: "Last month we had elections in our 13 SCCs in the Main Center, Nyagasense. I was elected the Chairperson of St. Joachim SCC.”

From Evangelist Hailu Adalo, Ethiopian and Eritrean Community National Coordinator in South Africa: "The Ethiopian diocesan priest Father Tekelmariam Ammanuel Bulamo visited our Ethiopian and Eritrean Small Christian Community during the Easter celebrations. During his visit he celebrated masses in various diocesan parishes and participated in some special events in South Africa. He celebrated our Group Mass in our home language Amharic. Our Community Executive Committee members and the National Coordinator in South Africa are hoping to have our own Permanent Chaplain from Ethiopia."

Feedback from one of the seminarians in our January to March, 2016 SCCs Course in the eighth and last semester in Tangaza in Nairobi, Kenya: "Thank you for teaching us and sharing your experiences with us. It was a symbiotic classroom experience. Thank you for those visitors whose experiences ring live in us each day in varied ways. It is a good course to wind up theology with."

These entries on our SCCs Facebook Page show that it is much more than just casual and superficial social networking. We hope that this SCCs Facebook Page can be a forum for analysis, conversation, discussion, exchange, information, questions and answers, quotations and updates including:

- Brainstorming on spiritual, pastoral and missionary issues.
- Concrete, practical experiences, stories and case studies of grassroots SCCs.
- Daily and Sundays Lectionary Readings and Commentary.
- Important "space" (“place”) for spiritual, pastoral and theological conversation, discussion and sharing.
  - Faith Sharing.
  - Discussion on the themes and topics of articles and theses on SCCs.
  - African Christian Palaver Theology or African Christian Conversation Theology.
  - Discussion on the process or methodology of theology.
- Meaningful “Prayer Corner.”
- Photographs and Video Clips.
- Providing new SCCs resources, tools and links.
- Requests for financial help from our *Mfuko wa Jumuiya*.
- Spiritual and Pastoral Reading.

This SCCs Facebook Page is pastoral ministry. It is evangelization. It provides important research, formation, training, learning and teaching resources, tools and references.

A concrete example is that several members (fans) weekly post their reflections on the Scripture Readings of the following Sunday on this SCCs Facebook Page. These reflections can be very helpful for personal prayer, SCC reflections and to aid preachers and teachers in preparing their homilies, sermons and other teachings for the following Sunday in the Catholic Church's Liturgical Cycle.

The SCCs team started four Online (or Virtual) SCCs as Facebook Groups on our website.<sup>828</sup> These online SCCs are text-based where members post reflections on the *Bible* and related comments. Just as SCCs are a new way of being church, Online SCCs are a new way of being SCCs. Each Online SCC chooses its patron/patroness saint such as: St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Martin de Porres, St. Michael the Archangel and St. Monica. This is a special way of encouraging especially young people to be involved in SCCs.

Online SCC members share their reflections on the Gospel of the following Sunday and connect and apply the *Bible* to our daily lives and experiences here and now. This is an experience of faith sharing. Members can share new insights and ideas after participating in the Sunday Eucharist and at other times during the following week. Thus the online reflections and sharing are on-going. Online SCC members help each other to grow in faith and explore the implications of the SCCs Model of Church. Each of these online or virtual SCCs states:

This virtual SCC's intention is: to foster personal relationships, family bonds, solidarity, and Christian belonging --sharing together, working together, and celebrating together. The purpose is to provide an avenue for the expression of our Christian faith.

The language of the internet is expanding. So we have such expressions as “the internet as a new way of being church,” Facebook SCC, Internet Small Christian Communities (ISCC), Social Media Small Christian Communities (SMSCC), Twitter SCC and WhatsApp SCC.

Skype<sup>829</sup> is used for an audio or video meeting of an Online SCC. Up to 10 SCC members (future technology will provide even a greater number of members and more flexibility) can meet online in real time. An example is the Our Lady of the Round Table, a

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<sup>828</sup> See Barb Frazee, “Virtually There: Small Christian Communities Online in Africa.” *Catholic News Service*, 22 February 2011, retrieved on the Catholic News Service Website at <http://cnsblog.wordpress.com/2011/02/22/virtually-there-small-christian-communities-online-in-africa> on 3 March, 2013.

<sup>829</sup> “The Strong Challenge -- Faith Sharing via SKYPE” by Donna Curtiss, Las Cruces, New Mexico describes a unique family-based *Bible* study, faith sharing and spirituality program in small groups via the internet. North American Forum for Small Christian Communities Website, retrieved on 27 August, 2012, <http://storage.cloversites.com/nafscce/documents/The%20Strong%20Challenge.pdf>

worldwide Marianist Cyber Community<sup>830</sup> that has African members. They meet daily online for faith sharing and *Bible* reflection.

Here is the original message sent as an email message and posted on our SCCs Facebook Page to start the first Skype Online SCC that was directly set up through our SCCs Website:

We are starting a new Online SCC that uses Group Video Calling through Skype. It is free. Members need to agree on a specific day and time each week to do joint *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection on the Gospel of the following Sunday. If you are interested please contact Alphonse Omolo at: [alphonceomolo@gmail.com](mailto:alphonceomolo@gmail.com). Please spread this message to others.

St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC using Video Conferencing started on Wednesday, 17 October, 2012 with one person from Kenya, one person from Germany and 13 people from the Maryknoll Lay Missioners Orientation Program at Bethany, New York, USA and four others. St. Isidore of Seville, Spain is the Patron Saint of the Internet and Technology.<sup>831</sup> He wrote the first encyclopedia – a 20-book opus called *Etymologia* after the subject title of one of the books.

From the very beginning we have had 32 people involved and interested in some way. Our permanent group using Skype has up to ten members from the following countries: England, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and USA. Other counties that have been represented are Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Swaziland. We met every Tuesday<sup>832</sup> following this timetable: 9 a.m. in Texas, USA; 10 a.m. in New Jersey, USA; 3 p.m. in England; 4 p.m. in Germany and 5 p.m. in Kenya and Tanzania. An increasing number of members connect through their Smartphones.

We read the Gospel of the following Sunday following the “Steps in the Weekly *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Life Connections Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa.” A key part is connecting the Gospel passage to our everyday life and

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<sup>830</sup> Information provided by Kenyan laywoman Lorna Mueni Kilonzo.

<sup>831</sup> When we get discouraged or disappointed in the technical problems in our weekly meeting on Skype we remember the challenges that St. Isidore faced and overcame: “As a boy he despaired at his ill success in study, and ran away from school. Resting in his flight at a roadside spring, he observed a stone, which was hollowed out by the dripping water. This decided him to return, and by hard application he succeeded where he had failed. He went back to his master, and with the help of God became, even as a youth, one of the most learned men of the time.” Daily Gospel Email and Website, retrieved on 4 April, 2013, <http://dailygospel.org/M/AM/>

<sup>832</sup> This SCC has emerged as a key to of my spirituality and biblical reflection. By meeting every Tuesday I have five days to read, pray over and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday. This insures that I am at least a Sunday Lectionary Catholic. In additional I may join another SCC (a physical SCC) during the week to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday.

having a “take way” (practical follow-up or follow-down) that we share at the end of our meeting. One member stated:

The idea of people from different parts of the world and different works and life sharing their experiences is very enriching. It brings out the multifaceted aspect of the Word of God and the fact that the Word of God is relevant to all people of all nations and races.<sup>833</sup>

Over the last three years a bonding and solidarity has developed among the members of our Online Skype SCC. Even when a person misses a weekly meeting, he or she reads the Gospel of the following Sunday privately ahead of time and feels “connected in spirit” to the online group when it meets.<sup>834</sup> Members who cannot join the Skype session in person post their reflections on the SCCs Facebook Page and/or send an email message for other members to read ahead of time. These messages are also read during the weekly sessions themselves.

One member wrote:

Unfortunately, due to my work schedule, it's nearly impossible to make it to an online session with our group. I do miss all of you and think of you often. I see the emails each week and am grateful to still be a part of our Online Skype SCC family, although I haven't been "present" for quite some time now. I hope all is well with each and every one of you, your families and your communities.<sup>835</sup>

The *Bible* Sharing and *Bible* Reflections on Skype on Tuesday are very helpful to members in an ongoing process.

1. In the “Touchdown Step” we share our experiences from the previous week.
2. In the “Take Away Step” we choose an action to carry out in the following week.

Skype SCC members themselves benefit a great deal from the sessions.

1. For personal, private prayer and reflection. Choosing a particular word or phrase or verse from the Gospel of the following Sunday as a *Bible* mantra or prayer mantra during the day can nourish and sustain a person all during the week
2. Some use the ideas and material in his or her regular SCC weekly meeting.
3. Others use the ideas and material in homilies, sermons, retreats and talks.

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<sup>833</sup>Genevieve Nneoma Ihenacho, SHCJ, “Small Christian Community Practicum Write-up,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>834</sup> For me personally this every Tuesday Skype *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection group is a important fixed point in my spiritual life just like the daily masses in the Gleason House at the Maryknoll Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. This sharing helps me a lot to prepare my homilies for the following Sunday.

<sup>835</sup> Jennifer Ehrentraut, email message to Skype SCC members, 1 November, 2015.

4. One Skype SCC member coordinates the preparation of the lectors in her parish on Saturday morning in reading aloud, and then reflecting on, the Scripture readings of the following day.

We continue to have many ongoing technical challenges and struggles with issues of changes of email addresses, electricity, limited finances, local internet connectivity, Skype updates, timing, traveling, etc.

Video Conferencing can also be set up through Cisco Webex, Facebook, Google Chat, Google Hang Outs, Go to Meeting and Yahoo Chat.

Our research shows that people join an Online SCC for a variety of reasons: their complicated work schedules; they are unable to participate in the ordinary weekly SCCs in their parishes; they travel a great deal; they would like a more variety in the membership of their community; and they would like to focus more on a specific part of a SCC like reflecting on the Gospel.

There are many internet options. The [BibleGateway Website](http://www.Biblegateway.com) (<http://www.Biblegateway.com>) has 32 searchable versions of the Bible in English. The fastest way to find a Bible passage is to search on Google. Insightful commentaries on the daily and Sunday Scripture readings are found on:

[Daily Gospel](http://dailygospel.org/main.php?language=AM) (<http://dailygospel.org/main.php?language=AM>)

[Sacred Space](http://www.sacredspace.ie) (<http://www.sacredspace.ie>)

[iBreviary](http://www.ibreviary.org/en) (<http://www.ibreviary.org/en>)

[FaithND](http://faith.nd.edu/s/1210/faith/start.aspx?gid=609&pgid=61) (<http://faith.nd.edu/s/1210/faith/start.aspx?gid=609&pgid=61>)<sup>836</sup>

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<sup>836</sup> Sometimes a lay person (such as a parent and a mother) gives a fresh perspective and insight on a Gospel passage such as this reflection by Notre Dame alumna Danielle Bianchi '05, '07 MA on *John* 17:11-19 (Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Easter – Year B) on the FaithND Website on 20 May, 2015:

As a parent, Jesus' prayer in today's Gospel resonates with my own nightly petitions. Jesus asks the Father to protect his disciples once he is no longer with them, and likewise I ask God to protect the ones [my children] who have been given to me. I pray that God will watch over each of my children and keep them safe, especially during the times when I am not with them. But as I contemplate Jesus' prayer more deeply, I recognize an important distinction. My prayers for my children always include their physical protection, that they will remain safe from illness or harm.

Jesus, however, actually asks for his disciples to not be taken out of this world, knowing that it presents very real and imminent danger for them. He focuses instead on their spiritual protection, that they will be guarded from the temptation to choose the ways of the world over the way of truth. Ultimately, God has entrusted my children to me for a time so that I may help lead them to heaven. As daunting as this responsibility is, I find comfort in knowing that God is always willing to assist us in fulfilling our vocations. I can follow Jesus' model of prayer by invoking and trusting in God's spiritual protection over my children as I send them out into the world.

SCC members in Africa get daily *Bible* passages in different languages in written or spoken form from online websites and cellphones and as text messages and audio messages on cellphones such as the eGospel and iMissal Apps and separate audio devices such as Go Bible Traveller. A user friendly method is to automatically get the daily readings and commentary on one's cell phone and computer every morning. Some members download the *Bible* and other resources on their Smart Phones. Skype can be used for SCCs training sessions, counselling,<sup>837</sup> video conferencing, meetings, online chats<sup>838</sup> and overall networking.

### c. Interactive Radio and Television Programs

Related to our Online SCCs on the internet is a Real Time Radio SCCs that can be also being heard on internet or web radio. Radio Amani, the Catholic FM Radio Station in Nakuru Diocese, Kenya has a live Swahili program called “Jumuiya ya Amani Usiku (“A SCC of Peace at Night”) every Thursday between 9 and 10 p.m. It is like a radio talk show with about 500 listeners. The producer is Benedict Ogola Mjomba. This Radio SCC follows the seven SCC steps of Lumko. After the Gospel of the following Sunday is read twice, about 15-20 listeners phone in their reflections that are broadcast live. Other listeners send SMS text messages to the producer who reads them live on the air. Participants try to connect the Gospel to daily life. The FM Station reaches listeners in a 70 kilometer square area including doctors, factory workers, night watchmen/women, nurses, patients in hospitals and students. Others listen to the program on the [Radio Amani](http://www.radioamani.co.ke) Website ([www.radioamani.co.ke](http://www.radioamani.co.ke)) and through Skype.<sup>839</sup>

The principle behind these new types of SCCs is the same as the regular SCCs that meet “physically” together: faithfulness and consistency in the weekly online meetings/posting of *Bible* reflections and in other activities of our SCC such as praying for special intentions. This includes making connections to our daily lives. What makes this experience

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My role as a disciple, then, is to be open to the process of sanctification that Jesus made possible—to continually allow God's word to transform and strengthen me so I can choose the way of truth. And with God's grace, I will better be able to guide my children in their own paths to holiness, so we may hopefully one day share together in Jesus' joy completely. - See more at: <http://faith.nd.edu/s/1210/faith/social.aspx?sid=1210&gid=609&pgid=24909#sthash.wgTTNr7Y.dpuf>

<sup>837</sup> Marriage Counselors use Skype for the pastoral visit with couples connected to the Pre-Cana process.

<sup>838</sup> From RENEW International: “What a wonderful opportunity for sharing across cultures!” (on a Skype Video Chat between four children, two religious sisters and one SCC lay leader from the Amani na Wema (“Peace and Goodness”) Home in St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi, Kenya sharing with 37 children and two teachers from the Fifth Grade at St. Patrick's School, Chatham, New Jersey, USA on 30 April 2013).

<sup>839</sup> Based on Kenyan layman Benedict Ogola Mjomba's conversation with the author on a cellphone in Nairobi, Kenya on 6 March, 2012.

of being a new way of being church “different” is sharing reflections as a member of an online SCC. Our focus is not on general *Bible* Study/Sharing/Reflection, but doing it in a focused way as an Online SCC member, as part of a small cyberspace community that interacts together.

Another expression of social networking is live radio talk shows on SCCs that are both participatory and interactive. Examples are: the Gikuyu program "*Ukumio: Kuina ni Kuhoya Keeri*" ("Praise: To Sing Is To Pray Twice")<sup>840</sup> broadcasts from 9 a.m. to 12 Noon on Sundays on CORO FM on the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) as well as on DSTV Audio Channel 110. The English and Swahili program "Waumini Soul Food" ("Spiritual Nourishment for the Christian Faithful") broadcasts daily in the morning on Radio Waumini. Both are based in Nairobi, Kenya. The Swahili program *Misa Mix/Zaburi* (Swahili for *Mass Mixed with Psalms*) on Radio Akicha in Lodwar Diocese, Kenya. Kenyan laywoman and broadcaster Mary Tioko reports: "We have a radio program on SCCs every Sunday during the Catholic musical program. Listeners call in to the radio to share their challenges and now they can strengthen each other in the faith."<sup>841</sup>

Specialists on SCCs join the producer/moderator in the studio to listen to comments and to answer questions sent by listeners on the phone, through SMS messages on cellphones, on email and on Facebook Pages on the internet. Listeners who call in or write in begin by saying: "I am \_\_\_\_\_. I belong to \_\_\_\_\_ SCC in \_\_\_\_\_ Parish. Listeners ask questions and comment on the theme of the day such as "Leadership on the SCCs," "SCC Members' Involvement in Civic Education in Kenya," "Patron/Patroness Saints of the SCCs" and "SCCs Celebrating the 2012-2013 Year of Faith." Listeners share their personal experiences of SCCs and learn from other people's experiences. One listener called these radio programs "a school of learning." It is a particularly good way of explaining how SCCs are a new way of being church in Africa.

Radio Waumini with headquarters in Nairobi provides a service of Daily Spiritual Nourishment to cell phone users. The "Daily Scripture Readings" of the Liturgical Calendar of the Catholic Church and Gospel verse references in English, Swahili, Gikuyu, and Luo are available by sending a text message (SMS) with the word "SOMO" to 20188. Thus interested people can access the *Bible* any time they want.

Here is a Case Study of how the Gikuyu radio program is integrated into a weekly SCC meeting in St. Paul Catholic Church in Kangaita Village near Nanyuki, Kenya:

We troop to Mariamu (an old woman who has been blinded by diabetes)'s home. She is kept company and assisted by her granddaughter. We sit in a circle outside her hut. A small transistor radio is hung from a tree in the compound. It is tuned to CORO FM Radio. They are listening to the radio program conducted on Sunday morning by Martin Kamande. You are baffled. You have not been able to listen to this program before as you are usually in church at that time. You have even often times wondered who actually listens to the program while most of the faithful are presumably in church at the time

<sup>840</sup> To get the Catholic Mass daily readings and the Saint of the Day straight in one's cellphone: SMS the word MASS to 21234. Powered by Ukumio.

<sup>841</sup> Mary Tioko in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 1 November, 2013.

the program is aired. Here goes your answer: Old Mariamu and her daughter, and countless other faithful who in one way or another are unable to go to church, or had gone for the early morning church service. You feel guilty. Forgive us Lord for our inequities and being judgmental to a worthwhile program. The radio is switched off. The meeting of the *Jumuiya* begins.<sup>842</sup>

Tumaini Media in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, Tanzania promotes the importance of SCCs through many interactive communications media. Radio Tumaini has a wide variety of Swahili programs that discuss SCCs including “Maisha” (“Life”) and “Sisi Sote Ni Wamisionari” (“We Are All Missionaries”). Tumaini TV produces a weekly 45-minute Swahili television program called “Ijue Parokia” (“Know Your Parish”) that includes on-site interviews with SCC members in various parishes in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese.

Radio Maria is a mainly Chewa-speaking FM Radio Station in Mangochi Diocese, Malawi. It has programs aired on SCCs that captured the activities of SCCs and how they move forward. Topics include the composition of the membership of SCCs and the election of SCCs leaders.<sup>843</sup>

In another technical innovation related to SCCs, Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia has pioneered in the use of “proclaimers.” Small black audio devices donated by the Bible Society of Zambia contain a clearing recording of the *New Testament* in English and local Zambia languages such as Bemba, Nyanja and Tonga. Following the principle of “faith comes by hearing” SCC members listen to a voice recording of the Gospel of the following Sunday in their weekly meetings of *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*. Zambian lay catechizer (a partially trained catechist) Mrs. Judith Phiri explains how in her home on Saturday from 7 to 8:30 pm, she gathers her five children and the children of her neighbors. They listen to a voice recording of the Gospel of the next day and then they discuss the meaning for their daily lives. The children never seem to get tired and enjoy this new way of learning about the *Bible*.<sup>844</sup>

A new initiative in using the internet to make known SCCs in Africa is the multimedia approach in promoting the Beatification Process of Cardinal Maurice Michael Otunga in Nairobi Archdiocese and throughout Kenya. Many SCCs in Kenya have Cardinal Otunga as their Patron. These include SCCs in parishes (for example, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese) and in schools (for example, Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University, Nairobi Archdiocese, Hekima College, Nairobi Archdiocese and Tangaza University College, Nairobi Archdiocese).<sup>845</sup>

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<sup>842</sup> Paul Njuki, “The Village and Church as a Family,” *Imani Yetu (Faith Transforming Society)* Blog, retrieved on 17 July, 2012, <http://imaniyetu.wordpress.com/2012/07/16/the-village-and-church-as-a-family>

<sup>843</sup> Father Peter Mkhwayi in a conversation with the author in Lilongwe, Malawi on 18 December, 2013.

<sup>844</sup> Mrs. Judith Phiri in a conversation with the author in Lusaka, Zambia on 6 December, 2013.

<sup>845</sup> See Francis Njuguna, “SCCs...In Efforts to Honor Cardinal Otunga,” *National Mirror*, 1:4 (April, 2013), 18.

We have sent the following message to different Facebook Pages such as the Small Christian Communities Facebook Pages, the Fans of Ukumio Facebook Page, etc.:

For those Fans of this Facebook Page in the Nairobi Area there will be a Fundraising Walk for the beatification of Cardinal Maurice Otunga on Saturday, 15 September, 2012 starting at Holy Family Basilica at 7:30 a.m. All SCC members are invited to walk behind a banner that reads: “Cardinal Otunga SCCs.” Please spread the word.

These same Facebook Pages promote the radio programs devoted to SCCs mentioned above especially the monthly *Mwaki* Program on CORO FM and other media like the *2013 and 2014 Cardinal Otunga Calendar*.

d. Promoting the Voices of Women, Youth and the Marginated. The internet is described as the great equalizer, the great leveler, democracy in action.

Our SCCs team is finding ways of promoting more participation of women through our SCCs Website. A search on our website on 12 May, 2014 revealed 51 references (hits) -- 10 for “woman” and 41 for “women.”

There is also more focus on youth. Traditionally we would connect with Catholic youth in the parish (a physical, territorial, geographical place) or a home. Youth would “meet” in the parish or home. But now youth “meet” or “congregate” in cyberspace, on the internet, through social networking on their smartphones. With less emphasis on computers and more on interactive smartphones they are less likely to be in a cybercafé and more likely to be in cyberspace. Go to a physical “place” like Tangaza University College. What are young people doing while eating lunch in the cafeteria? Talking or reading. No. They are mainly texting messages to friends, using WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter and checking social media websites. What are young people doing while waiting in their van in front of the college to take them home? Reading a book or talking with friend? No. They are busy in cyberspace.

American Maryknoll missionary priest and internet expert Father David Smith, MM states:

An even more radical advancement for our online presence is to see the web not simply as a communication tool but more as a “place” in which to engage in mission. We need missionaries who enter into this new (virtual) culture, learn the language, learn how to build relationships, and how to evangelize/bring the Gospel there. The internet is where we can now encounter those who have not heard the Good News – or who have become disenchanted with traditional forms of religion. How do we speak to them? How is God calling us to be in mission among these citizens of the world wide web, so that God might touch their hearts, too?<sup>846</sup>

So we have to meet today’s African youth in cyberspace and on the internet -- in their new “places” and “spaces.” See also the theme and explanation of Pope Benedict XVI’s

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<sup>846</sup> David Smith in an email message to the author dated 12 May, 2014.

*Message for 2013 World Communications Day* on 12 May, 2013: “Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; New Spaces for Evangelization.”

The marginalized (a cover term for the poor and excluded) also have a platform. One concrete way is developing a [SCCs Stories Database](#) that uses the MySQL (Structured Query Language) online database management software to provide searchable, user-friendly, online access to a collection of African SCC stories. These online stories give a voice to women, youth and the marginalized in Africa in different ways. There is a power, an energy, a release, a healing, a transformation that comes in telling and sharing one’s story. Storytelling is an importance source of African Narrative Theology.

e. Moodle is the name of the Tangaza University College (Nairobi, Kenya) Virtual Learning Environment. It includes the course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today” (PTC418) <http://moodle.tangaza.org/course/view.php?id=98>. Moodle is a free, open source eLearning software platform that is also known as a Course Management System (CMS), a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Moodle helps educators create online courses with a focus on interaction and collaborative construction of content. It is a free web application to create effective online learning sites. Moodle is located on the Tangaza University College Server and needs a password for access. Visitors who are not enrolled in the SCC course can participate as guests. Hopefully people who are interested in SCCs but are not students at Tangaza University College will eventually be able to participate in this online, long distance learning.

f. Online SCCs Resources. With the internet we become a Global Electronic Village. There are many SCCs websites and Facebook pages. Many have content about African SCCs. Many more have content and resources that are useful to African SCCs, For example, [Small Groups.com](#)<sup>847</sup> has training materials and practical suggestions on *Bible Study*, community, leadership, ministry, mission, prayer and small-group retreats.

[RENEW International](#) with wide experience throughout the world including Burundi and South Africa (Port Elizabeth Diocese and Johannesburg Archdiocese)<sup>848</sup> has many faith sharing resources.<sup>849</sup> “The World as Our Neighbor” is a six-part global justice

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<sup>847</sup> Two examples from its website: “Our newly updated resource, [Ministering to Difficult Group Members](#), will help you handle the people who talk too much, talk too little, give too much advice, promote false theology, encourage tangents, and so much more. It's filled to the brim with practical tips that you can immediately implement in your group.” Small Groups Website, retrieved on 4 May, 2013.” [Top 10 Small Group Training Tools of 2014](#), retrieved on 26 November, 2014.

<sup>848</sup> RENEW International has produced a very nice video of 12 minutes called "Discussion on Global Small Christian Communities especially in Africa: Small Christian Communities in Africa and Beyond: A Conversation between Sr. Marie Cooper and Fr. Joe Healey, MM". November, 2012. You can find it on our SCCs Website under "Videos" at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/videos/228-discussion-on-global-small-christian-communities-especially-in-africa.html>

<sup>849</sup> See *Sowing Seeds: Essentials for Small Community Leaders* offers a comprehensive collection of pastoral insights and practical suggestions to help small community leaders guide their groups in a way that nourishes spiritual growth. Culled from RENEW

reflection series from Catholic Relief Services and RENEW International. It explores pressing issues of our day through the lenses of prayer, scripture and Catholic social teaching. These reflection guides are ideally suited for small faith sharing communities in parishes and other groups. Each session includes real-life stories of people who experienced challenges of global concern, presented in written or video form. Session topics available for download include: Global Solidarity, Fair Trade, Hunger, Migration, HIV/AIDS and Peacebuilding. The series is available for college and university students as “The World on Campus.”

[Presentation Ministries](#) (PM)<sup>850</sup> has a variety of SCCs resources especially a seminar training program designed to lead participants into joining or forming a Small Christian Community and to create home-based communities. These resources are available in printed guidebooks and manuals as well as on audio and video tape.

The theme of Pope Benedict XVI’s *Message for 2013 World Communications Day* on 12 May, 2013 is: “Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; New Spaces for Evangelization.”<sup>851</sup> The digital environment is a reality in the lives of many people. It is not some sort of parallel or merely virtual world but is an existential environment where people live and move. Using a metaphor, it is a “continent” where the Church must be present and

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International’s over three decades of experience in pioneering and promoting Small Christian Communities, this book overflows with simple but effective ideas and strategies that will enhance the way these groups reflect on and respond to the gospel. The book offers tips for how to lead small group faith sharing. *PrayerTime* provides the weekly Sunday Gospel readings in a format conducive to faith sharing. *Why Catholic? Journey Through the Catechism* is a parish-based process of evangelization and adult faith formation through Small Christian Communities.

The newest outreach is *RENEW Africa* that is a dynamic, engaging process for the spiritual renewal of parishes, built on the faith experiences of Africans in their daily lives, and centered on faith sharing within small Christian communities. The overall theme is “Gathered as God’s Family” <http://www.renewintl.org/renewafrica>

<sup>850</sup> Our Lady of Presentation Communities and Ministries is the full title given to a seven-year-old Catholic organization that started in March, 1992 when it received the status of Lay Association under canon law by Archbishop Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. The two components, [ministries](#) and [home-based communities](#), exist to disciple Catholics more deeply for Christ, through teaching the word of God and equipping all for Christian ministry using the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Teachings on the daily eucharistic readings, and encouragement to receive Jesus in daily Holy Communion are emphasized to such an extent that one could cite a secondary influence in the church as a “daily Mass movement.”

<sup>851</sup> “Since the first papal tweet was sent by Pope Benedict XVI on 12 December, 2012 over 6 million followers have joined. The account, which was deactivated during *Sede Vacante*, was reopened after Pope Francis’ election and the numbers continue to rise. Francis has continued Benedict’s lead in reaching out to the world through the use of social networks. As of now the @Pontifex account post tweets in him in nine languages on Twitter: English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, French, Germany, Latin, Polish and Arabic. “Zenit: The World Seen From Rome Daily Email Dispatch,” 9 May 2013. As of March, 2014 Pope Francis is riding high on social media, with 11 million following him on Twitter.

where believers, if they are to be authentic in their presence, will seek to share with others the deepest source of their joy and hope, Jesus Christ. This is a clear call to SCCs in Africa to use the social networks actively and to enter into these new spaces for evangelization. The forums created by the social networks allows us to share the truth that the Lord has passed to His Church, to listen to others, to learn about their cares and concerns, to understand who they are and for what they are searching.

Truly in the world of internet and cyberspace the future is now. New SCC ideas, projects and networks will emerge as *we create the path by walking*. As we try new ways and learn from each other's "new paths," Alphonse Omolo comments:

We are inspired by similar experiences with our international students SCC in Germany – “parishes without borders.” They meet every week and share the Gospel of the following Sunday. Another inspiring experience is the International Online SCC group, meeting weekly via Skype and using a similar *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* approach. I believe we are challenged to “cast our nets deeper” -- effectively using emerging opportunities as SCCs continue to “spread the Church beyond its borders.”<sup>852</sup>

So SCC members are challenged to learn and use the new language of the internet and social media. American lay writer Amy Woolam Echeverria explains:

Today we Google and tweet our way through learning, relationships, work and life. This is a new language which like any other language must be studied and practiced if we hope to have any fluency. It brings new meaning to, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation” (*Mark 16:15*). But why should we and the [Catholic] Church make the effort to learn and use this language? The same reason that Jesus told parables and that Paul wrote letters because each age has its tools for evangelization, each audience has its ears to hear. The message is meaningless unless it can be spoken and delivered in a way that the audience can meaningfully hear it. From storytelling and the written word, to radio, TV, and now the internet and social media, the [Catholic] Church is challenged to speak the language of its day without losing its core message of justice, love, peace, and right relationships. Using social media is one way we can challenge structures and change lives in ways that reflect our missionary calling to be inclusively cross-cultural... Ultimately social media is a tool for evangelization, an e-vite to bringing the Gospel to our world. As missionaries we understand the importance of meeting people where they are and using the language that speaks to their heart. Creating an online community for people to encounter Christ is as valid today as Paul's Home [House] Churches were for early Christians.<sup>853</sup>

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<sup>852</sup> Alphonse Omolo, email message to the author, 28 April. 2013.

<sup>853</sup> Amy Woolam Echeverria, “But Why Should We and the Church Learn This Language?” *Mission Update*, Volume 22; Issue 3 (Autumn 2013), United States Catholic Mission Association (USCMA) Website, retrieved on 21 October, 2013, [http://www.uscatholicmission.org/files/usatholicmission/files/Mission%20Updates/Mission\\_Update\\_v22-3\\_autumn\\_2013.pdf](http://www.uscatholicmission.org/files/usatholicmission/files/Mission%20Updates/Mission_Update_v22-3_autumn_2013.pdf)

Part of the reason that we describe the internet as “the future is now” is the creation and development of online SCCs. We can call them Online House Churches. They particularly appeal to young people.

On our 2014 SCCs Class exam at Tangaza University College and Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College I asked a question about the importance and influence of the internet and the social media/new media/social networking in relation to SCCs in Africa. Some answers:

- Recently when responding to the fire in the Fuatanyayo section of Queen of Peace Parish in Nairobi cellphones were very handy in tracking the movement of the smoke, in locating children and in coordinating other responses.
- Christians who don't have enough time to join a physical SCC can participate in an online SCC.
- While youth find long meetings and prayer sessions boring, they can participate more actively through social media.
- The internet and social media can keep SCC leaders and animators in Eastern Africa updated on what is happening in the Global Church. Having updated themselves they can deliver good services to other SCCs members.
- Chat Groups or Chat Forums such as WhatsApp can connect SCC members.
- Lumko should open a Facebook Page for SCC training and conversations.
- Online instruction manuals are available for SCC leaders to learn many things.
- There are online classes through video conference calls.
- SCC leaders can access webinars that have training and empowerment programs.
- Via YouTube SCC leaders can practice new methods and techniques.
- Through the internet SCCs members sharing the joy of the Gospel and our faith with people who are far away.
- St. Paul's words can be written: “Woe to me if I don't preach the Gospel and evangelize through social media.”
- When you talk to Americans about SCCs in Eastern Africa they may think that they are “flying horses.” But when you share the Gospel of the following Sunday on Facebook they realize that SCCs are “walking horses,” that is, a reality.
- People who live in Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia where Christianity cannot be practiced publically can participate in a SCC though the internet.

At these two colleges and other schools associated with CUEA I have taken online learning a step further. In January, 2014 I began teaching the SCCs Course using *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, one the main Resource and Reference Books, as a free online Ebook. First, I posted it on the SCCs Website as an Ebook in the pdf format. With monthly updates it is 596 pages as of 1 April, 2014. Then I downloaded it on the local internal servers of the various colleges for quick access. Then I encouraged the students to download it on one of their own electronic reading devices stating:

This free online Ebook is only 4.5 MB. It can be downloaded (saved) on any electronic reading device such as a desktop computer, laptop computer, external hard drive, flash drive, Ipad, tablet, Ereader like Kindle, Nook, Blio, Google, etc. Follow the download instructions on each browser.

Then I use the online version in class via my laptop and a video projector on a big screen. Short input in class on a particular topic is following by interactive questions and answers and discussion.

More and more SCCs are using a wide variety of instant messaging systems. The most popular and fastest growing is WhatsApp (simple, personal, real time messaging) that has SCCs called Group Chats. WhatsApp is an instant messaging app for smartphones that operates under a subscription business model. The proprietary, cross-platform app uses the internet to send text messages, images, video, user location and audio media messages.

In January 2015, WhatsApp was the most globally popular messaging app with more than 700 million active users,<sup>854</sup> with India alone having a user base of more than 70 million.<sup>855</sup> Mobile messaging app WhatsApp hit one billion 'monthly active users' in February, 2016., Its closest competitor, Facebook's Internet Messenger, had around 700 million users. Figures for Africa: **ADD**

A recent exchange on the Holy Cross Youth Dandora Facebook Page:

"We are 645 members in this group, but we only manage to get one post per week. When was the last time you posted something on this page? I would like to know..."

"*WhatsApp imemaliza Facebook!!!* (Swahili for "WhatsApp has finished off Facebook").

"So WhatsApp is better than Facebook? I wonder.

"We can create a WhatsApp group that is an easy place to get people."

"It's understandable that things are changing. The reading culture nowadays is terrible. People are moving from long posts on Facebook to shorter SMS that WhatsApp accommodates. For me a group should not only be entertaining but educative. To me WhatsApp is more of catching-up, vibe & sometimes rumor-mongering. The educational part for which I thirst for is hardly catered for. But maybe I'm too old school."

More and more SCCs are starting WhatsApp Group Chat Pages just for their members (private) to use as a medium to communicate both personal and general information. A particular SCC has its own App for contact information, daily scripture readings, places of meetings announcement of SCC activities, notices of sicknesses and deaths, etc. A good example is the KUCC App.

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<sup>854</sup> This messaging service jumped to 800 million active users in April, 2015. It allows you to text other users for free. The app sends messages over the internet, bypassing a phone carrier's text messaging charges.

<sup>855</sup> Wikipedia Website, retrieved on 16 April, 2015, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WhatsApp>

## 10. Promoting the Missionary Outreach of SCCs in the AMECEA Region

We are reminded that “the pilgrim church is missionary by her very nature (or in another translation “the Church on earth is by its very nature missionary”) for it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree [plan] of God the Father” (No. 2 in *Ad Gentes*, the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* promulgated by the Second Vatican Council in 1965).<sup>856</sup> There is a well-known saying that “the church does not have a mission. The mission of God has a church.” Fundamentally Christianity is not church-centered but Trinity centered.

Our primary mission is the mission of the trinity. Moved by love, God the Father sends the Son – and the Holy Spirit – into the world. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (*John* 3:16). Recall Jesus Christ’s words to the Apostles after his resurrection: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me (*John* 20:21).<sup>857</sup> Jesus continues to send SCC members today in the continuation of the trinitarian mission. He sends all of us to “go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation” (*Mark* 16:15) and says: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (*Acts* 1:8). SCC members follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ the first missionary who said, “I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because for this purpose I was/have been sent” (*Luke* 4:43).<sup>858</sup>

Mission is part of the Christian’s deepest identity. “Thus it is plain that missionary activity wells up from the Church's inner nature and spreads abroad her saving Faith. It perfects her Catholic unity by this expansion. It is sustained by her apostolicity” (No. 6 in *Ad Gentes*, the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church*). Mission is the foundation of the Catholic Church. It is **not** one of the church’s ministries or tasks.

Through Baptism all Christians are called to be missionaries and evangelizers. This is described very well by Pope Francis in the section “We are All Missionary Disciples,” No. 120 in *The Joy of the Gospel*:

In virtue of their Baptism all members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced

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<sup>856</sup> 7 December, 2015 is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promulgation of this decree and a wonderful opportunity to promote the missionary outreach of SCCs.

<sup>857</sup> This was the theme of 2011 World Mission Sunday on 23 October, 2011 in which SCC members actively participated in Africa.

<sup>858</sup> This is the scriptural theme of the DVD *Walking with the Eastern African Church in Mission*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2004.

God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples."

One theologian has even said, "Baptism is the main ordination." This cannot be emphasized too much.

I enjoy shocking African audiences, especially lay people, when I ask them. "When St. John Paul II was asked, "What was the most important day of your life," what do you think he answered? Many thought he would answer, "When I was elected pope" or "The day I became a bishop." But he quickly answered, "The day I was baptized." He recognized that the day he was baptized he fully became a child of God and began participating in the life of the Trinity. Through his baptism into the Christian community the saint became responsible to be a missionary and to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to others. This is echoed in the mission of the Catholic Church to invite all people to travel on the "firm and free road to full participation in the mystery of Christ" (No. 5 in the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church*).

In a broader context Vatican II's programmatic articulation of mission is found in No. 1 of the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (commonly known by the Latin title *Gaudium et Spes*): "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [people] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."<sup>859</sup> Henriot points out: "This statement formulates a permanent challenge to the church's self-understanding as a community in mission."<sup>860</sup> One of the charisms of SCCs is their community response to mission. This is rooted in the *New Testament* model of Jesus sending out the disciples and other followers "two by two."

So we continually ask: How can we promote the missionary outreach of SCCs? How can our SCCs in Eastern Africa be more missionary-minded?

The 1979 AMECEA Study Conference referred to earlier planted an important seed in the implementation of the AMECEA SCCs Key Pastoral Priority in the pastoral resolution that stated: "SCCs are an effective way of developing the mission dimension of the church at the most local level, and of making people feel that they are really part of the church's evangelizing work." Now after 35 years of solid experience the new praxis reveals a double action. First, SCCs are essentially missionary<sup>861</sup> and integrally involved in different forms of

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<sup>859</sup> These famous words are based on French Dominican theologian Father Marie-Dominique Chenu, OP's phrase: "The joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties of all humanity are those of the church."

<sup>860</sup> Peter Henriot in Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, p. 239.

<sup>861</sup> Marins identifies five features or components central to the Basic Christian Community dynamic: Prayer; Reflection on Reality; Discernment and Decision; Action [Mission]; and Celebration. See José Marins, *Basic Ecclesial Community: Church from the Roots* (Quito: Colegio Tecnico Don Bosco, 1979), p. 18.

evangelization.<sup>862</sup> Second, many missionary and evangelization activities pass through SCCs and are carried out by SCC members.

No. 7 in the [Checklist of 14 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in Africa Today](#) states: “Practical action/service and social, pastoral and mission outreach. Includes justice and peace actions, different types of evangelization (first or primary evangelization, new evangelization, and deeper evangelization) and the mission focus of a SCC.”

Among the [28 Criteria to Evaluate a Typical Small Christian Community SCC in Eastern Africa](#) are:

No. 13: The SCC has some kind of planned practical action/service/ pastoral, social and mission outreach. Ideally this is a communal response where the SCC members carry out the practical action as a group. Ideally it is connected to/flows from the Gospel text of the weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* and is closely related to the pastoral priorities and activities of the parish. This service and outreach responds to local challenges and problems such as lax Catholics in the neighborhood, bereavement, sick people, needy and poor people, people with HIV/AIDS, street children, internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees, and people with dependency on alcohol, drugs, etc., local tensions over tribalism/negative ethnicity, concern about ecology and the environment and so on.

No. 19: “The SCC analyzes justice and peace issues with concrete follow-up on the SCC, parish, deanery and diocesan levels.”

No. 28: “The SCC has a missionary spirit with a specific evangelization (first or primary evangelization, new evangelization and deeper evangelization) and a mission focus.”

Regarding SCC members’ service and outreach to people with HIV/AIDS read carefully the story “We Need to Run Out and Meet Lucia” that is Story No. 3 in Appendix No. 13 on “Stories of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa.”

A powerful example of social outreach is the Visitation Committees of John Paul I SCC in St. Ignatius Parish in Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia. Recognizing the need to serve the community at large, SCC members set up visitation committees so that they can reach as many vulnerable groups as possible. All members participate in at least one of these sub-committees:

- University Teaching Hospital (UTH) Children’s Ward;
- UTH – E Wards;
- UTH – Maternity wards;

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<sup>862</sup> The DVD *Small Christian Communities* (Swahili is *Njia Mpya ya Kuishi na Kueneza Injili or A New Way of Living and Proclaiming the Church*), Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1985 presents 12 Cases Studies of SCCs in East Africa. One is “The Missionary SCC” about a SCC in Iramba Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania that regularly visits Christians that have drifted away from the Catholic Church and encourages the starting of new SCCs.

- UTH - G Wards;
- Our Lady's Hospice - Kalingalinga;
- Prisons (Chimbokaila - Men);
- Prisons (Chimbokaila - Women).

“It is up to the members to agree when to make the visitations, but reports are expected at least once a month at the SCC meeting. It is important to emphasize that the sick and the needy are assisted immediately their needs are known. JP1 has in the past given loans to members requiring startup capital for their businesses or cash to sick members to access medicines.”<sup>863</sup>

Here is a Case Study from Tanzania:

The 13 SCCs in Iramba Parish Center in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania decided to celebrate their annual "Small Christian Community Day" on World Mission Sunday to emphasize the missionary responsibility of the SCCs. Some special features of this annual celebration included:

1. A special display of posters, pictures, booklets and a world map highlights World Mission Sunday, the main themes of the pope's annual message and the annual celebration of the SCCs. This includes information on Iramba's sister parish, Christ the King Parish in Ansbach, Germany.

2. Each Christian is encouraged to invite one member of the African Religion or another religion to the church and the social gathering afterwards. One year about 50 "guests" came -- both children and adults.

3. Members of the SCCs sit together in the parish church. So the Sunday Eucharist becomes a communion of 13 SCCs. Special missionary and community songs are sung such as *All You Nations, Announce Love in the Community, Bind Us Together, Go into the Whole World*,<sup>864</sup> *Here I Am, Lord (Whom Shall I Send), Let Us All Go Forth and Proclaim the Greatness of the Name of the Lord*. Sometimes the Youth Group performs a short play such as *Jesus Sends out the Twelve Disciples*.

4. The homily highlights missionary themes by using stories and proverbs such as the African sayings: *In times of trouble a member of an African Religion seems to know God more than his or her ancestral spirits. We are children of the same God. We are branches of the one God*. Concrete examples are given of how the local Christians can be missionaries in their own situations and places.

5. The special collection for World Mission Sunday reminds the local people of being mission-minded and mission-sending. It is sent to help wider church concerns. One year part of the collection was sent to South Sudan.<sup>865</sup>

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<sup>863</sup> Kelvin Lubinda Yeta, *The Involvement/Participation of Women*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>864</sup> This missionary song is based on *Mark 16:15*. The Swahili version is *Nendeni Duniani Kote* and is very popular in masses in East Africa. One creative SCC member in Nairobi, Kenya has the Swahili version as his "signature song" that you immediately hear when you dial his cellphone number.

<sup>865</sup> Healey, *Towards an African*, p. 371.

The Mission Awareness Committee -- MAC (the Swahili name is *Kamati ya Kuhamasisha Roho ya Umisionari*) of the Religious Superiors' Association of Tanzania (RSAT) emphasizes various activities and projects to help promote a missionary spirit, a mission consciousness and missionary activity in the Local Church in Tanzania. MAC works closely with the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS). Many of MAC's activities pass through the SCCs.

MAC produces a weekly 45-minute Swahili radio program on Radio Tumaini, the Catholic FM station in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, called "Sisi Sote Ni Wamisionari" ("We Are All Missionaries"). It is a live "talk" program allowing listeners to phone in or text message their questions and comments. This is part of a series of mission radio programs within the general theme "On-going Christian Formation." Each year a number of these radio programs focus on how SCC members can be missionaries and evangelizers. There is also a weekly 25-minute Swahili television program on TV Tumaini also called "Sisi Sote Ni Wamisionari." MAC sponsors workshops and seminars on "The Mission of SCCs" ("Umisionari wa JNNK") in parishes and formation houses. MAC encourages SCCs to be involved in the activities of October as "Missionary Month" and in particular the annual World Mission Sunday on the next to last Sunday in October. MAC members encourage SCCs to be involved in the process of the Adult Catechumenate (steps of the RCIA). This is an enriching experience to renew and deepen their faith for all Catholics. Sometimes the newly baptized on Holy Saturday are sponsored by their SCCs. They are sent out to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ with the Swahili saying that is translated *to be called is to be sent*. We are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ and we are sent as apostles/missionaries/evangelists of Jesus Christ.

MAC encourages SCCs members to be missionaries and evangelizers on the local level in their families, small communities, neighborhoods, outstations, parishes and dioceses. SCC Members participate in local branches of MAC in parishes such as in Mwanza Archdiocese and Bukoba Diocese, Tanzania. Cardinal Polycarp Pengo of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania calls SCCs in Swahili *chombo mahususi cha uinjilishaji* that can be translated as "a special or privileged instrument of evangelization."<sup>866</sup>

Another Case Study is the Catholic Church in Kenya's annual promotion of October as "Missionary Month." SCC members participate in the "October Missionary Month Activity Calendar." For 2013 this included the following:

<b>WEEK OF PRAYER</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>WEEK OF SUFFERING</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>WEEK OF SOLIDARITY</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>WEEK OF THANKSGIVING</b> 21 <sup>st</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup> October
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The highlight was World Mission Sunday on 20 October 2013 with the theme: "Go and make disciples of all nations: (*Matthew* 28:18 –20). Mission materials are available on Pontifical

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<sup>866</sup> These activities on the grassroots are described in Chapter 5 "Ushiriki wa MAC katika Kamati ya Uratibu Mwaka Wajumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo Jimbo Kuu la Dar es Salaam 2006 – 2007" in the book *Jubilei ya MAC Miaka 25: 12. 5. 1987 – 12. 5. 2012*, Dar es Salaam: Unpublished manuscript, 2012.

Missionary Societies (PMS) – Kenya Website (<http://www.pmskenya.org> such as Pope Francis’ “Message for 2013 World Mission Sunday” **ADD** SCC members share their experiences and reflections on the [SCCs Facebook Page](#).

Another contemporary example is the increasing involvement of SCCs in the evangelizing outreach of the St. John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams in Kenya and parts of Tanzania. Laymen and laywomen are particularly active in these teams and respond to Venerable Pope Paul VI’s call and challenge to the African Church in Kampala, Uganda in 1969 to “be missionaries to yourselves.” These teams add a new element to the ministries of SCCs: formation of agents of evangelization in the public proclamation of the Word of God. American Maryknoll Father Richard Quinn, MM who is the Spiritual Director emphasizes: “We must train and form our people on how to evangelize in our Small Christian Communities.”<sup>867</sup> Kenyan layman Peter Kiarie who is the Director states: “The emergence of Lay Catholic Evangelizers rooted in the Small Christian Communities will be the Game Changer in the next phase of evangelization.”<sup>868</sup>

SCC members participate in monthly formation meetings. Topics include: “What are the different human problems in Kenya that we should reflect on in our SCC meetings in the light of the Gospel?” “Using the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Method of “See,” “Judge” and “Act” to Reflect on Key Pastoral Problems Related to Family and Marriage in Kenya Today.” “The Missionary Outreach of SCCs” “How We Make our SCCs Evangelistic.” Qualifications to participate in the Annual National Workshops includes: “Must be active in your SCC” and “Must be willing to implement the Molo teachings in your SCCs.”

At the 2012 Annual National Workshop “the topic SCCs was mentioned time and time again in the reports, testimonies and examples. Some called them our domestic communities of faith. Tanzanian diocesan priest Father Eustaki Tarimo, the Parish Priest of Holy Family Parish in Arusha, said they have 60 SCCs and without them the parish would be dead. Mwalimu Simon Rurinjah gave an excellent paper on how to make our SCCs more evangelistic. This evoked much discussion on the floor.”<sup>869</sup>

A new resource is the 34 minute DVD documentary *Sowing the Seed: New Evangelization. St. John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams*, Nairobi: Creativecamera Ltd, 2011. It contains several sections emphasizing the importance of SCCs in evangelizing.

SCC members are agents of mission and evangelization. In reporting on his

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<sup>867</sup> Richard Quinn, “KENYA: Catholic Laity Challenged on Evangelization,” Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) *Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 67, Friday, August 31, 2012. Available online: <http://a4a0g.s18.it/f/rnl.aspx/?fgc=wwsrx.f.dh=n5dd0=sx25a1cc=008&x=pv&7:8j&x=cc&0f:33idNCLM>

<sup>868</sup> Peter Kiarie, **ADD**

<sup>869</sup> “Report for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual National Workshop for the St. John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams” in Molo, Kenya from 16-19 August, 2012, Nairobi: Privately Printed, p. 1.

Mission Experience Program (MEP) in Malindi Diocese, Kenya, Cameroon priest Ndichia Anthony Ndong, MHM reports: “The Five Year Strategic Plan for Malindi Diocese (2008-2013) emphasizes the need of SCCs in the ministry of evangelization. SCCs are not a question of choice in the diocese. They are a “must be” group in the church. They are true witnesses of Jesus’ mission.”<sup>870</sup>

Machakos Diocese, Kenya reports on “Building Up a Committed Laity:”

The Small Christian Communities have been very instrumental in the evangelization of our diocese. This has helped our Christians live their vocation by living the Gospel values. It is on this narrower [smaller] level (SCCs) that in the last ten years the majority of our Christians have lived and worked. Special thanks to our priests, deacons and seminarians who have helped our Christians to be grouped on this [local] level by teaching the Word of God to our Christians.<sup>871</sup>

A key is to develop a mission awareness and a mission consciousness. One way is to celebrate the great missionary feasts in our SCCs:

1. Feast of the Epiphany on 6 January, 2011. We begin the year by celebrating that “all nations shall come to God’s light.” This can be the annual celebration of Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) Day.<sup>872</sup>
2. World Vocation Sunday (Good Shepherd Sunday) in May.
3. Pentecost Sunday, the Birthday of the Church, in June.
4. Feast of Saints Peter and Paul on 29 June, 2011.
5. Feast of St. Therese of Lisieux (St. Theresa of the Child Jesus or St. Theresa the Little Flower), the Patroness of Mission, on 1 October, 2011.<sup>873</sup>
6. World Mission Sunday on the next to last Sunday in October.
7. Feast of St. Francis Xavier, the Patron of Mission, on 3 December.
8. Feast of the Holy Innocents on 28 December, 2011. This can be the annual celebration of the Pontifical Missionary Childhood Day.

In Kenya we started SCCs of the Pontifical Missionary Childhood. Small groups of children meet on Saturdays or Sundays in their parishes to pray and to reflect on the *Bible*. In Kitale Diocese 15 PMC children belong to St. Francisca SCC in Holy Trinity Parish and 30 PMC children belong to St. Ann SCC in St. Peter Claver Parish. Similar SCCs of PMC

<sup>870</sup> Ndichia, “The Role of SCCs in Mission,” p. 55.

<sup>871</sup> *Journey of 10 Years*, p. 10.

<sup>872</sup> One of the challenges is to make PMC better known. Even though many PMC groups are active in all the Kenyan dioceses, an article in the July-August, 2014 issue of *New People* entitled “Missionary Groups in Our Parishes” referred to “making the young ones aware of the missionary vocation and its importance” without mentioning PMC.

<sup>873</sup> The many SCCs in Eastern Africa named after St. Therese emphasize the importance of prayer and contemplation, women saints and young Catholic Saints (she was 24 years old when she died).

children are in Chaani Parish in Mombasa Archdiocese. The PMC SCCs use the Lumko "Seven Steps" Method of *Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing*.

Ugandan theologian Father Callisto Locheng, AJ describes SCCs at the end of his book *Missiology: Introduction to the Roots of the Great Commission* in the chapter on "Small Christian Communities (SCCs): Practical Living of African Ecclesiology." SCCs reflect Trinitarian Community. The community always has a mission or purpose. SCCs are a pastoral necessity today in Africa because they make the church relevant to the African people. Through the SCC every member of the People of God assumes his or her mission in the church.

In offering some theological reflections on "The Future of Mission in Africa" Magesa has a section on "New Ecclesiological Opportunities in Small Christian Communities." His original text states:

Another shift in mission in our time is increasingly towards Small Christian Communities of faith. This involves a change in emphasis from large entities, such as parishes, as the basic organizational and pastoral units of the Church, to SCCs. Practically, SCCs provide more personal involvement and interaction by all the members of a given community of faith, and are thus closer and more faithful to the image of "Church as Family." Therefore, for the future of Christian mission, specifically in Africa, we can say without hesitation that the development of small faith communities is an indispensable requirement.<sup>874</sup>

In the section on "Rethinking the Ministerial Structures of the Church in Mission" Magesa emphasizes:

The rise of SCCs as a new way of being church has brought most powerfully to the fore the truth of the principle that the *church's needs should determine ministries and not ministries its [the church's] needs*. John Baur explains that this model of Church as "People of God" – or in the image of the First African Synod as "Family of God – was what guided the early church. It requires that "all the faithful fulfil their vocation and mission in the church...implying a change from a priest-based apostolate to a people-based apostolate that demands that the priest assume the role of the "community-minded inspirational minister."<sup>875</sup>

The shortage of priests has definitely been a concern in the church for some time now, and all indications are that the numbers of priests will continue to drop in many parts of the world. Yet that is not the primary reason why new forms and styles of ministry should be encouraged and developed. Rather, the fundamental reason is that this development is as much an intrinsic

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<sup>874</sup> See Laurenti Magesa, "Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission in Africa," Maryknoll 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium 2011, Nairobi, Kenya: Unpublished Paper, 12 pages.

<sup>875</sup> John Baur, *2000 Years*, Second Edition, pp. 319-320.

part of the nature of the church as it is an appropriate response to the signs of the times.<sup>876</sup>

Magesa expands on the inculturation or contextualization of ministries in SCCs in Eastern Africa:

The varieties of ministries particular to each SCC are a consequence of prayer. It is obvious, on account of this, that ministries in SCCs should, therefore, not be predetermined or streamlined to fit preconceived needs. It cannot be emphasized enough that felt spiritual and pastoral needs must be allowed to determine needed ministries in SCCs, and these will vary from one community to another. It is a variety that constitutes the vivacity of the church, as we have noted Pope Francis argues. Do we need ministers to the sick, the homebound, the non-Catholics among us, the young, the poor? Are there among us who can teach the *Bible* or keep accounts? Can they offer these services to other communities or the parish at large? Is it possible or feasible to establish a financial outreach ministry to less privileged communities around than ours? Scripture, the church's tradition contextualized in our experience, and prayer, will unearth endless possibilities of self-emptying service associated with human sinful but graced nature.<sup>877</sup>

I have been at several conferences and meetings where the importance and challenge of this statement -- the *church's needs should determine ministries and not ministries its [the church's] needs* -- have been forcefully pointed out.

There are two important issues here. First, the shortage of priests is not the determining factor in promoting the growth of lay ministries. By Baptism lay people participate in pastoral ministry in their own right. SCCs ministries evolve out of our fundamental and universal Baptismal call. Second, the implementation of the key pastoral priority of SCCs in Eastern Africa calls for priests to participate in a new way in this new model of church -- not as boss, but as animator or facilitator, or in Baur's words above, "community-minded inspirational minister."

It is important to bring an African missionary consciousness into SCC activities, for example, liturgical activities. A useful book is *A Maryknoll Liturgical Year: Reflections for the Readings of Year C* (Orbis Books, 2012) edited by Judy Coode and Kathy McNeely. Weekly reflections by Maryknoll Missionaries relate the Sunday Scripture readings to the world of the poor and marginalized. There are reflections from Kenya, Namibia, South Sudan,<sup>878</sup> Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The examples, stories and applications can be

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<sup>876</sup> Laurenti Magesa in Laurenti Magesa and Michael Kirwen (eds.), *Exploring the Future of Mission in Africa: In Celebration of Maryknoll's 100 Years in Mission*, Nairobi: MIAS Books, 2012, p. 130.

<sup>877</sup> Laurenti Magesa, "The Joy of Community," p. 26.

<sup>878</sup> A powerful example is the Third Sunday of Advent (13 December 2009) prepared by American Marj Humphrey, a former Maryknoll lay missionary based on her experiences in South Sudan. <http://archive.maryknollogc.org/about/Scripture-reflection-archive/12-13-09-Third-Sunday-Advent.pdf>

used in the weekly *Bible Services* of the SCC, SCC Masses, para-liturgical services and other prayer services.

SCC Masses should have a missionary spirit. Examples are given in other parts of this Ebook including Appendix No. 20 -- "Sample of an African Inculturated Small Christian Community Mass -- *Jumuiya* Mass (Nairobi, Kenya)." Sometimes the ending of mass can be dull and uninspiring with a simple "The Mass is ended." "Go in peace." Some SCC Masses adapt an idea from the start of the annual Indianapolis Speedway 500 mile car race in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA when the announcer calls out, "Drivers, start your engines" and the cars race away. So at the end of mass the congregation is told, "Christians, start your engines," that is, go out on fire to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. Then the people process out clapping and singing missionary songs like *Go into the Whole World* or *Go, Tell It on a Mountain*.

A concrete example of missionary solidarity and outreach is SCC Twinning that is described as follows:

International or global Small Christian Community (SCC) twinning (also called Sister SCCs, Sister Communities, and Partner SCCs) is a recent development in the worldwide Small Christian Communities experience and an important form of international networking. Twinning, the setting up of "Sister Dioceses" (Diocesan Twinning) and "Sister Parishes" (Parish Twinning) on a higher level and "Sister Small Christian Communities" on a lower, grassroots level, is a practical, proven and enriching experience of missionary involvement in the global church.

SCC twinning has developed in the last 15 years. It is a concrete expression of how SCCs are a new way of being church. The heart of SCC twinning is sharing mutual pastoral and missionary experiences between Local Churches on the very grassroots level. It is a group pen-pal friendship rather than an individual pen-pal friendship. The twinning relationship is joint and reciprocal. It is a two-way, mutual relationship. This is a partnership of Local Churches on all six continents expressed on the local level. This partnership is a special way for laypersons to participate and to say, "We are the church" and to reveal a unique face of sharing and collaboration. Twinning is an important means for SCCs to develop a broader viewpoint, a wider vision and a missionary spirit.<sup>879</sup>

Many SCC Twinning relationships have been set up between SCCs (both neighborhood, parish-based SCCs and specialized SCCs) in Eastern Africa and SCCs in other continents especially North America and Europe. Specific examples can be found on the [Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website](#). SCC Twinning offers an approach to the globalization of solidarity, a globalization from below as it were. The purpose of the twinning is *not* that the wealthier North American and European SCCs help the poorer Global South SCCs. The SCC Twinning is mainly spiritual, social and pastoral, not economic.

SCC Twinning can also take place on the local level, for example:

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<sup>879</sup> Rita Ishengoma and Joseph Healey, "Re-energizing International SCC Twinning" in Healey and Hinton, *Small Christian Community Today*, pp.157-158.

1. Twinning between SCCs in two dioceses in the same state or region.
2. Twinning between SCCs in two neighboring dioceses.
3. Twinning between a SCC in an urban area and a SCC in a rural area of a diocese.

A new development in twinning takes place simultaneously on three levels:

- Two dioceses in different countries twin.
- Parishes in these two dioceses twin.
- SCCs in these specific parishes twin.

St. Cloud Diocese in Minnesota, USA and Homa Bay Diocese in Western Kenya are experimenting with this plan.

Another model is found in this Case Study on “Creating a Youth SCC within the Main SCC” as described by Democratic Republic of the Congo Augustinian Deacon Jules Nugu Konza, OSA:

If the SCC is called for instance St Joseph SCC, there should be within that same SCC in the parish, a youthful SCC called St Joseph Youth SCC composed of young people only. This is much better in order to keep with the nature of SCC that is the church in the neighborhood (a specific geographical area). The youth will agree on the appropriate time (on Sunday afternoon for instance) to have their gathering. If this suggestion is adopted, the priest or the pastoral agent should make sure that the activities are shared between the two branches and they are equally represented at the parish level. More so, there should be collaboration among the steering committee members from these two branches so that they walk parallel to one another while engaging in the life of their SCC. Since both branches belong to the same truck, there should be collaboration or “twinning” when it comes to taking responsibilities in church for readings, dusting and cleaning the church, bringing offerings and formulating the Prayer of the Faithful.<sup>880</sup>

Closely related to SCC Twinning are the various programs of mutual mission solidarity and sharing. A Case Study is the Maryknoll Deacon Mission Partners 2104 East Africa Immersion Trip. During their visit to Nairobi the 11 American participants including one retired bishop, one priest, six deacons and three of their wives heard a presentation on SCCs in Eastern Africa and later visited St. Kizito SCC. One participant said: “The group was most impressed with the ministry with the SCCs and really enjoyed the visit to St. Kizito SCC.”<sup>881</sup>

SCCs are continually challenged to be missionary in responding to new signs of the

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<sup>880</sup> Jules Nugu Konza, “Creating a Youth SCC within the Main SCC,” **ADD**

<sup>881</sup> Matt Dulka in an email message to the author dated 8 March, 2014. Further information can be found on the 2104 East Africa Immersion Trip Post Trip Resources and Information Website, retrieved on 9 March, 2014, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UFVFyview3O9xiekvu7KjqBnjJW404b6\\_jGU9LERzXH/edit?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UFVFyview3O9xiekvu7KjqBnjJW404b6_jGU9LERzXH/edit?pli=1)

times in Africa. In the “Preface” to the *Pastoral Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Nairobi 2013* Cardinal John Njue states:

It would be desirable if every Small Christian Community, whatever difficulties lie ahead of it, would develop a sense of mission among her faithful so as to continue doing something good for God. Such an endeavor must arise from the dialogue and cooperation of all our Archdiocesan components.<sup>882</sup>

During the 2012-2013 Year of Faith SCCs in Eastern Africa found new means to reach out in creative ways. First, evangelize lukewarm and lax Catholics. This included home visitations to Christians in the local neighborhoods. Second, helping SCC members to regularize their marriages (“get married in church”) is a top priority. If the Best Man and Maid of Honor come from the same SCC they can spiritually and pastorally help the newly married couple even more. Kyalo points out:

The best man and the best lady should also play a great role in helping the newly married couples cope with marriage life by teaching and sharing with them some of the key success virtues in a Christian wedding. This plus their involvement and participation in SCC activities can help the newly married couples build a strong foundation in their family.<sup>883</sup>

This is connected to ceremonies of the renewal of marriage vows and celebrating wedding anniversaries.<sup>884</sup> Kenyan Bishop Peter Kihara, IMC, Bishop of Marsabit and Chairperson of the Commission for Missions of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), emphasizes catechesis preparation for these events. In his pastoral and missionary experience one year of preparation is necessary for these celebrations to be effective and deeply rooted.<sup>885</sup>

Third, encourage practicing Catholics to receive the sacraments more especially the Eucharist. This can also be connected to celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in SCC Masses. Fourth, promoting the adult catechumenate (RCIA) and accompanying SCC members who are preparing for Baptism (the lay ecclesial ministry of Adult Catechumenate Pastoral Accompanier). Fifth, encourage such religious practices as the World Mission Rosary where each decade has colored beads that represent the continents of the world: White for Europe, Yellow for Asia, Blue for Oceania, Red for the Americas and Green for Africa.<sup>886</sup>

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<sup>882</sup> *Pastoral Guidelines*, page vi.

<sup>883</sup> Peter Kyalo, Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, retrieved on 5 April, 2013, <https://www.face-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

<sup>884</sup> See Simon Rurinjah, “Case Study of a 60 Year Wedding Anniversary in St. Irene Small Christian Community in Limuru, Kenya,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2013, 1 page.

<sup>885</sup> Summary of Peter Kihara, IMC’s comments during the National Missionary Council, Nairobi, Kenya. 19 February, 2013.

<sup>886</sup> As part of a Twinning Project the children of the Fifth Grade in St Patrick’s School in Chatham, New Jersey, USA make and give these special rosaries to the children in the *Amani*

Sixth, more involvement in justice and peace ministries. In introducing the 2013 Kenyan Lenten Campaign (described in another part of this book). Archbishop Okoth emphasized that Catholics should “prove their faith in action.”

As Njue states above, SCC members can expect difficulties ahead of them. But Jesus Christ says “In the world you will have trouble, but take courage. I have conquered the world” (*John* 16:33). Pope Francis says: “You cannot know Jesus without having problems. And I dare say: If you want to have a problem, go towards the path to know Jesus. Not one [problem], you will have many. But it is the path to know Jesus! You cannot know Jesus in first class! Jesus is known through the daily paths walked every day. You cannot know Jesus in tranquility, not even in the library.”<sup>887</sup> So African SCC members meet Jesus in the problems and paths of everyday life. And Jesus promises us: “I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have told you this so that you may have peace in me. Behold I am with you always until the end of the world” (*Matthew* 28:20).

In light of the Year of Faith and the New Evangelization, research has been carried out on a typical Catholic Parish. A religious sociological profile is as follows.

Community of the “Gathered” (Catholic families who participate in Mass on Sunday)

Community of the “Others” (Catholic families who still belong to the parish and “could” include:

- Alienated/Angry Catholics
- Cafeteria Catholics
- Catholics comfortable with their minimal status and activity in the church
- Catholics who are involved in a small group/SCC during the week, but don’t go to Mass on Sunday
- Catholics who feel that the Catholic Church is irrelevant to their lives
- Catholics who go to another Catholic Church on Sunday
- Catholics who go to a Protestant Church on Sunday
- Christmas/Easter Catholics
- Community of the “Lost” Catholics -- two meanings:
  1. These Catholics themselves feel that they are lost.
  2. Strict Catholics who feel these others are lost (not saved or mixed up).
- Fallen-away Catholics
- Inactive Catholics
- Indifferent Catholics
- Lapsed Catholics
- Lax Catholics
- Lukewarm Catholics

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*na Wema* (Swahili for "Peace and Goodness") Children’s Home (AIDS orphans) located in the geographical area of St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi and to Kenyan Children in the Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC).

<sup>887</sup> Pope Francis’ homily at the morning mass in Domus Sanctae Marthae on 26 September, 2013. Zenit Website, retrieved on 19 October, 2013 <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-jesus-cannot-be-known-in-first-class>

Nominal Catholics  
 Non-practicing Catholics/Catholics who do not practice their faith<sup>888</sup>  
 Occasional Catholics  
 Searching Catholics (Seekers)

The challenge is how SCC members can reach out to those families in the “others” group. This is a significant part of the practical action of all mature, fully developed SCCs. Pope Francis’ challenge to all Catholics to “evangelize the peripheries and the marginated” is a special call to SCCs members. He explains: “Jesus renewed his call to each one of us to become his missionary disciples. May we perceive this call as the most important thing in our lives and share this gift with others, those near and far, even to the distant geographical and existential peripheries<sup>889</sup> of our world.”<sup>890</sup> No. 20 of *The Joy of the Gospel* states: “All of us are asked to obey the Lord’s call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel.” This is part of the shift in mission being situational as well as geographical/territorial. No. 120 states: “In virtue of their Baptism all members of the People of God have become missionary disciples.”

In many speeches and in his writings Pope Francis emphasizes the need for Catholics, lay and religious, to shake up the status quo, get out of their stuffy sacristies and reach the faithful on the margins<sup>891</sup> of society. “We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities when so many people are waiting for the Gospel! It’s not enough simply to open the door in welcome, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people.”<sup>892</sup> SCC members have a special opportunity to do this on the local level, in and through their neighborhood communities.

In its meetings the National Missionary Council of the KCCB has reflected on SCCs. Some conclusion. Priests have an important role in animating SCCs. In promoting the Role of

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<sup>888</sup> While “non-practicing Catholic” is a popular term, the use of a negative is questionable as explained on page 72. A better distinction is between active and inactive Catholics.

Many people wrongly use “going to Mass on Sunday” as the litmus test of whether a person is a practicing Catholic or an active Catholic. American Notre Dame de Namur Sister Mary Evelyn Jegan, SND tells the story of her nephew who drifted away from the Catholic faith and stopped going to mass on Sunday. But every Thursday he visited an old man in a nursery home and shaved his beard. Jegan said, “My nephew goes to mass on Thursdays.”

<sup>889</sup> These existential peripheries and margins are people and situations in pain and suffering.

<sup>890</sup> Pope Francis, “Message of Pope Francis for the Twenty-Ninth World Youth Day” (Palm Sunday, 13 April 2014), *Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 30, 11 April, 2013. Available in email message dated 11 April, 2011 and on the CISA Website, **CHANGE**  
<http://cisanewsafrika.com/kenya-scc-the-only-way-to-improve-faith-says-bishop-dsouza>

<sup>891</sup> Orbis Books is publishing various books on Pope Francis in 2014 and 2015.

<sup>892</sup> “Pope Francis in Brazil Draws Millions for Vigil,” *Huff Post Religion*, retrieved on 28 July, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/27/pope-francis-in-brazil-dr\\_n\\_3664952.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/27/pope-francis-in-brazil-dr_n_3664952.html)

SCCs in World Mission Sunday members emphasize the importance “to mobilize SCCs in remain in a state of mission.”<sup>893</sup>

A recent initiative is the mission outreach of Mangalore Diocese in South India to Same Diocese in Tanzania. In leading a delegation in a mission towards reviving the Catholic faith in Same, Indian Bishop Aloysius Paul D’Souza of Mangalore Diocese said that having active Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the church is one of the solutions towards stopping Catholics from leaving the church:

People are leaving the church because there is no one to listen to their problems as they are being listened to in other sects. I know we cannot listen to each person’s problems, but through the Small Christians Communities individual problems can be solved much easily.

The bishop further urged the church to begin projects that would take care of the less advantaged in the society such as building houses for the homeless. “Through these houses the people who are homeless feel appreciated and you will see them getting back to the church,” he said.<sup>894</sup>

Eastern African SCCs can learn from other Christian Churches especially from lay evangelists Christians in their home cells. Malawian Pentecostal missionary Pastor Harvey Kwiyani states:

[As part of African Christianity] it is the lay Christians who do the work of evangelism, visitation and praying for the sick, among other ministry duties. In their small groups – or “home cells,” as they are usually called -- lay Christians engage in neighborhood evangelism on a constant basis. These home cells organize their own prayer vigils, community get-togethers and ministry schools.<sup>895</sup>

SCCs continue to use the internet to promote mission. The SCCs Website has a Poll that asks: “The best part of my Small Christian Community is...” Some answers:

- Agents of evangelization
- Basic means of evangelization
- Call to respond to the suffering Christ
- Center of communion and outreach
- Center of constant missionary outreach
- Channel of evangelization
- Community of missionary disciples

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<sup>893</sup> Minutes 04/02/2013 of the National Missionary Council of the KCCB on 19 February, 2013.

<sup>894</sup> Aloysius Paul D’Souza, “SCC the Only Way to Improve Faith, says Bishop D’Souza,” *Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 63, 16 July, 2013. Available in email message dated 16 July, 2013 and on the CISA Website, <http://cisanewsafrika.com/kenya-scc-the-only-way-to-improve-faith-says-bishop-dsouza>

<sup>895</sup> Harvey Kwiyani, *Sent Forth*, p. 59.

- Community of proclaiming the Word of God
- Concern for others
- Evangelizers in our neighborhood
- Evangelizing families rooted in SCCs
- Frontier of evangelization in the AMECEA Region for the laity
- Instrument of evangelization
- Living center of evangelization
- Living the mission *ad gentes*
- Main cell of evangelization
- Missional small groups
- Mission-minded
- Missionary outreach
- Missionary spirit
- Neighborhood evangelism
- New way of doing evangelization
- New way of evangelization
- Outreaching church
- Outreach to others
- Place of evangelization
- Powerful means of evangelization
- Practical action and service
- Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ
- Promotes the New Evangelization
- Reaching out to others
- SCCs evangelization
- Sharing ideas and ways to evangelize
- Small community of missionary disciples
- Small mission community
- Social outreach activities
- Special structure of evangelization
- Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ
- Sure way of evangelization
- Tool of evangelization
- Tool to serve evangelization
- Vital icon for New Evangelization
- Without borders or boundaries

The frequent use of the words “mission” (eight times) and “evangelization” (22 times) are significant.

One of the most important internet platforms to promote mission is the Pontifical Mission Societies’ MissioApp that is a free app that features the latest news and video from around the world about the Catholic Church. It is mobile app for iPhone, iPad Android, etc. The MissioApp offers news and information in English, Spanish, Italian, German, French, Portuguese, Chinese and Arabic from Fides, the Vatican's missionary news agency, and news.va. The news appears in the default language set on the mobile device. The app also includes videos from news.va and Catholic News Service.

The use of Apps and the social media/new media is a reminder and challenge for the future as a 2013 Mission Conference stated: “If mission is going to continue past our lifetimes, we must reach young people, and young people live in the culture of social media.”<sup>896</sup> A proposal for the Maryknoll Society’s 2014 Thirteenth General Chapter on “Social Media, the Language of Mission” stated: “That the voice of mission be extended and made more effective through social media and the use of modern developments in information technologies.”<sup>897</sup>

Pope Francis’ “Message for 2014 World Mission Day” (19 October, 2014) has four sections that can be applied to the ministry of African SCCs:

- “The Evangelist tells us that the Lord sent the seventy-two disciples two by two into cities and villages to proclaim that the Kingdom of God was near, and to prepare people to meet Jesus” (No. 1). This highlights the community, unity, teamwork and collaboration of SCC members.
- “The joy of communicating Jesus Christ is expressed in a concern to proclaim him in the most distant places, as well as in a constant outreach to the peripheries of their own territory, where great numbers of the poor are waiting for this message” (No. 4). This highlights Pope Francis’ call and challenge in *The Joy of the Gospel* to evangelize the excluded, the marginated and those on the peripheries: “All of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel” (No. 20).
- “I encourage parish communities, associations and groups to live an intense fraternal life, grounded in love for Jesus and concern for the needs of the most disadvantaged” (No. 4). SCCs are an important part of these parish communities.
- “On this World Mission Day my thoughts turn to all the Local Churches. Let us not be robbed of the joy of evangelization! I invite you to immerse yourself in the joy of the Gospel and nurture a love that can light up your vocation and your mission” (No. 5). This is a call and challenge to SCCs members in African Local Churches.

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<sup>896</sup> Ken Eppes, “Social Media – a New Mission Language,” *Not So Far Afield*, Volume 23, No. 2 (March-April, 2014), Not So Far Afield Website retrieved on 10 April, 2014, [Notsofarafield.org](http://Notsofarafield.org)

<sup>897</sup> Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Intranet, retrieved on 24 June, 2014, <http://www.maryknoll.net/Missioners/Pubs/Members/Thirteenth%20General%20Chapter/Social%20Media,%20the%20Language%20of%20Mission.pdf>

## 11. SCCs' Involvement in the New Evangelization in Eastern Africa

As we read and respond to the contemporary signs of the times in Africa and around the world, the “New Evangelization” emerges as a new and top priority. First, it is important to clarify the many meanings and uses of New Evangelization. The “Preface” to the *Lineamenta* that was published in 2011 for the October, 2012 Synod of Bishops on *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* states that “the new evangelization is primarily addressed to those who have drifted from the Church in traditionally Christian countries.” Later Vatican documents and speeches of Pope Benedict XVI extended the importance of New Evangelization to the whole world including the Global South that covers Africa.

I often get the questions: What is “new” about the New Evangelization? Why is it important for Africa? In the expression “New Evangelization” “new” refers mainly to the context of transmitting the Christian faith rather than the message. Four great challenges are the growing secularism/secularization, relativism, pluralism and globalization in our postmodern<sup>898</sup> world. The context of Europe and North America is reaching Christians who have drifted away from the Christian faith due to the influence of secularism and worldly values. This influence has been described as a secular religion. The context of Africa is reaching Christians who have been disconnected from their faith and distracted by other priorities.

A writer for the *Tablet* points out:

As the people with the best story, we should have the best means of communicating it...The New Evangelization is really the old evangelization but with new methods, expressions and approaches. In other words, it is the same Good News of Jesus Christ – but with attempts to find new means to communicate it and new mediums through which to express the same Gospel Jesus shared with the disciples.<sup>899</sup>

SCCs are not specifically mentioned in the *Lineamenta* (this is consistent with other documents for the universal church), but are included under “parish communities.” Also SCCs are included under “ecclesial communities,” one of the common expressions in Vatican documents. The answers to the questions of the *Lineamenta* from the AMECEA countries include references to SCCs. Following the pattern of past synods, SCCs are mentioned in the

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<sup>898</sup> Postmodernity is a name that has been attached to our cultural milieu. Among its features are a sense of historical consciousness, a recognition of the social construction of knowledge, an appreciation for pluralism and a suspicion of grand narratives. It is a cultural worldview that is naturally suspicious of Christian mission. Meanwhile, traditional Catholics are equally suspicious of postmodernism, associating it with relativism, secularism and syncretism.

<sup>899</sup> Brenden Thompson, “Evangelization 2.0,” *Tablet*, Vol. 269, No. 9101 (23 May, 2015), p. 18. The *Tablet* Website, retrieved on 25 July, 2015, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/230515issue.pdf>

This article stresses the importance of the myParish app that allows the parish and parishoners to stay connected. See the my Parish Website (the App for Catholic Life Every Day): [www.myparishapp.com](http://www.myparishapp.com)

*Instrumentum Laboris* that was published in June, 2012. This shows that the writers in the Synod of Bishops Office in Rome responded to the answers to the *Lineamenta* from episcopal conferences around the world.

As a Case Study let us take some examples from the official responses of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB):<sup>900</sup>

Introduction, Question No. 4: What specific pastoral activity has benefited by undertaking the "new evangelization"? Give an account of any changes in these pastoral programs or any significant renewal of activity? **Answer:** "Introduction of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a pastoral and missionary tool. This is one of the most successful pastoral approaches in terms of the laity's involvement in evangelization.<sup>901</sup> The laity evangelizing the laity and sharing their lives in the spirit of charity with the Word of God at the center of their activity."

Chapter I, Question No. 2: How does the Church fulfill her missionary role of taking part in people's everyday lives, "in the midst of the homes for her sons and daughters"? **Answer:** "The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are very instrumental in bringing the Gospel down to the lives of the people. The AMECEA (Eastern Africa) Bishops said: 'SCCs are an effective way of developing the mission dimension of the church at the most local level, and of making people feel that they are really part of the church's evangelizing work.'"

Chapter I, Question No. 11: How have Christian communities been affected by the changes in the religious sector? What is the principal work? What new opportunities are present? **Answer:** "Revitalization of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is one of the greatest opportunities in this process."

Chapter I, Question No. 12: Describe the ways the new evangelization has been enacted in the Local Churches? **Answer:** "Through the establishment of Small Christians Communities in the parish communities. Powerful preaching and *Bible* sharing in Small Christian Communities and in families."

Chapter I, Question No. 16: How has the celebration of the continental or regional synodal assemblies' assisted Christian communities to devise a project for a new evangelization? **Answer:** "The greatest achievement of Association of the Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) is the introduction and promotion of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" There are presently 180,000 SCCs in the nine AMECEA countries. They are pastorally oriented and mainly parish-based.

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<sup>900</sup> Contributed by Kenyan diocesan priest Father Charles Odera, the National Executive Secretary of the Pastoral Department of the Kenya Catholic Secretariat from the report that the KCCB sent to the Synod of Bishops Office in Rome.

<sup>901</sup> See Pope Francis' "Address to Bishops of Rwanda:" "The laity has a primordial role in the task of evangelization and reconstruction to be accomplished. And I would like here first of all to warmly thank all the catechists for their generous and perseverant engagement. Lay faithful are intensely involved in the life of the grassroots Ecclesial Communities," "ZENIT: The World Seen from Rome," email message dated 3 April, 2014.

Chapter II. **Answers** to four questions emphasise the importance of Bible sharing and Bible reflection in the Small Christian Communities.

Chapter III, Question No. 3: Generally speaking, how are individual Christian communities meeting the demands of devising new forms of raising the question of God in society and in the communities themselves? What meaningful experiences deserve to be shared with other Particular Churches (Local Churches)? **Answer:** “Through our 45,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Kenya that are mainly parish-based. We are strengthening our Small Christian Communities where the Word of God is shared, prayers offered, and charitable activities to the poor encouraged.

Chapter III, Question No. 11: How are Christian communities supporting parents in their increasingly difficult task of transmitting the faith? **Answer:** Small Christian Communities animated by catechists carry on our catechesis all the time.

In the section on “Parish Transformation and the New Evangelization” in the *Instrumentum Laboris* (“Working Document”) No. 80 states:

Many responses describe a Church strongly engaged in the work of transformation by being present among people and within society. The younger Churches are working to enliven parishes<sup>902</sup> which are oftentimes extensive, animating them internally through a program, depending on geographic and ecclesial contexts, called “Basic Christian Communities” or “Small Christian Communities”. Their stated purpose is to foster a Christian life which is better capable of sustaining the faith of their members and illuminating, through their witness, various areas of society, particularly in large, sprawling cities. The older, more established Churches are reviewing their parish programs which are being administered with increased difficulty as a result of a decrease in the number of the clergy and a decline in Christian practice. They are seeking to avoid the danger that their work become merely bureaucratic and administrative and lead to undesired effects, namely that Particular Churches (Local Churches), already too busy with operational problems, might, in the end, become exclusively concerned with themselves. In this regard, many responses refer to the idea of a “pastoral unity” as a means of combining a parish renewal program with a cooperative endeavor among other parishes, so as to create a more community-minded Particular Church (Local Church).

In Eastern Africa SCCs are much more than “a program” – the word used above. As a key pastoral priority of the Catholic Church in the AMECEA Region SCCs are a very important component of pastoral ministry and evangelization and even a way of life. Davies

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<sup>902</sup> Eastern Africa can learn from Asia. A creative example is the dynamic BCCs in the Philippines. A nine-year journey for the New Evangelization that climaxes with the Jubilee Year 2021 includes the theme “Parish as a Communion of Communities” in 2017. *See Live Christ, Share Christ*, Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP)’s Pastoral Letter on the Era of New Evangelization, 9 July, 2012.

emphasizes: “SCCs should make Christianity a way of life, really touching their lives and supporting them in their problems. A SCC is ideally a communion of families.”<sup>903</sup>

This is seen in how some SCCs members greet each other. One SCC member calls out: “*Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo*” (“Small Christian Community”). The other responds: “*Roho mmjoa, moyo mmoja katika Kristo*” (“One spirit, one heart in Christ”). Rutechura states that “Small Christian Communities are not a mere pastoral strategy but a communion of communities, a way of being Church Family of God.”<sup>904</sup>

SCCs’ involvement in the New Evangelization can be viewed in the context of the AMECEA Region and the World Church. First, in the AMECEA Region. The 2011 AMECEA Study Session Resolution No. 1 states: “Developing a Comprehensive Ten Year Pastoral Plan comprised of recommendations on the various issues and concerns. The plan must include a theological framework of addressing key issues and challenges of ‘New Evangelization in Solidarity in the AMECEA countries:’” SCCs can play a big role in implementing these AMECEA recommendations on the local, grassroots level.

A contemporary Case Study is the Evangelizers of the Word Ministry in Christ the Teacher Parish (Catholic Chaplaincy Center) at Kenyatta University in Nairobi that is described as follows:

This is a group of university students dedicated to preaching the Word of God in and out of Kenyatta University. The members are students leading a mature sacramental life. They undergo formation in the monthly Formation Sessions of the St. John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams that meet at the Maryknoll Society House in Nairobi.

The members’ main activity is sharing the Word of God in SCCs. Members are sent to the different Small Christian Communities to help interpret the readings of the day. The group is also involved in the animation of the mass in the university parish. The members organize community outreach programs to children’s homes whereby they gather food and other forms of assistance to the homes, help in cleaning, cooking, playing with the children and sharing the Word of God with them. The members meet weekly on Sundays at 4 p.m.<sup>905</sup>

Through their SCCs and other apostolic programs these university students have a missionary spirit and practice. The “Reach In, Reach Out Program” means that you have to be evangelized first before you can evangelize others. The “Capture, Recapture Outreach Program” is a New Evangelization program to visit students in their residence halls/dorms at Kenyatta University who have stopped going to church and are not involved in SCCs.

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<sup>903</sup> Colon Davies, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop*, p. 114.

<sup>904</sup> Pius Rutechura, “The Pastoral Vision of Basic Christian Communities.” p. 1.

<sup>905</sup> Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University Website, retrieved on 11 October, 2011, <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke>

The *Lineamenta* uses the image of the “new ‘Courtyards of the Gentiles’ that are areas in society created by the social media/new media and which are increasingly engaging more people. The new evangelization means to devise ways to proclaim the Gospel, even in these technologically advanced areas.”<sup>906</sup>

To put this into practice the “Evangelizers of the Word” Ministry created a Facebook Page to reach out to youth  
[http://www.Facebook.com/group.php?v=app\\_2373072738&gid=328247078038#!/group.php?v=wall&gid=328247078038](http://www.Facebook.com/group.php?v=app_2373072738&gid=328247078038#!/group.php?v=wall&gid=328247078038)

The Profile Picture of this page is an imaginary painting of Jesus Christ sitting in a garden and using a computer with the word “Facebook” on the cover. The description of the page reads: *1 Corinthians* 9:16: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel." The African young men and women who are fans (members) of this page do online faith sharing, exchange spiritual reflections and learn on how to evangelize through the media.

These technological advances are already changing the lifestyles and ministries of SCC members in Eastern Africa. Fiber optic cables provide fast internet access. Smart phones and iPads provide instant access to Catholic Church news. A speech of the pope or a Vatican document that a person ordinarily waited for to be printed in his or her Catholic newspaper in Eastern Africa is now posted on different websites. It can be read on one’s laptop computer, tablet or cellphone. Then this information can be instantaneously shared with friends.

A key feature of the New Evangelization is to get youth more involved in the Catholic Church through the social media/new media and social networking. We are finding an increasing number of people, especially young people, are joining Online SCCs (described in Chapter 9) for a variety of reasons: their complicated work schedules; they are unable to participate in the ordinary weekly SCCs in their parishes; they travel a great deal; they would like a more variety in the membership of their community; and they would like to focus more on a specific part of a SCC like reflecting on the Gospel in depth. Kenyan Peter Kyalo, a young Catholic layman in Nairobi, writes:

It has been difficult for most Catholics especially those working until Saturday to participate actively in their SCCs. For instance I am a member of an SCC that meets on Wednesday afternoon and it has been difficult to participate very actively unless I have permission from my employer to be away from work. I think that the introduction of Online SCCs especially on Facebook is the best thing that technology has facilitated and supported.<sup>907</sup>

So an Online SCC fits these African youth’s needs. Youth want to express themselves and like the web for its User Generated Content (UGC). There has to be a balance between the empowerment offered through the freedom of the internet and the accountability in contributing material consistent with the Catholic Church’s message.

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<sup>906</sup> *Lineamenta* for the Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly. *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2011, No. 5, Footnote 18.

<sup>907</sup> Peter Kyalo in an email message to the author dated 26 November, 2010.

Pope Benedict XVI had his own personal official Twitter Page to demonstrate the Vatican's commitment to embrace new technology. This SCCs website is setting up its own Twitter Page.

Another technologically advanced area mentioned by Pope Benedict XVI is YouTube. How can SCCs use YouTube to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ? Youth in Eastern Africa love music and drama. Youth Choirs are popular everywhere. Through YouTube audio and video clips of choir music like Christian music videos especially with *Bible* and mission-minded themes can be posted on SCC Websites and available through Smart Phones. Information and awareness-building videos on ecology/environment and justice and peace themes are popular too. Various SCCs DVDs, video clips and training materials are posted on [YouTube](#) and available through many social networking sites and web applications.<sup>908</sup>

Youth Groups perform Bible Plays and Gospel Plays on many occasions especially during Christmas and Holy Week. Some parishes have a Gospel Play as part of the homily during every Sunday of Lent. Research in Eastern Africa shows that many Catholic forget the Gospel when it is only read at the Sunday Mass, but they will always remember when the story is acted out. Video clips of dramas and short plays on evangelization themes can be posted on SCC websites.

The potential is enormous. We are challenged to use our creativity and imagination to enter into the world of the social media/new media. We are challenged to think outside the box. *To see beyond your nose* as the expression goes of Kenya youth today. The goal is to use the social media/new media not superficially as casual online social networking, but genuinely at the service of the Word of God and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our mantra can be: “The Social Media/New Media: New Mode of Youth Evangelization.”

Another way of responding to Pope Benedict XVI’s call to enter “these technologically advanced areas” is to keep up with the ever-changing trends and patterns of the internet and social networking. In a talk to seminarians in Rome in February, 2011 he said:

The internet is a valuable tool for seminarians, not only in their studies, but also in their pastoral ministries. Because of its capacity to surmount distances and put people in mutual contact, the internet presents great possibilities also for the Church and her mission. With the necessary discernment for its intelligent and prudent use, it is an instrument that can serve not only for studies, but also for the pastoral action of future priests in different ecclesial fields, such as evangelization, missionary action, catechesis, educational projects, the management of institutes."

We receive weekly information on the use of our SCCs Facebook pages. Then we receive the monthly Google Analytic Report on our SCCs website. From these reports we

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<sup>908</sup> Every weekend on local TV in metro Manila, Philippines Cardinal Chito Tagle, the Archbishop of Manila, hosts *The Word Exposed*, a half-hour TV commentary covering each of the Sunday readings in anticipation of the weekend's liturgy. It is also available online on Facebook (where he has over 100,000 fans) and YouTube.

analyze the trends and patterns of what our visitors like and need especially the online content and the presentation. Based on these trends and patterns we change and update the pages and websites. Some trends and patterns:

1. A link to the SCC Website is on the top left side of the Home (Front) Page of the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website. Many fans and visitors use this referral.
2. Overall the number of people who vote in the SCCs Poll on “The best part of my Small Christian Community is...” is small – about three people a day.
3. There are relatively few posts on the SCCs Facebook Page. Fans (presently 1,462 fans), and visitors have not gotten used to sharing regularly their practical SCCs experiences, stories and examples.
4. Visitors like interesting short video clips such as YouTube to accompany the content. This attracts and even captivates people. These videos can be shared freely without restriction. Videos and images are among the major driving forces behind social media.
5. More photographs and graphics can increase the attractiveness of both the website and Facebook Pages.
6. To attract more visitors we have added the “BBC RSS Feeds for African News” on the top right hand side of the “Africa Page” of the SCCs Website.
7. A major challenge is to find interested people to volunteer to moderate the various parts of the SCCs Website (SCCs Stories Database, Facebook Page, Twitter Page).

In the section on “The New Frontier of the Communications’ Sector” in the *Instrumentum Laboris* No. 61 states:

The Church is engaged in these areas created by the media and has, from the very beginning, utilized these means as a useful way to proclaim the Gospel. Today, in addition to the more traditional means of communication, especially the printed word and radio, which, according to the responses, have moderately increased in recent years, new *media* are increasingly becoming a major factor in the Church's ministry of evangelization, making interaction possible at various levels: local, national, continental and global. The potential for using both old and new media is clear, as is the need to take advantage of this newly created social space and introduce the vocabulary and forms of the Christian Tradition. An attentive and shared discernment process is needed not only to better assess the possibilities of their use in proclaiming the Gospel, but also to understand properly the risks and dangers involved.

“Faith” is a theme that links SCCs to other pastoral activities in the New Evangelization. The “Preface” to the *Instrumentum Laboris* states:

The importance given to the faith is further emphasized by the decision of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI to celebrate a Year of Faith, beginning on 11 October 2012, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

*The Door of Faith*, the *Motu Proprio* by Pope Benedict XVI includes Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. No. 4 in the Section on “At the Level of the Parish/Community/Association/Movement” states:

Catechists should hold more firmly to the doctrinal richness of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and, under the direction of their pastors, offer guidance in reading this precious document to groups of faithful, working toward a deeper common understanding thereof, with the goal of creating small communities of faith,<sup>909</sup> and of giving witness to the Lord Jesus.

The missionary activity of Eastern Africa of SCCs respond to the challenge in No. 81 of the *Instrumentum Laboris*: “The new evangelization is a call to the Church to rediscover her missionary origins... Parishes have the responsibility to become real centers for propagating and bearing witness to the Christian experience.”

All these examples can help our SCCs to think about "New Evangelization" in a way that would really be “mission” and not just getting people back into the church. We need to be creative and *think outside the box* especially in reaching out to young people today.

The World Synod of Bishops on “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”<sup>910</sup> took place in Rome, Italy from 7-28 October, 2012. All the documentation is on the Vatican Website in the *Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin*. The bulletin is published by the Holy See Press Office in six language editions (plurilingual, Italian, English, French, Spanish and German). The key documentation is also available on the [AMECEA Pastoral Department Blog](#) on the AMECEA Website including the 13 interventions by the archbishops and bishops who were delegates at the Synod from the AMECEA countries.

In the intervention on the Continent of Africa Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam and President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM – SECAM) said: “A very fundamental establishment for New Evangelization in Africa is that of Small Christian Communities. These have become living centers of evangelization of the present day Continent.”<sup>911</sup>

The *Message to the People of God from the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* contains two references to SCCs:

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<sup>909</sup> Small Faith Communities (SFCs) is a common name for SCCs in the USA. See Susan DeGuede and Steven Valenzuela, “Development of SFCs in the Diocese of San Bernardino, California in Healey and Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today*, pp. 41-48.

<sup>910</sup> See “Small Christian Communities as an Agent of New Evangelization,” by Joachim Omolo Ouko, AJ, *Voices of Justice for Peace Regional News*, email dated 16 October, 2012.

<sup>911</sup> Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, “Reports on the Continents,” Second General Congregation (Monday, 8 October, 2012), *Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin* on the Vatican Website retrieved 11 October, 2012, [http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino\\_25\\_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02\\_inglese/b05\\_02.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_25_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02_inglese/b05_02.html)

Number 8 under “The Ecclesial Community and the Many Agents of Evangelization” states:

No one person or group in the Church has exclusive right to the work of evangelization. It is the work of ecclesial communities as such, where one has access to all the means for encountering Jesus: the Word, the sacraments, fraternal communion, charitable service, mission.

The role of the parish emerges above all as the presence of the Church where men and women live, “the village fountain”, as St. John XXIII loved to call it, from which all can drink, finding in it the freshness of the Gospel. It cannot be abandoned, even though changes can require of it either to be made up of Small Christian Communities or to forge bonds of collaboration within larger pastoral contexts.

Number 13 under “To the Churches in the Various Regions of the World” states:

We look to you Christians, men and women, who live in the countries of Africa and we express our gratitude for your witness to the Gospel often in difficult circumstances. We exhort you to revive the evangelization that you received in recent times, to build the Church as the family of God, to strengthen the identity of the family, to sustain the commitment of priests and catechists especially in the Small Christian Communities.

The *Final List of Propositions* contains three references to SCCs:

Proposition 11 on “New Evangelization and the Prayerful Reading of Sacred Scripture” under “The Nature of the New Evangelization” states:

In consideration of the necessity of familiarity with the Word of God for the New Evangelization and for the spiritual growth of the faithful, the Synod encourages dioceses, parishes, Small Christian Communities to continue serious study of the Bible and *Lectio Divina*, the prayerful reading of the Scriptures (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 21-22).

Proposition 26 on “Parishes and Other Ecclesial Realities” under “Pastoral Responses to the Circumstances of Our Day” states:

The parish continues to be the primary presence of the Church in neighborhoods, the place and instrument of Christian life, which is able to offer opportunities for dialog among men, for listening to and announcing the Word of God, for organic catechesis, for training in charity, for prayer, adoration and joyous eucharistic celebrations... In order to bring to all people the Good News of Jesus, as required by a New Evangelization, all the parishes and their small communities should be living cells, places to promote the personal and communitarian encounter with Christ, experience the richness of liturgy, to give initial and permanent Christian formation, and to educate all the faithful in fraternity and charity especially towards the poor.

Proposition 42 on “Integrated Pastoral Activity” under “Agents/Participants of the New Evangelization” states:

Each particular [local] Church is the primary community of the Church’s mission. It must animate and lead a renewed pastoral activity able to integrate the variety of charisms, ministries, states of life and resources. All these realities must be coordinated within an organic missionary project, capable of communicating the fullness of Christian life to everyone, especially to those who feel themselves far from the Church’s care. Such an endeavor must arise from the dialog and cooperation of all diocesan components, including: parishes, Small Christian Communities, educational communities, communities of consecrated life, associations, movements and individual faithful.

Other noteworthy interventions<sup>912</sup> and interviews on SCCs and the New Evangelization include:

1. Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, CM, Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia:

Small Christian Communities, established as the most local presence of the Catholic and Universal Church, share this same mission. Small Christian Communities provide an ideal pastoral context to establish and develop lay ministries. One of the most significant differences between traditional Catholic Associations and Small Christian Communities resides in the apostolic orientation of the latter.

Small Christian Communities are not built on the personal holiness of their members but in their humble availability for and faithfulness to their apostolic mission; personal holiness is a requirement and a consequence of the mission, not its final purpose. Small Christian Communities have an essential apostolic spirituality oriented to mission. Without mission, the Small Christian Community, as well as the universal Church, would be unfaithful to its very fundamental vocation of being a witness to the Gospel. This mission becomes a concrete reality with the establishment of lay ministries to be exercised in the restricted area of the community.

Lay Ministries, therefore, are not to be conceived as accessory or optional activities of the Small Christian Community in order to relieve the work of the priest. They are part and parcel of its life and growth and when ministries decline it is the whole life of the community that declines.

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<sup>912</sup> Although there were many positive interventions on SCCs, it is common that their strength, weight and priority don’t get into the final documents such as the *Apostolic Exhortation The Joy the Gospel*. A discerning observer Bishop Rodrigo Mejia points out: “May I express some skepticism about these declarations on SCCs? It is years that they are declaring nice things but in the end, in the final *Apostolic Exhortation* the SCCs are mentioned in just one or two places, ‘*en passant*,’ among ‘other movements’....” Email message dated 3 November, 2012.

Experience has shown enough what religious associations who are centered only in prayer and devotion can become: a sort of exclusive spiritual club for holy members only, more faithful to the *minutiae* prescribed by the handbook written by their founder than to the demands of Jesus in the Gospel.

The field is vast and open to pastoral creativity. However, in establishing new lay ministries, care must be taken that the dialog, consultation and communion with the local bishop is observed and that a periodical evaluation is performed lest a disparate variety of lay ministries conducted without a common vision and pastoral guidelines may result in creating disconcert and confusion among the People of God.

Such is the main challenge of the New Evangelization. Though a relevant reeducation of our Christian people is necessary in the field of lay ministries, it is not certainly from the side of our Christians that objections and resistance to them will come. Christians are eager to participate in a more active way in the life and growth of the Church.

1. Bishop Bonaventure Nahimana, Bishop of Rutana, Burundi:

The Small Living Christian Communities need a new breath to play a more prominent role in new evangelization. After the war and the conflicts our country has undergone with all the consequences that follow, we saw the need for a deep evangelization and to involve our Living Christian Communities to deepen the faith and to take care of the life of the Church.

The size of these communities allows the members to know each other and help each other, to reinforce their cohesion and their communion in a climate of fraternity and solidarity.

They are the place where Christians can live the experience of reconciliation which is first of all achieved in the sacrament of penance so the Church may answer her vocation in being at the service of peace, justice and reconciliation. The Holy Father said that the new evangelization “demands that we be reconciled with our neighbors and that we overcome every kind of barrier, including those arising from language, culture and race” (*Africa’s Commitment, No. 169*).

Because of the dynamism of their faith and their commitment, these communities are the favorable place for the blooming of priestly and consecrated vocations. Because they favor a climate of prayer for vocations and help parents become conscious of their responsibility as teachers of the faith. These communities are called to associate together for their development to battle against hunger, misery, all kinds of injustices, to better their condition and to find solutions to their problems.

2. Archbishop Filipe Neri António Sebastião Do Rosário Ferrão, Archdiocese of Goa and Damão, India:

The parish is the place where the faithful gather to grow in faith, live

the mystery of ecclesial communion and take part in the Church's mission (cf. *The Church in Africa*, No. 25). The Church in India has embraced "A New Way of Being Church" through "Small Christian Communities." The faithful of a neighborhood reflect collectively on the Word of God, pray together and act in solidarity for the integral development and authentic liberation of the human person. Experiencing conversion, growing in the personal encounter of Jesus and recognizing him in one another, the faithful place the various gifts and charisms of the Spirit at the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church and enter into a dialog of life and action in their own places with people of other faiths.

3. Archbishop Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij, of Bangkok, Thailand:

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand is of the opinion that it is necessary that all the Bishops, priests, men and women religious and the laity be concretely revived in faith and Christian life aiming at "Discipleship and sharing the Good News" with regards to the teaching of the Church, liturgy, life of prayers and continuous formation, using the means of "BEC" (Basic Ecclesial Communities) through coordination of the various Catholic entities and the CBCT commissions especially the Episcopal Commission for Pastoral Care of the Christians. The parochial community will enable the BEC to be the sign of active life of a parish which will be a new community, "communion of communities", based on the culture of love and will become a good approach for the pastoral care and evangelization *Ad Gentes*.

4. Bishop José Dolores Grullón Estrella of San Juan de la Maguana in the Dominican Republic:

Among the subjects privileged to carry out the new evangelization ... are the small communities, formed by a small group of people who gather like the primordial cells of an ecclesial structure to live the faith, train themselves, evangelize and undertake community actions. These small communities are the fruit of a real pastoral conversion.

5. Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin, Ireland:

The culture of individualism can be counteracted by the creation of a variety of new ecclesial communities, not just those of the ecclesial movements, but around our parishes, which will be the building blocks of the Eucharistic communities of the future.

6. Summary of the French-speaking Small Group:

The New Evangelization passes through the parish with a "new face", capable of accompanying people in faith and the personal and affective world, the thing that is most missing in our society of today. Parishes should be a network of ecclesial communities which, in their concrete settings, sustain faith in Jesus Christ and his followers and, for the same reason, the growth in the overall human dimension. These are the "ecclesial bodies" (the parishes and their communities) to be called to show the Risen Lord who gives life and

meaning to existence. Perhaps the most pressing problem of the New Evangelization is the formation and the accompanying of these little ecclesial communities.

7. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna, Austria's interview with John Allen:<sup>913</sup>

The key idea, which has been extremely present in this synod, is the Small Christian Community. Many, many bishops from around the world have spoken about the Small Christian Communities. We see the need, and we have the desire, not to lose communities but to increase their number. We're forced to reduce the number of parish structures, with all their administration and expenses, but we want to favor a growing number of Small Christian Communities led by laity – laity who aren't full-time, who aren't bureaucrats, but volunteers. These are people living in the field, who do what laity in many parishes and other communities already do, which is to take responsibility for a large part of the life of the church, the vibrant aspects of community life. We want to implement more explicitly the great theme of Vatican II: the common priesthood of all the baptized, with the ministerial priesthood at its service, promoting the holiness of the People of God. Laity today – or, I would rather say, the baptized today – are fully capable of being true witnesses to faith in Christ in their daily lives, and therefore in the lives of Small Christian Communities...[In the future] five small parishes in the countryside will form one greater parish. Their facilities, however, could be used to animate some of these Small Christian Communities.”

### **COMMENTARY**

The process and results of the synod clarified several important aspects of the praxis and theology of SCCs throughout the world. First, the Synod delegates emphasized the importance of the parish and its rich variety of ecclesial communities in the New Evangelization. One commentary said that the key to New Evangelization is parishes coming to life and offering new forms of spiritual nourishment, sustenance, formation and community. This includes parish-based evangelization, engaging the laity in the task of evangelization (through Baptism all Christians are called to be missionaries and evangelizers) and the spirit and practice of the missionary parish.

Second, the synod statements clearly affirm and encourage the importance of SCCs in the parish structure and ministry. Pastoral, parish-based SCCs are part of the “new face” of the parish and form the core of this SCCs Model of Church. The parish is a communion or network of SCCs within the “communion of communities” ecclesiology. The patterns vary from dioceses in the countries in the Global South where the numbers of parishes are growing and the pastoral, parish-based SCCs are central in the pastoral structure and ministry (examples are Eastern Africa, Philippines and Korea) to dioceses in the West where parishes are clustering together in pastoral units with SCCs participating in the pastoral structure and

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<sup>913</sup> John L. Allen Jr., “Interview with Cardinal Christoph Schönborn,” *National Catholic Reporter* [(NCR) (25 October 2012) on the *National Catholic Reporter* Website retrieved on 28 October 2012 <http://ncronline.org/node/37906>

ministry (an example is Austria). It is hoped that this priority on parishes will focus on the strengthening and growth of parishes that are founded and structured on SCCs from the grassroots.

In this model of a cluster of parishes/a “greater parish”/a network of pastoral units spread over the geographical area of a number of present parishes,<sup>914</sup> it is very important that:

- The local Catholics on the grassroots take ownership of this plan.
- Key lay people (elected lay leaders, catechists, lay ministers, SCCs leaders, etc.) participate in the leadership and decision-making along with the priests and religious.
- A “communion of communities” model is the operating force.

Synod commentaries trace the historical shifts in the growing widespread acceptance of SCCs. At one stage the “base communities” were controversial because of their association with the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America. Interventions and reports at the present synod suggested that the church has recovered from this hang-up. Now the base communities have become a widely accepted pastoral model (as distinguished from a social action model) in many parts of the continent of Latin America. SCCs have also become accepted as a key pastoral model in Africa, Asia and even Europe. In the official summaries of synod speeches released by the Vatican Press Office some version of “small,” “base,” or “basic communities” was used many times.<sup>915</sup> Liberation Theology in Latin America is evolving. Its new expressions and spinoffs are now included in the broader term Contextual Theologies.

Again this authoritative voice of the pope and the universal church confirms the direction that the AMECEA countries are taking in building SCCs that are solidly rooted in the parish and in the Bible and that continue to be a key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa.

In commenting on the strategies for the New Evangelization American Paulist Father Frank DeSiano, CSP writes:

Many bishops from developing nations insisted that Small Christian Communities (also called “base communities”) have become essential in the growth and maintenance of faith. They spoke of the way Catholics help reinforce the faith of others, become part of a larger support system and bring

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<sup>914</sup> This is echoed by Cardinal Walter Kasper in his book *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission*. A reviewer summarizes: Kasper “proposes that dioceses be restructured so as to have but a few central parishes providing basic sacramental and educational services around which would orbit a wide variety of smaller, more intentional communities.” Richard R. Gaillardetz, “Between Nostalgia and Utopia: The Catholic Church is Facing Challenges, but the Pope’s Theologian is Capable if Cautious Guide on the Road Ahead, *Tablet*, Volume 269, No. 9094 (3 April, 2015), p. 33.

<sup>915</sup> Summary of many articles, reports and blogs by John Allen in the *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)* in October, 2012 – both in the print editions and the online editions. See especially “Synod Notebook: Islam, Africa, and where are the deacons?” 16 October, 2012 and “Synod: Challenges in Muslim Nations,” 26 October –November 8, 2012, p. 6.

the experience of conversion into their relationships with neighbors. Parishes in developed countries might well ponder the gain that can accrue from such communities of faith.

In terms of organizing a congregation, small groups can accomplish what parishes, with their sometimes large and anonymous styles, often cannot—putting a personal face on the experience of Catholic life. Further, they can be the first points of outreach beyond the faithful, calling the ever-growing numbers of uninvolved people into some kind of faith relationship. If it is difficult for someone to make it to a parish church, it certainly is much easier for them to make it to a neighbor's house or apartment.

These small groups [SCCs], breaking open the word of God in more consistent and extended ways every time they meet, help believers experience the power of the word through reflection, discussion, personal sharing and common prayer. Making *Lectio Divina* a part of small group sharing can be a way to link Catholics to experiences of contemplation and adoration, as the Word leads them to fuller awareness and acceptance of God's action in their lives.<sup>916</sup>

Other synod commentaries were disappointed with the concrete results as Robert Mickens states: “These [synod] documents offer few concrete proposals as to how evangelization can be “new in its ardor (fervor),<sup>917</sup> in its methods and in its expressions” (to quote the words Pope John Paul II used in 1983 when he first launched the “New Evangelization”<sup>918</sup>).<sup>919</sup>

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<sup>916</sup> Frank DeSiano, “This Little Light: Strategies for the New Evangelization from the Synod of Bishops,” *America*, 11 February, 2013 and on the *America* Magazine Website retrieved on 2 February, 2013 <http://americamagazine.org/issue/little-light>

<sup>917</sup> Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, recalls a story from the Middle Ages. “A poet passed by some work being conducted and saw three workers busy at their work; they were stone cutters. He turned to the first and said: ‘What are you doing, my friend?’ This man, quite indifferently, replied: ‘I am cutting a stone.’ He went a little further, saw the second and posed to him the same question, and this man replied, surprised: ‘I am involved in the building of a column.’ A bit further ahead, the pilgrim saw the third and to this man also he put the same question; the response, full of enthusiasm, was: ‘I am building a cathedral.’ The old meaning is not changed by the new work [of evangelization] we are called to construct. There are various workers called into the vineyard of the Lord to bring about the new evangelization; all of them will have some reason to offer to explain their commitment. What I wish for and what I would like to hear is that, in response to the question, ‘What are you doing, my friend?’ Each one would be able to reply: ‘I am building a cathedral.’”

<sup>918</sup> John Paul II, Address to CELAM (Opening Address of the Nineteenth General Assembly of CELAM, 9 March, 1983, Port-au-Prince, Haiti), *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition 16/780 (18 April 1983), No. 9.

<sup>919</sup> Robert Mickens, “Old Ways for the New World,” *Tablet*, 3 November, 2012, p. 6.

SCCs in Eastern Africa and throughout the world are challenged to come up with this “new ardor (fervor),” these “new methods” and these “new expressions.” Once again the mantra: *Think outside the box*.<sup>920</sup> A key is the positive and creative attitude one brings to the spirit and activities of the New Evangelization. In his talk to the cardinals after his election in March 2013 Pope Francis emphasized that Holy Spirit was the “supreme protagonist of every initiative and manifestation of faith” and would help the church find “new methods” of spreading the Gospel.

Pope Francis promulgated *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)* in Rome on 26 November, 2013 to close the Year of Faith. This is the Apostolic Exhortation on the meeting of the Synod of Bishops on *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* in October, 2012. Pope Francis explains this challenge of the New Evangelization very well in No. 33 of *The Joy of the Gospel*:

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way.”<sup>921</sup> I invite everyone to be bold<sup>922</sup> and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory. I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear. The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.<sup>923</sup>

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<sup>920</sup> During his *Ad Limina* visit to Rome in 2012 Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville Archdiocese, USA explained the value of structured small groups (Small Faith Sharing Communities) that form the core of the *Why Catholic?* parish-centered process of spiritual renewal and evangelization developed by RENEW International to Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella and officials in the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. This opens up new connections between small communities and the New Evangelization. *Think outside the box*.

<sup>921</sup> Two examples in Eastern Africa. A major seminary in Malawi has a very good plan of eight active SCCs. But they have names like Team One, Team Two, etc. When I suggested having saints’ name to give the SCCs a religious identity and focus the rector said, “But we have always done it this way.” He promised to consult others and rethink the plan. A seminary in Zambia has five SCCs with the same saints’ names used year after year. When I suggested letting each new group of seminarians chose the saint’s name of their particular SCCs to give them more “ownership, participation and involvement, a priest staff member said, “But we have always done it this way.” He saw the value of my suggestion and said he would follow up with the other staff members.

<sup>922</sup> In explaining his reform efforts Francis urges Catholic Church leaders to speak with *parrhesía* – the evangelical “boldness” he repeatedly cites as a key to healthy collegiality in governance.

<sup>923</sup> Magesa insightfully commented:

Let us search for bold and creative ways that SCC members can carry out our pastoral ministry in a missionary key. There is a tendency especially for SCC members in rural areas to say, “But we have always done it this way.” A simple example is the arrangement of chairs in a SCC gathering. Our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team have visited SCCs where the chairs are set up in a classroom or meeting style – a head table for the leaders and then rows of chairs for the members. Sometimes all the men are sitting together and all the women sitting together. We have to break away from this old thinking and old mentality. SCC members should sit in a circle where the men and women are mixed and everyone is equal. This is why it is a new way of being church.

The ongoing challenge: How can rethink the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in our respective SCCs? Each aspect/element has been evaluated and updated/improved at all levels.

In No. 27 on “Ecclesial Renewal” Pope Francis says:

I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with him. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: “All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion.”

How can SCC members in Eastern Africa participate in this missionary option, this missionary impulse, this missionary activity?

Paulino Mondo, the former pastor of a busy urban parish in Nairobi, says:

Truly the Small Christian Communities are the “Answer” to the many questions on the New Evangelization. We have seen it in [busy urban] Kariobangi Parish in Nairobi. Through our 72 SCCs we are able to help 73,000 Catholics who are very active and well organized... Small Christian Community was the success story for the methodology of St. Paul and we

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John Paul II’s papacy and the nearly eight years of his successor Benedict XVI (2005-2013) saw some practical retrenchment from the theological vision of Vatican II, something which, after Benedict’s surprise resignation on 28 February, 2014, Pope Francis his successor, has been trying to undo since his election on 13 March.

Laurenti Magesa, “Endless Quest,” p. 9.

have to revive it again all over the world if we want to remain a vibrant and witnessing Church today.<sup>924</sup>

No. 28 of *The Joy of the Gospel* states:

The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if it proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be the church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters (from Proposition 26). This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed cluster made up of a chosen few.

The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. (from Proposition 26). In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers (from Proposition 44). It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.

## **COMMENTARY**

Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the parish that is in line with the pastoral thinking and experience of the Catholic Bishops in the AMECEA Region. SCCs offer one of the best ways that pastors and other pastoral agents can get to know the lives of people on the local level – from the inside, as it happens. See the comments of Bishop Method Kilaini on page 81. This is where we can get the “smell of the sheep,” one of the pope's favorite expressions.

No. 29 states:

Other Church institutions, basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervor and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the Particular Church (from Proposition 26) This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.

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<sup>924</sup> Paulino Mondo, in an email message to the author dated 12 December, 2012.

## COMMENTARY

It is significant that “basic communities” (that often are not linked to the parish) are differentiated from “small communities” (the Eastern African model of SCCs is clearly linked to, and even integrated into, the parish). These pastoral, parish based SCCs have a distinct ecclesial identity and pastoral focus. This is explained at length in the section “Leadership Structures” on pages 246-251.

SCCs participated in various pastoral events and outreach programs in Eastern Africa during the 2012-2013 Year of Faith. These include catechetical and religious education programs (involvement of SCCs in the ministry of catechizing specific groups – children, youth and adults); more *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*; focus on the family as the Domestic Church; increased celebration of the sacraments<sup>925</sup> such as Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation<sup>926</sup> and Matrimony; and promoting the use of the social media/new media and social networking in the New Evangelization.

Some SCCs systematically go through sections of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* in their weekly meetings. Other SCCs study more deeply the life and charism of their Patron/Patroness Saints.

Other SCCs use a palaver style of conversation, dialogue, discussion and visitations to reach out to Catholics who have drifted away from the faith.

Humer reported about the activities in Kayanga Diocese, Tanzania:

The Year of Faith started also in our diocese Kayanga Diocese, Tanzania on 11 October, 2012 with a special mass and feast. A cross was St. that is doing a pilgrimage through the whole diocese during the next year: It started in our cathedral parish in Kayanga. The cross went to in all our outstations. In Kayanga Outstation the cross visited all six Small Christian Communities (SCCs). We used the opportunity to give lectures, religious talks

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<sup>925</sup> As an example St. Austin’s Parish Church in Nairobi Archdiocese that celebrated its Centenary on Pentecost Sunday, 19 May, 2013. The nine SCCs in the parish and other Small Apostolic Groups celebrated this huge sacramental event with many couples getting married, 200 couples renewing their marriage vows, Catholic in marriages with spouses of other religious faiths returning to the Eucharist and many newly baptized adults getting confirmed.

Another example is the Formation Meeting on “Evangelizing in Cyberspace” of the Blessed John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams that took place in the Maryknoll Assembly Hall, Nairobi, Kenya on 17 February, 2013.

<sup>926</sup> One creative example of inculturation in Africa is to emphasize the sacrament of Confirmation as a Christian “Rite of Passage” for African teenagers (13 to 16 years old) comparable to the traditional initiation rites in various ethnic groups. SCC members can accompany and support the candidates in their SCCs. In addition various “Coming of Age” events can commemorate these important teenage and early 20s years with their significant transitions.

and the possibility to receive various sacraments: confession, Baptism, weddings. The faithful were excited about it, accepted this good chance, and thus tried to deepen their faith.<sup>927</sup>

In his 2012 Christmas Pastoral Letter entitled *We Hold a Treasure that is Jesus Christ Our Lord* Cardinal John Njue, the Archbishop of Nairobi, urged that every baptized Catholic in Nairobi Archdiocese be an active member of a Small Christian Community in his or her neighborhood and be an agent of evangelization. In the section on “Make the Parish the Cradle of Faith” he says:

I call upon parishes to make visible the communion of Small Christian Communities and outstations that are united around the Eucharist. In order to bring to all people the good News of Jesus, as required, all our parishes and their Small Christian Communities should be living cells.<sup>928</sup>

In the section on “The Way Forward” he recommends the following points to be on our parish pastoral agenda as we continue the celebration of the Year of Faith and the era of New Evangelization:

- Formation of agents of evangelization on deepening the Catholic faith by studying and discussing together in small groups the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the documents of Vatican Council II. This includes developing a culture of sharing on matters of faith and assimilating the Scriptures.
- Strategy to make the Family Biblical Apostolate a reality to strengthen Small Christian Communities.
- Strengthen and support the Catholic media apostolate and educate the youth to get involved in media evangelization.
- Make sure that all the children from Catholic homes are members of the Pontifical Missionary Children (PMC).<sup>929</sup>

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<sup>927</sup> Hans Humer, “News-Nov-Dec-12” in email to the author dated 2 January, 2013.

<sup>928</sup> John Njue, *We Hold a Treasure that is Jesus Christ Our Lord: Pastoral Letter on the Occasion of the Nativity of Our Lord 2012*, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Privately Printed, 2012, page 6.

<sup>929</sup> At the risk of patting ourselves on the back we can confidently say that PMC is as alive and vibrant in Eastern Africa as anywhere else in the world and can teach Europe and North America a great deal about mission. Where else can you find 40,000 children gather for the annual outdoor PMC Mass such as in Nairobi Archdiocese every February. In joking with Cardinal Pengo in Dar es Salaam and Cardinal Njue in Nairobi I enjoy saying, “One thing for sure. Our East African Cardinals’ favorite activity is PMC.” One reason is that PMC is a deliberate pastoral focus.

- Encourage missionary vocations so that capable holy men and women take their faith beyond their lands of origin.<sup>930</sup>

The “Prayer for the Year of Faith” says:

Almighty Father ever living God, we thank you for the gift of faith and the gift of one another. We pray that we Christians within the Archdiocese of Nairobi may come to know and love you in a more personal way, grow in as disciples of your son our Lord Jesus Christ, become actively engaged in the full life of the church and utilize our gifts for building up the Kingdom of God and the salvation of souls.

The Guidelines for celebrating the Year of Faith in Nairobi Archdiocese on the theme “One Faith, One Family, One Church” state:

At the parish level, we are to organize how we can renew our faith especially during our parish days, organize seminars in our SCCs, and have different activities of catechesis, even in our ecclesial groups. It is recommended that at the parish level the creed should be recited throughout the year of faith. All SCCs are encouraged to make use of the *Bible* in their prayer meetings.

Pope Benedict XVI chose “Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith: New Spaces for Evangelization” as the theme for the 2013 World Communications Day in the context of the 2012-2013 Year of Faith. One of the most important challenges facing the task of evangelization today is that which is emerging from the digital environment. The communique that announced the theme stated:

During a time in which technology has emerged as part of the fabric of connectivity of human experiences, such as relationships and knowledge, we need to ask: can it help men and women meet Christ in faith? It is not enough to find an adequate language, but rather, it is necessary to learn how to present the Gospel as the answer to that basic human yearning for meaning and faith, which has already found expression online. Such an approach, which will serve to create a more dynamic and humane digital world, requires a new way of thinking. It is not simply a question of how to use the internet as a means of evangelization, but instead of how to evangelize in a context where the lives of people find expression also in the digital arena. In particular, we need to be attentive to the emergence and enormous popularity of social networks, which privilege dialogical and interactive forms of communication and relationships.<sup>931</sup>

Part of celebrating the 2012-2013 Year of Faith and promoting the New Evangelization in Africa was to study and reflect on the documents of the Second Vatican

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<sup>930</sup> Summarized from *Ibid.*, pages 14-15 and “KENYA: Be Agents of Evangelization, advises Cardinal,” *CISA*, 14 December, 2012.

<sup>931</sup> “Social Networks: Portals Of Truth and Faith: New Spaces for Evangelization,” *Vatican Information Service* in email dated 22:175 (1 October, 2012).

Council and apply them to our contemporary African world in a new and fresh way. Rahner's challenge of inculturation and contextualization rings true today:

The church must be inculturated throughout the world if it is to be a World Church...This, then, is the issue: either the church sees and recognizes these essential differences of other cultures for which she should become a World Church and with a Pauline boldness draws the necessary consequences from this recognition, or she remains a Western Church and so in the final analysis betrays the meaning of Vatican II.<sup>932</sup>

The Year of Faith can continue in new and creative ways. Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish in Monze Diocese, Zambia has 11 SCCs. They meet every Sunday afternoon. Once a month the SCC members meet all together for a "School of Faith." Various pastoral and spiritual topics are presented and discussed.

47 people participated in a Mwanza Metropolitan Workshop on the theme "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Embrace the Word of God" at the St. Dominic Pastoral Centre in Mwanza, Tanzania from 19 to 22 May, 2014.<sup>933</sup> Participants included representatives from the eight dioceses of the Lake Victoria Zone in northwestern Tanzania (Mwanza Archdiocese and the dioceses of Bukoba, Bunda, Geita, Kayunga, Musoma, Rulenge Ngara and Shinyanga): one archbishop, one bishop, 11 priests, 5 religious sisters, 21 laymen and 8 laywomen.

In his remarks Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Ruwa'ichi, the Archbishop of Mwanza Archdiocese, emphasized that four priorities in the Catholic Church in Tanzania today come together for "their opportune time" (*wakati mwafaka* in Swahili) that is like a *kairos* moment: The Word of God (*Bible*); the New Evangelization; Small Christian Communities; and the family.

After this SCCs Workshop Febian Pikiti wrote: "Let us encourage one another in this ministry of continuing to build the Church, Family of God around the Small Christian Community that is a communion of families in the neighborhood."<sup>934</sup>

Rita Ishengoma reported:

In Bukoba Diocese, Tanzania on 14 August, 2014 we conducted our SCCs Seminar with all diocesan parish priests and lay apostolate group

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<sup>932</sup> Karl Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies*, 40, 4 (December, 1979), pp. 718, 724.

<sup>933</sup> Reports on this workshop can be found on the AMECEA Website ([www.amecea.org](http://www.amecea.org)) as a report in the 23 May, 2014 AMECEA Online Newsletter: [TANZANIA: Catholics are Called to Reflect on the Importance of Various Ministries of the Church](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/05/tanzania-catholics-are-called-to-reflect-on-the-importance-of-various-ministries-of-the-church.html) <http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/05/tanzania-catholics-are-called-to.html> and on the SCCs Website under "Tanzania."

<sup>934</sup> Febian Pikiti's email message to the author dated 3 July, 2014.

leaders. The main point was to make the SCCs really small for betterment. This was a follow up and implementation of our 2014 Mwanza Metropolitan Workshop and meeting.<sup>935</sup>

Rurinjah reported about the activities in Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania:

The SCCs helped to celebrate the Feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ at St. Joseph Cathedral, Ngokolo, Shinyanga, Tanzania on Sunday, 22 June, 2014. Traditionally this is one of the biggest feasts of the year for the Sukuma Ethnic Group and is called *Bulabo* that means “flowers” in the Sukuma language. After the 8 a.m. Mass there was a five hour procession from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. of six kilometers. The theme was “To Take Jesus to the Villages.” The Blessed Sacrament was carried through the town as two thousand people sang and praised God with joyful hearts. Muslims and those who are not Christians also joined the procession. The six SCCs each prepared a Prayer Station where the procession stopped for special prayers and songs.<sup>936</sup>

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<sup>935</sup> Rita Ishengoma’s email message to the author dated 18 August, 2014.

<sup>936</sup> Simon Rurinjah in a conversation with the author in Nairobi on 4 July, 2014. Five photographs of this celebration are posted on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 16 July, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/photo-gallery.html>.

## 12. SCCs Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa

### 1. Introduction: Two World Synods of Bishops on Family and Marriage (2014-2015)

The nine AMECEA Countries participated in the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization," in Rome from 5-19 October, 2014. This synod "defined" the "*status quaestionis*" (Latin for "the state of the question") of the topics of family and marriage.<sup>937</sup> Then the AMECEA delegates participated in the second synod – officially called the Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary<sup>938</sup> World" that took place in Rome from 4-25 October, 2015 and sought "working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family."

The total number of participants in the October, 2014 Extraordinary General Assembly was 253 made up of representatives from the five continents divided as follows: 114 presidents of Episcopal Conferences (including seven from the AMECEA Region), 13 heads of the "sui iuris" Eastern Catholic Churches, 25 heads of the dicasteries of the Roman, 9 members of the Ordinary Council of the Secretariat, the secretary general, the under-secretary, 3 nominees from the Union of Superior Generals, and 26 pontifical nominees. Other participants included 8 fraternal delegates, 38 auditors, including 13 married couples, and 16 experts. There were 25 women. The participants included one married couple from the AMECEA Region: Dr. Jean Dieudonné Gatsinga and Emerthe Gatsinga Tumuhayimpundu who are responsible for young families in the Focolare Movement for Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and Uganda and who live in Rwanda. The married couple from South Africa were Stephen and Sandra Conway, regional heads for Africa of Retrouvaille.<sup>939</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> Appendix 22 lists 78 proverbs on this theme of "family and marriage." Six of these proverbs are used in the July to September, 2014 Poll on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website (<http://www.afriprov.org>): "My favorite proverb of the month on "family and marriage" is..." The top voter getters are: *The hoes of two people cultivating together in a field sometimes clash (hit) against each other.* Sukuma (Tanzania) Proverb. *Like ants, eat little and carry the rest back to your home.* Bembe (DRC, Tanzania) Proverb. The *2016 African Proverbs Calendar* has the theme "Family, Marriage and Relationships."

<sup>938</sup> The English word "contemporary" has a more up-to-date, "here and now" meaning than the word "modern." In Swahili see the difference between *kileo* and *kisasa*.

<sup>939</sup> A program to help couples to heal and renew their marriages. Thousands of couples who are heading for cold, unloving relationships or divorce have successfully overcome their marriage problems by attending the program. The Retrouvaille Program consists of a weekend experience combined with a series of 6-12 post-weekend sessions over three months. It provides the tools to help put one's marriage in order again and to rediscover a loving marriage relationship. The main emphasis of the program is on communication in marriage between husband and wife. It gives couples the opportunity to rediscover each other and examine their lives together in a new and positive way.

Eight themes served as guidelines for the discussions at the Extraordinary Synod taken from the *Preparatory Document (Lineamenta)*. A bishop opened each session with an explanation of the theme (topic) of the day. Then a married couple gave their witness on the theme being discussed. The final synthesis called the *Final Report of the Synod (Relatio Synodi)* was used as the *Lineamenta (Guidelines)* for the Ordinary Synod in October, 2015. These two meetings were closely connected to the Eighth World Meeting of Families on the theme “Love is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive” that took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA from 22-27 September, 2015.

This important meeting will involve all the People of God – bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, and lay faithful of the Particular Churches of the entire world – all of whom are actively participating in preparations for the meeting through practical suggestions and the crucial support of prayer. Such support [and input] on your part, dear families, is especially significant and more necessary than ever ... May we all, then, pray together so that through these events the Church will undertake a true journey of discernment and adopt the necessary pastoral means to help families face their present challenges with the light and strength that comes from the Gospel.<sup>940</sup>

The Vatican asked national bishops' conferences around the world to conduct a wide-ranging survey of Catholics asking for their opinions on church teachings on family,<sup>941</sup> marriage, annulments, single-parent families, adoptions, birth control, artificial contraception, abortion, surrogate motherhood (wombs for hire), premarital cohabitation, the culture of non-commitment and the presumption that the marriage bond can be temporary, conditional marriages, common law marriage, mixed or inter-religious marriage, same-sex marriage/unions and divorce.

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<sup>940</sup> “Pope Francis Writes to Families Asking for Their Prayers Ahead of October Synod,” 26 February 2014, *Tablet Website*, retrieved on 1 March, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/texts-speeches-homilies/4/296/pope-francis-writes-to-families-asking-for-their-prayers-ahead-of-october-synod>

The importance of prayer is seen in the joint statement from the Episcopal Conference of Benin and of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM/SCEAM), that concluded by inviting “all Christians, in the joy of the Gospel, to pray, to reflect and to act with the Church on the challenges of today's family,” *International Fides News Service*, 18 June, 2014, Email message dated 18 June, 2014.

<sup>941</sup> A request on our African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Facebook Page states: “Please contribute an African Proverb or Saying on ‘family’ and ‘marriage’ for our meeting on Saturday, 23 November, 2013. If possible mention the country and language.” There were 78 responses as of 24 June, 2014. A selection of these examples and others are listed in Appendix No. 22 in Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, that is available as a free Ebook on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 16 July, 2014, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf) Some of these proverbs are classified into the three categories mentioned later in this chapter.

This survey included the Africa-related challenges especially connected to these 73 African family and marriages issues<sup>942</sup> (listed alphabetically):

abandoned babies,  
 abortion,  
 abusive and violent husbands due to strong temperament, alcohol and drugs,  
 AIDs orphans,  
 alcohol and dependency,  
 alcoholic family,  
 artificial methods of family planning,  
 child abuse,  
 child-headed families,  
 cohabitation (*Come we stay* or common law unions),  
 communicating the faith to the next generation,  
 couples living together before marriage to test female fertility,  
 customary marriage,<sup>943</sup>  
 displacement of people,  
 divorce (including on the grounds of a woman being unable to have children and couples who subsequently remarry),  
 domestic violence/violence in the family,  
 dowry or bridewealth – sometimes understood as the purchase price of the woman,<sup>944</sup>  
 drug abuse,  
 dysfunctional family,  
 early, child and forced marriage (including child mothers),  
 Ebola orphans,  
 economic injustice,  
 economic migration (internal and external),  
 economic pressures/financial pressures occasioned by work and certain cultural traditions,  
 enslavement and frequent abandonment of women,  
 ethnic animosity and tribal discrimination,  
 domination of one marriage partner over the other,

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<sup>942</sup> While many of these issues are universal, the African context and situation makes them African issues. There is some repetition because these issues are known by different names. The importance of these 73 issues was confirmed by the grassroots reports of the delegates from Eastern Africa at the “AMECEA Pastoral Department Workshop for National Commissions for Marriage and Family Life Apostolate in the AMECEA Region” that took place in Nairobi from 23-27 June, 2014 and other meetings.

<sup>943</sup> In the African context this is sometimes called traditional marriage. This is a cultural marriage following the customs and traditions of the local African ethnic groups. “Traditional” has many meanings. Worldwide it can refer to the marriage union between a man and a woman.

<sup>944</sup> At the AMECEA Workshop in Nairobi in June, 2014 (see above) the many different traditions and practices of dowry or bridewealth among the nine Eastern African countries were compared and contrasted as well as the many different traditions and practices of dowry or bridewealth among the ethnic groups within a particular country. See examples in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

families with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender members,  
 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM),<sup>945</sup>  
 gender-based violence,  
 gender inequality,  
 generation gap (inter-generational conflicts between parents and children),  
 globalization,  
 hectic, fast and exhausting pace of work,  
 HIV/AIDS including discordant couples,  
 homosexual unions and gay marriage,  
 human trafficking,  
 ignorance,  
 impact of poverty on family life,  
 inequality between genders,  
 infertility,  
 infidelity of couples/sexual promiscuity,  
 insecurity,  
 interfaith marriage issues,  
 lack of mutual trust and intimacy,  
 levirate marriage (widow inheritance),  
 material poverty,  
 migration,  
 misconception of human rights linked to reproductive health,  
 mixed marriages (including inter-faith or interreligious marriages)  
 need to travel greater distances to work,  
 negative mass media and social media portrait of marriage,  
 no boy/son,  
 non-commitment of spouses,  
 patriarchy in African society,  
 philosophy of relativism,  
 polygamy,<sup>946</sup>  
 poverty,  
 property grabbing after death of spouse,  
 reformulation of the very concept of family,  
 refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs),  
 rituals after death,

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<sup>945</sup> Female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as “female genital cutting” and “female circumcision,” is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.” Laurenti Magesa feels the word “mutilation” is unfortunate and emphasized by Western specialists from the outside. He comments that an African mother would never consider this cultural ceremony as a “mutilation” of her daughter. Conversation with the author in Nairobi, 19 June, 2014.

<sup>946</sup> During the AMECEA Workshop in June, 2014 (see above) Ethiopian layman Aman Desalegn posed this pastoral question: In Ethiopia there is a new Prefecture called Robe. More than 80% of the population are Muslim. Some Muslim men want to join the Catholic Church with their three or four wives. In the light of present Catholic teaching on marriage, what is the pastoral solution to accommodate these Muslim families?

same sex unions/homosexual unions and gay marriage,  
 sexual dysfunctions,  
 single parents (single mothers and single fathers),<sup>947</sup>  
 street children and street youth,  
 Sugar Daddies/Sugar Mommies,  
 tensions with Muslims (related to interreligious dialog),  
 terrorism,  
 urbanization,  
 use of contraceptives,  
 violence,  
 war,  
 witchcraft and superstition,  
 youth unemployment.

This survey was part of the 39 questions in the eight-page *Preparatory Document (Lineamenta)* to the synod that is also available online. It has been translated into Amharic, Bemba, Chewa, Ganda, Swahili, Tumbuka and other languages in Eastern Africa.

Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, secretary general of the Vatican's Synod of Bishops, asked the conferences to distribute the poll "immediately as widely as possible to deaneries and parishes so that input from local sources can be received."<sup>948</sup> This represents a significant shift in thinking in the Vatican. Bishop Marcello Semeraro of Albano Diocese, Italy and secretary of the Council of Cardinals, "dismissed criticism of the decision to circulate a public questionnaire ahead of October's Synod of Bishops on the family. 'The beauty of this moment is that the church feels encouraged to ask questions,' he said. 'The church doesn't just have answers; it also needs to ask questions.'"<sup>949</sup>

Another shift of thinking is in the process or method of the synod. Pope Francis has indicated that the synods will be more collegial and more participatory. This will promote affective and effective communion that is a constitutive part of the collegial government of Synod of Bishops. This means practicing "effective collegiality" by granting bishops participation in the central government of the church. Hungarian Jesuit Canon Lawyer Father Ladislav Orsy, SJ stated: "It is reasonable to anticipate that soon, in October this year, we shall be watching a synod operating on a new pattern."<sup>950</sup>

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<sup>947</sup> While we often refer to the reality of single mothers in Africa, the number of single fathers is increasing.

<sup>948</sup> Lorenzo Baldisseri in Joshua McElwee, "Vatican Asks for Parish-level Input on Synod Document," *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 31 October, 2013, National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved 4 November, 2013, <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/vatican-asks-parish-level-input-synod-document>

<sup>949</sup> Marcello Semeraro quoted in John Allan, "Francis Revolution' Rolls On in Both Symbols and Substance," National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved on 30 January, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/francis-revolution-rolls-both-symbols-and-substance>

<sup>950</sup> Orsy writes further: "From our historical vantage point, we know that John Paul II and Benedict XVI chose (without saying it explicitly) to govern monarchically. Their policy consisted of calling on the bishops for advice, in the spirit of "affective collegiality", but they

Part of this new pattern is for bishops, priests, brothers, and sisters to become more of a “Listening Church.” Traditionally bishops are officially part of the “Teaching Church.” But regarding the topics of family and marriage they need to become part of the “Listening Church.” – to listen to the lived experience of lay people, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, even youth and children. Nigerian theologian Father Elochukwu Uzukwu’s describes insightfully how church leaders need to become more of a “Listening Church.”<sup>951</sup> It can be rightly asked: How much do Catholic Church leaders in Africa know about (alphabetically): families that have sexual abusers, families with abusers of alcohol, forced marriages of young

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never invited them to practice “effective collegiality” by granting them participation in the central government of the Church. Enter Francis. In his 1 April, 2014 letter, which is really an internal communication made public, he described bishops as his collaborators exercising effective collegiality with the Pope. As a foundational principle, he declared that he sees in the episcopal synod a manifestation of collegiality: “The synodal activity in virtue of episcopal order mirrors [represents] that affective and effective communion which constitutes the Synod of Bishops’ primary purpose... Then Francis clarifies that he wants to promote affective and effective communion in obedience to Vatican II: ‘I wish to give full value [*desidero valorizzare*] to this precious heritage of the council.’” Ladislav Orsy, “Francis’ New Order,” *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 19 June, 2014, and *Tablet*, 19 June, 2014, *Tablet Website*, retrieved 21 June, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/2624/francis-new-order>

Pope Francis’ celebration of the 50 years of the Synod of Bishops.

The last level is that of the universal Church. Here the Synod of Bishops, representing the Catholic episcopate, becomes an expression of episcopal collegiality within a fully synodal church. Two different words: “episcopal collegiality” and “fully synodal Church”. It manifests *collegialitas affectiva*, which can in some circumstances become “effective,” linking the bishops to each other and to the pope in care for the People of God.

<http://brisbanecatholic.org.au/articles/on-the-road-listening-more-than-hearing/>

In an interview with the author at Georgetown University on 9 October, 2014, Orsy confirmed that “affective collegiality” involves a consultative process by the world bishops while “effective collegiality” is involves a deliberative process (decision-making that includes voting to reach a consensus). Francis wants national bishops’ conferences to be more involved in the collegial process and ideally present a consensus view on a particular pastoral topic from the grassroots level. The Holy Spirit works through the consensus of these local bishops.

Orsy said that SCCs are operating as a canonical, juridical units. SCCs include both the territorial model (church in the neighborhood) and the specialized model (members with like interests such as Georgetown alumni in the Washington DC area forming SCCs). They have both canonical and spiritual dimensions. We agreed that the Catholic Church needs an African Avery Dulles to develop the Church as Family of God Model of Church.

<sup>951</sup> See *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, Orbis Books, 1996, Wif & Stock Publishers, 2006.

girls to older men, homosexuals (gays, lesbians); marriages with domestic abuse; marriages with sexual abuse; and economically poor single mothers?

In Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) were part of this consultation process especially through their parishes and national bishops' conferences. SCC members in Eastern Africa contributed answers to the survey questions whose results were coordinated by the Pastoral Departments of the national bishops' conferences in the AMECEA Region.<sup>952</sup> For example, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) answered the 39 questions in a 25-page document. SCCs are mentioned seven times including these statements: "Strengthen Small Christian Community discussions on the family as a Domestic Church." "The Catholic Church has provided ministers, support groups and Small Christian Communities to support and journey with couples in crisis situations." "Small Christian Communities should participate fully in family issues."

SCC members also sent their answers and comments directly to the Synod of Bishops Office in Rome<sup>953</sup> and through other groups and organizations (like the Focolare Movement). Overall, however, this grassroots consultation was not widespread in Eastern Africa.

This process has been an opportunity to talk about the pastoral needs of people in real situations in Africa. It was hoped that the two synods will provide a realistic assessment of family life today and propose concrete pastoral approaches to meeting these challenges. A 19 November, 2013 "Editorial" in the *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)* states: "There is the danger that the media-rich West could dominate the discussion. Care will have to be taken to hear the voices of families in the Global South." Voices of lay people "on the ground" in Africa can make an important contribution to the future of the family based on and in the light of the Gospel and African cultural values. Delegates from the AMECEA Countries can emphasize key "African" priorities and points in their "Interventions" at the World Synods of Bishops in Rome in October, 2014 and October, 2015. The voice and practical pastoral experience of the African Church is very important at these universal meetings.

Yet an example of how these Vatican documents are often written from a too Western perspective is pointed out by Laurenti Magesa:

The *Lineamenta* tries to list some of the striking features of the present situation, including – to mention only those most immediately urgent in the African churches – premarital cohabitation, single-parent families,

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<sup>952</sup> The AMECEA Pastoral Department synthesized the answers from the nine AMECEA countries for joint discussion and further planning at the AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Lilongwe, Malawi in July, 2014. One topic was "New evangelization as an opportunity to work towards true conversion and witnessing to Christian faith, with emphasis on the role of Family Life and Small Christian Communities."

<sup>953</sup> It is gratifying that our report "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family Ministry/Family Life Apostolate in Eastern Africa" was received by the Synod of Bishops Office in the Vatican with this answer: "Thank you for your e-mail and the attached file which we have printed out and delivered to those who are analyzing and summarizing the responses and observations to the questions in the Preparatory Document. Please convey our appreciation for the work, effort and concern involved!"

polygamy,<sup>954</sup> and dowry or bridewealth. To say, as the *Lineamenta* does, that these are situations that “were unheard of until a few years ago” does not reflect the African reality. Polygamy and bridewealth as social institutions in Africa predate by far Christian evangelization, and all indications show that they are not about to disappear.<sup>955</sup>

He adds:

Implied here, it seems, is the recognition that ‘family’ is experienced differently in different places, to which experiences the Gospel should be applied. Hence the need for Local Churches around the world to bring concrete “proposals” from their own situations to this dialogical table of the universal church, confident that – as She has always consistently done – the Holy Spirit will show us the way through whatever human muddle we may be in at the moment...

Without popular involvement [of the African Churches] in the process, the “pastoral policies” arising out of it will remain simply another in the long list of those impractical Catholic curiosities as far as the life of the people is concerned.<sup>956</sup>

To use the words of Pope Francis may the African delegates at the two synods be “bold and creative.”

## 2. Analyzing the Reality of Family and Marriage in Eastern Africa Today

Before answering the questions it is helpful to use Step One “See” of the Pastoral Spiral to analyze the local reality of family and marriage in Eastern Africa today.<sup>957</sup> “Family

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<sup>954</sup> Laurenti Magesa presents some interesting and challenging pastoral questions and solutions on polygamy in “Reflections on Marriage in Africa,” Nairobi: Unpublished paper 2014.

<sup>955</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “The Synod on the Family and Africa,” Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church (CTEWC) Website, retrieved on 6 June, 2014, <http://www.catholicethics.com/forum-submissions/the-synod-on-the-family-and-africa>

<sup>956</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>957</sup> The Editorial in the 20 September, 2014 *Tablet* states: “Accepting marriage as it is means accepting people as they are, warts and all – and their relationships as they are, stressed, broken, or harmonious and calm.” “Frowns Do Not Defend Marriage,” *The Tablet* Website, retrieved on 19 September, 2014 <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/200914issue.pdf> The phrase “warts and all” means “The whole including all the blemishes, faults and and shortcomings -- not concealing the less attractive parts.” This phrase is said to derive from Oliver Cromwell (Lord Protector of England in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century)'s instructions to the painter Sir. Peter Lely, when commissioning his portrait.

and Faith” was the theme of Week Two in the Kenyan Lenten Campaign 2014 booklet *How Can We Be One?...for the Sanctification and Salvation of All People*. In the “Preface” to the booklet Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth, Chairman of Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, states:

This year Pope Francis has called a special synod on the family. He wants the synod to examine the pastoral challenges experienced by families. The topic for Week 2 is “Family and Faith.” The institution of the family is continuously being challenged. In Kenya we have seen proposed laws touching on family and marriages presented in parliament that do not take into account both the African and Christian values. In our discussions we must look for ways we can fight this monster that has come to destroy the family. We need to have a unity of purpose for us to address this challenge.”<sup>958</sup>

Using the “See,” “Judge”<sup>959</sup> and “Act” method/process, the Situational Analysis Section identifies 10 challenges to the family in Kenya today:

The family today is faced with many challenges that threaten to tear it apart. They include an anti-Christian culture, divorce, busyness, absent parent figure, indiscipline, financial pressures,<sup>960</sup> lack of communication, negative media influences, balance of work and family and materialism.<sup>961</sup>

The AMECEA Pastoral Department based in Nairobi, Kenya in November, 2013 also identified 10 challenges or problems under the heading: “Reality of the Problem Being Addressed:

Many families in the AMECEA Region, and indeed around the world face a lot of challenges such as: separation, divorce, cohabitation, polygamy, poor parenting, economic problems, impact of education systems, the distortion of the meaning of marriage, gender violence and other abuses that negatively affect the family.<sup>962</sup>

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<sup>958</sup> Zacchaeus Okoth, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *How Can We Be One?...for the Sanctification and Salvation of All People*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2014, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2014, p. 7.

<sup>959</sup> Calling the second step “discerning” or “interpreting” or “analysing” or “evaluating” is preferred by some because the English word “judge” is associated with the word “judgement” and “judgemental.”

<sup>960</sup> One concrete example is the seemingly endless challenge and nagging concern of paying school fees especially in primary and secondary school. This affects many African families across the board.

<sup>961</sup> Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *How Can We Be One?* p. 19.

<sup>962</sup> See AMECEA Pastoral Department, “Training and Capacity Building for the Coordinators of National Commissions for Marriage and Family Life in the AMECEA Countries.” Nairobi: Privately Published, 2013.

This research is part of its *Strategic Plan for 2013-2016* that focuses on “The Christian Family Life Campaign for the Protection of the Dignity and Value of Marriage and Family Life.”

Cieslikiewicz assesses the Tanzanian situation this way:

Above all the big question emerges: how are we to promote a powerfully supportive Christian community-culture of God’s family against family dissolution and despite the pressures of the media and of a hedonistic society? Not only are family values attacked, but also the phenomenon of single mothers, divorces and free unions threaten the institution of the family. In this way life in communion and its expressions are threatened more and more by individualism and materialism.<sup>963</sup>

All this local reality is within the context of (alphabetically) growing consumerism, globalization, materialism, relativism, secularism/secularization and urbanization throughout Africa.

Pope Francis challenges us to look at and respond to the present family reality. In Africa countries where most people “can identify at once with Jesus who was poor and marginalized,” the pope said, Catholics provide loving service to “God’s most vulnerable sons and daughters: widows, single mothers, the divorced, children at risk and especially the several million AIDS orphans, many of whom head households in rural areas.”<sup>964</sup>

A recent 2013 study in Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish in Karen, Nairobi, Kenya identified the following 12 factors that contribute to the lack of marital commitment: sexual dissatisfaction; violence to children and spouse; absence of love; conflict in roles; family interference; childlessness in marriage; infidelity in marriage; failure to cooperate with each other; personality conflict; problem of mixed marriage; couples from different cultural backgrounds; and challenges of the extended family.<sup>965</sup>

Mrs. Rose Musimba, Kenyan lay woman, the former Chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council of Holy Trinity Parish, Buruburu I, Nairobi and a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team, affirms many of these challenges and factors in the following comments on the changes in Kenya society:

There is a lack of commitment to a permanent marriage. If a couple feel their marriage is not working, they just split up. There is more emphasis

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<sup>963</sup> Christopher Cieslikiewicz, “Urban Small Christian Communities,” p. 92.

<sup>964</sup> Francis, “Violence against Women Harms Society, Pope Tells African Bishops,” *Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 35, Tuesday, 29 September, 2014. and on the CISA Website, <http://cisanewsafrika.com/vatican-violence-against-women-harms-society-pope-tells-african-bishops>

<sup>965</sup> Solomon Gbaki, *The Pastoral Challenge of Marital Commitment: A Case Study of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish in Karen, Nairobi*, Nairobi: Unpublished Long Essay at Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College, 2014.

on conditional marriages. If certain conditions don't work out, the two people separate and go their own way. Even with plenty of marriage counseling, many couples don't focus on the basis issues and easily give up in their marriages. If we remove God from marriage we are done. Without Christian values we are finished.<sup>966</sup>

Simon Rurinjah, Kenyan layman, evangelist and a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team, who died in 2015 pointed out:

Some of the challenges in Kenya threaten to tear up our Catholic families such as divorce caused by financial pressures. If a married woman is earning more than her husband there is often no compromise and the marriage is often in danger and it is hard to maintain peace and unity. The wife is often the first to go to the court and file for a divorce. There is little chance to educate the children. Couples stop praying to God who joined them together. Where there is no justice and peace how can we expect this family to be a Domestic Church Family of God.<sup>967</sup>

Tanzanian Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH, a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team based in Bukoba, Tanzania, says that one of the challenges of SCCs in Tanzania is involving men in the SCC Meetings:

A family without a father is "wounded." So is a SCC without the presence of men. Men are not against SCCs, but they need to be approached. They will be interested to come when our meetings are timely and serious. Men are like that everywhere.<sup>968</sup>

Premarital cohabitation with no intentions of legally binding obligations is increasing worldwide. In Kenya it is described as a *Come we stay* (a popular Kenyan saying) arrangement when a man and a woman begin living together. It is especially an urban phenomenon. During a mass wedding of 34 couples at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Kiambu, Nairobi, Kenya in December, 2013 the *National Mirror* reports that "Cardinal John Njue reached out to couples who have not solemnized their unions and are living in *Come we stay* arrangements, urging them to take the bold step and embrace the sacrament of marriage."<sup>969</sup> He challenged parents saying that the dowry should not be a stumbling block for financial reasons, but ought to cement the bonds of love and family. Njue said that dowry cannot be greater than God.

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<sup>966</sup> Rose Musimba, cellphone interview with the author, 29 January, 2014.

<sup>967</sup> Simon Rurinjah, conversation with the author, 29 January, 2014.

<sup>968</sup> Rita Ishengoma, "Three Challenges of SCCs in Tanzania," Bukoba: Unpublished Report, 1 page.

<sup>969</sup> Kamau Gitau, "A Long Walk Down the Aisle," *National Mirror*, 01:14 (January/February, 2014), p. 18.

In a related example Cardinal Njue visited Christ the King Church, Kangemi, Nairobi on 30 March, 2014. He said that this is the “Year of the Family and Marriage” and challenged Catholic parents of demanding too much dowry. There are parents who are willing to arrange the marriage of their children but are unable because the father of the groom does not enough dowry for his son. Other parents deny the wedding in the church unless the full customary dowry is paid.

Njue gave an example of a father who arranged for a man to marry his daughter in the Catholic Church. The customary dowry was paid in the Kikuyu tradition. The wedding was announced and the groom asked Cardinal Njue to join them during their wedding and the cardinal agreed. With one week remaining before the wedding in the church the parents of the bride requested 200,000 Kenyan shillings (approximately \$2,225) more from the groom. He failed to raise the money and so the church wedding had to stop. The cardinal sent for the father of the bride to discuss this new demand. But the father of the bride said to the parish priest to allow the wedding to continue since he didn’t want to have to face the cardinal. Cardinal Njue informed the parents that marriage is a sacrament and not something for parents to get rich.<sup>970</sup>

There is a similar situation to *Come we stay* in Uganda. *Kasefuliya* is the Ganda word for “small cooking pot.” It is used to symbolize the domestic arrangement of a couple living together before they get married in the Catholic Church. The Ganda noun for the state of marriage is *bufumbo* from the verb *kufumba* that means “to cook.”

Openness to the possibility of communion for divorced and remarried Catholics is a complex issue. In preparation for the October, 2014 World Synod of Bishops this was the most talked about topic in Europe especially in Germany. It is less discussed in Africa. Univision (February, 2014) conducted a scientific poll of more than 12,000 Catholics in 12 countries representing Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. The results represent an interesting snapshot of current opinion within the body of the Catholic Church. There was a question: Do you agree or disagree with Catholic Church policy on divorce that says “An individual who has divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church, is living in sin which prevents them from receiving Communion”? The results were as follows:

**Europe** (France, Italy, Poland and Spain)

Agree: 19%

Disagree: 75%

No answer: 6%

**Africa** (Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC and Uganda)

Agree: 75%

Disagree: 19%

No answer: 6%<sup>971</sup>

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<sup>970</sup> Reported by Simon Rurinjah.

<sup>971</sup> Univision Global Survey of Roman Catholics, Bendixen and Amadi International Website, retrieved on 9 March, 2014, <http://bendixenandamadi.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

On the results of the poll Italian Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, the Archbishop of Bologna, Italy, observes:

75% of most countries in Africa are against allowing the divorced and remarried to receive communion. And so I ask again: which expectations are we talking about? Those of Africa or Europe? Does the Western world have the monopoly on what the Church should preach? Are we still stuck in that paradigm or have we started to listen, even just a little bit, to the poor? I am left perplexed when it is said we must go in a certain direction or there is no point in having the synod. Which direction? The direction desired by middle Europe? Well, why not the direction desired by the African community?<sup>972</sup>

During a SCCs Workshop in Lusaka, Zambia in December, 2013 Mulenga said that he is very compassionate and empathetic with couples he knows in Zambia who had a bad first marriage, got remarried and have been living together in a happy, stable marriage for 20 years or so – and are faithful Catholics who regularly participate in Sunday Mass. He said the Zambian Bishops are open to finding ways to help these people to be able to receive communion.<sup>973</sup>

In talking informally with various pastoral agents in Eastern Africa I hear suggestions that the Catholic Church should not be rigid, but flexible in dealing with these pastoral problems. Marriage cases should must be looked at on a one-by-one basis. Some comments: Young African Catholic girls can be forced into even sacrament marriages due to family, cultural and dowry pressures – often marrying men much older than them. An example was given of a couple in a valid sacramental marriage who had four children. The husband left his wife and children. The wife remained a practicing Catholic and raised faithfully raised her children in the Catholic Church. She wanted a father for her children so remarried “outside” of the Catholic Church and now has a long time, stable marriage. How can she be helped to receive the sacraments again?

Financial/economic pressures are a challenge that is constantly discussed and prayed about in our SCCs in Eastern Africa. A particular problem is “school fees.” SCCs members, especially in poorer areas, are constantly looking for money to pay the fees and needs of their children in primary schools and high schools. Another issue is the effect of two working (and salaried) parents on the quality of family life. With fulltime jobs they are spending less and less time at home. The education of their children suffers.

A situational analysis in Eastern Africa identified various abuses in the family as an important concern. The AMECEA Report at the Continental SCCs Workshop in Karen in September, 2012 under the theme “Ways to Implement Reconciliation, Justice and Peace” stated that we need to look at the concrete situations of life in the light of the Gospel (e.g. good governance, democratic space, child abuse and child protection). SCC members have opportunities to participate in awareness building and

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<sup>972</sup> “Cardinal Caffarra Expresses Serious Concerns about Family Synod Debates,” “ZENIT: The World Seen from Rome,” email message dated 24 March, 2014.

<sup>973</sup> Clement Mulenga in a conversation with the author in Lusaka, Zambia on 4 December, 2013.

training workshops. The Spec Training and Consultancy Centre (STCC) in Nairobi is conducting workshops on Child Protection Policies in Nairobi in 2014.

To summarize this overall analysis, here is part of the Chairman of AMECEA Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel's intervention at the synod on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family, External Pressures on the Family" (*Instrumentum Laboris* Nos. 70 – 75) at the October, 2014 World Synod of Bishops itself: The pastoral challenges that face the Catholic families in Africa are (author's **bold**):

1. **Poverty**: material poverty forces husbands or wives to migrate within countries or go to neighboring countries or abroad, especially in the Arab world. This creates cracks in the marriage bond.

2. **Migration** is also linked to trafficking and also dispersion of children, who most of the time spill over to become street children and prone to be trafficked and abused.ng

3. **HIV/AIDS**:<sup>974</sup> a disease which creates division in the family and frequently

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<sup>974</sup> This very important challenge/problem for Africa has a surprising history. Given its very serious effect on marriage, family and relationships in general, it has received very little attention. It is significant that HIV/AIDS was not specifically mentioned in the 39 questions of the original questionnaire. Some African countries such as Kenya did not mention HIV/AIDS in its answer to the last question: "What other challenges or proposals do you consider urgent or useful to treat?" The coordinator of the compilation of answers in Kenya said that this was an oversight due to the pressure of limited time. Author's interview with Kenyan laywoman Theresa Abuya, Nairobi, Kenya, 25 June 2014.

HIV/AIDS was not mentioned in the *Final Report of the Synod*, another indication of the Western influence on the synod discussions and documentation. Cameroonian African theologian Father Jacquineau Azetsop, SJ says "HIV was totally absent. The synod was totally dominated by issues from the first world. It is unfortunate that African bishops forgot about it also." Email to the author dated 1 December, 2014. Commentators in North America and Europe are merely saying that the HIV/AIDS problem is being handled by medicine (that is, the "cocktail" of anti-retroviral drugs). This is fueled by news reports in the West such as:

HIV is evolving to become less deadly and less infectious, according to a major scientific study. The team at the University of Oxford shows the virus is being "watered down" as it adapts to our immune systems. It said it was taking longer for HIV infection to cause AIDS and that the changes in the virus may help efforts to contain the pandemic. Some virologists suggest the virus may eventually become "almost harmless" as it continues to evolve.

James Gallagher, "HIV evolving 'into milder form,'" BBC News Website, 1 December 2014, retrieved on 2 December, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/health-30254697>

divorce. Usually, both parents are affected and, sometimes both die, leaving children under the care of grandparents.<sup>975</sup> **NOTE:** “71% of the 35 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the world live in sub-Saharan Africa. The call by (UNAIDS) to close the gap around access to HIV services will not be met unless the delivery of antiretroviral treatment (ARV) is radically reshaped into community-led approaches that adapt to the realities of those living with HIV.”<sup>976</sup>

It is very important to understand that these three challenges are interconnected and interrelated and part of Africa’s overall social, cultural, economic and political context and reality.

Souraphiel balances these problem areas by saying (author’s **bold**):

In order to strengthen Catholic families in the region, the positive elements of **traditional African family values** ( e.g. respect for life, love of children, respect of mothers, right influence of the extended family, respect for elders, etc.) need to be taught in schools, in parishes, and in institutions... In spite of the many challenges and difficulties of married life, there is also **joy and happiness in Catholic families**. There are saints in family life: grandparents, parents, children, and even unborn children.<sup>977</sup>

### 3. Answers to the First Four Questions in the Questionnaire/Survey of the *Lineamenta* of the 2014 Synod of Bishops

The first four questions in the questionnaire/survey treated the teaching of the Catholic Church’s post-conciliar magisterium on the family and marriage under the title “The Diffusion of the Teachings on the Family in Sacred Scripture and the Church’s Magisterium.” This is a deductive approach, from the top down. An inductive approach, starting with the reality of family and marriage in the world today, would have been more creative and helpful. The word “diffusion” is one of those Latin-English words that is hard for the ordinary

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<sup>975</sup> Chairman of AMECEA Cardinal Berhaneyesus D. Souraphie’s intervention began: “I speak on behalf of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) whose chairman I have been elected by my brother bishops in our Plenary in Malawi in July, 2014. AMECEA is a regional association which is comprised of eleven countries in Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa, together with Djibouti and Somalia as affiliated members...” The full text of his presentation is published in *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, No. 70 (14 November, 2014), AMECEA Website, retrieved 14 November, 2014, [http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/11/ethiopia-extract-of-chairman-of-amecea.html?utm\\_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=5720a96ca8-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_85fa866553-5720a96ca8-6746297](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/11/ethiopia-extract-of-chairman-of-amecea.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=5720a96ca8-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-5720a96ca8-6746297)

<sup>976</sup> “Flexibility in Health Systems and Community Approach that Adapts to the Daily Realities of HIV-positive People,” *Fides News*, 29 November, 2014

<sup>977</sup> *Ibid.*

Catholic to understand similar to “dissemination” or “propagation.” Better expressions would be “communication” or “transmission.”

Concerning the Catholic Church’s teaching, in his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis offers pastors of the Catholic Church guidance on how to interpret traditional teaching concerning marriage and family life. One principle is that “the Church has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time, but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people’s lives” (No. 43). Another was that “the Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak” (No. 47). These words are particularly relevant to two of the most contentious issues raised in present consultation on marriage and family life: contraception and the admission of divorced and remarried Catholics to Holy Communion.

The Local Churches in Africa can make a special contribution to these questions. AMECEA emphasizes developing SCCs as a concrete expression and realization of the Church as Family Model of Church that reflects the ecclesiology of communion of Vatican II. The 1994 First African Synod developed the specific ecclesial identity of the Church as Family of God in Africa while the 2009 Second African Synod focused more on the pastoral and mission activities of this Church as Family of God in Africa, namely to work toward reconciliation, justice and peace.

St. John Paul II’s 1995 Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa* Number 63, under “The Church as God’s Family” states: “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.” In this Church as Family of God Model of Church, along with parish-based SCCs and lectionary-based SCCs, we can talk of family-based SCCs. In Eastern Africa a SCC is a communion of families. SCCs made up of families are Africa’s strength. SCCs are part of the “Communion of Communities Model of Church.”

As African theologians explore more deeply the “Church as Family of God Model of Church,” we see the growing importance of the “Small Christian Community Model of Church” that is closely related to the “Communion of Communities Model of Church” and the “Communitarian Model of Church.” The Communitarian/Participatory/Collaborative/Circular/Inductive/Bottom-up Model can be compared and contrasted to the Hierarchical/Institutional/Pyramid/Deductive/Top-down Model.<sup>978</sup>

How is the recent praxis of SCCs in Africa contributing to the development of the theology of the Church as Family of God? African cultural relationships and communal life are the foundations that provides a developing model of a church based on the African family. Small Christian Communities are affirmed as the fundamental building blocks of the Church as Family of God in Africa. Stated another way, SCCs are the ideal foundational units of building the Church as Family of God.

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<sup>978</sup> See the section “Small Christian Communities: Ecclesiologies and Models of Church” in Kieran Flynn, *Communities for the Kingdom: A Handbook for Small Christian Community Leaders*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* Nos. 181-182, 2007, pp. 67-81.

In the *Final Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God* of the First African Synod, Section 28 on "The Church as Family and Small Christian Communities" the bishops state: "The Church, the Family of God, implies the creation of small communities at the human level, living or basic ecclesial communities... These individual Churches as Families have the task of working to transform society." Democratic Republic of the Congo theologian Father Bénézet Bujo emphasizes that "the bishops of the African Synod declared that the Church in Africa should make the family model their own and Small Christian Communities have stressed this concept of family."<sup>979</sup> Irish missionary and theologian Father Kieran Flynn, SPS asserts: "It is in being transforming communities [of themselves and others] that SCCs realize their ecclesial identity in the Church as Family Model."<sup>980</sup>

We 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."

#### **4. SCCs' Involvement in Family and Marriage Ministry and Evangelization**

First it is important to understand the African context for marriage, family and raising children. Traditionally marriage in Africa is not just between a man and a woman, but between two families and even two clans. The children belong to the community and not just to the biological parents. Bujo asserts:

For African marriage is not a private affair but embraces the extended families<sup>981</sup> of both husband and wife, the living dead and the yet unborn. The Western model of marriage that distinguishes between the civil and the religious has little meaning. Marriage is always religious... There is no marriage without both God and the ancestors.<sup>982</sup>

Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins help in raising the children. Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel states: "As Pope Francis is pointing out to the world, if it listens, to

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<sup>979</sup> Bujo, Bénézet, *Plea for Change of Models of Marriage*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009, p. 14.

<sup>980</sup> Flynn, *Communities*, p. 99.

<sup>981</sup> Tanzanian theologian Father Laurenti Magesa and other African theologians and scholars emphasize that "extended family" originates from a Western sociological conception of family structures. For Africans this wide network of aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc. is simply "family" or on a wider scale "clan." Many have pointed out that this wide family network is the Africans' worst enemy as well as best friend. This family solidarity system (called "the economy of affection") can help needy members, but the more financially successful members can be constantly preyed upon by their "poor cousins."

<sup>982</sup> Bujo, Bénézet, *Plea for Change of Models of Marriage*, p. 17.

defend the family, especially the Christian Family based on fathers and mothers including the grandparents.” We have some interesting Case Studies of the specific importance of the grandparents in passing on the Catholic Faith to their grandchildren. The SCCs and the *Mahber* can be important support groups in which this takes place. This is so well expressed in the picturesque Sukuma, Tanzania proverb *One knee does not bring up a child*.

This important role of the wider community is seen in the many “African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Small Christian Communities (SCCs)” listed in Appendix 22 on pages 555-558 of the Ebook *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa* by Joseph Healey. The African value of community is expressed in the conviction of the fundamental African proverb *I am because we are; we are because I am*.<sup>983</sup> This has important implications for SCC Members. They accompany the betrothed couple on each stage of their whole marriage journey. Among the Sukuma people in Tanzania sometimes the priest blesses the handing over of the cows (the dowry) from the father of the bridegroom to the father of the bride in a religious ceremony followed by a festive meal. SCC members participate and give support.

Yet some of these values are changing in contemporary Africa especially through urbanization and secularism/secularization.

The Fourth Arua, Uganda Diocesan Synod 2005 described the close link between families and SCCs:

We will be empowering the Christians and Christian Communities. This means that all stakeholders intensify their activities right from the families, Small Christian Communities, Chapels, Parish, Diocesan departments and institutions. Much has to be done to the families and SCCs so that they became a center for the spiritual and material development of the Christians. Therefore the role of parents and SCCs should be reinforced in order to change the negative attitudes of the people.

SCCs are involved in family ministry/family life apostolate/family evangelization<sup>984</sup> that includes marriage ministry,<sup>985</sup> youth ministry, and a variety of other pastoral ministries and spiritual ministries. Research on the 180,000 SCCs in Eastern Africa reveals two approaches that work together. Family ministry is carried out in the SCCs that have an ecclesial identity in themselves. Parish-based SCCs elect lay ministers/animators/coordinators for:

1. Specific groups: Couples (married and engaged), Youth and Children.

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<sup>983</sup> See Chapter III on “Marriage and Family Life” in *African Cultural Domains Book 2: Cycle of Family and Interpersonal Relationships*, edited by Michael Kirwen, Nairobi: MIAS Books, 2010.

<sup>984</sup> These three expressions are used interchangeably.

<sup>985</sup> Marriage ministry is inclusive of marriage counseling that can be very “problem-centered” (couples having marital difficulties) and encouraging/advising/helping young couples to get married in a sacramental marriage.

2. Specific pastoral ministries: Catechesis, Justice and Peace, Religious Education, Sacraments and Spiritual/Religious Formation.

SCC members also actively participate in family ministry and marriage ministry on the outstation, subparish and parish levels.

The series of six questions in the questionnaire on “The Pastoral Care of the Family in Evangelization” is particularly relevant to SCCs in Eastern Africa. One question asks: “What pastoral care has the Church provided in supporting couples in formation and couples in crisis situations?”

A beautiful Case Study of pastoral care and inculturation is “Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at the Small Christian Community (SCC) Level in Malawi” by Malawian Montfort priest Samuel Satiele, SMM. He vividly describes a wedding mass that took place at the home of the bride (matrilineal society) in a SCC in Namitembo Parish, Zomba Diocese, Malawi with this evaluation:

This practice restores the communitarian aspect of the African family which is vital. By registering the marriage at that SCC, involving counselors of that SCC, announcing marriage bands at that SCC and celebrating the sacrament itself at that SCC, the local community is involved. There is greater participation of relatives and this makes them feel part and parcel of the process.<sup>986</sup>

By celebrating marriages in the homes of SCC members many more people in the neighborhood participate. This includes friends and neighbors who are not Catholics and Muslims. SCCs have a special way of being inclusive that could not happen at the parish church.

SCCs in Eastern Africa choose one of its lay members (usually a married person) to be responsible for marriage ministry. This leader both advises young people to sacramentalize their marriages in church and counsels couples who are having marital difficulties. Musimba points out:

The SCC members more easily notice problems among couples. One or two women in the SCC should take the wife apart privately. One or two men in the SCC should take the husband apart privately. Then the SCC members should talk with the couple together to encourage dialog among them. Prayer is important throughout.<sup>987</sup>

Segment Two of the video *The Church in the Neighborhood: Small Christian Communities* portrays “Services (Ministries) in the SCC” with a focus on the SCCs in St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese. One very important and necessary service/ministry is “Marriage Animator/Marriage Counselor.” The video points out that

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<sup>986</sup> The full Case Study is available on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/malawi/55-malawi.html>

<sup>987</sup> Musimba, *Ibid.*

“more than half of our Catholic married people have never received the sacrament of marriage” and thus cannot receive the sacrament of the Eucharist. Solutions are discussed in the SCC regarding problems such as high dowry payments, drunkenness, financial irresponsibility and opposition to mixed marriages.<sup>988</sup>

Statistics in Nairobi Archdiocese show as many as 60% of Catholic couples have not sacramentalized their marriages (had their marriages blessed in church). Thus they cannot receive communion.<sup>989</sup> “The traditional reasons of the high dowry payment and high cost of the wedding itself (including the reception) remain, but other new reasons have strongly emerged. First, young Catholics are reluctant to make permanent, lifetime commitments.<sup>990</sup> They prefer living together for a period of time to “test” their relationship. This is related to the *Come we stay* arrangement when a man and a woman begin living together before formalizing their marriage. Second, as Kenyan diocesan priest Father Deogratias Kibirango points out having so many broken marriages makes young people fear this institution.<sup>991</sup> Third, married women increasingly leave their husbands if he loses his job or cannot provide financial security to the family. One Kenyan Sister told me that we need nothing less than “an aggressive campaign to help couples to sacramentalize their marriages.”<sup>992</sup>

For various reasons a number of Catholic women want children, but not a husband and a permanent, lifetime marriage. More equality in the government marriage laws is raising new tensions and questions.

There are different patterns in Eastern Africa. While traveling in Malawi in December, 2013, I was pleasantly surprised that many people receive communion at the Sunday masses and major feasts. I was told that many young people are getting married in the Catholic Church today.

During a SCCs Class at Tangaza in February, 2014 we had an animated discussion on Catholic marriages in Africa. One seminarian raised a provocative question: “Why do candidates for the priesthood spend eight to 10 years in formation and studies before ordination to the priesthood (a sacrament in the Catholic Church and a **permanent, lifetime commitment**) while couples preparing for marriage (also a sacrament in the Catholic Church and a **permanent, lifetime commitment**) can have as few as three marriage instructions

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<sup>988</sup> Taken from *The Church in the Neighborhood: Small Christian Communities* (with Swahili and Arabic versions). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1995. Segment I: “Life and Activities of SCCs.” Segment II: “Services (Ministries) in the SCC.”

<sup>989</sup> I personally experienced this reality. In Nairobi on 19 April, 2015 I celebrated a Sunday Mass for 101 people. 43 received communion.

<sup>990</sup> For an increasing number of couples worldwide “until love do us apart” has replaced “until death do us apart.” In other words the lifetime commitment in all situations has been replaced by we can split/separate/divorce if problems arise and mutual love wanes and even disappears.

<sup>991</sup> See Henry Onyango and Stephen Mukhongi, “Tackling Pastoral Challenges Facing the Family,” *Seed*, Vol. 26, Nos. 8/9, p. 10.

<sup>992</sup> Sister Esther Ichugu, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 14 April, 2014.

before their wedding in church?” Another asked: “How come? Why is there such a big difference?” A random sample of marriage instructions in Nairobi Archdiocese ranged from a Crash Course of two weeks to three two hour sessions with the priest to five sessions spread over one and a half months to a six month marriage preparation program. Clearly more needs to be done in depth in preparing couples for Catholic Marriage. Better marriage catechesis should be a high priority.

Ethiopia and Eritrea have a traditional devotional small community or association called *Mahber*. It is a devotional group with a long history and significance. It offers important social support in the Ethiopian family system. Some of the activities of *Mahberat* (plural) in Ethiopia are:

- The small community reconciles members who have disputes through special ceremonies. When every member does not drink from the ceremonial pot (cup), the leaders immediately know something is wrong and try to reconcile the disputing parties. Once reconciled, both parties drink together.
- Helping at marriages, anniversaries and funerals. This includes encouraging young people in the association to get married in the Catholic Church, providing the choir at different events and organizing and serving at the related social events.

Thus a serious, ongoing challenge for SCCs is to help many of their members to regularize their marriages in a Catholic ceremony. One increasingly hears the expression “Eucharistic Famine” referring to the many, many Catholics in Africa who cannot receive communion because they are not officially married in the Catholic Church. M Cleary states: “In many places of Africa and Madagascar large numbers of baptized are not able to receive communion because of their marital situation.”<sup>993</sup> Botswana Bishop Boniface Tshosa emphasizes that this situation causes much pain in an African context:

Many [people], because of what we call irregular marriage situations cannot receive the Eucharist -- the Food of Life. In Botswana, food is a symbol of welcome, of togetherness, of sharing, of celebration, of solidarity. To exclude someone from the Eucharist in Botswana, is interpreted as being excluded from God's company and God's love. Words expressing otherwise do not convince.<sup>994</sup>

Some SCCs have a campaign to help their members to overcome some of the main stumbling blocks such as finalizing the dowry and raising money for the expenses of the marriage celebration.<sup>995</sup> Our research has gathered case studies of marriages that take place in

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<sup>993</sup> M Cleary, *Church as Family: Dialogue between African Culture and the Church*, 948

<sup>994</sup> Boniface Tshosa, intervention at the 1994 First African Synod, “Fifth General Congregation,” *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17, 1338 (27 April, 1994), p. 11.

<sup>995</sup> Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Michael Otunga liked to give the example of the SCC in Nairobi Archdiocese that donated the bride's wedding dress to a couple in its small

the home of SCC members and are less expensive than in a Catholic Parish Church. SCCs help couples in arranging Multiple or Group Wedding Ceremonies (many marriages celebrated together at the same time or *ndoa za kwa pamoja* in Swahili) in their outstations and parishes to cut down on the overall expenses.

One SCC member pointed out that we Small Christian Communities adult members are supposed to show a good example to others. It is very embarrassing if our children ask for church weddings before their parents get married in church. Nigerian Salesian seminarian Chiemeka Maria Utazi, SDB confirms this in his analysis on “Good Parenthood: “If youth don’t see their fathers or parents in SCC, they say, why should we go? If their parents are not married in the church, they ask questions on the need of SCCs?”<sup>996</sup>

Sometimes the SCC sends a small committee to mediate a marriage dispute. A Swahili video segment called *Jumuiya ya Upatanisho – Gekano, Kisii* [Kenya] (“SCC of Reconciliation– Gekano, Kisii [Kenya]”) has a short play<sup>997</sup> about a husband and wife who have a dispute over money. A delegation from the SCC composed of two men and two women visit the couple in their home. They discuss the problem, pray together and resolve the dispute. Then the couple witnesses to their reconciliation in the whole small community. This example of a delegation of SCC members is similar to the designated committee of small community members (*Mahber* and SCCs) used in Ethiopia for marriage counseling.

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 small community. Other times the Marriage Counselor – a specific pastoral 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 SCC members use special cultural symbols of reconciliation such as the green *isale* leaf, the *isale* tree (a special reconciliation tree), a white goat and even a baby.

Recent research<sup>998</sup> in Nairobi shows that SCCs are actively involved mediating marriage disputes. Issues include that the husband is drinking alcohol too much, in-laws are interfering in the marriage and the effect on raising the children in the Catholic faith when one of the spouses joins a Pentecostal Church. Intervention by a

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community who had insufficient money for all their needs for their Marriage Ceremony in the Catholic Church.

<sup>996</sup> Chiemeka Maria Utazi, “Absence of Youth and Men in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa,” p. 4, SCCs Website, retrieved on 7 December, 2014, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/absence\\_men\\_youth.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/absence_men_youth.pdf)

<sup>997</sup> This should be used as a teaching video. A segment is shown and then discussed in small groups.

<sup>998</sup> Examples are documented in the SCCs Course Papers and answers to the essay exam questions at Tangaza University College and Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College in March, April and May, 2014.

small mixed delegation of men and women from the SCC has been often successful. More complicated marriage problems are referred to a trained Marriage Counselor.

On how SCCs can reconcile married couples with problems Rurinjah states: “The couple should remember their vows that they took during their wedding in the church before God and Christians.” He adds: “The married couple should live as people who forgive each other in order to maintain peace in the family. Remember the Gikuyu, Kenya proverb *A home is for a husband and a wife.*”

“Reflection on Adoptive Parent Families” is a catechism lesson in *The Journey of Faith – 5: Together in Jesus’ Family* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2012). It is based on *Matthew* 18:5 and 25:40; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) Nos. 2379, 1654; and *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC), No. 218. It tells the touching story of Stephen and Caroline, a childless African couple in a Small Christian Community who adopt the three little children of a young couple who lost their lives in a terrible road accident. The lesson also helps SCCs in the ongoing formation of couples and the deeper understanding of family and marriage.<sup>999</sup>

Regarding how Christian families transmit the faith in Kenya we started SCCs of the Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC). Small groups of children meet on Saturdays or Sundays in their parishes to pray and to reflect on the *Bible*. In Kitale Diocese 15 PMC children belong to St. Francisca SCC in Holy Trinity Parish and 30 PMC children belong to St. Ann SCC in St. Peter Claver Parish. Similar SCCs of PMC children are in Chaani Parish in Mombasa Archdiocese. The PMC SCCs use the Lumko "Seven Steps" Method of *Bible* Sharing/Gospel Sharing. The PMC animators are trained first in this method.

Kenyan Salesian seminarian Isaiah Muthukumi, SDB adds:

When men and women especially husbands and wives attend SCC meetings together it unites them more and they are able to plan and bring up their family together. This will help them instill the spirit of prayer and responsibility in their children, mirroring the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Small deeds such as being with the family and praying together are very important.<sup>1000</sup>

## **5. Other Challenges and Proposals in the Questionnaire/Survey of the *Lineamenta* of the 2014 Synod of Bishops**

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<sup>999</sup>The full reflection is Appendix 16 in the Ebook -- Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa* -- on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf)

<sup>1000</sup> Isaiah Muthukumi, “Reflection on the Lack of Men and Youth in SCCs,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2014, p. 4.

The final question in the survey/questionnaire on family and marriage – “What other challenges or proposals related to the topics in the above questions<sup>1001</sup> do you consider urgent and useful to treat?” -- was open-ended and offers wide scope to present the Eastern Africa perspectives and grassroots experiences.

Pope Francis says: “I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.” One intriguing proposal in Africa for many years is to develop an inculturated Rite for the Catechumenate of Christian Marriage (Marriage Catechumenate) similar to the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA or the Adult Catechumenate). This could be two years or more depending on the customs and traditions (cultural dimension) of the local ethnic groups in Africa. It would integrate the basic elements of consent in the traditional African marriage rituals into the Christian sacrament of marriage.

This would follow the stages of marriage<sup>1002</sup> in an African context (also called “marriage in stages”) where marriage is a process rather than a single event and marriage is between two families rather than just between two individuals. The Catholic sacramental and spiritual “moments” (not “moment”) would take place during different stages of the marriage process: from the first official meeting and agreement of the two families of the couple to the betrothal (engagement) to the living together to paying of the dowry or bridewealth (that often takes place slowly over many years)<sup>1003</sup> to the wife’s pregnancy to the birth of the first

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<sup>1001</sup> It is surprising that HIV/AIDS was not mentioned in the questionnaire. Organizers in Rome said that the questionnaire could not cover all the local challenges and topics and it was the responsibility of National Bishops Conferences, etc. to add their own priorities in answering the last question. It is more surprising, and even disturbing, that some of the answers to the questionnaire from Africa do not mention the topic.

<sup>1002</sup> In an interview with the author in Washington DC on 9 October, 2014 Orsy mentioned that in the history of the Catholic Church the German tribes had a “gradual” approach to the sacrament of marriage. It was confirmed after the couple lived together successfully for six months.

<sup>1003</sup> This important ritual is not well understood by Westerners. In some African ethnic groups the dowry or bridewealth payment lasts a lifetime. The groom is required to pay a major portion of it before being allowed to marry the bride in church. The balance is paid in portions throughout the couple’s lifetime to ensure that there is a continuing bond/relationship between the two families.

child<sup>1004</sup> to the civil marriage to the Catholic Marriage Rite (that could be in a Catholic Church or in a SCC) to the wedding celebration.<sup>1005</sup>

The couple usually live together during most of this process -- what is commonly called premarital cohabitation.<sup>1006</sup> During this period, sometimes called the “trial marriage” or “the test of compatibility” period, the couple test their ability to live together and to get along with their in-laws such as the wife getting along with her mother-in-law if it is a patrilineal society. In African ethnic groups it is essential for the couple to have successful genital intercourse and for the wife to be fertile. If she is barren (as well as not having children) the marriage can break up. More recently if the wife does not get pregnant the man can also be tested because there are various reasons for male infertility (male's inability to cause pregnancy in a fertile female).

Overall this proposal is based on the principle that the structure of the Catholic Marriage Rite is flexible enough and general enough to integrate cultural differences in the process of African inculturation.

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<sup>1004</sup> Here is an interesting parallel: “New Catholics who enter the church at the Easter Vigil continue to meet with their group of sponsors and teachers for months after their initiation through a process called *mystagogia*. They are reminded that the parish community still supports them and that the Easter Vigil was not a graduation ceremony from a program, but the start of something new. In a recent email, my friend Isaac posed a question: What might a mystagogical approach to marriage prep look like? Could parishes invite mentor couples to check in on newlyweds at the three-month, six-month, one-year mark? Could parishes gather groups of couples for faith sharing, community service activities, and social events, with babysitting provided as necessary? Surely, many parishes are already doing these and other things to support married couples. But it would be so valuable for the synod to encourage church leaders to facilitate opportunities for newly married adults beyond traditional marriage and baptism preparation.” Mike Jordon Laskey, “Three Things I'd Tell the Synod on the Family About Marriage,” National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved on 16 October, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/three-things-id-tell-synod-family-about-marriage>

<sup>1005</sup> I asked a devout Catholic married woman in Iramba Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania what was the happiest day of her life. She answered: “Not the day of my marriage or the day of the birth of my first child. It was the day my first born son was circumcised.” For her this symbolized that her son had passed to manhood and the continuance of the family lineage was assured. As a mother she had successfully done her part.

<sup>1006</sup> This applies the principle of gradualism to the question of marriage. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn states: “When discussing marriage and the family, we must first of all ask ourselves why couples all over the world often cohabit nowadays without marrying. Before I evaluate this morally, I have to learn to understand why even committed Catholic couples nowadays often only gradually discover the way to the Sacrament of Marriage.” He said that recognizing that cohabiting couples may be on the way to the sacrament of marriage did not mean agreeing with cohabitation as a whole. Christa Pongratz-Lippitt, “Schönborn: The Next Synod Must Concentrate on the Realities of Family Life,” *Herder Korrespondenz*, December, 2014, NCR Website, retrieved on 10 December, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/news/global/sch-born-next-synod-must-concentrate-realities-family-life#.VIdIzvVMc4k.facebook>

This is also being discussed in other parts of the world. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Austria stated: “Cohabitation could be seen as a stage on the way to marriage.”<sup>1007</sup>

One challenge is how SCCs can reach out to families and married people on the margins and periphery of society. This includes pastoral, missionary and social outreach to (alphabetically): abandoned babies, abused children, families and marriages affected by HIV/AIDs including AIDs orphans, homeless families, migrant families, single parents and their children and young people from broken homes. Segeja states:

SCCs are thus tasked with the responsibility to provide the needs of these vulnerable people. Perhaps this is the most challenging pastoral concern of SCCs especially today when we observe the difficult and intolerable treatment to which so many children in Africa are subjected.<sup>1008</sup>

SCC members have a special opportunity to minister to families and couples affected by HIV/AIDs. One concrete example is outreach to the millions of AIDs orphans in Africa. Then there is the challenge of marriage counseling to discordant couples. In a SCC how does the Marriage Counselor advise a husband or wife whose spouse has AIDs? How does unaffected partner avoid getting affected himself/herself? Should they use a condom? How does the SCC Marriage Counselor advise a faithful Catholic woman who discovers that her husband is sleeping with other women? Should she and her husband first both get an AIDs test? Should she deny marital privileges to her husband until he promises to be faithful only to her?

These are real questions that are very complicated, sensitive and nuanced. At a certain point the SCC Marriage Counselor may have to refer the questions to a specially trained Marriage Counselor. Some of the issues to be considered: The primacy of personal conscience informed by the teachings of the church. The use of condoms in special situations. Importance of prayer for deeper discernment. Advice on a case by case basis.

SCC members also have a special opportunity to minister to families and couples in the refugee camps and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Eastern Africa.

This compassion and care for the poorest and neediest mentioned above is a special concern of Pope Francis.

Various bishops and other Catholic Church leaders in Eastern Africa are offering pastoral solutions to these challenges of family and marriage.

## **6. African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Family and Marriage**

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<sup>1007</sup> Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, *The Tablet*, Vol. 268, No. 9069, 4 October, 2014, p. 1.

<sup>1008</sup> Nicholas Segeja, “Small Christian Communities: A Vital Icon,” p, 27.

Another approach to this final question in the *Lineamenta* is to reflect on African proverbs and sayings related to family and marriage. Pastoral and theological insights emerge. They are used in many SCCs' contexts and situations. A full list is found in Appendix No. 22 of the Ebook -- Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*.<sup>1009</sup> A helpful online resource is the section on "African Wise Proverbs and Inspiring Quotes" on the [Afritorial Website](#). Some examples by three categories:

- **African proverbs and sayings on family life (19)**

*A united family eats from the same plate* (Ganda, Uganda).

*Home is best.* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*Dine with a stranger but save your love for your family* (Ethiopian proverb).

*Blood is thicker than water* (many African languages).

*You can only resemble the parents that gave birth to you. For a cow does not give birth to a sheep* (Yoruba, Nigeria).

*You only have one mother* (many African languages).

*A mother is the cornerstone of a family* (Somali, Somalia).

*A child does not laugh at the ugliness of its mother* (Uganda)

*The person who has not traveled widely thinks his or her mother is the only cook (the best cook)* (many African languages).

*No matter how skinny, the son always belongs to his father*<sup>1010</sup> (Galla, Ethiopia)

*No matter how useless a person may seem to another, they mean the world to their family* (Zulu, South Africa).

*Brothers and sisters are like calabashes; even if they knock each other, they don't break* (Bunyoro, Uganda).

*Brotherhood and sisterhood does not mean physical resemblance but mutual assistance* (Africa).

*Eating together strengthen brotherhood and sisterhood* (Tongo, Ghana).

*When a man person walks naked it is the kinspeople who feel the shame not the naked person.* (Igbo, Nigeria).

*When brothers fight to death, the stranger inherits their father's estate* (Igbo, Nigeria).

*You must treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It is loaned to you by your children* (Gikuyu, Kenya).

*A visitor is a guest for two days. On the third day give him or her a hoe.* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*Let the guest come so that the host may benefit (get well).* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

These proverbs and sayings are closely linked to African values of relationships, community and unity. They touch all aspects of human life.

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<sup>1009</sup> On the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf)

<sup>1010</sup> There is a Sukuma, Tanzania riddle about the importance of the father in the home under the theme "Respect for Those in Authority." The riddle says: "You do not wipe your nose on the pillar that supports the whole house?" The answer is: "Parental father."

*Blood is thicker than water* is a very common African proverb found in many languages. We have to appreciate the deep African cultural values, ties and loyalties of family, clan and ethnic group. In his intervention during the First African Synod in 1994 on the tragic civil war in Rwanda Nigerian Bishop Albert Obiefuna of Awka, Nigeria explained that "when it comes to the crunch, it is not the Christian concept of the church as a family that prevails but rather the adage that *blood is thicker than water*."<sup>1011</sup> Thus the blood of family and ethnic group in Africa is thicker than the water of *Baptism*. Stated another way, at the core of an African's priorities and allegiances blood relationship is often more important than the church as a family, even for an African who has become a Christian. This helps to explain how horrible genocide and ethnic cleansing can take place in predominantly Christian countries such as Rwanda and Burundi and more recently in South Sudan.

The Marsabit Diocese,<sup>1012</sup> Kenya Website states:

Ethnicity: Our region, for the last couple of years, has been deeply divided on ethnic lines to a point that sessions at deanery level, where different ethnic groups are present, have become a real problem. People identify themselves more with their tribe than with their faith. There is a tedious but obligatory journey of helping the people gain the sense of belonging to a larger Christian Family. It is urgent for the Church to find ways and means of bringing the people together.

In developing African Christianity and the integration of African values and Christian values in the family we are challenged to go further and rephrase this traditional African proverb to say *the water of Baptism is thicker than the blood of tribalism*. This can start at the grassroots level in our homes and SCCs. For the church to see itself as a Christian family is to extend the boundaries beyond the clan and ethnic group. The water of *Baptism* must be stronger than the blood of narrow clannishness and tribalism. In this process SCCs are challenged to become genuine agents of change for the transformation of society. The African theology and praxis of Church-as-Family can be one of the keys to reconciliation, peace, and unity on the continent.

- **African proverbs and sayings on raising children (14)**

*The hen with baby chicks doesn't swallow the worm* (Sukuma, Tanzania).

*A cow never runs away from her calves.* (Bemba, Zambia).

*When the woman is hungry she says, "Roast something for the children so they might eat"* (Akan, Ghana).

*Your own child is like an axe; once it falls on you you pick it up.* It means no matter how serious the offence that your child has committed, you cannot abandon the child or for the child to cease to be your child (Bemba, Zambia).

*A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm* (Yoruba, Nigeria).

*The old woman looks after the child to grow its teeth and the young one in turn looks after the old woman when she loses her teeth* (Akan, Ghana).

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<sup>1011</sup> Albert Obiefuna, "Fourth General Congregation," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17, 1338 (April 27, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>1012</sup> Retrieved on 8 June, 2014, <http://marsabitdiocese.org/parishes.html>

*Who loves the mother must love the children also* (Bemba, Zambia).

*A child who is not taught by its mother will be taught by the world* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*The person who does not listen to an elder's advice gets his or her leg broken.* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*A stick is straightened while still young* (many African languages).

*It takes a whole village to raise a child* (Igbo and Yoruba, Nigeria Proverb).

*Children of a hippo play in all the pools of water in the river or the lake.* (Bemba, Zambia).

*You are the child of a duck; take care of yourself* (Sukuma, Tanzania).

*If you think education is costly, try ignorance* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

African proverbs and sayings teach many values about raising children. Often the mother has the central role. Traditionally the elders' advice was very important, but this is changing especially in urban Africa.

There are many insights in the Igbo and Yoruba, Nigeria proverb *It takes a whole village to raise a child*.<sup>1013</sup> Child upbringing is a communal effort. The responsibility for raising a child is shared with the larger family (sometimes called the extended family). Everyone in the family participates especially the older children, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and even cousins. It is not unusual for African children to stay for long periods with their grandparents or aunts or uncles. Even the wider community gets involved such as neighbors and friends. Children are considered a blessing from God for the whole community. This communal responsibility<sup>1014</sup> in raising children is also seen in the Sukuma (Tanzania) proverb *One knee does not bring up a child* and in the Swahili (East and Central Africa) proverb *One hand does not nurse a child*.

This African proverb can be effectively used during infant baptism. It is the whole extended family that has the responsibility of raising the child in the Catholic faith especially the parents and godparents but also the other siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents and the whole SCC at times. This includes the spirit and practice of pastoral accompaniment.

In general this Nigerian proverb conveys the African worldview that emphasizes the values of family relationships, parenting, parental care, self-sacrificing concern for others, sharing and even hospitality. This is very close to the Biblical worldview as seen in scripture texts related to unity and cooperation (*Ecclesiastes* 4:9,12) and a mother's self-sacrificing love (*Isaiah* 49:15-16).

American politician Hillary Clinton is not the only person who has made this Nigerian proverb popular. In a "Church for Schools" day to support Catholic education in St. Peter's Square, Vatican City on 10 May, 2014 Pope Francis emphasized that family, school and Catholic community go hand in hand and said: "This makes me think of an African proverb which says: *It takes a village to raise a child*. Let us all say it together: *It takes a village to*

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<sup>1013</sup> A full explanation can be found on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 16 May, 2014, <http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/23-1998proverbs/137-november-1998-proverb.html>

<sup>1014</sup> The plan of religious education in the USA uses the term "whole community catechesis."

*raise a child. All together: It takes a village to raise a child.*” Inviting the audience or congregation to repeat the proverb is a very African style of communications.

A commentator stated:

Now surely the Pope was meaning to underscore the need for Catholic community in assisting parents to raise children. And that truth needs reinforcing today more than ever. As many growing families in cities in the Western world have found, raising morally healthy children in a secular anti-Christian culture is very challenging. Finding and maintaining a Christian community is essential for good friendships for children, for reinforcing faith and morals, and for giving parents the peers and encouragement they need to continue to go against the tide in raising their children to know, love, and serve God.<sup>1015</sup>

Thus in the pope’s interpretation of this proverb the village and other local communities supports the parents. The SCC is one of the places where this can happen. The SCC is the church in the neighborhood and closely connected to the local network of clans and families. SCC members are agents of pastoral life, catechetical instructions and evangelization in promoting family life, parenting and family values. Another interpretation of this proverb that the church does not agree with is that the parents and families’ help in raising children is insignificant and that more authority should be given to the government and other outside institutions.

- **African proverbs and sayings on marriage ministry/marriage preparation/marriage counseling (14)**

*Marriage is like a peanut/groundnut; you have to crack it to see what is inside* (Akan, Ghana).

*Marriage is like a book; every page/day is a new lesson* (Ewe, Ghana).

*Marriage is the main post of the hut.*<sup>1016</sup>

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<sup>1015</sup> John-Henry Westen, “It Takes a Village to Raise a Child’: Did Pope Francis quote Hillary Clinton?” LifeSiteNews Website, retrieved on 14 May 2014, <http://www.lifesitenews.com/blog/it-takes-a-village-to-raise-a-child-did-pope-francis-quote-hillary-clinton>

<sup>1016</sup> “‘Marriage,’ says an African proverb, is the main post of the hut.’ If the house, that is, the Church of Christ in Africa, should sway, perhaps that is because its main support does not plunge deep enough into the earth of Africa. There is a great number of Catholics excluded from the sacraments, the source of unity and strength, by reason of their irregular marital situation. Still others are barred from coming into the Church by reason of already existing relationships. It is good that all of these problems should be treated so as to find out what pastoral solutions are possible.” No. 68 of *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod of Bishops First Special Assembly for Africa, *The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: “You Shall Be My Witnesses” (Acts 1:8)*, Vatican: Liberia Editrice and Nairobi Paulines Publications Africa, 1993.

*My beloved* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*The journey of marriage is far, far* (Ashante, Ghana).

*No matter how beautiful is your sister, you cannot marry her* (Bemba, Zambia).

*The house that is built well (like a fixed faith) doesn't move any longer* (Lwalu, Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC).

*A single person cannot counsel a married couple* (Luo, Kenya and Tanzania)

*An uncircumcised person can never advise a circumcised person (concerning adulthood including marriage)* (Gikuyu, Kenya).

*The hoes of two people cultivating together in a field sometimes clash (hit) against each other* (Sukuma, Tanzania).

*Hoes that dig together never miss to knock at one another* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*Two calabashes in a basin of water will by all means touch each other but not break each other.* (Ewe, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria).

*Until the nagging wife marries the second husband, she will not know the value of the first one* (Igbo, Nigeria).

*The electric wires are still live* (a warning not to play with the 'live wires' of AIDS because they are packed with enough "voltage" to kill). (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

*Better a still curtain than a flag blowing in the wind* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

Marriage is basic to African society, but there are many different traditions and customs depending on the local context and situation.

Concerning the Sukuma proverb above – *The hoes of two people cultivating together in a field sometimes clash (hit) against each other*.<sup>1017</sup> The Sukuma Ethnic Group is the largest ethnic group (more than six million people) in Tanzania and lives mainly in rural areas in the northwestern part of the country on or near the southern shores of Lake Victoria – mainly in the Mwanza and Shinyanga Regions. The Sukuma are agricultural-pastoralists whose lives focus on farming (maize, sorghum, cassava, sweet potatoes, cotton, etc.) and herding cows. The hoes of two people weeding together in their fields sometimes clash (hit) against each other as seen in this Sukuma proverb. This proverb is applied to married people living in close proximity. They experience misunderstandings and differences at times. This is part of daily life. The proverb is used during Wedding Masses to encourage the newly married couple to persevere in bad times and difficult situations. When marital problems occur, it is used in marriage counseling.

Concerning the Lwalu proverb above -- *The house that is built well (like a fixed faith) doesn't move any longer*. The African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website states:

This is a proverb used in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the daily life of married people that praises them for not having the spirit of divorce. The faith union of the Catholic couple is sacramentalized and there is no question of divorce. When a couple marries, the man and woman should

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<sup>1017</sup> A full explanation can be found on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 16 May, 2014, <http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/57-2014-african-proverb-of-the-month/664-february-2014-the-hoes-of-two-people-cultivating-together-in-a-field-sometimes-clash-hit-against-each-other-sukuma-tanzania-proverb.html>

live together and try always to feel happy. When a person builds his or house solidly it should remain forever. Before the construction of a house, the cost estimate should be evaluated so that the person has sufficient money to finish. This is true in marriage where commitment is the foundation that makes the husband and wife want to persevere together until they die. The demolition of a house is connected to its expansion or improvement and not to its total destruction. Faith finishes building a house. It is fixed to continue into its old age. This imitates the marriage contract. Aging in marriage with his or her partner is desirable for the family. Building a permanent home is desirable for the family.

In this Lwalu proverb we learn to respect marriage as a permanent alliance. For example, when we say that something is permanent or mandatory, we say that it is “set in stone” such as referring to the Ten Commandments tablets prescribed by God originally. Marriage is a foundational sacrament so the marriage is “set in stone.” And this stone supports the home.<sup>1018</sup>

## 7. Small Christian Communities in the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the 2014 Synod of Bishops

The *Instrumentum Laboris* (Latin for “Working Document”)<sup>1019</sup> for the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization” was published in the Vatican on 26 June, 2014. The working document notes that many responses were “submitted by the synods of the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris* (Latin phrase which literally means "of one's own right"), the episcopal conferences, the departments of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors

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<sup>1018</sup> Laur Mwepu, “June, 2014 African Proverb of the Month,” African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 6 June, 2014, <http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/57-2014-african-proverb-of-the-month/682-june-2014-the-house-that-is-built-well-like-a-fixed-faith-doesnt-move-any-longer-lwalu-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-drc-proverb.html>

<sup>1019</sup> There have different responses to this document. The 30 July, 2014 issue of *National Catholic Reporter* has an Editorial (“Obstacles Riddle Synod on the Family's Path”) and two essays. The Editor's note states: “The 50-page *Instrumentum Laboris*, or working document, that was released 26 June and will guide the discussion during the October Synod of Bishops on the family was dry and impersonal, lifeless almost, and that confounded us at *NCR*. From personal experience and from listening to colleagues, readers and friends, we have experienced marriage and family life as life-giving and joyous. Marriage and family life is not without its challenges and struggles; it offers ample lessons in humility and forgiveness, but that, too, at the best of times can be nurturing. If the writers of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, which is now supposed to be being studied in dioceses throughout the world, had begun with the fundamental experience of people who have lived in marriages and raised families, we wondered, how different would it have been?” See National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved on 31 July, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/editorial-obstacles-riddle-synod-familys-path>

General. In addition, other responses — categorized as *observations* — were sent directly to the General Secretariat by a significant number of dioceses, parishes, movements, groups,<sup>1020</sup> ecclesial associations and families, not to mention academic institutions, specialists, both Catholic and non-Catholic, all interested in sharing their reflections.” Cardinal Baldisseri, Secretary of the Synod of Bishops explained that intervening in the Extraordinary Synod will be 23 lay auditors, seven of whom will be married couples, one of whom will render its testimony during the Synodal sessions.

The document highlights both the pastoral challenges and concrete examples of pastoral care of the family and marriage. It has 26 references to “community” and 10 references to “communities” that are used in different senses: Christian community, church community, ecclesial community, faith community, local community, new community and parish community. Three pertinent sections are:

No. 48 under “The Family and Integral Development” states:

The responses mention the significance of the close collaboration of families/homes and the parish in the mission of evangelization, as well as the need for the active involvement of the family in parish life through support and solidarity on behalf of other families. In this regard, invaluable assistance comes from the community made up of families. Membership in movements and associations can also be a particularly significant source of support.

### **COMMENTARY**

While the expression “the community made up of families” is more general, this is an exact description of Eastern Africa SCCs that are called “a communion of families.” This is part of the “Communion of Communities Model of Church” that is explained at length in other parts of this Ebook. “Movements and associations” cover a wide variety of small communities and small groups. Some Catholics continue to place SCCs in these two categories although they are different theologically.

No. 54 under “Marriage Preparation” states:

Many laudable initiatives in marriage preparation are taking place in various parts of the world, including: “new communities” which promote retreats; personal encounters; groups for prayer, reflection and discussion.

### **COMMENTARY**

What is missing in the document and very important for the AMECEA Region is that Eastern African SCCs have a specific ministry for marriage and a specific minister for marriage preparation called the Marriage Animator or Marriage Counselor. This person is responsible for coordinating the marriage preparation of couples and counseling married couples in the SCC.

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<sup>1020</sup> The wide variety of names used shows both the richness and complexity of the English language in describing the “small community” or “small group” phenomenon under which SCCs fit.

No. 146 under “The Response of the Particular Churches”<sup>1021</sup> states:

When parents, usually after an absence from the church for some time, request from the ecclesial community the sacramental preparation of their children, the most recommended approach in all the responses is to readily accept them without making any distinctions. Receiving them with a basic attitude of respect, a friendly disposition and a willingness to listen to their human and spiritual needs creates a proper and beneficial atmosphere for communicating the Gospel message. The important and effective ecclesial experiences aimed at assisting parents along the way include: catechesis in the family and community; the ecclesial movements in support of the pastoral care of married couples; Sunday Masses; family visits; prayer groups; popular missions; the activities of Basic Christian Communities; groups of *Bible* study; the pastoral activities of ecclesial movements.

### **COMMENTARY**

While the questionnaire’s responses from around the world lump BCCs or SCCs together with a variety of pastoral options to help the sacramental preparation of children, the Eastern Africa experience of SCCs as a key pastoral priority and a new way of being church is significantly different. Unfortunately the *Instrumentum Laboris* doesn’t reflect the basic insight of the Eastern Africa experience – that parish-based SCCs are a primary means and “place” for family catechesis, marriage catechesis, family life apostolate, religious education, pastoral care and evangelization.

At the same time the document emphasizes various pastoral activities and methods for marriage preparation and catechesis such as “older and more experienced couples act as “godparents” to younger couples who are preparing for marriage” (No. 56). In Eastern Africa often these pastoral activities and methods take place in the SCCs and are carried out by SCCs members.

The day after it was published this *Instrumentum Laboris* was presented during in the AMECEA Pastoral Department Workshop for National Commissions for Marriage and Family Life Apostolate in the AMECEA Region that took place in Nairobi in June, 2014. The theme of the workshop was “Marriage and Family Life” – a Preparation for the Synod of Bishops III Extraordinary General Assembly.”

The presentation on “How SCCs Are an Important Part of the Pastoral Care of the Family and Marriage in Evangelization in Eastern Africa” began with all the participants receiving a bookmark with the map of Eastern Africa that celebrates the 180,000 SCCs in the nine AMECEA countries.<sup>1022</sup> The bookmark mentions the Small Christian Communities

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<sup>1021</sup> No. 58 under “Support for Familial Spirituality” uses diocese, Particular Church and Local Church interchangeably and states: “Clearly, Local Churches should be able to find that this richness is a real resource for not only promoting various initiatives on behalf of couples intending marriage but devising ways to provide suitable pastoral care for families today.

<sup>1022</sup> During a discussion of the delegates from Kampala Archdiocese, Arua Diocese and Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese it was pointed out that the success of SCCs in Uganda is uneven.

Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page” ([www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)) that has an Ebook on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” and many online SCCs resources.<sup>1023</sup>

We can be grateful for the special pastoral experience and activities of parish-based SCCs that are a key pastoral priority in the AMECEA Region. This is seen in the light of the People of God and Communion Ecclesiology that developed after Vatican Two and the African cultural priorities of communion, solidarity, relationships and family values. SCCs are a new way of being church from the bottom up/from the grassroots up. A SCC is a communion of families. An outstation is a communion of SCCs. A parish is a communion of outstations. And so on.

SCCs are the “place” of much pastoral care and the SCC members themselves are the “agents” of pastoral ministry and evangelization. Cardinal Polycarp Pengo of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania calls SCCs in Swahili *chombo mahususi cha uinjilishaji* that can be translated as “a special or privileged instrument or means of evangelization.” Related to our topic SCCs in Eastern Africa have two important lay ministries:

1. Religious Education/Catechesis Animator (for youth and children).
2. Marriage Animator or Marriage Counselor
  - a. Helping young couples sacramentalize their marriages.
  - b. Counseling couples with marital difficulties.

The two meanings of the Eucharist in Africa were explained.

## **8. Small Christian Communities in the *Final Report and Message of the 2014 Synod of Bishops***

The methodology of the Third Extraordinary Synod was the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process as follows:”

1. The interventions (written interventions submitted a head of time and oral interventions presented during the sessions) were organized around the eight (8) topics listed in the *Instrumentum Laboris*.
2. Each topic was introduced by an “auditor/auditrice” (mainly married couples) with focus on personal experiences,<sup>1024</sup> then sharings by the bishops or any other

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There is no “uniform” experience. Arua Diocese has the best overall SCC plan. The *Bible* is used in some youth groups and not in others.

<sup>1023</sup> This includes online SCCs that appeal especially to youth. During a discussion on the importance of the *Bible* it was mentioned that young people use an electronic *Bible* on their smartphones rather than a paper *Bible*. A Zambian Sister said, “But the youth should still bring their *Bibles* to the SCC Meetings.” Another person commented, “But they do – on their smartphones.” Electronic devices and the internet require a new way of thinking.

<sup>1024</sup> These couples spoke of the deep joy they had experienced in their marriages and family lives – as well as the difficulties they had overcome and the struggles they had faced.

delegates for not more than four minutes (“See” – by listening to the actual experiences of members of the Family of God especially married couples).

3. Then the bishops made their interventions<sup>1025</sup> on the given topic after having listened to the life experiences (“Judge” – by reflecting on the Teachings of the Sacred Scripture and Magisterium with regard to the topic being discussed).
4. In small groups, the bishops discussed and proposed pastoral responses to the given topic (“Act” – by offering the pastoral guidelines in the light of the teachings of the Church and with consideration of the actual situation).

Many commentators have emphasized the fact that the bishops and cardinals publicly disagreed with one another in their attempt to discern what is good for the church. The Catholic Church really has not had this experience since the open debates of the Second Vatican Council. The pope himself supported this open discussion. This is an on-going process of listening, discussion,<sup>1026</sup> dialogue, debate, discernment and proposed pastoral responses leading up to the Synod of Bishops Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly to take place in Rome from 4-25 October, 2015. The pope likes to call this process a journey or a path -- in the spirit of the meaning of the word “synod.” “Synodality is the path of the Catholic Church.”<sup>1027</sup> This process of synodality is a journeying together.<sup>1028</sup> The Pope often refers to the model of synodality in the Orthodox Churches. He emphasizes, “The synod is not a parliament, it’s a protected ecclesial space. And this protection exists so (that) the Holy Spirit can work.”<sup>1029</sup>

Pope Francis says that he is open to changing Catholic Church regulations and practices (NOT doctrine) for pastoral reasons, that is, finding a “pastoral solution.” He says if there is a consensus of the recommendations of bishops on the local level (for example, a national or regional episcopal conference) on a particular pastoral issue,

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<sup>1025</sup> During this meeting Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel presented his important intervention on behalf of AMECEA that is referred to above.

<sup>1026</sup> See the creativity of St. Paul Inside the Walls Madison, New Jersey, USA)’s Young Adult Fireside Chat: Open discussion for young adults that welcomes opposing viewpoints on the great moral issues of our day.

<sup>1027</sup> Francis, “Homily on 29 June, 2013,” America Website, retrieved on 2 February, 2015, <http://americamagazine.org/content/dispatches/pope-decides-pallium-will-be-given-metropolitan-archbishops-home-dioceses>

<sup>1028</sup> There are many relevant metaphors. The Story of “The Road to Emmaus” in *Luke 24*. The famous African proverb: *If you want to walk fast walk alone. If you want to walk far walk together.*

<sup>1029</sup> “Pope Francis Speaks Up on Synod Process – 'It Isn't Over,’” *Catholic News Agency* (CNA), 30 November, 2014, retrieved on 2 December, 2014, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-francis-speaks-up-on-synod-process-it-isnt-over-37950/>

change is possible in the context of a process of subsidiarity (decentralization) and collegiality.<sup>1030</sup>

The two-week synod in the Vatican produced two major documents on 18 October, 2014 – the *Final Report of the Synod (Relatio Synodi) of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization" (5-19 October 2014)* and the *Message of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* – and many supporting documents. These official documents highlight both the pastoral challenges and the concrete examples of pastoral care of the family and marriage.

There are many references to “community” and “communities” (or their equivalents marked in **bold**) in these October, 2014 synod documents that are used in different senses (alphabetically):

**church community(ies)**

**community(ies) of believing families**

**community(ies) of faith or faith community(ies)**

**community(ies) of the faithful**

**community(ies) who accompany couples and families and care for their wounds**

**ecclesial community(ies)**

**entire community:** “The complex social reality and the changes affecting the family today require a greater effort on the part of the whole Christian community in preparing those who are about to be married. The importance of the virtues needs to be included, among these chastity which is invaluable in the genuine growth of love between persons. In this regard, the synod fathers jointly insisted on the need to involve more extensively the entire community by favoring the witness of families themselves and including preparation for marriage in the course of Christian Initiation as well as emphasizing the connection between marriage and the other sacraments. Likewise, they felt that specific programs were needed in preparing couples for marriage, programs which create a true experience of participation in ecclesial life and thoroughly treat the various aspects of family life (Number 39 – “Guiding Engaged Couples in Their Preparation for Marriage” -- in the *Final Report of the Third Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family*)

**PROPOSED ACTION:** Lengthen and deepen the pre-marital catechesis. Beginning and advanced training programs for married couple accompaniers (mentor couples) and other facilitators/ formators/presenters/ trainers. Emphasize Train the Trainers (TOT) Workshops for parishes, schools and marriage programs. Engaged couples SCCs are both a faith sharing group and a support group. Married couple accompaniers are called upon when needed. This overall approach would insure that the engaged couple not focus too much on the celebration and social aspects of their wedding only. One concrete suggestion:

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<sup>1030</sup> In an interview with the author at Georgetown University on 9 October, 2014, Father Ladislaus Orsy, SJ confirmed that “affective collegiality” involves a consultative process by the world bishops while “effective collegiality” is involves a deliberative process (decision-making that includes voting to reach a consensus). Francis wants national bishops’ conferences to be more involved in the collegial process and ideally present a consensus view on a particular pastoral topic from the grassroots level. The Holy Spirit works through the consensus of these local bishops.

Parishes could encourage couples to go to marriage preparation weekends before any formal preparation takes place in the parish. They can initiate small groups for the married to meet in their own homes and provide resources that will enable them to discuss how to deepen their relationship with their spouse and with God. These could include exercises, reflections and discussions on weekly Scripture readings for Sunday Mass. One such resource is *I Am With You*, a trilogy of books covering the three liturgical years.<sup>1031</sup>

**family is the core of parish communities:** “Family is thus an authentic Domestic Church that expands to become the family of families that is the ecclesial community” (*Message of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*)

**local church community(ies)**

**local community(ies)**

**new communities:** “The initial years of marriage are a vital and sensitive period during which couples become more aware of the challenges and meaning of married life. Consequently, pastoral accompaniment needs to go beyond the actual celebration of the Sacrament (*Familiaris Consortio*, Part III). In this regard, experienced couples are of great importance in any pastoral activity. The parish is the ideal place for these experienced couples to be of service to younger couples, with the possible cooperation of associations, ecclesial movements<sup>1032</sup> and new communities.<sup>1033</sup> Married couples need encouragement in a basic openness to the great gift of children. Emphasis on the importance of a familial spirituality and prayer life should lead couples to meet regularly to promote growth in their spiritual life and solidarity in the concrete demands of life. Meaningful liturgies, devotional

<sup>1031</sup> Brian and Maureen Devine, “What Marriage is About,” *Tablet*, 6 December, 2014, retrieved on 6 December, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/parish-practice/6/4081/what-marriage-is-about>

<sup>1032</sup> “Ecclesial movements” and “church movements” are used interchangeably.

<sup>1033</sup> Another English translation is: “with the possible involvement of associations, church movement and new communities.” The official Italian text of this sentence is: “La parrocchia è considerata come il luogo dove coppie esperte possono essere messe a disposizione di quelle più giovani, con l’eventuale concorso di associazioni, movimenti ecclesiali e nuove comunità.”

In the AMECEA Region in general the Catholic Church see the various associations, ecclesial (church) movements and new communities connected to marriage such as Couples for Christ, Engaged Encounter, Faithful House (FTH) Program, Family Life Ministries, Holy Cross Family Ministry, Marriage Care, Marriage Encounter, Marriage Preparation (Marriage Prep), Pre-Cana, Pro-Life, Retrouvaille, SCCs, Teams of Our Lady, other Christian Family Movements and their various centers and institutes as an important assistance and a big help to the parish. The Catholic Church continue to offer a range of formation opportunities and approaches. There is not a single program/one size fits all approach.

While some priests might see these groups as “sheep stealers” (setting up separate exclusive groups of married couples outside the parish structure), most priests and pastoral agents welcome and depend on these specialized groups in marriage ministry within the parish structure. So the best translation of *concorso* has the contextual meaning of cooperation/collaboration/involvement/assistance/a running along with/with the help of.

practices and the Eucharist celebrated for entire families were mentioned as vital factors in fostering evangelization through the family” (Number 39 – “Accompanying the Married Couple in the Initial Years of Marriage” – in the *Final Report of the Third Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family*).

A key text is “with the possible cooperation of associations, ecclesial movements and new communities.” Parish-based SCCs are included here. There is a wide range of pastoral possibilities.

**PROPOSED ACTION:** Lengthen and deepen the post-marital catechesis. Beginning and advanced training programs for married couple accompaniers (mentor couples) and other facilitators/formators/presenters/trainers. Emphasize Train the Trainers (TOT) Workshops for parishes, schools and marriage programs. Newly married couples SCCs that are both a faith sharing group and a support group. Married couple accompaniers are called upon when needed.<sup>1034</sup>

### **parish as the family of families**

#### **small activist units**

**vibrant communities:** “Vibrant communities exist in parish composed of married couples or entire families who meet regularly, pray together, study and thoroughly discuss the *Catechism of the Church*, read the *Bible* and talk about everyday problems, difficulties and the beauty of life lived in common by couples and treat questions concerning the upbringing of their children. In other words, they strive to combine faith with life. They help each other in times of illness, unemployment or other problems. Many of them participate in the work of *Caritas*. Many help in the preparation of engaged couples for marriage in strengthening their relationship of friendship which is to endure long after their wedding. Groups of young Catholic mothers with young children also accommodate mothers without any religious affiliation or non-believers, thus creating a new form of mission. Families are forming various new communities which assist couples in crisis or help women in existential or psychological difficulty” (Number 2 – “The Gospel of the Family and Family Ministry” -- in the *Report Preceding the Discussion at the Third Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family*).

**PROPOSED ACTION:** Special outreach programs beginning with listening, active accompanying, walking with before teaching (the Emmaus model).

### **welcoming community(ies)**

## **COMMENTARY**

While the term “Small Christian Communities” is not mentioned specifically in these documents, their life and ministry is definitely described in the examples above. The synod

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<sup>1034</sup> *I Am With You* is a trilogy of books that reflect on the readings at mass for years A, B, and C. They are a new approach to Scripture for married people. They will help them to understand the key messages in the Sunday readings. They include witty illustrations and a prayer for the couple. Website: <http://www.twainoneflesh.org.uk/> *Marriage Matters* is a Word.doc Book, a weekly 60 word snippet adapted from the reflections on the Sunday Mass Scripture readings in the *I Am With You* series.

has inspired SCC members and others to become more active in promoting Catholic family life and spirituality in Africa and everywhere. Some concrete examples:

- Experienced SCC couples should pastorally accompany engaged couples.
- Experienced SCC couples should pastorally accompany young married couples.<sup>1035</sup> SCC members should accompany families and couples who are wounded and on the periphery. This is the Ministry of Compassionate Accompaniment. This includes mercy toward broken and fragile families and couples. There should be special outreach programs beginning with listening, active accompanying, walking with before teaching (the Emmaus model). See Numbers 2, 8, 28 and 45 of the *Final Report of the Third Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family*.

This also includes the important pastoral and missionary outreach of SCCs. In a pastoral metaphor Pope Francis has called the Catholic Church a field hospital after battle. German Cardinal Walter Kaspar extended this metaphor to say that “the family too is a field hospital where it is necessary to bind many wounds.” We can extend this metaphor even further to say that the Small Christian Community as a Domestic Church is also a field hospital called to reach out to needy families, broken homes, to the homeless and to those people Pope Francis calls “the margined and those on the periphery of society.”

- In parishes together with various lay movements SCC members should be united to families and to work with them to promote the living of the “Gospel of the family” in homes. See No. 2 of the *Final Report of the Third Extraordinary Synod*.
- SCCs should encourage Catholic men to organize themselves into groups, associations, or even small activist units dedicated to stopping the scourge of abuse in the home and in society.

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<sup>1035</sup> Eastern African SCCs can learn from Bishop Mario Grech of Gozo Diocese, Malta and president of the Maltese Episcopal Conference how the Gozo diocesan pastoral plan of families was restructured in order to be more effective in accompanying courting couples and the families of today.

In the synod we often spoke about the importance of proposing a pastoral journey that helps couples before and after marriage. In Gozo we propose a journey of marriage preparation lasting two years. During this course a priest and married couples accompany the courting couples so that their love matures humanly and spiritually while preparing for the sacrament of marriage. There is also the proposal of a catechetical accompaniment for young married couples, especially during the first five years of married life, that helps them to build their marriage on the gospel. The Diocesan Family Commission also offers journeys of faith for cohabitating, separated, and divorced remarried couples.

Mario Grech, “Bishop Grech: ‘There Is a Need for Spreading the Gospel of the Family:’ President of the Maltese Episcopal Conference Discusses Aspects Emanating From Synod on the Family, *ZENIT: The World Seen from Rome Daily Dispatch*, 28 October 2014, p. 19.

In summary: Pope Francis' challenge to all Catholics to "evangelize the peripheries and the margined" is a special call. He explains: "Jesus renewed his call to each one of us to become his missionary disciples. May we perceive this call as the most important thing in our lives and share this gift with others, those near and far, even to the distant geographical and existential peripheries<sup>1036</sup> of our world."<sup>1037</sup> No. 20 of *The Joy of the Gospel* states: "All of us are asked to obey the Lord's call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel." This is part of the shift in mission being existential/situational as well as geographical/territorial. No. 120 states: "In virtue of their Baptism all members of the People of God have become missionary disciples.

At the end of the October, 2014 synod Cardinal Tagle of Manila commented on the uneven press coverage. He said that not one professional journalist from the continent of Asia (native to a country in Asia like the Philippines, Hong Kong or South Korea, living in Asia and working for Asian media) covered the synod in Rome. All the Asian communicators in Rome were working for Western-based media such as the Vatican Radio or an international news service. The correspondents in Rome for Asian news agencies like UCAN were Westerners. The same was true for the continent of Africa. For example, no Catholic newspaper or news agency in Africa was directly represented in Rome by a professional journalist who lives and works in Africa and would go back to Africa after the synod.

This is a critical incident for the Catholic Church in Africa. The clear teaching is that we need the important voice of Africa to be heard at significant meetings such as the synods of bishops in Rome. But we also need the communications media, and especially African communicators based in Africa, to get the message out to the Africa and to the world.

Specialists continue to study the complex social and cultural reality of our contemporary world. In the follow-down to the Third Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome in October, 2014 on Family and Marriage it was proposed to emphasis SCCs composed of the following specialized groups:

- Youth (Generation Y 18-22 year olds)
- Young Adults (Generation Y 23-35 year olds)
- Engaged Couples
- Newly married Couples
- Married Couples with Little Children

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<sup>1036</sup> These existential peripheries and margins are people and situations in pain and suffering.

<sup>1037</sup> Pope Francis, "Message of Pope Francis for the Twenty-Ninth World Youth Day" (Palm Sunday, 13 April 2014), *Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 30, 11 April, 2013.

These small communities would combine lectionary-based faith sharing and being a support group. The engaged couples and newly married couples could consult married couple companions (mentor couples) when necessary.<sup>1038</sup>

Indian psychologist and writer Father Sahaya Selvam, SDB explains that the *Final Report of the Third Extraordinary Synod*

follows an adapted rendering of the See-Judge-Act formula which, in the recent decades, has become more used in pastoral reflection in the Catholic Church. The method is also referred to as the Pastoral Cycle. In the present document, seeing or listening consisted in openly perceiving and understanding the prevailing situation regarding marriage and family life in the world today...Almost every plenary session of the synod began with narratives from the [married] couples. They shared their commitment to the truth of the teaching of the church regarding marriage and family, but also brought to the attention of the clerics at the synod the struggles that accompany the commitment.” The stage of making judgment was led by the scripture and the Tradition of the Church. And, finally, a way forward has been proposed in pastoral accompaniment of the faithful.<sup>1039</sup>

This process also called the Pastoral Spiral is described many times in this Ebook as the process of Eastern Africa SCCs.

The *Final Report of the Third Extraordinary Synod* serves as the *Lineamenta (Guidelines)* on the theme of "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World." A new preparatory document based on this final document and containing "a series of main points to lead the discussions and to help in its reception and deepening" with 46 questions was sent to the world's bishops conferences at the beginning of December, 2014.

The year between the synods "should take the path already done as a starting point and take this special opportunity to study issues and promote discussion at the level of Episcopal Conferences, finding the means and the tools necessary to further involve also the different ecclesial bodies in the synodal reflection on the family."

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<sup>1038</sup>Taken from Joseph Healey, "What Is The Way Forward? Where Do We Go From Here? Some Reflections on the Evangelizing Ministry of St. Paul Inside the Walls in Preparing for the Synod of Bishops Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly on the "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Modern World" in Rome from 4-25 October, 2015 in the Spirit and Vision of Pope Francis." Madison, New Jersey: Unpublished Paper, 6 December, 2014. 6 pages. Under the "United States of America" under "North America" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/inside\\_the\\_wall.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/inside_the_wall.pdf)

<sup>1039</sup> Sahaya Selvam, "Bishops Integrate Truth and Mercy in Debate on Divorce and Homosexuals, Daily Nation Website, retrieved on 26 October, 2014, <http://mobile.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/CATHOLIC-Bishops-integrate-truth-and-mercy-in-debatE/-/1950774/2499484/-/format/xhtml/-/g1lakl/-/index.html>

Hopefully Eastern African SCCs will participate in this ongoing process of listening, discussion, debate, discernment and proposed pastoral responses.<sup>1040</sup> The answers to the 46 questions will be sent to Rome by 15 April, 2015 and will be collated to produce the *Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document)* (to be ready by June, 2015) for the Synod of Bishops XIV Ordinary General Assembly to take place in Rome from 4-25 October, 2015.

It was pointed out that Africa has unique challenges and concerns (for example, polygamy, the influence of widespread poverty, economic injustice, war on family life, frozen ideas of culture and tradition usually rooted in powerful patriarchal hierarchies, etc.) and these issues will be addressed more at the October, 2015 synod.

At the same time it was emphasized that Africa is coming of age and that the African bishops at the October, 2014 synod had staked their claim to a say in the Catholic Church's teachings.<sup>1041</sup> An Editorial in *America Magazine* states:

This is a dialogue that must include other voices that have been subdued in the past. The more confident presence of African bishops should be welcomed. In fact, the vibrant participation of representatives from all the fast-growing parts of the Catholic world needs to be encouraged.<sup>1042</sup>

John Allen adds:

The upshot is that Africa has emerged as a genuine force in Catholic conversation, and Westerners need to get used to establishing trust before real dialogue can begin... In today's Catholic Church, Africans have both the numbers and the self-confidence to back up their concerns... If you want to get

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<sup>1040</sup> The Catholic Church in England and Wales has launched a wide-ranging consultation of parishes and clergy ahead of next year's Synod on the Family. There is a period of spiritual reflection in each parish, and separately to hear the experiences of clergy, on the main "pastoral challenges" they encounter with families. Material was sent out to parishes and clergy after Christmas. The period of reflection will go on until June or July ahead of the synod in October, 2015. It is not so much a request for opinions as a request for testimony. The two great features of the Third Extraordinary Synod in October, 2014 were: On the one hand a resounding trumpet call in support of marriage and stability of family life. On the other hand an opportunity to express and strengthen the pastoral response of the Church in a wide variety of difficult and pressurised situations. The material sent out has this same balance. The results of this consultation will be made public.

Summarized from Christopher Lamb, "English and Welsh Bishops Call for Priests and Parishes To Make Voices Heard Ahead of Next Family Synod," Tablet Website, 14 November 2014. Retrieved on 18 November, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/1396/0/english-and-welsh-bishops-call-for-priests-and-parishes-to-make-voices-heard-ahead-of-next-family-synod>

<sup>1041</sup> See Tina Beattie, "After the Synod – A Journey into the Unknown," "Marginal Musings: Tina Beattie's Intermittent Reflections," retrieved on 25 October, 2014, <http://tina-beattie.blogspot.co.uk>

<sup>1042</sup> "Editorial: Go in Peace," *America*, Vol. 211, No. 12 (10 November, 2014), p. 5, America Website, retrieved on 15 November, 2014, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/go-peace>

anything done in 21st century Catholicism, in other words, one great tip is to involve Africans early and often.<sup>1043</sup>

During the next year the Eastern Africa SCCs can learn from the Small Group Model or Small Parish Discussion Group model in Europe and North America:

The cardinal archbishop of Paris, France André Vingt-Trois, one of the president-delegates at the October meeting, revealed that in preparation for the 2014 synod he had set up small groups (around a dozen people in each group) in every parish throughout his archdiocese to discuss the themes that were on the agenda for that synod. “I will now do the same in preparation for the 2015 synod,” he told a press conference in the Vatican.

Cardinal Péter Erdö (Hungary), who had the key role of relator at the 2014 synod, said he had done something similar in preparation for that gathering. He had groups of married couples in almost every parish in his Budapest archdiocese whom he asked to discuss the themes for the recently concluded assembly. He plans to do likewise for the next one.<sup>1044</sup>

## 9. Small Christian Communities in the Answers to the 46 Questions in the *Lineamenta* of the 2015 Synod of Bishops

Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, wrote:

Accompanying this letter, which is being sent to episcopal conferences, the synods of the Eastern Catholic Churches *sui iuris*, the Union of Superiors General and the Roman Curia, is a copy of the *Lineamenta* ([http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20141209\\_lineamenta-xiv-assembly\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20141209_lineamenta-xiv-assembly_en.html)) composed of the *Relatio Synodi* and a series of questions on the reaction to this synodal document and a thorough examination of its contents, in the process of continuing the synodal journey already begun and in drafting the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the next synodal assembly.

The previously mentioned ecclesial entities are asked to choose a suitable manner to engage all components of the particular churches and academic institutions, organizations, lay movements and other ecclesial associations in an ample consultation of the People of God on the family,

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<sup>1043</sup> John Allen, “In 21st Century Catholicism, You Can’t Ignore Africa Any More,” Crux Website, retrieved on 20 November, 2014, [http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2014/11/20/in-21st-century-catholicism-you-cant-ignore-africa-any-more/?s\\_campaign=crux:email:daily](http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2014/11/20/in-21st-century-catholicism-you-cant-ignore-africa-any-more/?s_campaign=crux:email:daily)

<sup>1044</sup> Gerald O’Connell, “Looking to the 2015 Synod,” *America*, Vol. 211, No. 13 (3 November, 2014), p. 24, America Website, retrieved on 13 November, 2014, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/looking-2015-synod>

within the framework of the synodal process. Once this consultation is completed on the local level, the same ecclesial entities are to submit a summary of the results to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops by Easter, 15 April 2015.

Consequently, I ask Your Eminence/Excellency to send this document to dioceses with the request that it be widely circulated in deaneries and parishes so as to obtain the input of all components of the People of God in the preparation of the *Instrumentum Laboris*.<sup>1045</sup>

The Introduction to Part III – “Confronting the Situation: Pastoral Perspectives” states:

In examining Part III of the *Relatio Synodi*, it is important to be guided by the pastoral approach initiated at the Extraordinary Synod which is grounded in Vatican II and the Magisterium of Pope Francis. The episcopal conferences have the responsibility to continue to examine this part thoroughly and seek the involvement, in the most opportune manner possible, all levels of the local Church, thus providing concrete instances from their specific situations. Every effort should be made not to begin anew, but to continue on the path undertaken in the Extraordinary Synod as a point of departure.

## **COMMENTARY**

This statement clearly shows the process and methodology of the two synods.<sup>1046</sup> The synods emphasize the importance of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and Pope Francis’ *The Joy of the Gospel*. Francis is reopening the lifelines to Vatican II as the blueprint for his own vision and programs of renewal. He

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<sup>1045</sup> Lorenzo Baldisseri, “Letter of the Secretary General to the Episcopal Conferences Accompanying the Lineamenta of XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops,” 12 December 2014, Vatican Website, retrieved on 20 December, 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20141212\\_lettera-lineamenta-xiv-assembly\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20141212_lettera-lineamenta-xiv-assembly_en.html)

<sup>1046</sup> The Editorial in the 30 December 2014 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter* states:

Perhaps Francis' greatest contribution as pope will be his embrace and advocacy for the Synod of Bishops as central to the governance and mission of the church. The two synods that Francis has called to discuss family life may result in changes in pastoral practices that will welcome Catholics back into full participation in the church, but the process the synods begin may well be their most important outcome. Francis is making of the synod what Pope Paul VI envisioned it to be in 1965: a body that would provide "for a continuance after the [Second Vatican] Council of the great abundance of benefits that ... result of our close collaboration with the bishops."

NCR Website, retrieved on 30 December, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/news/people/editorial-person-year-2014>

draws more on the theology of Pope Paul VI than St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. He encourages concrete examples from specific pastoral situations.

While the term “Small Christian Communities” is not mentioned specifically in these questions, their life and ministry is contained to the references to families, parishes, associations and movements. Searching within the SCCs Website we found a lot of material:

Family: 42 results found.  
Marriage: 20 results found.

The free online Ebook on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” has these references:

Family: 779 results found.  
Marriage: 478 results found.

Here in Eastern Africa we realized the danger of just affirming current Catholic Church teaching and pastoral practice as in "how can the church help folks to live according to our truth." We tried to respond to Pope Francis' call to be “be bold and creative” in finding new pastoral solutions (“think outside the box”).

First to the key Preliminary Question: “Does the description of the various familial situations in the *Relatio Synodi* correspond to what exists in the church and society today [such as in Africa]? We said “An overall yes.” Then we named the “missing aspects” from our African experience and perspective]<sup>1047</sup>

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<sup>1047</sup> These “missing aspects” and the following answers to the questions were collated from the following sources:

- Meeting of St. Joachim SCC, Kangemi, Nairobi, Kenya, 1 February, 2015.
- SCCs Class on “SCCs Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Africa Today,” 5 February, 2015 and on "SCCs Involvement in the 2015 Kenya Lenten Campaign on the theme *Build Our Family and Nation with Dignity*,” 19 February, 2015 at Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Meeting of St. Kizito SCC, Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya, 8 February, 2015.
- Meeting of the Commission for Missions of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB)'s Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Watakatifu Wote (All Saints) Pastoral Centre, Ngong Diocese, Kenya, 13 February, 2015.
- Meeting of the Kenya Diocesan Family Life Coordinators at St. Joseph Conference Center, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya, 25 February, 2015.
- Formation Meeting on “Better Pastoral Care of Marriages” of the St. John Paul II Evangelizing Teams in Nairobi, Kenya on 15 March, 2015.
- Meeting of five people to collate the recommendations from the Formation Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya on 17 March, 2015.
- Meeting of Representatives of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) and Justice and Peace Commission with Mrs. Theresa Abuya to answer some of the questions, Nairobi, Kenya on 18 March, 2015.
- Answers of Kenyan Dioceses to the questions.

- The questions have a Western tone or viewpoint and sometimes lack a Global South perspective.
- Children are seen as the objects and receivers of pastoral and missionary care. Children can also be the subjects of promoting family relationships and family life, active participants in church life (for example, the liturgy) and agents of evangelization.
- Add “Traditionally Married” to Numbers 41-43.
- Specifically mention the challenge of HIV/AIDS in relation to family and marriage.
- Specifically mention the challenge of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- Specifically mention the challenge of child-headed households.
- Specifically mention the influence of witchcraft and superstition in African culture.
- The trend towards euthanasia is an alarming aspect in the intergenerational conflict.
- Specifically emphasize the importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in promoting family and marriage ministry in the world today. One example is *Bible* reading, reflection and study in SCCs.
- Specifically emphasize the importance of the Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) in Catholic family life.
- More on traditional family and community values.
- More on “Rites of Passage” especially the communal spirit.
- More on good and responsible parenting.
- Contextualize the hopes of the document more.

Pope Francis' prayer intention for evangelization in February, 2015 was: “That married people who are separated may find welcome and support in the Christian community.” What are our SCCs doing to reach out to these people? Answers posted on the SCCs Facebook Page are found in Chapter 9.

Week Three (“Family and Social Morality”) of the Booklet of the *2015 Kenya Lenten Campaign* presented this question: “What can we do as family or Small Christian Community to promote Christian values in our families?”

In Eastern Africa SCC members focused on Questions 28-39, but we revised them in the Eastern African context. First, we identified 11 marriage situations/categories that need pastoral care ranging from engaged couples to divorced and remarried couples. To make it more real we tried to put people in Kenya that we know in each situation/category.

Then we rewrote and answers some of the questions as follows:

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- Meeting of eight-member team to consolidate the responses to the "Lineamenta" for the October, 2015 Synod of Bishops at the JJ McCarthy Centre, Nairobi, 7-8 April, 2015.

1. How do SCC members guide and accompany engaged couples (in the middle of courtship)?<sup>1048</sup> Based on the section “Guiding Engaged Couples in Their Preparation for Marriage” (Nos. 39 - 40) that states: “The synod recognized the steps taken in recent years to facilitate an effective preparation of young people for marriage, stressing, however, a need for a greater commitment of the entire Christian community in not only the preparation but also the initial years of family life.” In Eastern Africa SCCs are an important part of the “entire Christian community.”
2. How do SCC members guide and accompany married couples with children who are not married in the Catholic Church?<sup>1049</sup> Based on the section “Pastoral Care of Couples Civilly Married, [Traditionally Married] or Living Together<sup>1050</sup> in Their Preparation for Marriage” (Nos. 41-43) that states: “The Synod discussed diverse situations resulting from a multiplicity of cultural and economic factors, practices grounded in tradition, and the difficulty of young people to make lifetime commitments.”
3. How do SCC members accompany married couples in their first five years of marriage?<sup>1051</sup> Based on “Accompanying Married Couples in the Initial Years of Marriage” (No. 40).

In our SCCs Course at Tangaza University College on Thursday, 5 February, 2015 we discussed two important topics. How SCCs can supply the extra formation needed for longer and deeper marriage preparation? How SCCs can provide pastoral care for Catholic couples who are separated, divorced and happily remarried “outside” the church?

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<sup>1048</sup> Swahili: *Ni kwa namna gani wanajumuiya wanashauriana na kuaambatana na wanaochumbiana?*

<sup>1049</sup> Swahili: *Ni kwa namna gani wanajumuiya wanashauriana na kuambatana na wanandoa na watoto wao ambao hawajaoana rasmi katika Kanisa Katoliki?”*

<sup>1050</sup> This describes cohabitation or the *Come we stay* phenomenon in Eastern Africa. There are many Swahili translations, but young people themselves like *kusukuma maisha* (a temporary, “for the time being” arrangement) and *mke wa deni* (a private, almost hidden, transitory arrangement without the dowry being paid). Another popular slang expression is “UN” referring to a young man in a Nairobi slum taking in a poor, vulnerable young woman into his flat. He provides her with the necessities of life in exchange for sexual favors. Compare with a hookup culture in the USA: a culture that accepts and encourages casual sexual encounters, including one-night stands and other related activity, which focus on physical pleasure without necessarily including emotional bonding or long-term commitment. It is generally associated with Western late adolescent behavior and, in particular, American college culture.

<sup>1051</sup> Swahili: *Ni kwa namna gani wanajumuiya wanaambatana na wanandoa katika ile miaka yao mitano ya kwanza?*

In answering these questions an on-going challenge is to track creatively the social, economic, political, cultural and religious changes in Africa today.<sup>1052</sup>

- According to the *Urban Dictionary Mpango Wa Kando* (Swahili for “a sideway or outside plan or program” refers to a side relationship or concurrent partnership) or a “jumpoff” is a casual sexual partner or girlfriend, a woman of dubious sexual practices, a mistress, an extramarital partner or a person that is usually only being used for sex while the man is married or in a serious relationship. This is increasing for men as polygamy is decreasing. Even wealthy married women in cities in Africa have these side relationships.
- Young engaged couples are spending so much time on planning the social sides of their marriages (funding raising gatherings, the wedding reception, related parties, etc.) that they give too little time to the religious side and to the specific marriage preparations.

The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) answered the 46 questions in a 37-page document sent to the Vatican on 15 April, 2015. SCCs are mentioned 23 times.

Highlights include:

- Specifically emphasize the importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in promoting family and marriage ministry in the world today. One example is *Bible* reading, reflection and study in SCCs.
- The elderly and the ill can be taken care of by their Small Christian Communities.
- Formation of Small Christian Communities to support and strengthen families of believers and those faithful to the bond of marriage
- Agents of evangelization such as Small Christian Community animators are urgently needed.
- Often the Local Church of Kenya forms supportive groups to cater for the people’s special needs, for example, in the Small Christian Communities.
- In Kenya the Catholic Church have 45,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs). A SCC is a communion of families in the neighborhood. Many are lectionary-based faith sharing groups. On weekly basis these SCCs members read the Gospel of the following Sunday and connect Jesus’ teaching to their everyday life.
- The SCCs are Domestic Churches and through them the Christians and their families are strengthened to be courageous and faithful.
- *Hodi Hodi* (Swahili for “door to door”) visitations through Small Christian Communities is a way of empowering families so that they are also evangelizers to each other.

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<sup>1052</sup> Based on various research and conversations with people such as with Kenyan lay women Mary Getui who teaches courses on Marriage and Sexuality at CUEA and Tangaza.

- The Church's pastoral activity towards families, especially those which are wounded and fragile, includes accepting them, journeying with them and visiting them through the SCCs.
- Tangaza University College, a constitutive college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), in Nairobi has two courses for future priests and other pastoral workers in which married people teach about the family, family values and marriage. The two courses are "Family Ministry" and "Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today."
- SCCs are starting a Ministry of Pastoral Accompaniment of newly married couples.
- In Kenya we have *wahudumu wa dini* (lay ministries of religious education, family life catechesis and marriage counseling) in SCCs and other apostolic groups.
- There is urgent need to form support groups especially through the networks of family associations, SCCs and other groups.
- Where SCCs are a pastoral priority they offer support to parents in raising their children.
- Allow children to interact and witness to each other in the SCCs and in *Bible Studies* program.
- Both parents (husband and wife) should participate in a SCC together. This models family participation for the children.<sup>1053</sup>

On 8 May, 2015 the National Family Life Program of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) General Secretariat published a 46-page booklet: *Relatio Synodi 2015 – Pastoral Guidelines for a Process of Discussion and Action*. The Online Version is *Family and Marriage in Kenya Today: Pastoral Guidelines for a Process of Discussion and Action*, <http://www.kccb.or.ke/home/news-2/pastoral-guidelines-for-a-process-of-discussion-in-action>

The "Preface" by Kenyan Bishop Salesius Mugambi, the Chairman of the National Family Life Program, states:

We invite you to participate in a very important "discernment process" in identifying the challenges and finding the pastoral solutions to family and marriage in Kenya today...Most recently the Kenyan Bishops sent to Rome on 15 April, 2015 a 37-page document called "Results of the Consultation in Kenya on the 46 Questions in the *Lineamenta on The Vocation and Mission of*

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<sup>1053</sup> Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), "Results of the Consultation in Kenya on the 46 Questions in the *Lineamenta on The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World*, Nairobi: Unpublished Report, 2015. See Jim McDermott, "Kenya and the Survey for the Synod on the Family," *America Magazine Website*, retrieved on 18 April, 2015, <http://www.americamagazine.org/content/dispatches/kenya-and-survey-synod-family>

*the Family in the Church and Contemporary World*. The opening words state: “The Local Church in Kenya, and in particular the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), is happy to share its pastoral experiences of family and marriage in Kenya with the Catholic Church worldwide”... Due to the positive response to our answers from Kenya, we decided to edit this document and print it in [this] user-friendly booklet form. We hope that you will pray over these answers, reflect on them and discuss them in various meetings coordinated by our Family Life Offices, in small groups involved in family and marriage ministry and in 45,000 SCCs in Kenya. Pope Francis urges us to find concrete, practical, pastoral solutions for our local African reality. As part of our ongoing pastoral process, the Family Life National Office will collate your comments, reflections and pastoral solutions and give them to the Kenyan delegates before they go to Rome in October, 2015.<sup>1054</sup>

The booklet includes a very useful Appendix of “Acronyms and Meanings” of ecclesiastical words.

Copies were distributed throughout Kenya for prayer, discussion, reflection and eventual implementation on the local level.

## **10. Small Christian Communities in the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the 2015 Synod of Bishops**

The *Instrumentum Laboris* was published on 23 June, 2015 and served as the “Working Document” for the October, 2015 meeting. The text is arranged around three pillars: First, the challenges that the family faces today in different parts of the world. Second, the discernment of the family vocation that brings out the beauty and the importance of the family in the light of the Christian Gospel. Third, the mission of the family today. Each pillar took up a week of the discussions at the 4-25 October, 2015 assembly.

In the section on “The Family: Agent of Pastoral Activity” No. 72 states:

The church must instill in families a sense of belonging to the church, a sense of “we”, in which no member is forgotten. Everyone ought to be encouraged to develop their skills and accomplish their personal plan of life in service of the Kingdom of God. Likewise, every family within the church ought to rediscover the joy of communion with other families so as to serve the common good of society by promoting a public policy, an economy and a culture in service of the family, even through the use of the social network and the media.

This calls for the ability to create small communities of families as living witnesses of Gospel values. Some families need to be prepared, trained and empowered so they can accompany other families in living in a Christian

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<sup>1054</sup> Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) General Secretariat, *Relatio Synodi 2015 – Pastoral Guidelines for a Process of Discussion and Action*. Nairobi: Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2015, pp. 3-4.

manner. Families who are willing to assume the mission *ad gentes* are to be acknowledged and encouraged. Finally, linking the pastoral ministry of young people with that on behalf of the family is of noted importance.

The document highlights "Accompanying Engaged Couples in their Preparation for Marriage" (No. 93) and "Accompanying Married Couples in the Initial Years of Marriage" (No. 94). In fact the *Instrumentum Laboris* has 16 references to "accompany," 13 references to "accompaniment" and eight references to "accompanying." SCC members accompany the both engaged couples throughout the stages of their marriage and married couples in their first years of marriage.

The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) prepared a document *The Future of the Family, Our Mission* as a "Contribution to the 14th General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Family." The section on "The Family and the Path Leading to its Fullness" states:

88. We recommend that this pastoral practice be promoted and that the Church develops a pastoral that encourages new couples to become living examples of marital faithfulness in the Small Christian Communities (SCC) and society.

89. The SCC and even parishes are all involved in the celebration of silver, golden and diamond jubilees of wedding. The celebration of these events which can be extended to the diocesan levels in the bishop's presence is the occasion of the proclamation of the Good News of the family, and an encouragement to young people to engage in marital life and stay faithful.

115. The new couples enter into a process and must be given special attention and pastoral care so as to lead a life of faithfulness to their commitment through the joys, the pains, the trials of marriage and family life. We recommend that the preparation for marriage brings new couples to participate in the Small Christian Communities (SCC) and Christian associations in order to benefit from the solidarity and the support of other couples and different members of the church.<sup>1055</sup>

## **11. Small Christian Communities in the *Relatio Synodi* (Final Report) of the 2015 Synod of Bishops**

270 people (bishops, priests and Brother Hervé Janson, the Prior (Superior General) of the Little Brothers of Jesus, as the first lay voting member<sup>1056</sup> in the 50-year history of Post Vatican II synods) were voting participants coming from countries and regions all over the world. These included 10 elected representatives of the episcopal conferences from the nine AMECEA countries. Pope Francis appointed 45 members to the Synod on his own authority

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<sup>1055</sup> *The Future of the Family, Our Mission*, Accra: SECAM -- SCEAM PUBLICATIONS, 2015

<sup>1056</sup> Pope Francis himself gave the right (permission) to be a voting member to Brother Hervé at the synod – the first time in the history of synods. At previous synods only priests voted.

(PONTIFICAL APPOINTMENTS), selecting a diverse group of prelates and others from Europe and Africa. These included from the Oriental Catholic Churches:

1. ex officio: Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, CM, president of the Episcopal Conference, metropolitan archbishop of Addis Abeba, president of the Council of the Ethiopian Church.
2. ex officio: Archbishop Menghesteab Tesfamarian, MCCJ., metropolitan of Asmara, president of the council of the Eritrean Church.

There were 34 auditors taking part in the discussions who participated in the deliberations but did not vote on any final document or issues. Among those auditors were 17 individuals/single (including auditors from Egypt, Nigeria and Rwanda) and 17 married couples (including auditors from Cameroon and South Africa). Thirteen of the individual auditors were women including three religious sisters (Mother Generals of their Religious Congregations). The total of auditors from Africa were seven (four laywomen, two laymen and one priest).

Some of the participants who have special ties to Eastern Africa were:

1. Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa Sr. Carmen Sammut, MSOLA, the head of the International Union of Superiors General Women (UISGW)
2. Fr. Richard Kuuia Baawobr, MAfr, Superior General of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) and now a bishop in Ghana.
3. Fr. Boniface Mungai, Kenya (Collaborators of the General Secretariat, Assistant).

The working method of the October, 2015 meeting was updated. Pope Francis, like Pope Benedict XVI before him, tried to make the synod less a gathering of bishops reading speeches and more a forum for discussing, questioning, studying and praying about the church's response to various pastoral problems.

The [\*Final Report \(Relatio Synodi\) of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father, Pope Francis\*](#) was published on 24 October, 2015 and 40 pages in length. All 94 paragraphs of the document were adopted by the assembly with the required two-thirds vote. Small Christian Communities (or their equivalent) are officially mentioned three times:

No. 60 on “The Initial Years of Family Life” states:

The parish is the place where experienced couples may be made available to the younger ones, possibly in conjunction with associations, ecclesial movements and new communities. Strengthening the network of relationships between couples and creating meaningful connections among people are necessary for the maturation of the family's Christian life. Movements and church groups often provide these moments of growth and formation. The Local Church, by integrating the contributions of various persons and groups, assumes the work of coordinating the pastoral care of young families.

No. 77 on “Accompaniment in Different Situations” states:

The Church will have to initiate everyone — priests, religious and laity — into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. *Exodus* 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 169). The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the parish, which is the family of families, where small communities, ecclesial movements and associations live in harmony.

No. 90 on “The Family as the Subject of Pastoral Ministry” states:

The hope is for the possibility of creating small communities of families as living witnesses of gospel values. There is a felt need to prepare, form and make responsible some families which can accompany others to live in a Christian manner. Those families are noted and encouraged who make themselves available to live the mission “*ad gentes*.” Finally, the importance is highlighted of combining pastoral youth ministry with the pastoral care of the family.

A wide variety of names and terms related to SCCs are used in the document to describe family catechesis, marriage catechesis and different forms of pastoral ministry connected to the family.

Family Associations  
 Family Movements  
 Ecclesial Associations  
 Ecclesial Groups  
 Ecclesial Movements  
 New Communities  
 Popular Movements

The document synthesizes material from previous synods and questionnaires. It affirms the important role of SCCs in pastoral accompaniment of families and married couples. But it does not break too much new ground in providing concrete pastoral solutions to the biggest challenges today.

Some important statements during the synod directly and indirectly affect the ministry of SCCs. These were either spoken interventions, written interventions or statements during media interviews:

Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel:

“The important thing that the African Church brings here to the synod is the great traditional values Africans have for life. They like life. They stand for life. They encourage all those who stand for life also. So that respect for life they have brought here. That’s not just an African value but is a world value and Christian value that should be kept and transmitted. That is a big message they have brought: that the family is a very dear unit in the African

society because it's not just a nuclear family but also the extended family/multigenerational family. If you are a daughter in a village, you are not just a daughter of your mother and father only, but of the whole village that will look after you and take care of you. So that aspect of the love that Africans have for the family has been reflected during this Synod."

"The universality of the Catholic Church needs to be respected and taken into account. At the same time also see that each conference, in its own area, study these issues, like issues of divorced and remarried. See it on the local issue, and find out what the causes are, and see if couples will come together again, or, if they are separated, what are the remedies, especially for the children. Because of the separation of families because of migration, these are big issues so they need to be seen locally."

"Pope Francis emphasizes decentralizing, that is, putting into practice the process that had been started in Vatican II, by establishing national conferences, while respecting the autonomy of each diocese. Then that will give cooperation, national cooperation in the conference, and discuss common issues for forming solutions together and also regional cooperation. So that is putting into place the Second Vatican Council's decision on ecclesial structures, on church structures. So what Pope Francis is saying is more work on the local level because the church is so different in so many parts of the world. So he was reflecting what was being emphasized during the synod. So give more responsibility to the local bishop and to the local bishops' conference to do more."<sup>1057</sup>

#### Cardinal Wilfrid Napier:

There is a deep need for better preparation for marriage among Catholic laity. Having listened to reports, especially in Western countries, about the many marriages ending in divorce, African bishops "don't want the same thing to happen to us." Marriage preparation, however, should not merely be a course that lasts a few weeks or months, but a longer process that looks at how marriage should be discerned as a "vocation," on a par with the priesthood or religious life.

On the issue of cohabitation, more leniency should be granted couples in Africa, for whom living together before marriage is often more a "step" in the marriage process than a rejection of matrimony or a trial marriage. "Cohabitation in our case is pro-marriage, not against marriage. In regard to the traditional African marriage custom, first of all it's not a marriage between two individuals but between two families. So there's a whole process of negotiation. When a dowry is established by the bride's family, it may take a young man a very long time, perhaps years, to raise the money to cover it. In the meantime, the families

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<sup>1057</sup> Deborah Castellano Lubov, "INTERVIEW: Head of Ethiopian Catholic Church: Human Rights Crises Merit More Attention at Synod," ZENIT: The World Seen from Rome, 23 October, 2015, ZENIT Website, retrieved 25 October, 2015, [http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/interview-head-of-ethiopian-catholic-church-human-rights-crises-merit-more-attention-at-synod?utm\\_campaign=dailyhtml&utm\\_content=%5BZE151023%5D%20The%20world%20seen%20from%20Rome&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=dispatch&utm\\_term=Image](http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/interview-head-of-ethiopian-catholic-church-human-rights-crises-merit-more-attention-at-synod?utm_campaign=dailyhtml&utm_content=%5BZE151023%5D%20The%20world%20seen%20from%20Rome&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dispatch&utm_term=Image)

could agree that at a certain point they would start living together as husband and wife, even though the marriage is not yet concluded.” The term “cohabitation” doesn't really fit that African experience. In the West couples may also live together for economic or other reasons, but it's not the same. He added that it was up to African bishops to make sure that “this particular custom gets incorporated into the sacrament of matrimony.” That, of course, would be a major change. The same issue was discussed at the First African Synod held at the Vatican in 1994, and there's been no significant action on it since. “With Pope Francis' lead,” African bishops will have a new impetus for studying the issue.

Cardinal Napier is eager to explore the opening toward more local decision-making that Pope Francis raised during his speech at the synod when he spoke of a more "synodal" and collegial exercise of authority in the church. According to the USA bishops, almost half the couples who come in for marriage preparation courses in local parishes are cohabitating. The rates of cohabitation across Africa are generally much lower, but studies indicate they are increasing in some countries, both as a prelude to marriage and an alternative to marriage.<sup>1058</sup>

**NOTE:** The synod heard a suggestion, for example, for ritual adaptation to accommodate the stages of traditional African marriage – with the African bishops guiding the discussion. After many years of Rome emphasizing the limits of inculturation, this seems to be a time for new exploration of diversity in the church. Pope Francis, in fact, highlighted this possibility in his final synod speech on inculturation.

#### Bishop Antoine Kambanda

Our challenge in Rwanda is to help orphans, assist single mothers, and provide pastoral care for divorced and remarried persons. In Kigali Cyprien and Daphrose Rugamba founded a lay Catholic community focused on helping other couples face crises and developed a six-month marriage preparation course. They also founded a center to transform street children into productive members of society. They were murdered during the horrific 1994 genocide and their cause for canonization is underway. Their memory lives on in their center that helps young people who grew up as orphans following the genocide and now have no experience in how to build families. Such young people have no memories of the interaction between their parents to help them understand what a family is like.

Part of encourage evangelical or mission work in families is to deal with the cultural effects of divorce. The separation of families and remarriage is particularly troubling because of cultural norms in the country regarding how children from first marriages are treated. "When you see families breaking down, it is a great concern for us, especially when it comes to divorce and remarriage." Many times parents will not support children from the first marriage; the child feels that he or she has no home -- neither with the father nor with the mother." Many such children wind up on the streets, living practically as orphans.<sup>1059</sup>

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<sup>1058</sup> John Thavis, “Cardinal Napier Has Praise for Synod Process, Pope Francis' Leadership,” “The Blog,” retrieved on 25 October, 2015, <http://www.johnthavis.com/cardinal-napier-has-praise-for-synod-process-pope-francis-leadership#.VjCWxLerQgs>

<sup>1059</sup> See Joshua J. McElwee, “Rwandan Bishop Carries Special Concerns to Synod in Rome,”

Archbishop Eamon Martin:

During the Synod of Bishops on “Family and Marriage” in Rome Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh Archdiocese, Northern Ireland said that he has been struck by the ideas put forward by bishops in the Philippines and elsewhere [including Eastern Africa] especially about Small Christian Communities where families support one another in times of need. He compares these to the “paltry efforts I’ve taken so far in my own diocese” where he says he’ll be looking to do much more at the parish and diocesan level.<sup>1060</sup>

This can be applied to urban Africa. The recovery of the traditional family in society today is completely unthinkable due to the changing social, cultural and economic factors. During the synod a clear example of a shift to a more pastoral direction was over cohabiting couples and those who are married in a civil ceremony. There is a recognition that couples live together before marriage due to financial reasons. This is the case in both the West (often due to the cost of housing) and in Africa (while a man pays off his wife’s dowry). It calls for the church to help them on a journey towards “the fullness of matrimony.”

Part of this synodal process is a more active role for the ongoing 14th Ordinary Council of the Synod of Bishops made up of 15 bishops. Also known as the Post-Synod Council or the Synod Ordinary Council, it will coordinate the follow-up to the synod on the family and marriage and prepare the topic of the next synod, traditionally held after three years. From the viewpoint of Africa there are special concerns. Of the three elected African members -- Cardinal Wilfrid Napier from South Africa, Cardinal Peter Turkson from Ghana and Cardinal Robert Sarah from Guinea -- the last two are based in Rome and serving in the Curia. Cardinals in Rome are better known, some even with a celebrity status, and have a better chance of being elected than bishops serving in dioceses in Africa. But how much are they in touch with life in the trenches in Africa? How much of the Catholic Church on the ground in Africa will be represented?

With the conclusion of the Synod of Bishops on the “Family and Marriage,” it is the responsibility of the Local Churches in Africa to “prepare, train and empower” families for this evangelizing work and to identify where, in the local communities, our families are being called to service. SCCs as a communion of families play a big role.

Catholics now await the pope’s document that will probably be an *Apostolic Exhortation* that will come out during the Jubilee Year of Mercy that runs until November, 2016. Meetings now continue on the continental and national levels. Some initial discussions focused on the role of the Local and Universal Church and the part that episcopal conferences might share. In these debates the focus was on what pastoral issues are best handled at what

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*National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 22 October 2015, *NCR Website*, retrieved on 25 October, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/rwandan-bishop-carries-special-concerns-synod-rome>

<sup>1060</sup> Eamon Martin, “Irish Church Must Respond Better to Challenges of Family Life.” Vatican Radio 23 October, 2015, retrieved on 24 October, 2015, [http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/10/23/irish\\_church\\_must\\_respond\\_better\\_to\\_challenge\\_of\\_family\\_life/1181552](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/10/23/irish_church_must_respond_better_to_challenge_of_family_life/1181552)

levels. Here is the perfect place for the doctrine of episcopal collegiality based on synodality and subsidiarity. In this ongoing synodal process and journey the Catholic Church in Africa can share its growing voice and important pastoral experiences of family and marriage with the Catholic Church worldwide.

## 12. Case Study of an Eastern African SCC

A Case Study of how an African SCC is involved in family ministry and the family apostolate is St. Kizito SCC that is described in many places in this Ebook. One weekly gathering reflected on “Family and Faith,” the theme of Week Two in the 2014 Kenyan Lenten Campaign booklet *How Can We Be One?...for the Sanctification and Salvation of All People*. The meeting took place at the Maryknoll Society House near Waruku in St. Austin’s Parish in Nairobi, Kenya on 9 March, 2014. I am an ordinary member of this SCC. To show solidarity with SCCs in other Eastern African countries the table in the middle of the circle of SCC members was covered with an African *chitenge* cloth that had the title “St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Parish, Regiment Church Lusaka, Zambia” with a drawing of St. Charles Lwanga and the names of all the SCCs in the parish. A striking Ethiopian cross was placed on the table. There were 24 participants: 13 women, nine men and two children. All were lay people except four African Franciscan Religious Sisters of the Immaculate Novices and one expatriate missionary priest (myself).

The SCC members used the three steps of the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” method/process for the Second Sunday of Lent, 16 March, 2014 as follows:

1. Analyze and discuss the drawing (cartoon) on page 16-17.
2. Read the story in Step One (“See”): “Mr. and Mrs. Kivu and Their Two Children” on page 18-19.
3. Read the Situational Analysis in Step Two (“Judge”) on pages 19-22.
4. Read the Gospel (*Matthew 17:1-9*) and the scripture commentary.
5. Answer question 3 in Step Three (“Act”): “Amidst the challenges facing the family, how is your Small Christian Community helping its members to cope with these challenges?”<sup>1061</sup>

A section from the booklet on the importance of African family values was highlighted:

Marriage and family life are important to each and all of us. We all come from families. We all have a mother, father, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, nephews, and nieces. Everyone desires a good, warm and loving family where people care for one another. If we don’t have these relatives, we feel deprived. A warm and loving family is God’s plan for

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<sup>1061</sup> Kenyan lay woman Lucy Nderitu reflected on this question in her St. Matthias Mulumba SCC of Don Bosco Parish, Makuyu, Nairobi Archdiocese on 1 March, 2014. In commenting on how Pope Francis wants to examine the pastoral challenges experienced by family at the October, 2014 Synod, she emphasized that the laws touching on family and marriage passed in the Kenyan Parliament do not take into account African values and Christian values. We have to challenge the wrong application of these laws that may harm our families. We have to train our children in the right direction because they will have the families of the future.

each of us. From the very beginning, when God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, God had a plan for marriage and family life.<sup>1062</sup>

In connecting the theme of family to the Gospel of the Transfiguration, one member said that God has a plan for all humanity, for Jesus as Savior and Redeemer, and for all our African families. Suggestions for action included:

- The family is the first school. As a “communion of families” our St. Kizito SCC is a school too that has a mission to educate.
- Remove the backbiting,<sup>1063</sup> jealousy and critical feelings among SCC members and their families.
- Prayer is very practical. We should pray more for our family problems and our family needs.
- As part of our Lenten action, visit the *Amani na Wema* ("Peace and Goodness") Children's Home (AIDS orphans) located in the geographical area of St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin's Parish.

In St. Kizito SCC a Kenyan married laywoman, Jackline Oduor, is responsible for marriage ministry and a Kenyan married layman, is the assistant. Unfortunately, they have not received special training for their leadership roles. Helping young people in the small community to sacramentalize their marriages (regularize their marriages/have marriages blessed in church) is relatively easy. The two main challenges are advising on mixed marriages (such as a Catholic and a Protestant, a Catholic and a Muslim) and counseling couples with marital problems.

Two SCC members, Tobias Musando and Winfred Nthenya were married at St Austin's Church. The enjoyable reception was catered in the parish hall afterwards. There was plenty of good food and lively singing and dancing. The next day, Sunday, 15 June, 2015 the weekly *Bible* Service of the small community based on the Gospel of the following Sunday took place in the newly wed couple's home in Waruku. There was a special blessing of the couple, their home and all the SCC members.

Two SCC members, Paul Mboya and Elizabeth Alouch, exchanged their marriage vows at St. Austin's Parish on Saturday, 14 June, 2014. Their invitation card has this

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<sup>1062</sup> Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *How Can We Be One?* p. 20.

<sup>1063</sup> Some years ago SCC members in Tanzania composed an “African Way of the Cross Following Our Local African Situation Especially the Sufferings, Crosses, and Problems of Our Everyday Life.” Women especially, based on their life experiences, composed the 13th Station: "Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross." Theme: “Backbiting, Calumny, Contempt, False Rumors, Gossip, and Insults.” This is described in the story “Living an African Way of the Cross” in Joseph Healey, *What Language Does God Speak: African Stories about Christmas and Easter*, Nairobi: St. Paul Publications Africa, 1989, pp. 65-69, Healey and Sybertz, *Towards An African Narrative Theology*, pp. 243-246 and in “African Lenten and Easter Stories” on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 18 August 2014, <http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-by-season/12-easter-stories/53-african-way-of-the-cross-following-our-local-african-situation-especially-the-sufferings-crosses-and-problems-of-our-everyday-life.html>

powerful prayer: “May the love we share today mean more tomorrow. May it give dreams and wishes to pursue. So dear Lord, from this day lock our hearts together and keep the key for life.”

St. Kizito SCC helped one of its faithful members, Kimori Conard, to prepare for his marriage with Jackline Kwamboka in Nairobi on 6 December, 2014. It was a long collaborative process. Conard’s SCC in his original home parish in Kisii Diocese was also involved. Kwamboka’s SCC in her original home parish in Kisii Diocese and her St. Elizabeth SCC in St. Francis of Assisi Gatina Outstation in Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Nairobi were also involved. In addition to St. Kizito SCC itself helping in the marriage preparations and making a financial contribution, some SCC members were part of a group called “Friends of Conrad Kimori.” They met weekly to raise funds for the wedding. Then many SCCs members actively participated in the wedding at St. Francis of Assisi Gatina Church and celebrated together at the reception. Significantly it was a rare fresh marriage, that is, the couple did not live together before they had a sacramental marriage.

As a happily married couple Kimori and Jackline now live in Waruku and are very involved in their SCC. They are very active in encouraging other young people to get married in the Catholic Church. They each gave a Marriage Testimony during the Formation Meeting of the St. John Paul II Evangelizing Teams in Nairobi, Kenya on 15 March, 2015. They described the steps in their marriage preparation and their present married life together. Jackline said, “we ask experienced marriage couples to journey with us”<sup>1064</sup> -- in the spirit of accompaniment. In a later conversation on the many problems connected with the dowry in Kenyan society, Jackline said “my parents were not after the dowry; they wanted to help my growing faith.”<sup>1065</sup>

Next the St. Kizito SCC members helped Agnes Alitsi and Ben Wanjala to finish the steps of their marriage preparation over a period of several years. Their sacramental marriage finally took place during the 8 a.m. Mass on Easter Sunday at St. Austin’s Parish on 27 March, 2016 followed by a lively reception in the parish hall. They choose a married couple in Waruku – Herbert and Jacinta Nabangi as the Best Man and Matron of Honor. Hopefully they will actively accompany the new couple in their marriage.

As Ben said: “Some of our best friends in our SCC such as Anastasia, Sammy and Paul have accompanied us.” Some SCC members were part of a group called “Friends of Ben Wanjala.” They met twice a week to raise funds for the wedding -- contributing a little bit each week following the maxim *Little and little, fills the measure* (the Swahili is *Haba na haba, hujaza kibaba*). These raised a total of 62,000/= Kenyan Shillings (\$62). The meetings were also social occasions to build community.

A marriage during the 8 a.m. mass on Easter Sunday may seem strange to Westerners. For security reasons the Kenya government does not allow marriages to be performed after 6 p.m. So the marriages that we have had for many years during the Holy Saturday Night Vigil Service have been transferred to the following day – either as part of one of the Easter Sunday Masses or immediately after the last mass.

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<sup>1064</sup> Jackline Kwamboka, Formation Meeting of the St. John Paul II Evangelizing Teams. Nairobi, Kenya, 15 March, 2015.

<sup>1065</sup> Jackline Kwamboka in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 17 March, 2015.

In the West we are used to the meaningful custom of only the father of the bride escorting his daughter down the center aisle and “giving her away” (“handing her over”) to the bridegroom (her future husband) in front of the altar. This is always a powerful, moving and sometimes emotional ceremony.

In Africa marriage has been inculturated in different ways. A central value is that the marriage is between two families, not between two individuals. Customs differ depending whether the ethnic group(s) are patriarchal or matriarchal. If the former, in the marriage ceremony the parents of the bride and groom escort their two children down the aisle at the beginning of mass. In front of the altar they turn towards each other, greet warmly and then the parents of the bride “hand her over” to the family of the groom. There are short speeches with everyone praying and hoping that the bride is happy in her new home.

At Ben and Agnes’ wedding reception, there were numerous speeches by the parents, and even the grandparents, of the bride and groom. They emphasized the union and solidarity between the two families of the Wanjala and Alitsi. Again everyone hoped that the wife will be happy in her husband’s family home. In turn, the husband is always welcome to visit his wife’s family home. The singing and clapping accentuated the joy, hospitality and liveliness of the happy extended family celebration.



When I was asked to speak at the wedding reception I joked that we are starting a new campaign in St. Kizito SCC and the other SCCs in Waruku: We are chanting: "Who is next? "Who is next?" Meaning: Who will be the next couple to get married in church? Karibu. Welcome.

Some of the SCC members serve in the new Ministry of Marriage Accompaniment. Some experienced married couples are Marriage Pastoral Accompaniers before and after the church marriage.

The active involvement of men is a big factor in St. Kizito SCC. On Sunday, 17 August, 2014 SCC members met for the first time in the new House of Charity Children Home. 33 participated (13 laymen, 12 laywomen, four religious sisters, two children, one priest and one seminarian). SCC members visited and prayed for the 17 abandoned babies (all under three years old) in the home. Helping abandoned babies is one of the challenges in responding to the harsh reality of family life and marriage in Kenya today. SCC members reflected on the Gospel of the following Sunday (21st Sunday in Ordinary Time). A number of men gave reflections on the themes of faith, inculturation and authority and offered some Prayers of the Faithful.

There are many men in St. Kizito SCC. Some are leaders who are active in promoting family and marriage values. Why the difference from other SCCs in Nairobi that have very few male members?<sup>1066</sup> Three reasons stand out. First, men from lower income families seem to participate more in SCCs than men from wealthy families. Most SCC *Bible* Services take place on Sunday afternoons. The more wealthy men are out spending money. The poorer men in the informal settlements are at home with their children and free to participate in their SCCs. Second, St. Kizito has a healthy mix of many different Kenyan ethnic groups and originally from all over Kenya. There is no dominant ethnic group that is common in other parts of Kenya. All ethnic groups are welcome and participate. Third, husbands have moved to Nairobi for work and live with some of their older children who are in school while their wives remain back in the villages with some of the younger children. For example, the chairperson (“minister of the ministers” or “servant of the servants”) is a Luyia who lives in Waruku while his wife lives in Kakamega in Western Kenya. The secretary is a Kamba who lives in Waruku while his wife lives in Kitui in Eastern Kenya.

On Sunday, 7 September, 2014 members of St. Kizito SCC and St. Peter Mwamba SCC had a joint Recollection Day. There was a total of 51 participants. – 46 adults and five children. The overall theme was “The Importance of the Family and Marriage in Kenya Today.” The first session was on “Forgiveness and the Family Tree” and the second session was on “Our Experience of Family and Marriage Ministry in Kenya Today.” One learning was that the lay ministers of children, youth and marriage in our SCCs need special training.

After the publication of the English text of the "Final Report of the Third Extraordinary Synod" (18 October, 2014), members of St. Kizito SCC are implementing two recommendations of how SCCs can be involved in the pastoral care of married couples:

No. 39 on "Guiding Engaged Couples in Their Preparation for Marriage:"  
Experienced SCC couples should pastorally accompany and guide engaged couples.

No. 40 on "Accompanying the Married Couples in Their Initial Years of Marriage:"

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<sup>1066</sup> Compare with St. Catherine of Siena SCC in Queen of Heaven Parish in Karen, Nairobi. At the weekly SCC *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection on Monday, 28 July, 2014 there were one man and 16 women. The reasons given: some of the SCC members are widows, their husband are not Catholics; their husbands are working; and their husbands are just not interested.

Experienced SCC couples should pastorally accompany young married couples.

First, experienced couples in St. Kizito SCC should be chosen for the ministry of accompaniers and guiders. Then they should be trained in their specific ministries. There should be training programs for married couple accompaniers (mentor couples) and other facilitators/formators/presenters/trainers. Emphasize Train the Trainers (TOT) Workshops for parishes, schools and marriage programs. All this should be in the context of lengthening and deepening the pre-marital catechesis and the post-marital catechesis.

Two ongoing challenges are:

- How SCC members should accompany families and couples who are wounded and on the periphery.
- How in parishes together with various lay movements SCC members should be united to families and to work with them to promote the living of the “Gospel of the family” in homes.

Two SCC members, Athanus Mutua Muvua and Joyce Wakiki Masai exchanged their marriage vows in a Nuptial Mass at St. Austin’s Parish on Saturday, 22 August, 2015. **Fresh marriage**

The Maryknoll Sisters Congregation (Religious Community of Catholic Missionaries) is sponsoring an International Bazaar of Crafts and Homemade Items on Saturday, 24 October, 2015 at the Maryknoll Sisters Center, Maryknoll, New York, USA. A benefactor has bought and donated to the bazaar some African Batik Shirts, Dresses and Handbags made by the St. Agatha Joy Women's Tailoring and Training Group in St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in Nairobi, Kenya. Sales in, and donations to, other International Craft Fairs and Events in Eastern USA will take place during the rest of this year and next year.

St. Kizito SCC’s maturity is found in the transition to new leadership in February, 2016. This is a process involving two categories of leaders: the normal five overall leaders and the nine new lay ecclesial ministers. Let us pray for the good participation and success of the "Workshop for New SCC Leaders" in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi -- today, Sunday, 21 February after the second mass. Ben Wanjala reports: Yesterday, we elected Leaders of St. Austin's Parish. During the retreat issues were brought up on 1. Orientation of members. And 2. Good Leadership. The facilitators were the Parish Priest Father George Wambua, his Assistant Father Mike and the catechist Pius. The election of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) will take place on 28 February 2016 on which the parish priest will plan for the Commissioning.

### **13. 2014-2015 as the “Years of the Family and Marriage”**

The closing of the 2012-2013 Year of Faith at the end of November, 2013 opened the door to a new theme for SCCs in Eastern Africa: 2014-2015 as the “Years of the Family and Marriage.” This is part of SCCs’ active participation in the two World Synod of Bishops Meetings in Rome. Many dioceses have officially declared 2014 as the “Year of the Family” such as: Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, Tanzania;

Johannesburg Archdiocese, South Africa; Machakos Diocese, Kenya; Moshi Diocese, Tanzania; Mwanza Archdiocese, Tanzania; Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya; Ngong Diocese, Kenya (the motto on banners is *The family that prays together stays together*); and Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania. Various Catholic institutions have declared 2014 as the “Year of the Family.” In its information posters the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi includes the saying *A family that prays together stays together*.

Machakos Diocese in Kenya has over 5,000 SCCs. The theme of its 2014 Diocesan Calendar is: “Called to Emulate the Holy Family.” This helps to remind us that the first SCC is the Holy Family.<sup>1067</sup> The diocese’s 10-year report has a section on “The Year of the Family.” First in reviewing the 2012-2013 “The Year of Faith” it states: “Much was accomplished from the Small Christian Communities’ level to the diocesan level.”<sup>1068</sup> Then SCCs are seen in the context of the family that is the smallest unit of our society.

Mwanza Archdiocese in Tanzania also has an excellent 2014 Archdiocesan Calendar on “The Year of the Family.” Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Ruwa’ichi’s emphasis on family values can be found in Chapter 10.

The theme of the Paulines Publications Africa 2014 Calendar is “Family Calendar with Pope Francis.” The Paulines have a wide range of pamphlets, booklets and books on family life including the “Family Today Series” and the “Joy of Living Series.” These are easily affordable and can be a regular part of SCC meetings and individual family meetings and discussions.

The theme of New People Media Center *Mission Calendar 2015* is “Family and Evangelization” with quotations on the family and mission for each month taken from synod documents, Pope Francis, Vatican II and other sources.

In 2014 the monthly “*Mwaki*” (Gikuyu for “SCC”) Radio Program on CORO FM in Nairobi focused on “SCCs Promote the Pastoral Care of Family and Marriage.”<sup>1069</sup> This theme was also used in a Swahili program (called *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo, Oyee!*) and an English program on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC).

<sup>1067</sup> Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel writes: “Family is facing so many challenges nowadays! May the Holy Family, Jesus - Mary - and Joseph, pray for Christian Families all over the world.” Email message to the author, 12 June, 2014.

<sup>1068</sup> *Journey of 10 Years Achievements. Catholic Diocese of Machakos. Bishop Martin Kivuva, Machakos: Privately Printed, 2014, p. 19.*

<sup>1069</sup> The monthly themes were as follows:

MARCH	- helping young couples to solemnize their marriage in the church
APRIL	- helping marriages with problems
MAY	- issue of divorce
JUNE	- religious education for your children
JULY	- tackling various addictions
AUGUST	- single motherhood

“Family Catechism” and “Family Catechesis” were two themes in Week Two on “Family and Faith” in the Kenyan Lenten Campaign 2014 booklet.<sup>1070</sup> Family is vital in passing on a living faith on to the next generation. In **bold** print the booklet states: **“Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore, must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.”**<sup>1071</sup>

One is reminded that 35 years ago in October, 1980 over 200 bishops from some 90 countries met in Rome for the first World Synod of the Bishops on the Family. The full title was: “On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World.” It was the first synod of the papacy of St. John Paul II and ultimately resulted in his 1981 apostolic exhortation on the family called *The Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)*. It emphasized the family as the "Domestic Church," the place where Christian religion is learned, experienced, lived.

Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa are helping its members in this family catechesis. Education of children starts in the family, in the home. A SCC is a communion of families. The SCC is an important support group for families – for the parents and the children alike. The SCC is also a place for religious education, pastoral care and evangelization. SCCs can promote a family culture. One specific challenge is the education of children in irregular marriages.

An interesting Case Study is the St. Andrew Kagwa Catechetical Training Center in Mumias (also called the Mumias CTC) in Kakamega Diocese, Kenya. During the two year residence course the 15 couples (the catechist and spouse) form a SCC. Each couple has a specific ministry in the SCC, for example, Marriage Counselor. This couple counsels the other couples if problems arise in their marriages. If there is tension between couples themselves the chairperson (another catechist) tries to bring about a reconciliation. During the course talks are given on SCCs and family catechesis. Two of the books required for the catechists’ training are *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment and Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*.<sup>1072</sup>

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SEPTEMBER - building the family culture

OCTOBER - celebrating marriages in church

NOVEMBER - stock taking of what we have done since March

<sup>1070</sup> Nairobi Archdiocese has conducted “Training of Trainers” (TOTs) Workshops to train people from every deanery (both clergy and lay) on the theme and weekly topics in the booklet. In this way both the process and content get down to the SCC members on the local level. Research over many years clearly shows that SCC leaders and animators need regular training in the use and application of the booklets especially the process/methodology of starting from life experience (a story in Step One -- “See”).

<sup>1071</sup> Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *How Can We Be One?* p. 21.

<sup>1072</sup> Based on the author’s conversation with Kenyan diocesan priest Father Vincent Lumumba in Nairobi, Kenya, 18 June 2014.

St. Matia Mulumba Catechetical Training Center in Mityana, Uganda has a similar SCC plan. The 60 catechists (presently 45 men and 15 women) form five SCCs each with a priest chaplain. Many liturgical and pastoral activities pass through the SCCs. On Wednesdays the five SCCs read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday.<sup>1073</sup>

"The Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization," was the theme of the Formation Meetings of the St. John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams in Nairobi, Kenya in 2014. The theme on Sunday, 16 February, 2014 was: "Using the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Method of "See," "Judge" and "Act" to Reflect on Key Pastoral Problems Related to Family and Marriage in Kenya Today." After wide consultation on the real issues in family and marriage in Kenya today (*hali halisi* in Swahili), the participants divided into SCCs to reflect on some of the following topics:

- *Helping young couples/couples with children to get married in a Catholic Church.*
- *Counseling couples with marriage problems.*
- *Divorce caused by financial pressures.*
- *Advising single mothers on raising their children.*
- *Increasing number of abortions.*
- *Helping children and young people who have addictions including alcoholism, drugs, excessive attachment to electronic devices/gadgets (computer games, internet surfing, online music, social media), gambling and pornography.*
- *Religious education for your children.*
- *Jobs for Youth/Problem of Youth Unemployment*<sup>1074</sup>

After discussing the meaning of the topic, SCC members looked up *Bible* passages on the topic and then discussed the practical solutions and actions to be taken. Some of the influences and factors involved in these problems and challenges included (alphabetically):

- bad local environment
- careless use of money
- curiosity
- effects of poverty
- financial pressures
- generational gap

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<sup>1073</sup> Based on the author's conversation with Ugandan diocesan priest Father Emmanuel Katongole in Nairobi, Kenya, 27 June 2014.

<sup>1074</sup> This is a problem that affects the social, economic and pastoral life of families throughout Africa. High unemployment of youth affects the stability of families and marriages.

- lack of communications
- lack of honesty and trust
- losing job
- no children
- no prayer life in the family
- parental neglect
- partner has other relationships
- selfishness
- stress

Under solutions it was recommended that the SCC can be a support system and “home” for its members especially in African cities. Regular prayer in the SCCs is very important including teaching the children how to pray. SCC members can work with professional counselors and groups such as Couples for Christ, Family Life Ministries, Marriage Encounter, Pre-Cana, Retrouvaille and 12 Step Groups (Al-Anon, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.), etc.

One of the best ways of celebrating the “2014-2015 Years of the Family and Marriage” was to emphasize these priorities in the annual “Days” and “Events” of the SCCs, apostolic groups and parishes. The Catholic Men Association celebrated a National Night Vigil of Prayers with the motto *Good Family, Good Church* on 23 May, 2014 at Karen, Nairobi. Mwalimu Simon Rurinja, a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team, spoke on “Why Divorce is More Rampant in Christian Marriage than in Traditional Marriage.”

Queen of Apostles Parish in Nairobi, Kenya had an interesting family plan in 2014. Annually all the SCCs in the parish have a lively choir competition when each small community performs the same new religious song in Swahili composed by a Kenyan priest. It is a special teaching moment. The message of the song that emphasizes African Christian values is as important as the skill of the singers. The competition builds up teamwork and collaboration in the practice sessions of the individual SCCs and a sense of solidarity throughout the whole parish. In 2014 the themes of love, joy and sharing appeared in the Swahili song *Familia ya Kikristu* (“The Family of Christ”). Various family values were highlighted. The preliminary completion started at the outstation level and moved towards choosing the SCC parish winner in a festive grand finale.<sup>1075</sup>

Various workshops and seminars are being conducted on the overall theme “Year of the Family and Marriage.” Leaders of 12 SCCs in Imara Seko Outstation in Mwanhuzi Parish, Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania participated in a two day workshop on 27-28 June, 2014. Every SCC member is a missionary by virtue of his or her Baptism. Members should proclaim the Good News of Salvation and be active evangelizers. The church is not a building, but a community of believers. We should focus on our heavenly home, rather than earthly values and priorities. Young people

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<sup>1075</sup> Based on a conversation with Kenyan layman Steve Mwangi, a member of St. Peter SCC in Thome 1 Estate, St. Gabriel Outstation, Queen of Apostles Parish, Ruaraka in Nairobi on 13 June, 2014.

should be encouraged to get married in the Catholic Church so they can receive communion.<sup>1076</sup>

Another example is St. Jude Catholic Church, Doonholm, Nairobi, Kenya. Its Family Day is celebrated every year on 28 October, the Feast Day of St. Jude Thaddeus. SCCs participate in the liturgy such as bringing up the Offertory Gifts. After the homily marriages are solemnized in the context of f

Another opportunity is Good Shepherd Sunday also called World Vocations Sunday that is celebrated on the Fourth Sunday after Easter with the Gospel story of Jesus as the Good Shepherd from St. *John*. Traditionally this day focused specifically on vocations to the priesthood and religious life. But now guidelines from the Vatican encourage prayers for vocations to all walks of life including married people and families. The 11 May, 2014 Vocations Sunday Poster of the Kenya Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS) has the theme: “Witness to the Truth.” It has photos of an African bishop ordaining a priest, African religious sisters praying together and a groom at a marriage ceremony putting the ring on his bride’s finger. By extension we can pray for the vocation to be SCC members and members of apostolic groups.

The Synod of Bishops XIV Ordinary General Assembly took place in Rome in October, 2015 and I sought “working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family.” *New People Magazine* introduced a new section in 2015 called “Family on Mission.” Married couples were invited to write articles on the following suggested themes:

- “Marriage as a Vocation:” January-February, 2015
- “Praying within the Family:” March-April, 2015
- “Education of the Children:” May-June, 2015
- “Family: The Domestic Church:” June-July, 2015
- “Evangelizing as a Family:” September-October, 2015.
- “Responsible Parenthood:” November-December, 2015

Married couples in SCCs were challenged to volunteer to write some of these articles. The theme of the “Mission Calendar 2015” of the New People Media Center was “Family and Evangelization.”

Many catechetical and liturgical materials are being produced that can be used in SCCs like *Together as One: Catechetical Sessions for Married Couples* (Arua Diocese, Uganda Publications). This is an 84-page booklet with 13 catechetical sessions for married couples and designed to be led by a married couple (or by a married man and a married woman).

In summary: During this “2014-2015 Years of the Family and Marriage” SCC members in Eastern Africa helped young people to have a sacramental marriage in church

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<sup>1076</sup> Information supplied by Simon Rurinjah.

and helping to reconcile couples who are having difficulties in their marriages. Parish-based SCCs<sup>1077</sup> have many opportunities to promote family ministry, family life apostolate, family evangelization, family catechesis, family values and marriage catechesis in their parishes and other places in Eastern Africa. This contributes to the ongoing development of the identity and pastoral mission of the Church as Family of God in Africa.

## 14. Toward Bold and Creative Pastoral Solutions in Africa

In No. 33 of *The Joy of the Gospel* Pope Francis says:

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way.” I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory. I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear. The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.<sup>1078</sup>

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<sup>1077</sup> Marriage experts and marriage advocates from all over the world signed an open letter in June, 2014 addressed to Pope Francis and the members of the 2014 Synod on the Family that stated:

Perhaps the boldest new way we can evangelize married couples (and by extension their children’s future marriages) is to build small communities of married couples who support each other unconditionally in their vocations to married life. These communities would provide networks of support grounded in the bonds of faith and family, commitment to lifelong marriage, and responsibility to and for each other.

The letter also recommended “creating small clusters of married couples at the parish level for mutual support.”

“Marriage Experts Send Open Letter to Pope, Synod Members: Underline Challenges Facing Family, Timeless Truths About Marriage, “ZENIT: The World Seen From Rome” 29 September, 2014. Thus small communities of married couples can be an important type of SCC.

<sup>1078</sup> Magesa insightfully commented:

John Paul II’s papacy and the nearly eight years of his successor Benedict XVI (2005-2013) saw some practical retrenchment from the theological vision of Vatican II, something which, after Benedict’s surprise resignation on 28 February, 2014, Pope Francis his successor, has been trying to undo since his election on 13 March.

Laurenti Magesa, “Endless Quest,” p. 9.

Thus we are challenged to this task of rethinking in a communal search and in wise and realistic pastoral communal discernment. In various documents and speeches Pope Francis explains this new process. Pope Francis says that he is open to changing Catholic Church regulations (NOT doctrine) for pastoral reasons, that is, finding a “pastoral solution.” He says if there is a consensus of the recommendations of bishops on the local level (for example, a national or regional episcopal conference) on a particular pastoral issue, change is possible in the context of a process of subsidiarity (decentralization) and collegiality.<sup>1079</sup>

More specifically Pope Francis said: “We are on the way towards a deeper matrimonial pastoral care.”<sup>1080</sup> He recommends that we should respond pastorally to the facts on the ground and not try to impose an ideological solution based on some ideal that rarely exists in the real world.

American Archbishop Blase Cupich, the Archbishop of Chicago, Illinois describes Pope Francis’ method or process as follows:

What is intriguing to me about what the Holy Father is doing with the synod is that he is saying “we need to walk together and we need to listen to each other. Nothing should be kept off the table, people should not say you can’t say that.” If you start only with ideas and fixed notions then you are not going to get too far because you are going to use a very deductive rather than an inductive method. The Pope wants to be close to the “pulse” of real life which can help “spark creativity and imagination” in pastoral situations.<sup>1081</sup>

Francis seems to favor a more pastoral approach to the equally perplexing questions of “invalid” marriages -- couples who do not get married in church in the first place and couples who remarry outside the church without getting an annulment. Regarding the Eucharist, in No. 47 of *The Joy of the Gospel* he says: “The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.”

A key issue is finding a pastoral solution to the two meanings of the “Eucharistic Famine” (also called the “Eucharistic Hunger”) in Africa today that are described as follows:

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<sup>1079</sup> In an interview with the author at Georgetown University on 9 October, 2014, Ladislaus Orsy confirmed that “affective collegiality” involves a consultative process by the world bishops while “effective collegiality” involves a deliberative process (decision-making that includes voting to reach a consensus). Francis wants national bishops’ conferences to be more involved in the collegial process and ideally present a consensus view on a particular pastoral topic from the grassroots level. The Holy Spirit works through the consensus of these local bishops.

<sup>1080</sup> Francis, *Vatican Information Service*, 31 July, 2013, p. 20.

<sup>1081</sup> Blase Cupich, “Synod Must Focus on ‘Real Life’ Says Cupich,” *Tablet*, 5 September, 2015 (Volume 269, No. 9116), p. 25, *Tablet Website*, retrieved on 4 September, 2015, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/050915issue.pdf>

- Due to the lack of priests (and lack of sacramentalized marriages) on any given Sunday in Africa most Catholics (up to 80% in some surveys) participate in a “Sunday Service without a Priest” (especially in rural areas) where there is no Holy Communion rather than participate in a regular mass. This is popularly called “the Eucharistic Famine.” In a few of these services communion is distributed by the catechist or by a trained and installed lay leader.

While statistics vary here is a dramatic Case Study from Uganda:

With such a huge area to cover, St. Matia Mulumba Parish in Irundu in Jinja Diocese, Uganda has developed in a typically African way – with a fully involved laity running most of the parish activities. Because of the vastness of the parish and lack of transport, fewer than one per cent of parishioners are able to attend one of the six Sunday Masses; but there are 36 sub-centers where Sunday worship (a “Sunday Service Without a Priest” or “Liturgy of the Word”) is offered without clergy. This is the main Sunday worship for the vast majority. A full-time catechist leads a team of eight part-time paid catechists who lead these liturgies.<sup>1082</sup>

A complete analysis of St. Matia Mulumba Parish shows that each of the three priests celebrate two masses in a Sunday Mass Center making up the total of six masses in the parish. 99% of the Catholics participate in the services in the 36 sub-centers that do not have a tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament reserved. Some, not all catechists, are installed to carry the Eucharist from the main enter to the sub-centers. This happens mainly on Christmas and Easter. So many people go spiritually hungry.

A similar pattern is in Iramba Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania where the author served for five years, most of the time as the lone priest. I celebrated two masses each Sunday, one mass at the Iramba Parish Center and one mass at one of the three subparishes or Sunday Mass centers on a rotation basis. In addition there were nine outstations where the catechist led the “Sunday Service without a Priest” in small chapels that did not have a tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. The catechists did not carry the Eucharist by motorcycle or bicycle from the Parish Center to the outstations. So on a given Sunday the Catholics received communion in only two out of the 13 places of worship. Again many people went spiritually hungry.

In general the AMECEA Bishops do not allow the Eucharist to be reserved in outstation chapels mainly because of security issues and do not allow the catechists to give out communion because of the abuses that have taken place.

- Up to 60% of adult Catholics in Africa have not had their marriages blessed in church (sacramentalized). So one increasingly hears the expression “Eucharistic Famine” referring to the many, many Catholics in Africa who cannot receive communion because they are not officially married in the Catholic Church A serious, ongoing

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<sup>1082</sup> James Cutts, “Across the Continents,” 22 January 2015, *Tablet*, Tablet Website, retrieved on 24 January, 2015, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/parish-practice/6/4469/across-the-continents>

pastoral challenge for SCCs is to help many of their members to regularize their marriages in a Catholic ceremony so they can receive communion.

- Practical pastoral solutions would help lay people in Africa to receive communion more frequently and thus nourish their all-important eucharistic spirituality (“the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life,” Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 10 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1324).

With such a wide variety of bishops and their different cultural, theological and pastoral views in the national bishops’ conferences, one might ask: Is a consensus possible right now on a new pastoral solution to a pastoral issue such as the Eucharistic Famine in Africa with its two meanings? Tanzanian Bishop Rénatus Nkwande of Bunda Diocese comments that the bishops themselves argue about the best pastoral solutions to this issue so consensus is very hard.<sup>1083</sup>

First let us look at a new process that is evolving that we might call “open discussion and debate leading to a deeper discernment” under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Many commentators have emphasized the fact that at the Third Extraordinary Synod in October, 2014 the bishops and cardinals publicly disagreed with one another in their attempt to discern what is good for the church. The Catholic Church really has not had this experience since the open debates of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>1084</sup> The pope himself supported this open discussion and said in “Address of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Conclusion of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops”:

Personally I would be very worried and saddened if it were not for these temptations and these animated discussions; this movement of the spirits, as St Ignatius called it (*Spiritual Exercises*, 6), if all were in a state of agreement, or silent in a false and quietist peace.... Many commentators, or people who talk, have imagined that they see a disputatious Church where one part is against the other, doubting even the Holy Spirit, the true promoter and guarantor of the unity and harmony of the Church... now we still have one year to mature, with true spiritual discernment, the proposed ideas and to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families.

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<sup>1083</sup> Rénatus Nkwande, conversation with the author, Maryknoll, New York, 14 May, 2015.

<sup>1084</sup> Historians comment on the great influence and help of Catholic theologians on the bishops and documents of Vatican Two. Today there is a lot of discussion on the uneasy relationship between theologians and bishops, for example, in the USA. John Allen points out that the African theologians, especially the progressive theologians, and the African bishops seem to move on parallel tracks without too much dialogue and communications. Commentators have said that at various synods of bishops without the help of theologians the African bishops’ interventions are less theologically sound or astute.

Then in the “Homily of Pope Francis” at the “Closing Mass of The Extraordinary Synod on The Family and the Beatification of the Servant of God Paul VI”:

In these days, during the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, we have seen how true this is. “Synod” means “journeying together”. And indeed pastors and lay people from every part of the world have come to Rome, bringing the voice of their particular Churches in order to help today’s families walk the path the Gospel with their gaze fixed on Jesus. It has been a great experience in which we have lived *synodality* and *collegiality*,<sup>1085</sup> and felt the power of the Holy Spirit who constantly guides and renews the Church.

The goal is deeper pastoral and theological communal discernment leading to new pastoral solutions. This is an on-going process of listening, discussion,<sup>1086</sup> dialogue, debate, discernment and proposed pastoral responses. Open discussion, debate and even disagreement may be new for African bishops, but it can be creative. It is the spirit, process and practice of synodality and collegiality under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Let us review the ongoing discussion and discernment regarding:

- **Pastoral Solution to the First Meaning of the Eucharistic Famine: Ordination of Married Community Elders.**

Providing the Eucharist to all Catholics in Africa is a great need. Malawian theologian Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr emphasizes that the Eucharist community is the heart of our Christian life. He says that if Christian communities in Africa cannot receive the Eucharist because of the lack of ordained ministers that presently in the Latin Rite are male, celibate priests, then we must rethink our church laws and pastoral practices, for example, ordain

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<sup>1085</sup> Robert Michens explains in very clear, succinct language:

At the heart of this reform are (author’s bold) **synodality** (the entire Church walking, discerning and evangelizing together), **episcopal collegiality** (shared governing responsibility between pope and bishops) and **subsidiarity** (decentralization of decision-making authority) -- to name just three core principles the apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* says are needed in order to renew the church. What the document leaves unsaid is that the creation of new structures or the significant alteration of old ones is absolutely essential to making these principles integral to the Catholic church's life. And they are key to hastening the increasingly urgent task of bringing about full church unity, especially with the Orthodox and the Reform Communities.

Robert Michens, "Pope Francis: Forging a Legacy," *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 31 August, 2015, NCRonline Website, retrieved 2 September, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/roman-observer/pope-francis-forging-legacy>

<sup>1086</sup> See the creativity of St. Paul Inside the Wall in Madison New Jersey, USA’s Young Adult Fireside Chat: Open discussion for young adults that welcomes opposing viewpoints on the great moral issues of our day.

mature married men of proven leadership skills (*virī probati* in Latin). Then many more people would be able to receive communion and our SCCs would truly be Eucharistic Communities.

In another part of the Global South Bishop Erwin Krautler, bishop of Xingu (pronounced Shin-goo) Diocese, Brazil has argued that the pastoral situation calls for drastic measures. In April, 2014 he took his case to the Vatican where he met with Pope Francis. Recently, Krautler and Cardinal Claudio Hummes, a friend of Pope Francis, presented the idea of ordaining married community elders to Brazil's National Conference of Bishops that is now in the process of forming a commission to delve deeper into the matter. Krautler said that he counted himself among a group of bishops, mostly in the Global South, who see the ordination of such elders as a potential solution for the countless rural congregations that cannot receive the sacraments, including Holy Communion, marriage and baptism. Krautler said that Pope Francis has encouraged open dialogue on the issue and urged bishops at the national level to come up with "courageous" proposals to address the priest shortage.<sup>1087</sup>

An Editorial in *Tablet* points out: "Pope Francis has indicated that he is prepared to lift the obligation of celibacy for candidates for the priesthood in response to a plea from an individual diocesan bishop or from a bishops' conference."<sup>1088</sup> Michens adds:

There is an acute priest shortage throughout most of the world and unless the structures and disciplines that regulate ordained ministry are changed the shortage will become even more severe. Francis could make a major contribution to this area as a reformer if he were to revive -- as he has indicated his willingness to do -- the ancient practice of allowing married men to be ordained to the presbyterate. This will not, in and of itself, stem the tide of those leaving the church, but it would be a just and charitable response to those many millions of Catholics who are now deprived of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, because there are too few priests. A married priesthood, if implemented with care and farsightedness, could also contribute to the dismantling of the cancer of clericalism, which finds especially fertile soil amidst an all-male (and disproportionately gay) priestly class.<sup>1089</sup>

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<sup>1087</sup> Summary of Benjamin Soloway, "Brazilian Bishop Urges Ordination of Married Community Elders, *Religious News Service*, 24 November, 2014, Reprinted in *Washington Post*, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/brazilian-bishop-urges-ordination-of-married-community-elders-as-priest-shortage-grows/2014/11/24/1e657fb8-7412-11e4-95a8-fe0b46e8751a\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/brazilian-bishop-urges-ordination-of-married-community-elders-as-priest-shortage-grows/2014/11/24/1e657fb8-7412-11e4-95a8-fe0b46e8751a_story.html) and *Huffington Post*, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/25/brazilian-bishop-ordain-married-elders\\_n\\_6215286.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/25/brazilian-bishop-ordain-married-elders_n_6215286.html)

<sup>1088</sup> "England Can Break New Ground," *Tablet*, 13 November 2014, retrieved from the Tablet Website, 20 November, 2104, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/editors-desk/1/3879/england-can-break-new-ground>. See also the cover story "Married Priests: The Bishops Speak Out in Support" in the *Tablet* (Vol. 269, No. 9108, 11 July, 2015) including the editorial "Celibacy is Not the Only Option."

<sup>1089</sup> Robert Michens, "Pope Francis: Forging a Legacy."

The retired German Fidei Donum Bishop Fritz Lobinger of Aliwal Diocese, South Africa has written extensively on topics such as *Teams of Elders: Moving Beyond "Viri Probati"* (Claretian Publications, 2007) and *Every Community Its Own Ordained Leaders* (Claretian Publications, Philippines, 2008). He puts forward the case for ordaining married men in underserved areas. In commenting on the World Church, and particularly the Global South, Lobinger states: "The priestless communities of the South have already developed a ministry structure of their own. We just have to build on it."<sup>1090</sup> "Lay leaders preach, conduct services, conduct funerals, pray for the sick and in some areas they are even authorized to conduct baptisms and marriages. There can be no doubt that they would also be accepted if they were ordained to the ministerial priesthood."<sup>1091</sup>

A key for Lobinger is that the ordination of elders would work in vibrant, self-reliant Catholic communities in Africa such as the networks of parish-based SCCs. He admits that some priests view a new path to ordination without formal academic training or the celibacy requirement as a threat that could undermine the traditional priesthood. But Lobinger argues that traditionally trained priests would fit into the new system. "The new local leaders (Married Community Elders) become a leadership team and the priests become formators."<sup>1092</sup> He adds:

I hope that some Bishops Conferences will make such proposals [on married priests] during this year. I am strongly in favor of this proposal but I feel we have to go into some detail because we might otherwise make some mistakes and might cause more problems than we solve. You remember that several bishops of Africa were convinced we should ordain the existing catechists. That would have caused problems indeed. The theme needs to be discussed thoroughly.<sup>1093</sup>

Lobinger comments positively on the SCCs in Eastern Africa: "The Catholic Church in Eastern Africa is firmly on the path of community building, exactly following the path on which the Early Church has put us. You have developed SCCs in your parishes in order to learn more about ways of becoming a community in Christ, as brothers and sisters. What would make my joy even greater would be to see how some of you are developing new materials for further developing this aim of becoming a Community Church. Times are moving on and we have to move on with them."<sup>1094</sup>

The retired Bishop Colin Davies of Ngong Diocese, Kenya writes:

I am going to advocate the incorporation of the Byzantine Rite into the Roman Rite which has the option of having married priests. Celibacy, a most

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<sup>1090</sup> Fritz Lobinger, letter to the author dated 28 September, 2013.

<sup>1091</sup> Fritz Lobinger in Benjamin Soloway, "Brazilian Bishop," p. 1.

<sup>1092</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1093</sup> Fritz Lobinger, email message to author dated 31 January, 2015.

<sup>1094</sup> Fritz Lobinger, email message to Ephigenia Gachiri, 2013.

treasured gift to the Catholic Church, has now become a block to helping to solve the problem, not only of Eucharistic Hunger but also of the Pastoral (Prophetic) Role of Christ active in the Eucharistic Ministry and in the Priesthood of the Laity. I am hoping it will be recognized and discussed as one of the “Sign of the Times” at the forthcoming Synods of Bishops. I see SCCs as seeds for the growth of Eucharistic Communities with the possibility of mature laymen becoming ordained priests!!!<sup>1095</sup>

In another article Davies writes about the Eucharistic Hunger in the Catholic Church today and the urgent pastoral need for more priests to celebrate mass. He cites the diocese in Brazil that has 800 Eucharistic Communities but only 17 active celibate priests. He strongly advocates married priests in a section on “Some Considerations on Proposed Neighborhood Eucharistic Communities (NECs)”:

The Byzantine Rite Model (adapted as necessary) would not prevent the present structures to continue but would allow additional ones. It would not require changes to the call for celibate priests. There would not seem to be any theological difficulties. Each potential NEC would be required to solve its own problems, case by case, regarding choice and acceptance of a married priest and his sustainability. A solution in a particular case should be possible since it has been found in Slovakia and other countries with the Byzantine Rite. Even Pentecostal sects have thrived on their own financial self-support. It would not be the total solution to the problems resulting from lack of vocations in the Catholic Church, but it would make a big difference. It would overcome the present pessimism in many quarters.

We recall that in the parable of the workers in the vineyard Christ proposed the idea of hiring workers in the vineyard, “even” at the eleventh hour (*Matthew* 20:1-16). The priority was the harvest, not financial or other considerations. These “extra workers” did the job, but why had they not been recruited? “Because no one has hired us...”

The Chairman of the NEC would be sure that plans, ideas, be discussed and ensure that all those involved were there. If someone was absent it was a community concern. If someone was sick or defaulting the community would be aware and positively concerned. Truly it would be a Christian Community. Everyone would know each other as a brother or sister. As Pope Francis reminds us in *The Joy of the Gospel* the parish structures “must really be in touch with the people and not absorbed in useless structures, out of touch with the people or a self-absorbed group made up of only a chosen few.” The whole situation would encourage community-building relationships. Instead, in present legislation, such happy developments are stifled from the beginning and are responsible for a rather apathetic attitude on the part of many clergy and laity.

The NEC model would enable a bishop to provide priests more easily, in progressive stages, but also bring the church nearer to the people involving

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<sup>1095</sup> Colin Davies, email messages to the author, 21 April, 2014 and 22 April, 2014.

them fully in the mission of the church at the individual as well as the community level. In present circumstances in the [Catholic] Church in the West, the “signs of the times” point in only one direction, that is, to have to go back to the Gospel vitality such as that of the early church, where the laity, at their level, were made responsible and were fully involved in the mission of the church.<sup>1096</sup>

Davies adds:

The SCC idea is the basis for the Neighborhood Eucharistic Communities (NECs) that are related to the Synagogue for the Jews, the Mosque for the Moslems and the Pentecostal Sect Churches. The geographic factor is essential to the lively community life.<sup>1097</sup>

But many other African bishops differ and want to maintain the present celibate priesthood discipline.

One pastoral solution in Africa is local experimentation within a specific context. An interesting proposal comes from England:

It is estimated that one in 10 priests in diocesan ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales began his priestly vocation in the Church of England. Many of them are married... Pope Francis has indicated that he is prepared to lift the obligation of celibacy for candidates for the priesthood in response to a plea from an individual diocesan bishop or from a bishops’ conference... Because of the successful arrangement regarding married former Anglicans, England is uniquely situated to pilot a modest experiment. It is not hard to imagine a bishop finding himself faced with having to close a parish church despite there being a married deacon in the parish. An application to Rome to ordain that deacon to the priesthood, if he is willing, would be by far the better outcome. Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor indicated recently that there are circumstances where he would do precisely that.<sup>1098</sup>

A related pastoral solution to the Eucharistic Famine is twofold:<sup>1099</sup>

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<sup>1096</sup> Colon Davies, “A Call to Action on Eucharistic Hunger – Now! Making the Eucharist Available to all Baptized People as the Bread of Eternal Life,” Manchester, England: Unpublished Paper, 2015.

<sup>1097</sup> Colon Davies, email message to the author dated 26 June, 2015.

<sup>1098</sup> Editorial: Married Priests: “England Can Break New Ground,” *Tablet*, Vol. 268, No. 905 (15 November, 2014), p. 2, retrieved on the Tablet Website on 28 November, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/editors-desk/1/3879/england-can-break-new-ground>

<sup>1099</sup> This solution was developed during discussions in a SCCs Workshop in Tororo, Uganda in May, 2015. This could solve the problem of some Catholics in distant rural areas in Uganda (and other African countries) only receiving the Eucharist twice a year.

1. Dramatically increase the number of Eucharistic Ministers – sisters, brothers and especially lay people. More religious sisters and brothers could easily make this part of their pastoral ministry. Catechists receive the Order of Eucharistic Minister at the end of catechist school training program. But other part--time catechists could be installed as Eucharistic Ministers after specialized training. Other lay people – men and women – such as teachers, professional people, parish, sub-parish and outstation leaders, etc. could be trained and installed as well. They could assist the priests in large parishes on Sundays as well as give out the Eucharist at “Sunday Services with a Priest.” They could bring the Eucharist to sick people in their homes on a regular basis.
2. Build strong, secure churches in the sub-parishes or Mass Centers. Have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in these churches. Then the Eucharist could be given out at all services. Have a designated area of the church, or even a secure side chapel (separate or connected) as an Adoration Chapel. Challenge the local lay leaders that they are responsible for the security and upkeep of “their” church.

- **Pastoral Solution to the Second Meaning of the Eucharistic Famine: African Stages of Marriage.**

One intriguing proposal in Africa for many years is to develop an inculturated Rite for the Catechumenate of Christian Marriage (Marriage Catechumenate) similar to the Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA or the adult catechumenate). This could be two years or more depending on the customs and traditions (cultural dimension) of the local ethnic groups in Africa. It would integrate the basic elements of consent in the traditional African marriage rituals into the Christian sacrament of marriage.

This would follow the stages of marriage<sup>1100</sup> in an African context (also called “marriage in stages”) where marriage is a process rather than a single event and marriage is between two families rather than just between two individuals. The Catholic sacramental and spiritual “moments” (not “moment”) would take place during different stages of the marriage process: from the first official meeting and agreement of the two families of the couple to the betrothal (engagement) to the living together to paying of the dowry or bridewealth (that often takes place slowly over many years)<sup>1101</sup> to the wife’s pregnancy to the birth of the first

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<sup>1100</sup> In an interview with the author in Washington DC on 9 October, 2014 Orsy mentioned that in the history of the Catholic Church the German tribes had this “gradual” approach to the sacrament of marriage. It was confirmed after the couple lived together successfully for six months.

<sup>1101</sup> This important ritual is not well understood by Westerners. In some African ethnic groups the dowry or bridewealth payment lasts a lifetime. The groom is required to pay a major portion of it before being allowed to marry the bride. The balance is paid in portions throughout the couple’s lifetime to ensure that there is a continued relationship between the two families.

child<sup>1102</sup> to the civil marriage to the Catholic Marriage Rite (that could be in a Catholic Church or in a SCC) to the wedding celebration.<sup>1103</sup>

The couple usually live together during most of this process -- what is commonly called premarital cohabitation. During this period, sometimes called the “trial marriage” or “the test of compatibility” period, the couple test their ability to live together and to get along with their in-laws such as the wife getting along with her mother-in-law if it is a patrilineal society. In African ethnic groups it is essential for the couple to have successful genital intercourse and for the wife to be fertile. If she is barren (as well as not having children) the marriage can break up. More recently if the wife does not get pregnant the man can also be tested because there are various reasons for male infertility (male's inability to cause pregnancy in a fertile female).

An important dimension is the Ministry of Pastoral Accompaniment that is emphasized in the documents of the two World Synods of Bishops (2014-2015) on “Family and Marriage.” SCC members accompany the engaged couple throughout the stages of marriage. A representative of the Catholic Church such as a priest or catechist is present at the important ceremonies and accompanies the couple in the key moments. For example, in a wedding of a couple of the Sukuma Ethnic Group in Tanzania the most important cultural ceremony is when the father of the groom hands over the dowry/bridewealth of cows to the father of the bride. This is a large, joyous event of the two families and the local community that includes the elders making a careful inspection of the cows themselves and a festive meal with plenty of food and local beer. In Bunda Parish in Bunda Diocese the parish priest participates in this celebration and gives a blessing.<sup>1104</sup> Magesa goes even further in

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<sup>1102</sup> Here is an interesting parallel: “New Catholics who enter the church at the Easter Vigil continue to meet with their group of sponsors and teachers for months after their initiation through a process called *mystagogia*. They are reminded that the parish community still supports them and that the Easter Vigil was not a graduation ceremony from a program, but the start of something new. In a recent email, my friend Isaac posed a question: What might a mystagogical approach to marriage prep look like? Could parishes invite mentor couples to check in on newlyweds at the three-month, six-month, one-year mark? Could parishes gather groups of couples for faith sharing, community service activities, and social events, with babysitting provided as necessary? Surely, many parishes are already doing these and other things to support married couples. But it would be so valuable for the synod to encourage church leaders to facilitate opportunities for newly married adults beyond traditional marriage and baptism preparation.” Mike Jordon Laskey, “Three Things I'd Tell the Synod on the Family About Marriage,” National Catholic Reporter Website, retrieved on 16 October, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/three-things-id-tell-synod-family-about-marriage>

<sup>1103</sup> I asked a devout Catholic married woman in Iramba Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania what was the happiest day of her life. She answered: “Not the day of my marriage or the day of the birth of my first child. It was the day my first born son was circumcised.” For her this symbolized that her son had passed to manhood and the continuance of the family lineage was assured. As a mother she had successfully done her part.

<sup>1104</sup> Based on several conversations with Bill Vos in 2013 and 2014.

suggesting that the cultural ceremony of the cows should be combined/integrated with the Catholic Church marriage ceremony.<sup>1105</sup>

A number of African bishops have pointed out how hard it is to achieve a consensus on marriage rites given the wide variety of African cultural traditions, customs and rites. In an interview with the author, retired Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki of Nairobi, Kenya mentioned that the 1994 First African Synod appointed him to a Commission on Marriage in an African Context. He said that our Catholic marriage laws are based on Western law (for example, German law). The hope was to develop common inculturated guidelines on marriage that could be used throughout Africa. But the commission failed and was disbanded. Ndingi said that he could not even get the bishops in Kenya to agree on a common marriage rite for the whole country. Presently in Kenya there are 26 Catholic Dioceses and 42 to 70 ethnic groups (depending on how you count), each with its African traditional marriage customs and rites.<sup>1106</sup>

Today in Africa there are many John Paul II and Benedict-appointed bishops with their more orthodox, traditional, cautious style. Now Francis-appointed bishops are emerging who have simpler lifestyles and are closer to the people. An example of this diversity is the Catholic Bishops' Conference in South Africa. Following the process of subsidiarity (decentralization) and collegiality, a big question is how a consensus on new pastoral solutions can evolve on the local level in Africa on the challenges regarding family and marriage?

## **15. Small Christian Communities in the Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of Love***

Based on the recommendations and contributions of the two synods and other input, Pope Francis promulgated the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of Love* (sub-titled *On Love in the Family*) on 19 March, 2016, the Feast of St. Joseph. It is addressed to "Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Consecrated Persons, Christian married couples and all the lay faithful." This is the traditional language of the hierarchal Catholic Church. In one sense it should be addressed to/given to Christian married couples and all the lay faithful *first* since it about them and for them.<sup>1107</sup> The document uses the traditional language of "as the Synod Fathers noted..." when Synod "participants" would be more accurate. There were priests and even one lay Brother as voting members and a variety of experts and auditors including lay people/married couples.

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<sup>1105</sup> Laurenti Magesa in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 March, 2007.

<sup>1106</sup> Raphael Ndingi in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya in March, 2007.

<sup>1107</sup> In describing the Synodal Church Pope Francis says that the Catholic Church's hierarchical structure "is like "an inverted pyramid" (upside down pyramid) with the top on the bottom, which is why the ordained are called "ministers" -- they serve the others. Everyone listens to one another, learns from one another and takes responsibility for proclaiming the Gospel. "Pope Francis' Address at Commemorative Ceremony for the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops," 17 October, 2015, retrieved on 23 April, 2016, <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/pope-lays-out-vision-for-a-more-listening-decentralized-church/#ixzz46eBAb0St>

Small Christian Communities (or their equivalent) are officially mentioned two times:

No. 202 under the section "Proclaiming the Gospel of the Family Today" states: "The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the parish, which is the family of families, where small communities, ecclesial movements and associations live in harmony."

No. 223 under "Accompanying the First Years of Married Life – Some Resources" states: "The parish is a place where such experienced couples can help younger couples, with the eventual cooperation of associations, ecclesial movements and new communities."

SCCs members are involved in parish marriage ministry and parish family ministry. New initiatives are needed to help families to bond together to survive in today's secular environment especially cities. Extended families are very important in Africa. Pope Francis talks about the family as multigenerational, not just nuclear. There is an opportunity for a variety of Intentional Communities that has several meanings.

In developing the SCCs Pastoral Model of Church Bishop Christopher Mwoleka stated that in his diocese of Rulenge, Tanzania "the entire pastoral work will be carried out by means of Small Christian Communities." Using this lens many references to small groups in Chapter Six on "Some Pastoral Perspectives" can apply to, and involve, SCCs: "Discussion Groups" (No. 223); "Groups of Married People" (No. 224); "Meetings of Couples Living in the Same Neighborhood" (No. 229); "Groups of Married Couples" (No. 229); and "Younger Couples in the Neighborhood" (No. 230). The presence of parish-based SCCs can be seen in the various references to "Christian Community," "Christian Communities" and "Church Community."

Among the lay ecclesial ministries in SCCs in Eastern Africa the Marriage Minister<sup>1108</sup> goes by many names (alphabetically):

1. Marriage Pastoral Accompanier (before and after marriage). Also referred to as Marriage Mentor after marriage.<sup>1109</sup>
2. Single Mother Pastoral Accompanier.
3. Marriage Animator (before marriage like a Formation Animator).
4. Marriage Counselor<sup>1110</sup> (after marriage).

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<sup>1108</sup> This person/persons works closely with movements and organizations in Eastern Africa such as Couples for Christ, Focolare, Marriage Encounter, National and Diocesan Family Life Programs, Project Rachel and True Love Waits.

<sup>1109</sup> The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB)'s "Results of the Consultation in Kenya on the 46 Questions in the *Lineamenta* on *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World* has a very good section explaining how a happily married couple can "mentor" (serve as "mentors") for a newly married couple.

<sup>1110</sup> "Counselor" or Counseling" is a tricky word because for many it is interpreted as "problem-centered." Research surveys in Kenya indicate that many couples faced by marital

Taking a specific example, in No. 215 Pope Francis states: “The Kenyan Bishops have observed that “many [young people] concentrate on their wedding day and forget the life-long commitment they are about to enter into.”<sup>1111</sup> They need to be encouraged to see the sacrament not as a single moment that then becomes a part of the past and its memories, but rather as a reality that permanently influences the whole of married life.<sup>1112</sup>

Here in Nairobi and other places in Africa (and around the world), we notice that increasingly young couples spend most their time and energy on the social aspects of their wedding especially the fund raising and a big reception. The religious aspect can get lost. Here SCCs members can help the couple to emphasize the balance.

Following the pastoral guidelines of *The Joy of the Family*, the Pastoral Accompaniers in Eastern Africa walk with specific kinds of SCCs:

1. Teenagers SCC.
2. Young Adults SCC.
3. Newly Married Couples.<sup>1113</sup>
4. Young Married Couples Without Children.
5. Young Married Couples with Children.

## 16. Conclusion: Where Do We Go from Here?

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problems do not want or seek real counseling. In a recent study only 1.8% sought professional psychological counseling. Men in particular resist counseling and deny that they have a “problem” with fidelity, alcohol, spending money, etc. Perhaps “marriage guidance” is a better term.

<sup>1111</sup> Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Lenten Message* (18 February 2015). It is significant that this the only reference to a document from Africa in the *Apostolic Exhortation*.

<sup>1112</sup> Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubii* (31 December 1930): AAS 22 (1930), 583.

<sup>1113</sup> In an interview with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 January, 2015 Kenyan layman Henry Kiranga emphasized the importance of specific SCCs for newly married couples. He said that after finishing school and getting married, a lot of Catholic young people drift away from the church and seem to disappear. They do not feel at home in the Adult SCCs. Their parents and the other adults have other interests and discuss other topics. The solution is specific Newly Married Couples SCCs and Young Married Couples Without Children SCCs (the same age group or peer group) where they can discuss and focus on their own issues and concerns.

In summary what is the way forward? Where do we go from here? How is the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa implementing the two synods: the **ADD** the October, 2015 XIV Ordinary General Assembly on the "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World." How can Eastern Africa SCCs participate in these practical, pastoral recommendations of AMECEA:

1. Promote the active ministry of the various Commissions/Committees for Marriage and the Family Life Apostolate including the Family Life Desk on the diocesan and national levels in Eastern Africa.
2. Help those looking forward to having their marriages blessed to come to the parish office with their parents, godparents and the chairpersons of their Small Christian Communities to begin a period of catechesis to prepare them to actively participate in the Catholic Church and understand their faith.
3. Lengthen the pre-marital catechesis. Have it focus not just on the wedding ceremony itself, but on the whole Christian life.
4. Lengthen the post-marital catechesis. Create occasions for those who have wedded during the course of the year to meet for an event and share their experiences.
5. Offer more counselling services that help married couples pull through periods of crisis.
6. Provide priest chaplains in the various Christian Family Movements.
7. Promotion Holy Childhood programs at various levels to bring the family together and to appreciate the role of parents in educating children on prayer and giving witness to their faith.
8. Organize celebrations of special masses for Christian families.
9. Bring the administrative process in nullifying marriages to the local level. The National Episcopal Conferences should come up with Judicial Procedures suitable for the local context and the Local Ordinary (Diocesan Bishop) should create a process so that the Marriage Tribunal study the specific cases and submit them to the National Episcopal Conferences for final judgment.<sup>1114</sup>

Responding to the call of Pope Francis and the recommendations of the 2014 Third Extraordinary Synod of Bishops and the **ADD**, we are challenged to continue to explore how SCC members and others should accompany families and couples who are wounded. This is the Ministry of Compassionate Accompaniment. This part of the imperative for all Catholics to go to the margins of society to serve the poor, migrants and those without hope. Pope Francis also emphasizes the importance of welcoming, listening to and accompanying young people today.

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<sup>1114</sup> Based on the recommendations of AMECEA Pastoral Department, *AMECEA Contribution to the III Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization*, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2014.

After the October, 2015 Synod of Bishops itself there is to be an ongoing process involving collegiality and subsidiarity. There will be follow-up meetings and various commissions related to pastoral solutions to the challenges of family and marriage. Ongoing discussion and decision-making will take place on the local level through national episcopal conferences. Pope Francis' *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* has an ongoing plan of action that includes concrete pastoral solutions.

### 13. How SCCs Are a New Way of Being/Becoming Church in Eastern Africa

After completing this evaluation of SCCs in the AMECEA Region, I continue to receive questions such as: What does a SCC in Eastern Africa look like? <sup>1115</sup> Exactly how are SCCs a new way of being/becoming church in Eastern Africa today?

It can be understood best through concrete, pastoral examples that show that SCCs in the AMECEA Region are not simply a parish program or project, but a way of life. They have a distinct pastoral and social identity. Many members' lives revolve in and around their SCCs as the "Church in the Neighborhood." <sup>1116</sup>

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<sup>1115</sup> When a visitor comes to Eastern Africa and asks about our SCCs, I immediately say, "Come and see." That is, invite the visitor to participate in a typical SCC meeting or *Bible Service*. Alternatively I refer him or her to: A written description of a SCC in an urban area. See the story "Visiting St. Charles Lwanga SCC" in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, p. 100. Story No. 8 in the "SCCs Stories Database," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website retrieved 27 September, 2011 [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=627](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=627). Or to a written description of a SCC in a rural area. See the story "Theresa's Old, Plastic Armless Crucifix" in Healey, *Once Upon a Time in Africa*, p.118. SCCs Story No. 7 in the "SCCs Stories Database," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 27 September, 2011 [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=626](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=626) and African Story No. 488 in the "African Stories Database," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 1 January, 2014, [http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=196](http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=196). The full text of these stories is also found in Appendix 13 – "Stories of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa."

<sup>1116</sup> At the Book Launch of this printed book at CUEA in Nairobi, Kenya on 3 September 2012 the following question was asked: "How is this new book different from the previous books that you have written on SCCs?" The author gave two answers:

1. SCCs as "a way of life" is highlighted. They are more than just a program or project or activity in a parish.
2. The use of the "See," "Judge and Act" method/process has changed many SCCs from being inwardly looking prayer groups to become outwardly looking groups interested in justice and peace concerns. SCCs' active participation in the annual Kenyan Lenten Campaign is a good example of this shift. Using the Pastoral Spiral to decide on new actions is a process of reaching decisions by communal discernment. God actively participates in this process as seen in the call in *Revelations 2:7*: "Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches." The "churches" are not just the ones of 2,000 years ago. SCCs are part of "the churches" in our contemporary world today.

There are many varieties of the "See," "Judge" and "Act" method/process that is connected to the methodology of pastoral reflection and the Pastoral Spiral of reflection as pioneered by the Young Christian Workers (YCW), the Young Christian Students (YCS) and the Christian Family Movement (CFM). The Salesians Religious Congregation in Africa call

The SCC way of life is seen in the context of Irish Theologian Father Brian Hearne, CSSp (who died in 1996) writing that “SCCs are essentially a spirituality.” This is developed by George Gichuhu in *The Spirituality of SCCs in Eastern Africa*.<sup>1117</sup> He treats the African value of community expressed in the conviction of the fundamental African proverb *I am because we are; we are because I am*. So SCCs can be described as “Truly African, Truly Christian.” The spirituality of SCCs is rooted in Jesus Christ’s new commandment of love and service. SCC members live out their African Christian spirituality by reaching out to others, especially the poor and needy. In this service to the community African SCCs integrate African values with gospel values. This spirituality of African SCCs can be reflected on in the context of Benedict XVI’s words at the Opening Mass of the 2009 Second Africa Synod: “Africa constitutes an immense spiritual ‘lung’ for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope.”<sup>1118</sup>

Yet Magesa raises this challenge:

Can they, in their present state in many dioceses, be described as a truly “new way of being church,” incorporating within them in practice the facets and characteristics of the early apostolic communities in terms of organization, the celebration of the Eucharist, and the growth of focused ministries? There is still a long way to go on this path, to realize the church as truly “a community of believers” through SCCs. What the Australian bishop, John Heaps, has written captures some important elements of what as yet still needs to be done to realize the deep theological and pastoral implications of SCCs:

“To make this truly the church, the bishop would approve these communities, accept their leaders and ordain their priests. All this would be done in consultation with the community. Leaders would emerge, candidates for ordination and the non-ordained ministries would present themselves for acceptance by the community and ordination or induction by the bishop. Some would need to undertake further studies, many of which would be part time

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it “Community Discernment” that is carried out in three steps: “Listening,” “Interpreting” and “Way Forward.” “Interpreting” (or “discerning” or “analysing” or “evaluating”) is preferred by some because the English word “judge” is associated with the word “judgement” and “judgemental.”

<sup>1117</sup> *Spearhead* No. 60 (February, 1985).

<sup>1118</sup> Benedict XVI, *Homily Of His Holiness Benedict XVI*, Eucharistic Celebration for the Opening of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, 4 October 2009, Vatican Website, retrieved on 13 August, 2014, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2009/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20091004\\_sinodo-africa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20091004_sinodo-africa_en.html)

in the same way that many people undertake part-time studies...Members of the communities that make up the diocese would be very much involved in the consultation process leading up to the choice of their bishop.”<sup>1119 1120</sup>

The SCCs’ “Ecclesial Identity” is very important. This is a relatively new term in our church vocabulary in Africa. Orobator distinguishes “being” and becoming” stating that today’s challenge is to develop “a distinctively African model of Small Christian Communities as a new way of *becoming* church.”<sup>1121</sup> This focuses on the important ecclesial status and centrality of SCCs in their self-understanding as Local Churches, as the Church in the Neighborhood.” Orobator explains:

SCCs have become the *loci* of ecclesial mission and identity. The gathering of Christians in the neighborhood<sup>1122</sup> is not only in the name of the church but *is* church. In their localization and specificity, SCCs actualize the mission of the church as both “sign and agent of the kingdom of God”; in other words, “these small ‘churches’ empower Christian existence in active, Christian subjects, and this manifests itself in concrete ways.” In this way, at their best, SCCs internalize, embody and exemplify the radical meaning of the theological insight that the church is a community of the people, for the people and by the people.<sup>1123</sup>

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<sup>1119</sup> John Heaps, *A Love That Dares to Question: A Bishop Challenges His Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans 1998.

<sup>1120</sup> Laurenti Magesa, “Expanding Horizons, p. 39.

<sup>1121</sup> Emmanuel Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way, p. 125.

<sup>1122</sup> As SCC members focus more on the gatherings in their homes in their geographical neighborhoods rather than at the physical parish church compound, there are some interesting parallels to other Christian Churches in Africa. Mwaura states:

In all African Instituted Churches (AICs) the concept of church as an assembly of believers, as was the case in the early church, is very real. The church as a physical structure is alien to most AICs, hence their ability to worship God freely in any place, whether in homes or in open-air spaces. The “home churches” are communities where the spiritual and existential needs of members are met...Together the members address their problems and find themselves integrated into the households of AICs where they participate in the life of families. The homes of adherents – and particularly of leaders – are “havens of belonging” open to those in need.

Philomena Mwaura, “African Instituted Churches as Expressions of African Christianity,” in Jesse Mugambi and Evaristi Magoti (eds.), *Endless Quest: The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian, a Festschrift for Professor Laurenti Magesa*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014, pps. 263-264.

<sup>1123</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 123-124.

A Case Study is Youth SCCs. In a typical parish in Eastern Africa there are many types of apostolic youth groups and youth involvement. First, there is the Parish Youth Group. Any youth can join and participate in a wide variety of social, recreational, religious and pastoral activities. Very common are sports and music/dancing. Then there are a variety of specific apostolic youth groups, each with their own constitution, goals and activities: Altar Servers, International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), Magis, Vocations, Young Christian Students (YCS) and Young Christian Workers (YCW). Then there are general apostolic organizations or associations in the parish that youth join and participate in: Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Choir, Junior Legion of Mary, Justice and Peace, Neo-Catechumenate, Pioneers, Pro-Life, Vincent de Paul. All these groups are voluntary depending on one's time, talents and interests.

But Youth SCCs are for all young men and women because this is their core ecclesial identity in itself -- intrinsically as members of the Catholic Church. Peter Kyalo, a former Kenyan youth leader at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, explains: "SCCs are the foundation of the church. They are the building blocks. They drive the church. They are the priority. When Youth SCCs meet, no other youth apostolic groups should meet."<sup>1124</sup> This is confirmed in parishes where the apostolic groups meet on Sunday morning and Youth SCCs meet on Sunday afternoon.

Specific youth events and activities strengthen their ecclesial identity and ecclesial life. A National Youth SCCs Workshop on the theme "Youth SCCs Embrace the Word of God" took place in Lusaka, Zambia from 2-6 December, 2013. There were 36 participants including the youth chaplains and youth representatives from the dioceses in the country.

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<sup>1124</sup> Peter Kyalo in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 13 March, 2012.

## 14. How SCCs Are a New Pastoral Model of Church in Eastern Africa

Other questions are: Exactly how are SCCs a new pastoral model of church in Eastern Africa today?<sup>1125</sup> How and why is the AMECEA Key Pastoral Priority different? How are our Eastern Africa SCCs different from SCCs in other parts of the world?

A starting point is to distinguish four different models<sup>1126</sup> of church in the Catholic Church today especially from an African perspective:

1. **Small Christian Communities New Model of Church.** This has a very specific meaning and context. Although the term “Small Christian Communities” is used in many different ways,<sup>1127</sup> as a “new model of church” it specifically refers to pastoral, parish-based SCCs (usually small neighborhood communities) being part of the official structure, leadership, ministry and life of the parish. SCCs are a pastoral, parish-based model that helps to build the parish structure. The parish is a communion or network of SCCs within a “communion of communities” ecclesiology. SCCs are the central “place” of ecclesial identity, ecclesial life, ministry and mission. In recent years a shift has occurred in Eastern Africa where much more of the ecclesial life takes place in the SCC not in the outstation church or parish church, for example, the celebration of the sacraments, religious education, catechesis and other ministerial and service activities.

2. **Small Apostolic Groups Model of Church.** “Apostolic” is added to distinguish this model from the very different Small Groups Model of Church that is not treated here. Many parishes have a rich variety of Small Apostolic Groups that are listed in other parts of this book. These groups are pastorally part of the parish, but are not normally directly

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<sup>1125</sup> This has led me to put the following question on some of my examinations for the SCCs Courses and Seminars: “Required question to be answered in two parts:

- a. How are SCCs a new or different **way** of being/becoming church in Eastern Africa today? This refers to the life of the SCC and its members. Give five concrete, specific examples or references.
- b. How are SCCs a new or different **model** of church in Eastern Africa today? This refers to the pastoral or ecclesiological structure/paradigm. Give five concrete, specific examples or references.”

Clearly understanding the difference between these two questions and their relationship helps a person get into the deeper meaning and importance of SCCs.

<sup>1126</sup> This is an ecclesiological model as distinguished from a sociological or theoretical structural model.

<sup>1127</sup> Described at length with many examples in Joseph Healey, “Evolving A World Church From the Bottom Up: An Analysis and Interpretation of 3,500 Different Names, Titles, Terms, Expressions, Descriptions and Meanings for and about Small Christian Communities/Basic Christian Communities in the World with 11 Case Studies From Six Continents,” Background Paper for the International Consultation on “Rediscovering Community -- International Perspectives,” University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA, 8-12 December, 1991.

integrated into the structure and leadership of the parish. Often they are voluntary programs, services and activities in the parish.

3. **Ministries/Services/Activities Model of Church.** This is a different model where the ministry or services or activities groups in the parish can be large groups of 100 people or more: the Youth Group, the Catholic Charismatic Group, the Catholic Women’s Group, the Catholic Men’s Group, etc. These larger groups are pastorally part of the parish, but are not normally directly integrated into the structure and leadership of the parish. Often they are voluntary programs, services and activities in the parish. Some of the services or activities are not specifically apostolic or pastoral.<sup>1128</sup>

4. **New Movements Model of Church.** A phenomenon of the past 75 years is the new ecclesial movements that have seen rapid growth and influence worldwide. They have energized many dying and inactive parishes, pastoral situations and Christian communities. They have successfully taken responsibility for running parishes (especially in Europe). But in certain situations they have become divisive in the local parish community. In other situations they have taken energy away from the parish rather than feeding energy into it. The great challenge is to coordinate the new movements with, and within, parish life.

The **Small Christian Communities New Model of Church** has a “newness” and a “differentness” from the other three models explained above. The terms “new way of being church” (also called “new way of becoming church”) and “new model (or paradigm) of church”<sup>1129</sup> are frequently used in many different contexts. The Eastern African meaning is closely connected to the “Church as Family of God Model of Church” (SCCs connected to families are Africa’s strength) and the “Communion of Communities Model of Church

Four concrete, pastoral examples of the “newness” and the “differentness” of the **Small Christian Communities New Model of Church** are:

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<sup>1128</sup> In USA I meet parishes that have as many as 150 “so called” ministries including a whole variety of social services, activities and clubs such as aerobics, book club, bowling, bridge club, cooking club, discussion group, gardening club, knitting club, etc. that could be provided by a local Community Center or Retirement Home. They are part of what is called “the busy (or ‘humming’) parish plant.”

<sup>1129</sup> There are many models of church. Each has its own identity and validity. Some Catholic Parishes and many Evangelical Churches have a more top-down style where the subject matter/contents of the weekly small group meetings are provided by the pastor’s weekly sermon or a workbook or a fixed program. So you have the expression “Sermon-based Small Groups.” “Many small group programs are meticulously organized by denominational bureaucracies. Official discussion booklets, detailed meeting outlines and formation selection and training processes for group leaders may militate against the formation of true communion –or community – in Small Faith Sharing Groups.” Wittberg, *Building Strong Church Communities*, page 34.

**1. Leadership Structures.**<sup>1130</sup> In this model of neighborhood, parish-based SCCs, the SCCs officially participate in the parish leadership structures. The SCC is an official ecclesial structure in the parish. Each SCC (or a group of SCCs) has a representative on the Outstation, Subparish or Parish Council/Parish Pastoral Council. Elections start at the level of SCCs and move upwards. This insures that the parish pastoral council leaders are chosen from those lay people who are already leaders in their SCCs – thus true representation from below.<sup>1131</sup>

A Case Study is Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi. Through Kalilombe it was the pioneering diocese for SCCs in Eastern Africa in the early 1970s. Building on this strong foundation, Malawian Bishop Felix Mkhori (who died in 2012) facilitated a Second Diocesan Synod in 2004-2006. The resolution on “Church Structures” stated:

The Small Christian Community is paramount. All other groups, organizations and movements are under the Small Christian Community. Leaders of Small Christian Communities must be well trained to know their rights and obligations. Members of the Small Christian Community must be united in mind and activities.<sup>1132</sup>

Lilongwe Archdiocese and other dioceses in Malawi have a creative structural plan at the parish level. All the apostolic groups (large and small) of lay people are under the Parish Laity Council that has a fixed number of representatives on the Parish Pastoral Council. All the apostolic groups (large and small) of youth are under the Parish Youth Council that has a fixed number of representatives on the Parish Pastoral Council. But the majority of members of the Parish Pastoral Council are representatives of the SCCs.

In evaluating the successes of SCCs in Tanzania Ishengoma states:

SCCs are a powerful force of renewal of the parish structures. They touch lay participation in the life of the Local Church though the parish council where the leaders are chosen from those who are already leaders in their SCCs. The parish is now a network of SCCs that can be reached easily.<sup>1133</sup>

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<sup>1130</sup> Laurenti Magesa’s comment that “structurally, Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are capable of manifesting the sense of being church in Africa in many of its dimensions” is explained on page 113.

<sup>1131</sup> When American theologian Father Bernard Lee, SM visited Kenya he said that this systematic pastoral plan and leadership structure from below was the most significant feature of SCCs in Eastern Africa. SCCs as an official ecclesial structure in the parish was the central point in a briefing for German theologians from Missio, Aachen and the University of Münster at Tangaza University College on 7 March, 2014.

<sup>1132</sup> Felix Mkhori, *My 7 Years in the Diocese of Lilongwe 2001-2007*, Balaka, Malawi: Montfort Media, 2000

<sup>1133</sup> Rita Ishengoma, Email File Attachment to the author dated 29 January, 2014.

The AMECEA pastoral priority of SCCs is a pastoral model of church integrally connected to the structures, ministries and activities of the parish. This helps local Catholics feel that “they are the church” and more responsible (“ownership”) for church life and decision making. This is dramatized in a true story:

In the early 1980s the Iramba Subparish Council in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania was formed by electing representatives from the total Catholic population in the subparish. These were good, dependable Catholics irrespective of where they lived. Often most of the members would come from only one section of the village. It so happened that the Iramba Subparish Council members had to investigate a marriage case in a section of the village where none of them lived. In fact, they were not familiar with the families and the local situation in that section. They were completely deceived by a boy who wanted to marry a Catholic girl from one of the outstanding local families. They later learned that the boy already had a "second" wife in another village.

From then on the leaders of the Iramba Subparish Council said they needed a representative from each geographical section following the SCC plan. This SCC-elected member would be more familiar with the pastoral situation such as marriages in his or her local section. This was a *critical incident* in the pastoral life of the Iramba Subparish Council that led to a new praxis of having the geographically-based SCC representatives form the council.<sup>1134</sup>

Over the years parishes and dioceses in Eastern Africa have struggled with how to practically express SCCs as a new model of church. A number of parishes have “Membership Registration Forms” for new Catholics joining the parish. The form lists a whole variety of parish groups with instructions such as: “Mark x if you would like to join the group or mark a tick if you are already a member.” If SCCs are listed alongside all the other parish associations, organizations, sodalities and groups, it shows that SCCs are not understood as unique and different from all these other optional parish groups. The statistical forms that dioceses fill out for Vatican offices have traditionally not had a place to indicate the number of SCCs in a parish and the numbers of SCC leaders under the types of lay ministries. Now this has changed to include the SCCs information.

In August 2011 I visited a parish in Nairobi Archdiocese that has a large colorful chart of the parish structure on the wall. Each major commission/committee has its own box and links to the overall diagram such as the Liturgy Commission and the Justice and Peace Commission. The same with the parish associations, organizations or sodalities such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Charismatic Renewal Group. I was surprised that one box was marked “SCCs -- Legion of Mary.” By linking SCCs with a popular parish association or sodality, the local parish leaders mixed two models of church and missed the newness of SCCs: how they are the basic unit/basic foundation of the Local Church to which every Catholic should belong and so are structurally different from voluntary parish associations, organizations or sodalities.

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<sup>1134</sup> Radoli, *How Local is the Local Church*, p. 64 and Healey, *Towards an African*, p. 144.

SCCs in Eastern Africa are often referred to as a "New Way of Being Local Church." This calls for a new way of thinking, a new type of leadership, a new style of pastoral ministry, a new structure and a new language and terminology. So we have expressions such as "New Vision of Church," "New Mentality of Church," "New Thinking of Church" and "New Meaning of Church." This "newness," of course, applies to the SCC, to the outstation, to the subparish, to the parish and to the diocese. Ndingi says: "We are trying to awaken a new mentality rather than just setting up structures... When a parish is built on SCCs, there are no spectators. All are players."<sup>1135</sup>

This can be illustrated in these two stories:

In February, 1999 I participated in a "Seminar on Missionary Awareness" at the Spiritan Missionary Seminary outside of Arusha, Tanzania. One speaker explained how the pope is the main person responsible for mission in the universal church, the bishop the main person responsible for mission in the diocese, the pastor the main person responsible for mission in the parish and the chairperson the main person responsible for mission in the Small Christian Community (SCC). At this point I politely disagreed, saying that this pyramid or vertical style of authority, responsibility and decision making is just the opposite of how the SCCs are a new model of church from the bottom up. It is not the chairperson but all the SCC members together who are jointly responsible for mission and different forms of outreach.<sup>1136</sup>

Traveling around the world I'm sure that I surprise many priests (and parishioners alike) when I say that in Eastern Africa we find it "easy" to preach on Sunday if we use the "SCC process or method." During the week the priest (or homilist/preacher/teacher on Sunday) participates in various SCC meetings of lay people in his parish that read and reflect on, the Gospel of the following Sunday.

Then the Sunday Parish Eucharist or "Sunday Service Without a Priest" becomes the "communion of the SCCs." During his homily the priest (or preacher) reflects back the experiences, insights and applications that he or she has learned from the *Bible* reflections that have taken place in the individual SCC meetings. Much of the content of his or her homily come from the life experiences and *Bible*-life connections of SCC members that members of the Sunday congregation can easily relate to and feel are relevant to their lives.<sup>1137 1138</sup>

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<sup>1135</sup> Raphael Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki, "Talk at the Book Launch of *Small Christian Communities: Capturing the New Moment*," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2007, p. 1.

<sup>1136</sup> "SCCs as a New Way of Being Local Church," African Story No. 357 in the "African Stories Database", African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 21 July 2011, [http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=588](http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=588)

<sup>1137</sup> Reflection on "The Small Christian Communities Way of Being Church in Preaching" adapted from Joseph Healey, "Small is Beautiful," *Tablet*, 4 November, 2004.

<sup>1138</sup> The Sunday Eucharist at St. Thomas More, the Catholic Chapel and Center at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, USA incorporates suggestions from the 14 Small

There are concrete examples of this approach. One priest in Bariadi Parish in Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania tried to visit three SCCs during the middle of the week. By listening carefully to the SCC members' reflections on the Scripture readings he found that over half of his Sunday homily was already "written" for him. The priests in St. Theresa's Parish, Eastleigh in Nairobi Archdiocese joined with lay members of the parish to use the Lumko "Group Response Method" of Gospel Sharing to prepare their Sunday homilies together.<sup>1139</sup> A deacon in Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, South B in Nairobi Archdiocese said that he "decided to join St. Clara SCC in Hazina Estate in order to prepare my homilies based on the sharing of life experiences of the people."<sup>1140 1141</sup>

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Church Communities of students and staff that meet during the previous week and reflect on the First Reading (*Old Testament*) and the Gospel and try to apply the Word of God to our daily lives. Guidelines for the SCC Facilitators state: "The facilitator summarizes the discussion for possible inclusion in the Sunday liturgy on the back of the attendance sheet and leaves it in a box at the reception desk."

<sup>1139</sup> In traveling in the USA I hear feedback on Sunday homilies that are sometimes very good and sometimes very bad. The "bad" homilies result from the preacher being too academic, being too aloof/distant from the parishioners, too focused on the Scripture readings alone, not connecting the Sunday Readings to daily life, having a foreign accent that is hard to understand, etc. Much of this could be avoided if American preachers followed the participatory styles/approaches used in Eastern Africa.

<sup>1140</sup> Ghanaian Missionary of Africa Deacon Damana Fidelis Kpeenbata, MAfr, "An Insertion Experience of Weekly Bible Sharing and Prayer in St. Clara Small Christian Community in Hazina, South B," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, March, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>1141</sup> An American diocesan parish priest in Hartford Archdiocese, Connecticut, USA states:

I began meeting every Saturday morning with five Catholic laymen from 6:30 a.m. -- 8:00 a.m. to reflect upon the gospel of the upcoming Sunday and to connect it with our daily lives. We have been meeting now for over three months and are ready to open the group to any man in our parish. To a man we have all found it very enriching. We talk with each other about the concrete experiences of our lives and about what our faith has to do with them. A bond of trust is growing within the group and we are eager to draw other men into it. On a personal note, let me say, I have always guarded my Saturday mornings as a special time to prepare my homily for the weekend, reading commentaries and praying with the Scriptures. So, at first, I hesitated to make the commitment on Saturdays. However, it is the best homily preparation I have ever found in my 44 years of priestly ministry. The shared faith of these men has enriched my preaching significantly.

Joseph Donnelly, "Men of All Ages Need to Talk about God, *Gatherings*, Fall, 2015 (Vol. 27, No. 2), pps. 5-7.

An American diocesan priest in Boston Archdiocese, Boston, USA meets with a Men's Spirituality Group on Saturday mornings. As they read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday he suggests that the laymen ask themselves three questions. What does the reading mean to you

And what of the content of the Sunday Homily. It is basically the same as the midweek *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Life Connections Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs)*: to connect or link the Sunday Readings to our daily lives.<sup>1142</sup> A good preparation for the Sunday Eucharist is to reflect on the readings ahead of time especially in t SCC Meetings that takes place in the middle of the week.

A good Case Study is the Gospel of *John 10: 27-30* for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year C. A priest in Meru Diocese, Kenya participated in the *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* of a SCC deanery group during a SCCs Workshop on a Tuesday afternoon. Then he participated in the *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* of Blessed Joseph Allamano SCC in St. Massimo Parish on Wednesday afternoon. Both SCCs reflected on the exact same scripture verse: “My sheep hear my voice” (*John 10: 27*). The SCC members’ comments were exactly the same. On Sunday mornings instead of going to church to “hear” Jesus’ voice, Catholics follow other voices: women (shopping), men (going to bars) and youth (social media on their smartphones). In rural areas some people go to their farms especially during the planting and harvest seasons. Drawing on these comments the title of the priest’s Sunday Homily became “Whose Voice Do You Hear on Sunday Morning?”<sup>1143</sup>

The SCC leaders have special names in the spirit of servant leadership. Various SCCs in Eastern Africa used “coordinator.” When Mwoleka helped found SCCs in Tanzania in the 1970s, he urged dropping government-related and church-related hierarchical names connected with power, rank and prestige such as “chairperson.” He recommended *mkolezaji* that is the Swahili translation of animator. Similarly in Zambia SCCs use the Bemba (the largest ethnic group in the country) term meaning animator. Some SCCs in Kenya prefer *mtumishi* (one who serves others) or *mhudumu* (one who ministers to others). Each ministry emphasizes service to the community and the overall leader is the “servant of the servants.” This leads to team ministry and community ministry.

An expression of this new type of leadership is how decisions are made from below through the SCC rather than from the top through the priest and parish structure. If someone dies the news goes first to the SCC leaders who then go to the priest or appropriate parish

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personally? What does the reading mean to you in your family as a husband and father? What does the reading mean to you in evangelizing the world? The answers help the priest with ideas for his homily the following day.

John in a conversation with the author in Boston, 19 November, 2015.

<sup>1142</sup> Evelyn, a lay parishioner on Kenya, said: “When I go to Church I expect the priest to help me connect my Sunday prayer to the rest of my week at work.” Canadian Quebec Missionary Father Roland Laneuville, PME explains: “If the Bible readings are to be relevant today, they must shed light on what has been lived during the week and encourage the faithful to act during the coming week... To make the link between the Word of God and the ‘today’ reality – as Jesus did—is what Evelyn is looking for; this is the purpose of a good homily.” Roland Laneuville, “Where the Bible and the Media Meet,” *National Mirror* (September, 2013), p. 12.

<sup>1143</sup> A similar homily could be given in the USA where on Sunday mornings Catholics sleep in, read the Sunday newspapers, go to the Mall, play golf, drive to children’s sports activities and even watch sports on TV (with the time difference many European soccer games start on Sunday morning).

office and the appropriate funeral service is arranged. The same for requests for financial help. If someone has a request for medicine for a sick person, school fees, a special need, a loan for any emergency, etc. the request is first discussed in the SCC. If the SCC treasury can be used, all the better. Otherwise the needy person takes a recommendation letter written by the SCC leaders to the priest or appropriate parish office. Requests that go directly to the priest or parish office are sent back for consultation first in the SCC.<sup>1144</sup> This results in a great saving of the priest, catechist and parish secretary's time and energy. Another example of this leadership from below style is the plan for African youth to participate in the periodic World Youth Days around the world. Before applying to his or her diocese for approval, first the youth have to get a recommendation letter from their SCC.

Another example of SCCs responding to the contemporary signs of the times in Eastern Africa is the increasing role of women in leadership. This is also reflected in civil society where women have a certain percentage of seats in Parliament in various African governments. Paul Njuki presents this interesting 2013 Case Study:

Today I assisted in presiding over the elections of new officials at St. Anthony Abbot Small Christian Community in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Nairobi. The elections of the officials were mainly unanimous, with the top leadership (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) going to women while the men took up assistant positions. It is interesting how the basic church in the neighborhood continues to take shape with women at the center stage of leadership. The policy guidelines for Parish Pastoral Council Elections at Our Lady of Guadalupe are explicit on the election criteria on gender representation at the ratio of 2/3. This means that out of the executive committee of five, men and women should be represented at the ratio of 2 to 3. If men are two, women are three. If women are three, men are two.<sup>1145</sup>

**2. Sacraments.** Ideally the Sunday Eucharist in the outstation, subparish or parish is a communion of small communities that have met during the middle of the week to reflect on the readings of the following Sunday. SCCs have the responsibility to recommend its members to receive the sacraments. Catholic parents wanting their child to be baptized need a letter of recommendation from their SCC. Some of the preparation for the sacraments takes place in the SCC itself, for example, preparing children for First Communion. The SCCs in Moshi Diocese, Tanzania are known for reconciling married couples who have disputes.

In some parishes in Tanzania adults interested in becoming Catholics (called "Inquirers") first pass through the SCC in their neighborhood/geographical area that submits the request forms for the Baptism of adults to the parish office. Some SCCs have started the Ministry of Pastoral Accompaniment in the Adult Catechumenate or the Adult

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<sup>1144</sup> Priests and other pastoral workers in Africa can be overwhelmed by requests for financial help (medicine, school fees, bus fares, burial expenses, etc.). One has to deal creatively, yet compassionately, with the "maombi mentality" (the Swahili saying *kuomba siyo vibaya – to ask is not bad*). One solution is that all requests from everyone pass through the SCC first.

<sup>1145</sup> Paul Njuki, Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, retrieved 17 April, 2013. <https://www.face-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

Catechumenate Accompanier. A catechumen chooses a SCC member to "accompany" him or her through the stages (steps and rites) of the RCIA. The catechumen is invited to participate in all the activities of the SCC. Personal relationships and friendships are an important part of helping people who are preparing for Baptism to feel "at home" in their local Christian community. Growth in faith is an experience of living in a believing community. In Rulenge Diocese Mwoleka emphasized the saying that *the faith is caught more than taught* meaning that regular participation in SCC meetings and activities especially sharing the life of the SCCs is more important than formal instruction classes. Sometimes the whole SCC accompanies "its" catechumens – an example of community ministry. Here all the SCC members are responsible for the spiritual and pastoral life of their own small community. This approach is closely related to the African values of community, joint responsibility, togetherness and sharing.<sup>1146</sup>

“Paul’s Two-Year Spiritual Journey” is a real life story adapted to illustrate practical evangelization. This story took place in Iramba Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania. It tells the story of Maro, a 79-year old Mgoreme elder who decides to become a Catholic. He joins the two-year Adult Catechumenate. Part of the story goes:

Maro never missed the weekly meeting of the Small Christian Community in Kenyamonta Town. He chose Petro Mosi, an old Catholic friend in the SCC, to be his companion and helper during the two-year Adult Catechumenate. The way the Christians shared together in the SCC Maro agreed that the Catholic faith was "caught more than taught. The official "Rite of Initiation into the Catechumenate" took place the following March. At this time Maro formally chose his new name Paul. He told everyone how proud he was to be preparing to become a Christian.

Paul started the second year of the adult catechumenate along with 44 other people in the parish. The twice-weekly catechism classes continued and he learned a lot about the *New Testament* and the mass. He particularly like the stories of Jesus Christ's miracles and parables. Paul's eyes were too bad for regular reading but he enjoyed the weekly *Bible* Sharing in his Kenyamonta Town SCC.

All together 38 catechumens prepared to be baptized during the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night ranging from 81-year-old Paul Maro to 15-year-old Pamela Owino. Everyone praised Paul for persevering during his two-year spiritual journey. As the water was poured over his head Paul smiled and said to himself, "Yes, now I am a Christian too." After the adult Baptisms his wife Theresa came up for the blessing of their marriage. As the two of them received communion together for the first time the beaming faces of all of Paul's children and grandchildren were wet with happy tears.<sup>1147</sup>

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<sup>1146</sup> “Faith ‘Caught’ Rather Than Taught,” Story No. 114 in the “African Stories Database”, African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 21 July 2011, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=64](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=64)

<sup>1147</sup> The full story is printed in Joseph Healey, *What Language Does God Speak*, pp. 53-57, Healey and Sybertz, *Towards An African Narrative Theology*, pp. 368-371 and in “African Lenten and Easter Stories” on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 18 August 2014, <http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-by-season/12-easter-stories/44-pauls-two-year-spiritual-journey.html>

More and of the sacraments are celebrated in the SCC itself especially the Eucharist, the Reconciliation, Baptism, Sacrament of the Sick and Matrimony. Thus the SCC is the increasing place (*locus*) of ecclesial identity, ecclesial life and activity. Here is a description by a Malawian seminarian of the celebration of marriage at the SCC level in Namitembo Parish in Zomba Diocese, Malawi:

During my parish pastoral experience in 2005 I attended the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony in a SCC. As a way of implementing the vision of this new way of being church, the parish priest of Namitembo gave a provision that those wishing to wed can choose to do so either in the parish church as had been the practice or in their respective SCCs. When a member of a particular SCC intends to marry, registration takes place in that SCC and the marriage counseling sessions are done there. The parish Marriage Counselors work together with the counselors of that particular SCC. The announcement of the marriage bands is done both at the parish and at that SCC every week they meet.

On the actual day that the sacrament is celebrated, the mass takes place at the house of the bride since the local ethnic group society is matrilineal. It is a mass just like at any other SCC meeting. During the sharing of the Word of God, the members emphasize sharing their life experiences in their families with the view of advising the ones to marry of the challenges of the commitment they are about to make. The priest also shares the Word of God from his perspective. When it is time to exchange marital vows, the priest invites members from each side of the couple to stand behind their relative. Parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and all who are related to them stand behind them to witness and give their assent to the event.

This practice restores the communitarian aspect of the African family that is vital. By registering the marriage at that SCC, involving counselors of that SCC, announcing marriage bands at that SCC and celebrating the sacrament itself at that SCC, the local community is involved. There is greater participation of relatives and this makes them feel part and parcel of the process. Advice given during the sharing of the Word of God is based on their personal experiences and this carries more value. Since the SCC knows the strengths and weakness of the new couple, they are at a better position to give relevant advice. The local community is no longer passive witnesses or spectators but active players.<sup>1148</sup>

The whole process of marriage can be celebrated in the SCC, not just the official sacrament itself. There can be liturgical and para-liturgical services at various stages like the offering and receiving of the dowry or bridewealth, the ceremonial meal of the two families, the farewell at the bride's home, the accompaniment of the bridal party and the welcoming of the bride and groom.

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<sup>1148</sup> Samuel Satiele, SMM, "Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage at the Small Christian Community (SCC) Level in Malawi," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 21 July, 2011, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/malawi/55-malawi.html>

Davies emphasizes:

In terms of inculturation the SCC is an excellent venue for celebrating the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Marriage where many African customs can so easily complement and express the Catholic value of community. In rural areas, having the sacrament celebrated in the home, in the same place as the traditional wedding feast. is a possibility which would also solve the practical and disrupting difficulty of moving the community from church to home...If the religious dimension of Christian marriage is safeguarded, it would be advantageous to have the religious and the community celebration in the same place and at the same time.<sup>1149</sup>

SCC members participate in the Ordinations and Final Vows ceremonies that take place in parishes and religious houses of priests, brothers and sisters who with their families belong to these small communities. Sometimes the SCC accompanies the person in the ceremony along with the parents and other family members. Sometimes the SCC has a celebration for the person who is honored.

A Case Study is the Priestly Ordination of Father Michael Mungai Ndung'u, SJ in St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Kangemi in Nairobi Archdiocese on 31 July, 2011. Originally from Gatundu Parish, Ndung'u spent four months doing pastoral work as a deacon in Kangemi. He became familiar with the 28 SCCs in the parish. So these SCCs were an important part of the ordination ceremony presided over by Bishop Rodrigo Mejia (originally from Colombia in South America and formerly the Bishop of Soddo, Ethiopia) who himself helped to start many of these SCCs when he worked in the parish in the 1980s.

During the ceremony SCC members read the First and Second Readings. At the end of the mass the bishop gave the leader of each of the 28 SCCs a candle. Then representatives of these SCCs spoke briefly at the reception. They mentioned how much they appreciated that the newly ordained priest had worked with the SCCs during his pastoral work in the parish. These SCC representatives also expressed great joy that Mejia who had founded some of these SCCs when he was a priest has now returned to lead this ordination celebration.

**3. Other Liturgical Rites.** In addition to the sacraments in the SCCs, another important part of the holistic African experience is the whole area of para-liturgical services, morning and night prayers, rosary in community, novenas, special blessings, prayers for concrete needs and sacramentals in the SCCs. Here we see the ecclesial identity and ecclesial life taking place in the SCCs themselves. Such expressions as "SCCs are a way of life, not a program or a project" and "the church in the neighborhood" become real. Lay people are mainly responsible and practically demonstrate that "we are the church." One female SCC leader in Uganda said, "After joining an SCC, I learned that the church belongs to me, not the priest."<sup>1150</sup>

This priority is rooted in African society and often follows the customs and traditions of the local ethnic groups. This is part of popular religiosity in Africa. Pastoral inculturation

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<sup>1149</sup> Colon Davies, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop*, p. 113.

<sup>1150</sup> J. J. Carney, interview with SCC leaders, Our Lady of Fatima Queen of Peace Cathedral Parish, Diocese of Kasana-Luweero, Uganda, January, 2013.

take place in SCC events such as praying over the sick (see the ministry of healing mentioned earlier) and the traditional African rites of passage including the *Naming Ceremony*, *Circumcision Ceremony*, *Bereavement Ceremonies* and *Burial Rite*.

The two most common special services/gatherings in SCCs in Eastern Africa are to pray for sick members of the SCC and to pray for recently deceased members (and members of their families) of the SCC. A popular liturgical ceremony is the blessing of a home and the people who live in it. Accompanied by the SCC leaders, a new pastor or priest in the parish might visit all the SCC members in a particular SCC and bless the houses along the way. During the year SCC members participate in various rituals such as blessing of the fields, the harvest, the instruments of work, even the animals. Reconciliation services have been particularly effective in SCCs in Kenya and Uganda to heal the divisions of tribalism and negative ethnicity.

Special *Bible* readings and prayers are used during the SCC *Bible Services* and SCC Prayer Services mentioned above. Africans love sacramentals such as blessings and the laying on of hands. These graced moments can be emphasized more by using holy water, incense and other symbols.

Segeja summarizes:

Due concern is given in the SCCs to the different liturgical and para-liturgical services at which ordained ministers are not present: like praying and meditating on the Word of God in the SCC, praying in families, service to the sick, various stages of the marriage process (offering and receiving of the dowry or bridewealth, the farewell, accompaniment and welcoming the bride and groom), the various penance services, First Communion and Confirmation.<sup>1151</sup>

Togolese Society of the Divine Word Deacon Koutandji Wayéname, SVD reports on a specific example in St. Theresa of the Child Jesus SCC in Kenya Technical Teachers College (KTTC) in Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya:

The second thing on the agenda was to find out how many [SCC members] were to go with Agneta when her husband was to go to her home town of Machakos for dowry payment on Saturday, 17 January, 2015. She wanted to associate the small community to that event in her life...Some of the SCC officials were asked to make arrangements for the car for the members who were to attend the dowry business of Agneta in Machakos the following week and the time of departure.<sup>1152</sup>

Among the Kamba Ethnic Group in Machakos Diocese there is a mass at the beginning of the official dowry ceremony. Participants are the whole family, friends, SCC members and neighbors (the local community). Some SCC members help in the dowry

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<sup>1151</sup> Segeja, "Small Christian Community A Vital Icon," p. 32.

<sup>1152</sup> Koutandji Wayéname, "SCCs Course Paper No. 1," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2015, pp. 1-2.

negotiations. Others help in the cooking during these events and the celebrations of the two wedding families.

It is unfortunate that the Catholic system of seven official sacraments is almost a “frozen” system, not subject to permanent change. Creative inculturated para-liturgical services seem to come and go, often based on the interest of the local leadership.

**4. Finances.** Most SCCs take responsibility for their own finances. Many have a treasury that is augmented by regular contributions from SCC members. Some wealthier SCC members contribute as much as \$12 a week, other poorer SCCs as little as \$0.10 a week. But the spirit and the regularity is what is important.

Many SCCs have income-generating projects and fund raising projects (called *harambee* in Swahili). The money is used to help needy people, special activities, celebrations in the SCCs (for example, ordination of an African priest from the parish, jubilee events), and parish collections (for example, diocesan assessment/contribution, a building project, seminary fund, new priest, retirement of the catechist). One creative approach is that SCCs members contribute to “buy a brick” fund raisers for parish building projects.

The first priority should be to help needy people in the SCC and wider community. This takes precedence over all the other uses of the treasury of the SCC. This underlies the heart and meaning of the life and activities of an African SCC. The ministry of the Good Neighbor/Good Samaritan/Servant of the Poor in the SCC is very important.

There are many examples of needy people: aged, children without school fees, people with disabilities, isolated widows, sick especially people with cancer, single mothers, unemployed and very economically poor people. Members of St. Martin de Porres SCC in Our Lady Queen Parish, Karen in Nairobi Archdiocese provide lunch money for poor children who have a long walk every day to a rural primary school in neighboring Ngong Diocese.<sup>1153</sup> Members of St. Francis Assisi SCC in St. Francis Assisi Parish, Kawangware in Nairobi Archdiocese raised money for the funeral and burial of the 17-year-old daughter of a SCC member who was mugged and killed in a rough neighborhood in the city. Members of St. Kizito SCC in St. Francis Assisi Parish, Kawangware in Nairobi Archdiocese raised money to help relocate a poor widow and her eight children to her home area. Members of St. Veronica Small Community in St. Catherine Catholic Church in Nyahururu Diocese helped a young girl who needed an operation for a cancerous growth on her neck.

There is a wide variety of help. A wheelchair for a person with a disability. Contribution to an air ticket of a delegate going to the World Congress of the Family in Philadelphia. A guitar for the choir of a SCC. A small grant to a widow to start a home-based African handicraft business to support herself. A small grant to finish building a parish library. Computer Center and School for youth. A small grant to help a self-help poultry project. Musical instruments for the SCC Band/Choir. Navigation sticks/canes and sunglasses for blind members of a SCC. Hospital care for SCC member who got burnt by cooking oil while on her daily business of selling mandazi and chapati.

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<sup>1153</sup> Joseph Ngala in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 9 April, 2013.

The request from Garissa Diocese is especially moving:

Kindly receive greetings from St. Joseph Small Christian Community of St. Jude Catholic Parish, Garissa Diocese. We are appealing to the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities Training Team to support us purchase a wheelchair for one of our members who was shot [during the terrorist attack on Garissa University] and had to have one of his legs amputated.

Kshs 93,500/= is required to buy the wheelchair. We have so far managed to raise the following amount:

St. Joseph SCC contribution 28,000  
 St. Jude Catholic Parish 18,000  
 Garissa Diocese 14,000  
 Eight other SCCs contributed 17,000  
 Total amount collected 77,000  
 Balance required 16,500

Any contribution extended to us will be very much highly appreciated. Thank you. Yours in Christ. Cornelius Mutuka.

For SCCs requesting specific financial help we have a process. A common plan is for the SCC members first to take up a collection among themselves. Each contribution is carefully written down. Then the special fund in the parish to help the needy and/or the parish priest himself makes a small contribution. Then the other SCCs in the parish contribute. Perhaps the diocese will contribute too. Then a special fund (*Mfuko wa Jumuiya* in Swahili) started by the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team makes a small contribution. We try to make this collaboration, teamwork and mutual help a “teaching moment.” We use the Ugandan proverb *one hand washes the other*.

Often this begins with a lengthy telephone conversation about the life and needs of the SCC that is requesting help that is the first “teaching moment.” For me this is a unique opportunity to “smell the sheep” in the now famous words of Pope Francis. I discover who are some of the wounded people and those on the margins/peripheries. During this time we may consult the SCCs Coordinator in the diocese that the request is coming from.

When a representative comes to receive the small contribution from the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team Fund (*Mfuko wa Jumuiya* in Swahili), we have a lengthy conversation that is a second “teaching moment” about the purpose and activities of the SCC. There is a time for prayer and a discussion on the meaning of SCCs, the activities of SCCs, helping the needy and self-reliance. The life of the Patron Saint of the SCC, the importance of *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*, understanding the liturgical year, etc. are discussed. We use the principal in the famous proverb, *give a person a fish and you feed the person for a day; teach a person to fish and you feed the person for a lifetime*.

Especially the SCC leaders learn skills and acquire information that they can pass on to the other SCCs members. We look up information using the Google Search feature on a smartphone. A SCC leader did not know the Feast Day of the Patron Saint of her SCC. Rather than giving her the answer, I lent her the *Daily Missal* and after 15 minutes of

searching she found the date herself. Another SCC leader found the date in the Catholic Church *Ordo* for the Liturgical Year.

Sometimes we use the speaker on my smartphone for a live conversation between myself, the SCC member who has come to collect the money and the chairperson of that particular SCC. The chairperson “teaches” the member basic information about the Catholic Church and their SCC.

The discussion on financial help is situated in the context of the diocesan and parish pastoral plans for developing SCCs and how SCC members collaborate together. The idea not just a small grant for a needy cause, but developing the overall life and activities of SCCs.

We have expanded the use of this fund to include:

1. Family and marriage issues. 15,000/ = Kenyan Shillings to the cost of the dowry of a couple in St. Kizito SCC Nairobi Archdiocese on a quasi-matching basis.
2. Books: 5,000/ = Kenyan Shillings worth of SCCs books to a parish library run by a SCC in Maralal Diocese.
3. Production of six copies of theses and long essays on SCCs for libraries in Nairobi.
4. Travel expenses for journalists writing on SCCs.
5. Repair of houses of SCCs members burnt down by thieves.
6. Help a needy SCC member to build a house.
7. Help to buy county council shoe shining stalls as a self reliance project for SCCs handicapped members rather than their begging in the streets.
8. Buying a keyboard for a SCC Choir.

As an example during the months of August and September, 2015 the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya* helped (in chronological order) all 26 Kenyan dioceses of Nairobi (Kiambu), Kitale, Nakuru (Navaisha), Machakos, Murang’a, Embu, Kisumu, Ngong, Nyeri, Kisii, Kitui, Nyahururu, Bungoma, Eldoret, Kakamega, Maralal, Kericho, Meru, Homa Bay, Mombasa, Malindi, Isiolo, Lodwar, Marsabit, Garissa and Military Ordinariate. In February, 2016 the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya* helped the Kenyan dioceses of Nairobi, Kitale, Nakuru, Machakos, Murang’a, Embu, Kisumu (twice), Ngong (twice), Nyeri, Kisii, Kitui, Nyahururu, **Bungoma**, Eldoret, Kakamega, Maralal, Kericho, Meru, Homa Bay, Mombasa, Malindi, Isiolo, Lodwar, Marsabit, Garissa and Military Ordinariate (total of 26) SCCs in Uganda (Lugazi, Masaka and Soroti) and Tanzania (Same) have also been helped. A particular touching example is the financial help to Joseph Ssentonga, a member of St. Matthew Small Christian Community in St. Jude Catholic Church in Masaka Diocese, Uganda. During the presidential election violence that took place in Uganda on 18 February, 2016 he was shot in the shoulder. He needed an urgent medical operation to remove the bullet to save his life.

This year the focus is on the corporal works of mercy especially helping the sick. In the plan of the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team the Fund (*Mfuko wa Jumuiya*) rotates with SCC Training Sessions.

Many SCCs have self-reliant and self-help projects that take many forms. Sometimes this begins from the desire and felt need to avoid constant financial contributions and collections from the SCC members. Money is raised from such activities such as:

bookshop.  
 buying food at a low price, storing it and later selling it at a higher price.  
 cake sale.  
 catering service.  
 community uniform sale.  
 dairy farming.  
 fish pond.  
 gift exchange sale.  
 green house (for vegetables).  
 making and selling African handicraft.  
 making and selling soap.  
 Mpesa Shop.  
 owning a small bus as a commercial venture.  
 poultry.  
 raffle.  
 raising and selling chickens/goats/pigs.  
 renting cooking utensils.  
 renting musical instruments.  
 sewing club.  
 special financial collection as a means of raising money.  
 small farm to raise cotton, corn, rice, sorghum, millet, etc.  
 small shop (*duka* in Swahili).  
 tailoring shop.  
 vegetable garden on the compound of a SCC member.

The profit is used for the many needs and self-help projects of the SCC. This includes starting cooperatives, credit unions, microcredit projects, etc. of the SCC members.

Gift to needy people in general (the most common).  
 Gift to a very poor SCC member.  
 Gift to an unemployed SCC member to start his or her own small business.  
 Loan to help members that are unemployed to start a small business.  
 Loan in a cooperative or credit union.  
 Many needs in the SCC, parish, local community and diocese.

Kenyan layman Michael Kyenze reports from Kitui, Kenya:

SCCs in Kitui have engaged themselves in activities which sustain them economically but guided by the Gospel values. For example, they have started sustainable income generating activities to keep themselves going. Some SCCs in the northern part of Kitui have started planting drought resistance crops like sorghum, millet, pigeon pea, cassava in their demonstration farms and call upon all the SCCs to do the same.

On issues of climate change we are all called to keep the environment better than the way we found it, SCCs in Kitui have started to construct energy saving cooking stoves at the family level. This enable them to place their pots in the *jiko* (Swahili for stove). Then they attend SCC prayer sessions only to

come back home and find that the food is already cooked!!!<sup>1154</sup>

If the annual church tax (called *zaka* in Swahili) is collected directly through the SCCs rather than through the parish office the returns are much higher.<sup>1155</sup> Information about the parish, subparish and outstation finances is communicated through the SCCs. Open discussion in the SCCs lead to more accountability, transparency and participation in the parish finances.

More and more bishops, priests and other pastoral agents are promoting creative ways of developing a self-reliant church through SCCs. In some parishes SCC members use the tithing plan such as contributing 10% of one's annual income to the Catholic Church. This helps to solve the problem of endless collections (*Michango* Church) in the SCCs that many SCC members complain about.

A Case Study is St. John the Evangelist Small Christian Community (SCC) in St. John the Baptist Parish, Riruta, Nairobi Archdiocese. The Sunday collection is carried out in the normal way. Tithing envelopes (10%) from SCC members are handed in during a special collection at the end of mass once a month. This replaces the special collections in the parish and in the SCCs to cover the cost of the seemingly endless extra collections and *harambee* (Swahili word for "Let us pull together") collections for the priest's new car, the water tank near the church, parish celebrations, etc. This dramatically reduces the amount of time spent on discussing money matters in the meetings of St. John the Evangelist SCC (and the other SCCs in the parish).

A similar Case Study is Holy Family Basilica, Nairobi Archdiocese. The tithing plan provides the revenue for all parish-wide collections including the annual Family Day Contribution to Nairobi Archdiocese, the parish building projects, etc. without having to pass through the SCCs and the apostolic groups/parish associations/devotional groups for special collections. This takes a big burden off SCC members and allows their weekly meetings to be focused on prayer and reflection, not business meetings about money.

The tithing plan also directly involves the 80% of the Catholics in the parish who do not belong to SCCs and the apostolic groups/parish associations/devotional groups. Financial responsibility is shared by all Catholics in the parish, not just SCC members.

Other parishes have started tithing such as St. John the Evangelist Parish, Langata, Nairobi Archdiocese.

A study is underway to use tithing in Tabora Archdiocese, Tanzania. Makusanya writes:

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<sup>1154</sup> Michael Kyenze, Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, 15 May, 2013.

<sup>1155</sup> In Buza Parish, Dar es Salaam 3 million shillings (= \$1,870) per year for the annual church tax was normally collected through the parish office. Now 15 million Tanzanian shillings (= \$9,355) or five times the amount is collected through the SCCs. Conversation with John Waldrep, Nairobi, Kenya, 14 January, 2013.

The archdiocese should help the parishioners to understand their responsibility to pay tithes. *Tithing* has a biblical foundation in which Christians have to contribute 10% of their monthly income to the church in support of services offered. This can be done monthly or quarterly. Here the recommendation given is monthly to avoid the temptation to parishioners of using the money that is supposed to pay tithes [for other things]. Nevertheless a system has to be laid out to insure that it is done. It is suggested that it is conducted on the second Sunday of every month. Parishioners who are not able to give cash should be allowed to contribute in kind.<sup>1156</sup>

Makusanya report that tithing is already used in Arusha Archdiocese, Bukoba Diocese and Dar es Salaam Archdiocese in Tanzania.<sup>1157</sup>

In some dioceses that have an annual Lenten Campaign the collection is higher when the money is contributed through the SCCs. Kenya uses little cardboard boxes with the designation “Lent Box.” The side of the box has place for the names of the specific family, SCC and parish.

More and more national collections for different purposes are passing through SCCs. Father Vincent Mwakhwawa, the National Director of the Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS), an arm of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) reports:

On this Vocations Sunday [11 May, 2014], the money collection in all the Catholic prayer-gatherings is meant to help in the training of future priests, sisters, and brothers in the whole world. The money will be collected from all outstations, Small Christian Communities or prayer houses in all parishes and then sent to the dioceses.<sup>1158</sup>

Makusanya’s study also raises the question of how much time and energy SCCs members should spend on money matters. How should SCCs get involved in various finance projects especially income generating projects? The goal of a self-reliant Local Church in the AMECEA Region is clear. SCCs have a major role in this process. But there is a danger of SCCs becoming too involved in efficient financial management. Mulinya states that there is a danger of turning the SCCs activities into fundraising enterprises and that “money can ruin the SCC.”

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<sup>1156</sup> Edwin Makusanya, *Efficient Financial Management*, p. 118.

<sup>1157</sup> Edwin Makusanya in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 13 May, 2014.

<sup>1158</sup> “MALAWI: Catholics Celebrates World Day of Prayer for Vocations Today,” *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, Issue 047, 09 May 2014, AMECEA Website, retrieved 9 May, 2014, [http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/05/malawi-catholics-celebrates-world-day.html?utm\\_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=5a04b00e63-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_85fa866553-5a04b00e63-6746297](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2014/05/malawi-catholics-celebrates-world-day.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=5a04b00e63-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-5a04b00e63-6746297)

The newness of SCCs in Eastern Africa can be found in the process as well as the content of church life. A Case Study was the Diocesan Synod taking place in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania. Diocesan Synods are frequent in Africa today and are highly encouraged by Pope Francis. The Motto of the 2013-2014 Musoma Diocesan Synod is “Faith and Action.” The theme of the fourth and last session was “Development and Self Reliance” that take place from 4 to 8 August, 2014. The official closing was be from 3 to 5 October, 2014. A five page questionnaire was circulated to all the parishes. Historically such a questionnaire would be answered by the priest and religious, the catechists, the Parish Pastoral Council, etc. But taking Kowak Parish as an example, the questionnaire passed through the 30 SCCs in the parish. The SCC members discussed the questions and gave joint answers for their small community. Then Father Augustino Mapambano, the Assistant Parish Priest, collated the answers, added other comments and sent the overall parish results to the diocesan synod secretariat. In this way the voice of the laity is being heard from the grassroots up.<sup>1159</sup>

At the same time our critical evaluation and assessment has to look at the “shadows” that Mejia and Kalilombe referred to earlier. SCCs can successfully become a new model of church only in the context of the wider church being less hierarchical and less clerical. A top-down, even dictatorial style of decision-making especially by bishops and priests defeat the communitarian, consensus style of SCCs from the grassroots up. Lay people through their SCCs need to be given the freedom to experiment in their local situations to discover new forms of ministry and service. This means following the principle that the Catholic Church’s needs should determine ministries and not the ministries the church’s needs. Otherwise it is just pastoral business as usual.

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<sup>1159</sup> Based on a conversation with Tanzanian diocesan priest Father Augustino Mapambano at Kowak parish on 9 July, 2014.

## 15. Future Challenges, 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.”<sup>1160</sup> SCCs continue to be the church on the move, the church from below. For the whole of Africa Orobator points out: “Small Christian Communities represent a way of *becoming* church; they are not a finished product or prefabricated ecclesial reality. In this sense, *process* takes precedence over *event* as key markers of the ecclesiological comprehension of Small Christian Communities.”<sup>1161</sup>

Here are 21 future challenges, priorities<sup>1162</sup> and actions for SCCs in Eastern Africa based on our in-depth critical evaluation/assessment, ongoing research and a reading of the contemporary signs of the times in Africa. They are part of the “Action/Pastoral Planning Step” of the Pastoral Spiral.

1. Choose good leaders in SCCs in Eastern Africa.<sup>1163</sup> <sup>1164</sup> This is within the context of committed, ongoing leadership of both priests and laypeople within a pastoral plan.

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<sup>1160</sup> “Mission of AMECEA,” AMECEA Website, retrieved on 11 March, 2012, <http://www.amecea.org/index.php/component/content/article/2-amecea/2-vision>

<sup>1161</sup> Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way,” p. 125.

<sup>1162</sup> These are closely linked. A challenge becomes a priority for concrete action. A challenge or problem or difficulty can also become a new opportunity.

<sup>1163</sup> These first three challenges and priorities were confirmed in a “One-day SCCs Workshop” that took place at the Mitume Pastoral and Catechetical Center in Kitale Diocese, Kenya on 8 October, 2011. The 47 participants including catechists and SCC leaders identified 19 main obstacles to the growth of SCCs in Kenya and then voted for their top six choices. The top vote getter was “Lack of Leadership” and the fourth was “More Understanding of the Meaning of SCCs.” The workshop emphasized the “Importance of Training and Education” including Training of Trainers (TOT) SCCs Workshops. It was estimated that there are about 3,000 SCCs in Kitale Diocese.

This was further confirmed in a meeting of 31 SCCs leaders (18 woman and 11 men) in Kachebere Parish, Lilongwe, Malawi on 12 December, 2013. They pointed out the lack of commitment of many SCC members to leadership roles and regular SCCs meetings.

Patrick Kalilombe says that “the evident thing is to make sure that these Local Churches do have the appropriate leadership and organization capable of adequately structuring them and providing the required leadership and animation. What is needed here is first of all a good choice of leaders.” Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999), 70.

<sup>1164</sup> The topic of “How to choose good leaders in SCCs” is discussed and discerned regularly. Some challenging questions: “Do we choose charismatic leaders (good talkers, good presenters) who then do nothing? Do we favor men over women? Do we choose a leader

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.<sup>1165</sup>
3. Train SCC leaders<sup>1166</sup>/animators/facilitators/coordinators in animation, facilitation and coordination skills.<sup>1167</sup> Set up SCC Training Teams on the Eastern Africa, national,

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because of his or her finances, not personal qualities? Can Christians who cannot receive communion be elected leaders?

<sup>1165</sup> This remains an ongoing challenge. The New Religious Movements have better formation programs for their lay members, for example, Leadership Training, Retreat in Life and Bible Study/Faith Formation, than what is offered to Catholic lay people in parishes and dioceses such as SCC Leaders. The Zaidi Centre for Ignatian Spirituality, started in July, 2000 in Nairobi as a means of ministering to Christians through workshops, presentations, recollections and retreats on aspects of our Christian life, offers excellent formation programs for parishes.

<sup>1166</sup> Many online resources are available to train small-group leaders such as *SmallGroups.com* that offers a diverse set of adaptable training tools for all small-group models that can be customized to a church's unique needs, [https://w1.buysub.com/pubs/L2/A09/smallgroups\\_lead\\_gen\\_0414.jsp?cds\\_page\\_id=162549&cds\\_mag\\_code=A09&id=1398547162866&lsid=41161619228034489&vid=1&cds\\_trackin\\_g\\_code=SG4DEBT001](https://w1.buysub.com/pubs/L2/A09/smallgroups_lead_gen_0414.jsp?cds_page_id=162549&cds_mag_code=A09&id=1398547162866&lsid=41161619228034489&vid=1&cds_trackin_g_code=SG4DEBT001) and *Creative Leader Training*, [http://www.smallgroups.com/downloads/training/practicalministryskills/bsg93.html?tCode=F21CA9D41A&dCode=E54591F76F&utm\\_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=9077722&utm\\_content=265397734&utm\\_campaign=2013](http://www.smallgroups.com/downloads/training/practicalministryskills/bsg93.html?tCode=F21CA9D41A&dCode=E54591F76F&utm_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=265397734&utm_campaign=2013)

<sup>1167</sup> This is an on-going process. Those who facilitate the *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* Services need regular updating and renewal. Also new people need to be trained to facilitate groups. Our research shows that bad habits can creep in and the sharing and reflection can change into a teaching mode (where one person takes over) or into a discussion mode. Thus training SCC leaders in group dynamic skills is important. For example, small group “hijackers” can do a great deal of harm. There are training resources on the four different hijacker personalities and how to deal with them: the Talking Hijacker, Emotional Hijacker, Leader Hijacker and Late Hijacker. See *Help! My Small Group Has Been Hijacked! Four common hijackers and ways to respond* by Margaret Feinberg, SmallGroups.com Website, retrieved on 19 July 2012, [http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2012/smallgrouphijacked.html?utm\\_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm\\_medium=Newsletter&utm\\_term=9077722&utm\\_content=130918751&utm\\_campaign=2012](http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2012/smallgrouphijacked.html?utm_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=130918751&utm_campaign=2012)

diocesan, deanery, parish and outstation levels.<sup>1168</sup> Use the mass media and the social media like the internet, radio,<sup>1169</sup> and TV for SCCs training programs.

4. A newer priority is training of SCC members in computer and internet skills that includes: writing for the internet;<sup>1170</sup> preparing Powerpoint Presentations on SCCs; the use of online “Search” features especially Google and searching within documents;<sup>1171</sup> and the use of social media.
5. 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<sup>1172</sup> and mission outreach.

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<sup>1168</sup> Richard Baawobr states: “An important service that AMECEA could offer concerns the formation of pastoral workers that cannot always be done at diocesan or even national level. Institutions like CUEA, Nyegezi, Gaba offer something, but it might be helpful to organize short courses (few weeks) for different ministries at diocesan level who in turn, could help form ministers in Small Christian Communities.” *AMECEA 50 Years*, p.112. The Lumko East Africa Pastoral Ministry Workshop (9 September, 2013 to 5 October, 2013 at Tabor Hill Spiritual Center, Nyahururu, Kenya) was the 20<sup>th</sup> annual international workshop for the AMECEA Region. The first international workshop took place in 1992. See the report “Impact of Lumko Workshops in Eastern Africa for the Past 22 Years (1992-2014),” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2014.

Other Lumko Workshops have been conducted in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania. Training of Trainers (TOT) SCCs Workshops are given on the diocesan, deanery, parish and outstation levels and then repeated in the SCCs themselves. Some parishes have Teams of Lumko Graduates that meet regularly.

<sup>1169</sup> SCCs courses on the radio are being planned. One example is a series on programs on Radio Waumini in Kenya on topics such as: “The Importance of the *Bible* in SCCs,” “The Seven-Step Gospel Sharing of Lumko (South Africa)” and “The Group Response Method/Bible-Mirror Method of Lumko (South Africa).”

<sup>1170</sup> This includes basic writing, editing and proofreading skills.

<sup>1171</sup> Many people do not know basic Search methods and techniques such as CTRL + F for finding data.

<sup>1172</sup> In talks, homilies, sermons, etc. we emphasize that Jesus Christ first calls us to be his disciples/followers and then sends us to be his apostles/missionaries/evangelizers. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, USA and President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)’s intervention at the World Synod of Bishops in Rome on 9 October, 2012 started with these words: “The great American evangelist, the venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, commented, “The first word of Jesus in the Gospel was ‘come’; the last word of Jesus was ‘go’.” <http://www.zenit.org/article-35689?l=english>

6. Encourage more courses and workshops on SCCs in the normal curriculum of the major seminaries, theological institutes, universities<sup>1173</sup> and houses of formation of both men and women that include some kind of planned practical action and social outreach.<sup>1174</sup> There should be a focus on Pastoral Theology.<sup>1175</sup> While most of the major seminaries and theological institutes in Eastern Africa are affiliated with universities in Rome and thus subject to tight curriculum requirements, Kihara, a long-time member of the Kenyan Catholic Bishops Seminary Episcopal Commission, points out that the Vatican should recognize the SCCs pastoral priority in Eastern Africa and allow it to be included in the seminary curriculum.<sup>1176</sup>

A new strategy is proposed for courses in the Pastoral (Practical) Theology Department. These courses can be Cycle Courses that are offered every two years<sup>1177</sup> or every four years. There are four possibilities:

- a. Some can be full semester, required, core courses (every theological student/seminarian takes this course during his or her training).
- b. Some can be elective courses that are in the Lecture or Seminar<sup>1178</sup> style.
- c. Some can be an intensive one week module in which three double periods are given each day to quality as a full semester course.<sup>1179</sup>

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<sup>1173</sup> There are an increasing number of online courses such as the postgraduate “Diploma In Forming Small Christian Communities (SCCs)” offered by the distance learning Society of St. Peter and Paul (SSPP) Seminary Website, retrieved on 24 August, 2012, [http://societyofstpeterandpaulseminary.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=82&Itemid=74](http://societyofstpeterandpaulseminary.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=82&Itemid=74)

<sup>1174</sup> Sometimes the starting point is a single talk or presentation to get the process started.

<sup>1175</sup> Pope Francis stressing the importance of Pastoral Theology. He maintains that theology without a pastoral dimension becomes an abstract ideology. Therefore dogmatic theology and pastoral theology should be interrelated; they need each other. All of them drive towards mercy and forgiveness.

<sup>1176</sup> Peter Kihara, comments during the Pontifical Mission Societies Missionary Awareness Animation Team Visit to St Joseph’s (Meru) Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya on 28 April, 2013.

<sup>1177</sup> The SCCs Course at Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College in Nairobi, Kenya is offered every two years in the Biennial Program (Second and Third Theology students together). In response to the Salesian charism of Youth Ministry the course title has been changed to “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today with Special Focus on Youth SCCs” (PET190).

<sup>1178</sup> As an example, Hekima College had a Seminar from January to April 2013 on “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today.” Its aim was to examine how Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are a New Model of Church and a New Way of Being Church in promoting justice, reconciliation and peace in Africa today. This is part of the implementation of the Second African Synod.

<sup>1179</sup> The Institute of Social Ministry, Tangaza University College in Nairobi offers a “5 Days Workshop Elective (2 credits)” every August on “Training for Faith Based Organizations and

- d. Some can be two, three or four day workshops: a single workshop<sup>1180</sup> or a series of workshops.<sup>1181</sup>
- e. Some can be one day sessions spread over a semester or a year.

All these courses are pastoral ministry courses with a practical component (practicum). The ideal is No. a above where every student (including every future priest<sup>1182</sup>) has a full course in the theology and practice of SCCs. This would include an emphasis on “The Role of the Priest in the Formation and Animation of SCCs.”<sup>1183</sup>

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Community Ministries (Lumko). Its purpose is to build up SCCs, develop parish groups, improve collaborative ministry and empower groups for action.

<sup>1180</sup> A good model of a short workshop is "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a New Model of Church in Africa Today," Apostles of Jesus Theologicum Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya, 21-22 February, 2008. The program and report were published in the Urbaniana University Magazine in Rome. In different forms it has been offered in the Emmaus Program for Diocesan Priests Workshop at Tangaza University College in May, 2008, the Blessed Bakanja AMECEA College (BBAC) SCCs Workshop in February, 2009, the Emmaus Program for Diocesan Priests Workshop at the Mary Ward Center in October, 2009, the St. Thomas Aquinas Senior Seminary SCCs Workshop in April, 2010 and again at the Apostles of Jesus Theologicum in February, 2012.

<sup>1181</sup> SCCs Workshops are designed to be full time experience incorporating all the prayer time and other activities of the day. DVDs on SCCs are shown in the evening as an official part of the workshop. Particularly valuable is the 43-minute instructional video *The Church in the Neighborhood: Small Christian Communities* (with Swahili and Arabic versions). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1995. Segment One is “The Life of the Small Christian Communities” and Segment Two is “Services [Ministries] in the Small Christian Communities.” Another helpful DVD is the 57-minute instructional video *Njia Mpya ya Kuishi na Kueneza Injili: Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kristo* (Swahili for *A New Way of Living and Proclaiming the Church: Small Christian Communities*). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1985. It presents 12 SCCs in action in Kenya and Tanzania.

<sup>1182</sup> In interviews and conversations in 2011, 2012 and 2013, bishops in the AMECEA countries have stated that seminarians should have a full, semester-long required course on SCCs during their seminary training and practical experience with SCCs when they do pastoral ministry in parishes during their holidays and during their Pastoral Year. They emphasize that it is too late to wait until they are ordained priests and serving in parishes to introduce them to this key pastoral priority.

<sup>1183</sup>At CUEA there is a two credit course on “Small Christian Communities” in the First Cycle (BA in Theology). “Ecclesial Communities in Vatican II and Post Conciliar Documents” is the SCC Course in the Second Cycle. It is a Core Course for MA/Licentiate students in the Pastoral Theology Department and a Seminar or Elective for MA students in the other departments in the Faculty of Theology. CUEA’s Pastoral Theology M.A. Program’s oral comprehensive exam includes the question: “The SCCs, its theology and in a parish, as a pastoral methodology approach in AMECEA region. Discuss.” At the Eldoret Campus a Diploma is offered in the area of specialization of “Small Christian Communities for New Evangelization.” This is the first academic program on SCCs of its kind in Africa.

7. Encourage more support and commitment from bishops and other ecclesial leadership across the board.
8. Encourage more quality participation of priests in animating, facilitating and coordinating SCCs.
9. 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. This includes increasing the involvement (responsibility and duty) of SCC coordinators/ animators/leaders in issues of civic education,<sup>1184</sup> advocacy and good governance. This

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“Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today”

(PTC418) is a Core Course as part of the STB and BATH (CUEA) Degrees (Eighth Semester) and the MA Degree in Pastoral Ministry in the Pastoral Theology Department of the School of Theology at Tangaza University College, a Constituent College of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) in Nairobi, Kenya. The course is online on Moodle. In 2012 the thesis question for the oral comprehensive exam in the Pastoral Theology M.A. Program at Tangaza University College was: “How can Small Christian Communities (SCCs) promote justice, reconciliation, peace in Kenya or another African country today?” The four reference books used were:

1. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Africa’s Commitment (Africae Munus)*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2011.  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africae-munus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html)  
<http://www.zenit.org/article-33862?l=english>
2. Second African Synod: *Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God and Final List of [57] Propositions* taken from “Timeline in the History and Development of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Especially Eastern Africa” on the SCCs Website  
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/107-timeline-in-the-history-and-development-of-small-christian-communities-sccs-in-africa-especially-eastern-africa.html>.
3. Booklet of the *Kenya Lenten Campaign 2012* on the theme “Towards a Transformed Kenya: Let Light Shine Out of Darkness.
4. Chapter 14 (pages 99-105) on “Pastoral Involvement of Parish-based SCCs in Dar es Salaam” by Christopher Cieslikiewicz in *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* (Edited by Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton).

<sup>1184</sup> Eastern Africa SCCs can learn from our neighbors. In Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2008 there was a workshop in French on “Le rôle des CEVB dans l'éducation

also includes specifically and concretely to connect, relate and apply the Bible (Gospel) to our daily lives and experience in Africa.

10. 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.
11. Encourage young adults, youth and children to form their own inculturated SCCs. This is closely connected to pastoral youth ministry.<sup>1185</sup>
12. Promote strategies of self-reliance and sustainability in SCCs. This includes financial support of SCC activities and parish activities and developing self-reliance projects.
13. Encourage SCC members to be more active in the New Evangelization and deeper-evangelization following the contemporary signs of the times in Africa.
14. Use the social media/new media more to promote SCCs especially in involving youth. Encourage SCC members to use the social media/new media more in pastoral and missionary activities. Continue to use the mass media like radio and TV for formation, information and training.
15. 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.’”
16. Produce and circulate more relevant, African-related resource materials (print, audio-visual and online)<sup>1186</sup> for SCC members including simple booklets and leaflets on the

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civique dans RD Congo” (“The Role of Basic Living Ecclesial Communities [SCCs] in Civic Education in DRC”).

<sup>1185</sup> The AMECEA Region has a population of 200 million people of whom 60 million are Catholics of which two thirds are youth and children. Youth and children need to be helped to appreciate their unique ecclesial identity and their participation in the model of the Church as Family built around the SCCs. Research suggests five “target” groups: Married Young Adults with children (ages 27 to 35 years old). Unmarried Young Adults (ages 27 to 35 years old). Senior Youth (ages 21 to 26 years old). Intermediate Youth or Junior Youth (ages 15 to 20 years old). Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) (ages six to 14 years old).

<sup>1186</sup> Vincent Mwachwawa describes the resource books used in Westminster Archdiocese, England as a model for Africa and recommends: “The Archdiocese of Lilongwe should study the resource books of Westminster Archdiocese and make an effort to produce a SCC resource book relevant to the situation of Lilongwe that should be used in all SCCs of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe.” See Vincent Mwachwawa, “Learning More about Small Christian Communities in Westminster Archdiocese, London, England,” SCCs Website, retrieved on

Bible (including lectionary-based faith sharing/faith reflection resources<sup>1187</sup>), Small Apostolic Group faith sharing/faith reflection, the Catholic Church's social teaching and new ministries. These materials should be produced in Swahili<sup>1188</sup> and other local languages in Eastern Africa.<sup>1189</sup>

17. Promote better communications and sharing of SCC experiences, information and resources within the AMECEA Region, that is, within the nine countries in Eastern Africa.<sup>1190</sup>

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14 August, 2012, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/europe/england/206-learning-more-about-small-christian-communities-in-westminster-archdiocese-london-england.html>

The England and Wales Catholic Bishops' Conference Spirituality Committee has prepared a pastoral document, *Do You Love Me?* This handbook that can be used by individuals or small groups recommends: “**DISCOVER** the power of praying together and reflecting on Scripture in small groups in your parish...Parish bookshops could promote *Do You Love Me?* as a resource for small groups meeting in people's homes or after weekday Masses.” See Kathryn Turner, “Guide for the Seekers,” *Tablet*, Vol. 269 No. 9081 (3 January 2015), p. 22., Tablet Website, retrieved on 3 December, 2014, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/030115issue.pdf>

<sup>1187</sup> Other useful resources are *Quest: A Reflection Booklet for Small Christian Communities*, *At Home with the Word*, *Little Rock Scripture Study*, *York Courses*, *Seasonal Resources* and *Monthly Resources* of the Agency for Evangelization, Westminster Archdiocese, England, *Give Us This Day: Daily Prayer for Today's Catholic*, *Magnificat*, *Living with Christ*, *Sunday By Sunday*, *Celebration*, *PrayerTime* – as well as the weekly Catholic magazines and newspapers that have a commentary on the scripture readings of the following Sunday -- and many special resources for the Advent and Lent seasons. Research indicates that these printed liturgical resources, as well as the online liturgical resources and apps like The Daily Gospel Online (DGO), FaithND, Laudate and EBreviary help Catholics read the Scriptures of the following Sunday, as well as the daily readings, more regularly and more faithfully. Some of these resources can be downloaded and read offline.

A trend in the USA is organizations like the [North American Forum for Small Christian Communities \(NAFSCC\)](#) whose website provides SCC resources, training, webinars and a forum for the exchange of ideas to support and promote SCCs in all of the ministries of parish and diocesan life.

<sup>1188</sup> In production is a simple, how to-do SCC booklet tentatively called *Mwongozo wa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo*.

<sup>1189</sup> A useful resource book for Africa is: Richard Baawobr, *God's Word for Christian Communities: Guidelines for Facilitators*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013. This book offers help to facilitators of Small Christian Communities, *Bible Sharing Groups* and *Bible Study Groups*. The first part explores in simple terms the person and role of the facilitator in a Small Christian Community alongside the usefulness of Small Christian Communities and *Bible Sharing Groups* for living our faith as the Church Family of God in Africa. The second part proposes five *Bible Sharing/Bible Study* methods.

<sup>1190</sup> At the AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Nairobi in July, 2011, Pengo pointed out that one of drawbacks for the solidarity of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa is that many

18. Promote better communications and sharing of SCC experiences, information and resources<sup>1191</sup> 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).
19. Support and contribute to SECAM: the SECAM-MISSIO Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Networking Team; the SCCs Networking Page under the Commission of Evangelization on the SECAM Website; and the SCCs Networking Library in the SECAM Office in Accra, Ghana.
20. Support and contribute to international Small Christian Communities meetings. After national meetings in the USA in 2002 and 2007 encourage another National Joint Convocation on Small Christian Communities in 2016 to bring people together, share their SCCs experiences and improve networks.
21. Emphasize ongoing evaluation and revitalization<sup>1192</sup> of the life and activities of SCCs that includes realistic assessment, honest self-criticism, critical reflection and openness

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Catholics on the grassroots do not easily see the link between AMECEA (that come across as a big organization of Catholic bishops at the top) and their SCCs on the local level. He said: “In five years to come, I would like that AMECEA gets known to the faithful and that they realize it is their responsibility, and not an institution of the bishops.” *Seed* 23: 8-9 (August-September 2011), p. 9.

<sup>1191</sup> It has been pointed out that there is little communications and exchange of resources on SCCs between English-speaking and French-speaking Africa. [Mikado](#), the online Mission Library and Catholic Documentation Center of the Internationales Katholisches Missionswerk Missio, the Institute of Missiology Missio and the Mission Library of the Jesuits in Aachen, Germany, helps to bridge this gap. Here are the results in a search on 5 March, 2013: In the “Topical Headings” literature for “Basic Christian Communities” (that includes Base Christian Communities, Basic Ecclesial Communities and Small Christian Communities) was found in 1653 documents. In the “Quick Search” literature on “Small Christian Communities” was found in 173 documents and literature on “Basic Christian Communities” was found in 1716 documents.

<sup>1192</sup> Missio in Aachen, Germany is conducting an evaluation of SCCs through a questionnaire entitled “Questionnaire on Small Christian Communities (SCCs)” and described as follows: “Small Christian Communities offer an appealing and forward-looking way of leading a Christian life. People gather around the Word of God and, having read and studied it together, they feel inspired by the Gospel spirit to become actively involved in the work of the Church and society at large. We would like engage in a discussion with you about Small Christian Communities. Alongside its partners in Africa, Asia and Oceania, *Missio* regards itself as a point of contact for local churches in Germany, offering them an opportunity to take up and jointly develop the ideas and stimuli that have arisen within the universal Church. We are therefore sending you a questionnaire (see enclosure), which we kindly ask you to fill in. The questionnaire will help us to begin a debate with you and other people in positions of responsibility in the Small Christian Communities and enable us to network with each other. This exchange of experience will be to our mutual benefit.” See email message and File Attachment of Michael Meyer dated 25 April, 2013.

to new actions especially in applying the last step (“Pastoral Planning”) of the Pastoral Spiral.

Finally Orobator states:

Thus, in assessing the fulfillment of the promise of SCCs, it is important to take a long view and affirm with Leonardo Boff that “this is still just beginning, still in process. It is not accomplished reality.”<sup>1193</sup> Small Christian Communities represent a way of *becoming* church; they are not a finished product or prefabricated ecclesial reality. In this sense, *process* takes precedence over *event* as key markers of the ecclesiological comprehension of Small Christian Communities.<sup>1194</sup>

Orobator describes the future development of SCCs in Africa as follows:

The significant factors of the future development of SCCs include the level and nature of interest from ecclesiastical leadership, the commitment to the formation and empowerment of the lay faithful and the relative strength of negative socio-economic and cultural factors, some of which have been outlined above. Along with the need for ongoing critical reflection on the present organization and practices of SCCs, much still needs to be done to develop the theology of Small Christian Communities as church in the neighborhood. This theology ought to facilitate the expansion of the missionary focus of SCCs to include attention to socio-political, ecological and economic conditions of their context. In this vein, SCCs in Africa would have much to learn from the history and praxis of the Latin American model,<sup>1195</sup> while, at the same time, developing a distinctively African model of Small Christian Communities as a new way of becoming church.<sup>1196</sup>

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The Pastoral Department of AMECEA coordinated seven National SCCs Workshops in Eastern Africa in 2013 (Zambia and Malawi), 2014 (Ethiopia and Tanzania) and 2015 (Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda). Pikiti states: “The initiative of building the local Church around SCCs was started by the bishops in Eastern Africa. Promoting the theology of this ecclesiology in collaboration with many Africa priests and laity has been a very great success. But it is also important to review and see how we can still maintain this motivation within the fast changing life style of the people, urbanization, work culture, etc. So this SCCs training will be helpful to reach to some of the leaders and together rethink the way forward.” Email to the author dated 11 June, 2013.

<sup>1193</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (Maryknoll, N. Y. Orbis Books, 1986), p. 2.

<sup>1194</sup> Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way, pp. 124-125.

<sup>1195</sup> See Fritz Lobinger, “What SCCs and CEBs,” p. 287-297.

<sup>1196</sup> Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way,” p. 125.

## 16. General Conclusions: The Way Forward

Certainly the growth and influence of Small Christian Communities has been one of the milestones and highlights of the first 55 years of AMECEA (1961-2016). Let us say “thank you” to the past and “yes” to the future. “Thank you” to the founders and visionaries who created the AMECEA Small Christian Communities Key Pastoral Priority. “Thank you” to the faithfulness and commitment of millions of lay Christians in Eastern Africa who have actively participated in SCCs over the years. “Yes” to the commitment to be truly African and truly Christian in further developing this new way of being church. “Yes” to being open to the Holy Spirit guiding us in the future.

This book began with a long historical journey in the AMECEA Region. In this year of 2016 as we continue to celebrate the 50-year Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) we recall the historical foundations of SCCs in the People of God Model of Church and in the Communion Ecclesiology of Vatican II. We saw the development of SCCs against the background of the independence movements in Africa and the terrific expansion of Christianity on the continent. This book analyzed and reflected on many aspects of SCCs that are not a movement in the Catholic Church, but the church on the move.

Some highlights: Moving from inwardly looking prayer groups to authentic SCCs that are outwardly looking. Eastern Africa SCCs that are a pastoral, parish-based model. The importance of *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* and practical action in the life and ministry of SCCs. The active involvement and participation of lay people in this new model of church that emerges from the grassroots up. The growth of specific Youth SCCs. Using the Pastoral Spiral (“See,” “Judge” and “Act”) as a new paradigm for promoting justice and peace in Africa today.

The sections on SCCs in the documents of the First and Second African Synods break new ground. The documents of the First African Synod have helped Eastern Africa SCCs develop a more inculturated model that is deeply involved in evangelization. A key challenge is the question “What are the different human problems in Africa that we should reflect on in our SCC meetings in the light of the Gospel?” based on No. 89 of St. John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa*.

In the documents of the Second African Synod SCCs themselves are described as “paths” to achieving reconciliation, justice, and peace and “places” for concretely living out reconciliation, justice, and peace on the local level. SCC members are challenged to be active “agents” of reconciliation not just subjects. This is a loud and clear call for SCCs in Africa to continue to be a new way of becoming and being church on the grassroots level. As a new model of church, SCCs can emphasize deeper biblical reflection and more regular use of the Pastoral Spiral to engage in effectively the pastoral and social life around them. As facilitators of reconciliation, justice, and peace, SCC members can be very important in the transformation of the Catholic Church in Africa and in the transformation of the social, cultural, political and economic life of African society.

Participating in the New Evangelization has emerged as a new priority of SCCs in Eastern Africa. This included focusing on the 2012-2013 Year of Faith. One of the foci of 2014-2016 period is the grassroots participation of SCCs in Eastern Africa in the pastoral topics of the two World Synods of Bishops on “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the

Context of Evangelization" and "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World." Two new priorities are participating in the continent-wide 2015-2016 African Year of Reconciliation (ATR) and the 2015-2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy.

As we move into the future we continue to create the path by walking. The way forward is open-ended and exciting. New priorities will emerge. Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel, the Chairman of AMECEA, describes Africa as a continent with “a great future and a great responsibility, not only for Africans but to the whole world... There is still a need of re-evangelization to make the Gospel planted in the various cultures, to educate the youth in their faith, to prepare Christian Leadership on the level of Small Christian Communities, parishes, deaneries, dioceses, and on the national level.”<sup>1197</sup> With the help of the Holy Spirit let us response boldly and creatively.

*“Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo, oyee!”*

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<sup>1197</sup> “Church’s Presence at the African Union among Priorities of Ethiopia’s Cardinal-Designate,” CANAA Website, 8 January, 2015, retrieved on 9 January, 2015, <http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php/home/16-latestnews/148-church-presence-at-the-african-union-among-priorities-of-ethiopias-cardinal-designate>

## **APPENDIX: Online Resource Materials<sup>1198</sup> on the On-going Formation and Training of Small Christian Community (SCC) Members**

Since our overall priority in the AMECEA Region is the on-going formation and training of Small Christian Community (SCC) leaders and members in Eastern Africa, these are 25 basic printed SCCs resource materials that are available free online on the SCCs Website:

1. **Checklist of 15 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today**
2. **31 Criteria to Evaluate a Typical Small Christian Community (SCC) in Eastern Africa**
3. **Lay Ecclesial Ministries in Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa**
4. **13 Steps in the Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Life Connections Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa**
5. **Utaribu wa Hatua Kumi na Tatu katika Vikao vya Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo (Swahili Version)**
6. **Seven-Step Gospel Sharing (Lumko, South Africa)**
7. **Hatua Saba: Njia za Kutafakari Masoma ya Biblia (Lumko, South Africa) (Swahili Version)**
8. **Group Response Method/Bible -- Mirror Method (Lumko, South Africa)**
9. **Five Steps of the Amos Program (Lumko, South Africa)**
10. **The Process of *Lectio Divina***
11. **Reading Guide for Understanding the *Bible***
12. **Sample of Bible Lessons: Bible Month, September, 2013 Book III (Lilongwe, Malawi)**
13. **Stories of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa**
14. **Alphabetical Summary of the Choices in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) POLL on our SCCs Website**
15. **Examples of Demonstrations, Role Plays, Questions and Exercises on the Meaning and Importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa**
16. **Using the “See,” “Judge,” and “Act” Method/ Process as Part of the Pastoral Spiral**
17. **Small Christian Community (SCC) Reflection on Adoptive Parent Families**
18. **Questionnaire on Fidei Donum Priests Animating the Small Christian Communities**
19. **Questionnaire on Evaluating the Small Christian Community (SCCs) Priority in a Parish or Diocese**
20. **Sample of the Program/Timetable of a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Workshop: National Youth SCCs Workshop on the Theme “Youth SCCs Embrace the Word of God” (Lusaka, Zambia)**
21. **Sample of an African Inculturated Small Christian Community (SCCs) Mass -- Jumuiya Mass (Nairobi, Kenya)**
22. **African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Small Christian Communities (SCCs)**
23. **African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Family and Marriage**

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<sup>1198</sup> Training in how to use online resources is very important. Thus the value of workshops and seminars such as “Using Information Communications Technology (ICT) and Online Resources to Facilitate and Promote Students’ Learning” at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya.

24. **Constitution of St. John the Evangelist Small Christian Community (Nairobi, Kenya)**
25. **Constitution of St. Joseph Small Christian Community (Nairobi, Kenya)**

## **1. Checklist of 15 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today**

A key factor is that Small Christian Communities (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 continue to update this "Checklist List of 15 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today." In SCC meetings, courses, workshops and seminars we ask: How many of the following activities<sup>1199</sup> are part of the **life** of your SCC? How many of these activities have you actually participated in?

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. Includes blessings of homes and families.
3. SCC as a *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*-Daily Life Connections Group.<sup>1200</sup> 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, Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR), Study (*Bible*, Creed, the Sacraments, a Catholic Church Document, *Constitutions* of a Religious Community, Religious Book, Film/Movie, DVD, Video, Audio Tape, etc.),<sup>1201</sup> Counseling, etc.

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<sup>1199</sup> Mondo emphasizes the importance of variety in long-lasting SCCs: "Alternating the format occasionally keeps gatherings fresh. Some ideas include: review a film/movie together, have a guest speaker, visit and walk in new places, study a book, try a new faith sharing guide, visit the sick and poor, write letters to prisoners and send greetings to other Small Christian Communities." Paulino Mondo, *Small Christian Communities*, p. 9.

<sup>1200</sup> This process is described as "Scripture-based Faith Sharing Connected to/Linked to Daily Life." The challenge is to encourage quality reflections that often connect to the previous reflections.

<sup>1201</sup> 20% of the meetings of John Paul I SCC in St. Ignatius Parish, Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia are devoted to talks on: Liturgical Year (Lent, Advent); Medical Issues (hypertension, diabetes, cancer); and Legal Issues (*Constitution*, "How to Write a Will"). A talk on cancer led to the screening of cervical cancer among the women in the SCC. Kelvin Lubinda Yeta, *The Involvement/Participation of Women*, p. 62.

6. Pastoral or Business Meeting of a SCC.
7. Practical action (*tendo la wiki* in Swahili), service and social, pastoral and mission outreach. Includes pastoral care, 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)<sup>1202</sup> and fund-raisers.
9. The SCC is responsible for assisting (called “animating”) in the Sunday Mass in the parish, subparish or outstation 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”).<sup>1203</sup> 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)<sup>1204</sup> includes a Shared Homily.<sup>1205</sup> Communion (a designated Eucharist Minister covers a group of SCCs) is brought to sick members in the SCC.

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<sup>1202</sup> 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. “The monies we generate from these services assist us in the group to participate in various events within the church without going back into our pockets e.g. retreats and recollection, harvest for the church, animation in the church, visiting homes for the less fortunate and also our own members who have a life event such as death, sickness, arrival of a new baby or even wedding.” Email from the SCC’s secretary Naomi Idah Anyango dated 27 March, 2013.

<sup>1203</sup> Zambian diocesan priest Father Febian Pikiti reports that in Kasama Archdiocese and other dioceses in Zambia it is common for SCCs to have their own choirs and to be responsible for the music and the songs of the Sunday Masses. Conversation with Febian Pikiti in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 August, 2012. SCC Choirs are common in other parts of Eastern Africa such as Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania.

<sup>1204</sup> A distinction is made between a normal mass that happens to take place in a SCC (such as in a home) and a genuine *Jumuiya* Mass with its unique characteristics and style.

<sup>1205</sup> The ideal in a Shared Homily is not that each person just gives his or her personal reflection in turn. Rather, in the whole experience, there is a genuine sharing and ongoing enrichment where each new reflection builds on and deepens the earlier reflections.

11. Celebrations 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.<sup>1206</sup>
13. Formation and training workshops/seminars of SCC leaders, animators and members.<sup>1207</sup>
14. Retreats/Recollection Days<sup>1208</sup>/Spiritual Renewal Formation Days/Pilgrimages of a SCC.
15. Elections in the SCC. Elections of the five top official posts (Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary, Vice-secretary, Treasurer) take place every three years and are supervised by representatives of the parish. At the same time there are elections of the different lay ecclesial ministers according to the priorities of the SCC. According to need (for example, the replacement of a SCC lay ecclesial minister who moves away) other elections can take place any time during the three years. Guidelines vary from country to country and diocese to diocese, there is a concern for gender balance (mixture of men and women), age balance (old and young), ethnic group balance (different ethnic groups), economic balance (rich and poor), etc.

More information is available on the:

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page”  
[www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

Updated: 8 May, 2016

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<sup>1206</sup> Many parishes have monthly meetings of SCC leaders, coordinators and animators.

<sup>1207</sup> Many dioceses and parishes in Eastern Africa systematically elect new leaders in the SCCs every three years. Some dioceses and parishes organize formation and training workshops for the new SCC leaders.

<sup>1208</sup> 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.

## **2. 31 Criteria to Evaluate a Typical Small Christian Community (SCC) in Eastern Africa**

Our SCCs Research Team has established 31 criteria for evaluating a typical neighborhood, parish-based Small Christian Community (SCC) in an urban, urban-rural (called peri-urban in Zambia), rural-urban or rural area in Eastern Africa or a specialized SCC. These criteria are drawn from official AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) documents as far back as the 1973, 1976 and 1979 AMECEA Plenary Study Conferences, the First African Synod in 1994, the Second African Synod in 2009, recent papal documents, practical pastoral decisions based on experience during this 1973-2016 period, and an evolving vision, theology, and praxis of SCCs. **NOTE:** 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 nine countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), South Sudan (2011), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961). Somalia (1995) and Djibouti (2002) are Affiliate Members.

1. The SCC is small -- usually not more than 15 or 20 regularly attending adults (with a varying number of children).<sup>1209</sup>
2. The SCC usually meets every week.<sup>1210</sup> Some SCCs meet every two weeks.
3. The SCC meets during the week outside of the Sunday Eucharist/"Sunday Service without a Priest."
4. The SCC meets in the home of one of its members usually on a rotation basis.

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<sup>1209</sup> Our research has found that determining the right size based on the number of families alone is not that helpful. The number of members from one family (that can be a nuclear family or an extended family/multigenerational family) can vary a lot and throw off the total desired number. But at the same time Lee's insight has to be appreciated:

In the past year I visited small Christian communities in Eastern Africa. At a parish meeting of the pastoral leaders of 24 Small Christian Communities, I know people in the USA would have counted the number of individuals and given an answer. But every one of the 24 community leaders said how many families are in the community, for family, not the individual person, is the basic social unit.

Bernard Lee, *The Beating of Great Wings: A Worldly Spirituality for Active, Apostolic Communities*, Mystic: Twenty-third Publications, 2004, p. 116.

<sup>1210</sup> This calls for creativity and flexibility. In rural areas during the planting season (rainy season) SCCs members meet less frequently. Equally it is better to organize SCCs workshops during the dry season after the harvest when people have more time.

5. The catechist is not the leader. A variety of leaders/ministers are chosen from within the SCC. They are animators, not bosses.
6. The SCC chooses a patron/patroness saint and is called by his or her name. This gives a specific Christian identity to the SCC beyond its geographical place name. The specific saint chosen serves as a model for the SCC members' lives and work. For example, a SCC may choose one of the apostles to indicate its apostolic/pastoral focus or one of the Ugandan Martyrs to show its African identity or a youthful saint if it is mainly composed of young people. The SCC celebrates the annual Feast Day of its patron/patroness saint.
7. The SCC is the felt need of its members on the local level without depending on the priest or pastoral agent/worker.
8. The SCC emphasizes friendships, personal relationships, family bonds, solidarity, and Christian belonging --sharing together, working together, and celebrating together (including social activities, meals and entertainment) in the context of African values and customs. It can be a significant support group.<sup>1211</sup> Developing SCCs is a concrete expression of, and realization of, the Church-as-Family Model of Church (First African Synod in 1994 and Second African Synod in 2009).
9. The SCC is an Inculturation/Contextualization Model of Church that tries to evolve from the grassroots up out of the daily life and experiences of the people themselves.
10. The SCC has some kind of *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Life Connections* on a regular basis. Usually the Gospel of the following Sunday<sup>1212</sup> is chosen (becoming a lectionary-based faith sharing SCC) with a clear step by step plan. Members try to integrate faith and life, the *Bible* and everyday experience. Sometimes the SCC has Daily Life-*Bible* Connections. Start with special themes and topics as well as our experiences and events of daily life and then go to the *Bible*. Use the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process of the Pastoral Spiral/Circle/Cycle. This is an experience of faith sharing.

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<sup>1211</sup> Some SCCs have a special community uniform to express their unique identity and solidarity. This is especially true of the SCCs in Zambia. See the example of John Paul I SCC in Lusaka Archdiocese and the SCCs in St. Leopold Parish in Livingstone Diocese.

<sup>1212</sup> Sometimes the Gospel of the previous Sunday is read. There is a value here since there is no one way to do the weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*. Some SCCs like to deepen the meaning and application of the previous Sunday's readings and homily by using them during the following week. Many applications to daily life can be found and discussed in a midweek SCC meeting after hearing the readings and summary of the homily on the previous Sunday. A Case Study is when *Luke 15:1-32* is used (for example, the 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C): The three parables of “The Lost Sheep,” “The Lost Coin” and “The Prodigal Son” (also called “The Lost Son” and “The Prodigal Father”). These three parables have many rich themes in alphabetical order: celebration, clemency, forgiveness, friendship, mercy, rejoicing, relationship, repentance and sorrow.

A few SCCs begin their weekly meeting by summarizing the reflections on the previous Sunday and end their meeting by reflecting on the following Sunday.

11. Regularly there is the Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions).
12. Silence after the *Bible* reading to listen to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us.
13. The SCC has pastoral and business meetings on a regular basis.
14. The SCC has some kind of planned practical action, service and pastoral, social and mission outreach. Ideally this is a communal response where the SCC members carry out the practical action as a group. Ideally it is connected to/flows from the Gospel text of the weekly *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection and is closely related to the pastoral priorities and activities of the parish. This service and outreach responds to local challenges and problems such as lax Catholics in the neighborhood, family and marriage difficulties, problems, bereavement,<sup>1213</sup> sick people, needy and poor people, people with HIV/AIDS, street children, internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees, and people with dependency on alcohol, drugs, gambling and other addictions, local tensions over tribalism/negative ethnicity, concern about ecology and the environment and so on.
15. The SCC usually has a treasury (fund) with a regular collection taken during its gatherings. The money is used for the activities of the SCC such as celebrations (meals, entertainment, etc.), bereavement of members and their families and to help needy people.
16. The SCC has self-reliance projects (self-generating activities) and fund-raisers.
17. The SCC members participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy as a community celebration of life (whether the parish/outstation Sunday Eucharistic Celebration or an occasional Eucharistic Celebration in the SCC itself that is called a *Jumuiya* (Swahili for “Community”) Mass. This reflects the “communion of communities” (or “communities of communities”) model of church. There are opportunities for celebrating other sacraments in the small community such as Baptism, Reconciliation, Marriage and Anointing of the Sick.
18. The SCC is responsible for assisting in the Sunday Mass in the parish, subparish or outstation on a rotation basis.<sup>1214</sup> 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. 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

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<sup>1213</sup> Members of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) follow the bereavement customs of their different ethnic groups in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya. The younger brother of the Chairperson of my own St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin’s Parish died. We had special prayers and a collection. But it was the eldest brother (first born) and the head of the family who led the bereavement customs and plans of the Luyia Ethnic Group including transporting the body of the deceased back to their ancestral home in Kakamega.

<sup>1214</sup> In parishes in Malawi this is called the “Week of Service” and covers all the masses and responsibilities of the week.

the Faithful” (“General Intercessions”).<sup>1215</sup> Specific SCCs encourage the youth participate in the small plays or dramas/role plays that take place during mass.

19. 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.
20. The SCC analyzes justice and peace issues with concrete follow-up on the SCC, parish, deanery and diocesan levels.
21. The SCC has opportunities for Special Study (on the *Bible*, the Creed, the Sacraments, a Catholic Church Document, a Religious Book, a Devotional Book, etc.), Counseling, etc.
22. The SCC has opportunities for Retreats/Spiritual Renewal and Recollection Days/Pilgrimages.
23. There is an annual SCC Day on the parish, subparish or outstation levels. This includes the Eucharist, a meal and sharing SCC activities.
24. The SCC help to promote and nurture vocations and ministries at various levels of the life of the church.
25. The SCC elects its own leaders in a democratic process of the church from below.
26. The SCC officially participates in the parish structures as a “communion of communities” (or “community of communities” or “network of communities”) model of church. For example, the SCC (or a group of SCCs) has a representative on the Outstation or Subparish or Parish Council/Parish Pastoral Council. Leadership starts from below.
27. There are regular meetings of the SCC leaders to coordinate and animate SCC activities.
28. There are formation and training sessions (workshops and seminars) of the SCC leaders and animators.
29. There is some kind of coordination and networking of the different SCCs on the parish, deanery, and diocesan levels.
30. The pastoral priority of SCCs is an integral part of the Parish and Diocesan Pastoral Plans.
31. The SCC has a missionary spirit with a specific evangelization (first or primary evangelization, new evangelization, re-evangelization and deeper evangelization) and a mission focus.

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<sup>1215</sup> Zambian diocesan priest Father Febian Pikiti reports that in Kasama Archdiocese and other dioceses in Zambia it is common for SCCs to have their own choirs and to be responsible for the music and the songs of the Sunday Masses. SCC Choirs are common in other parts of Eastern Africa such as Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania. Some SCCs lead the “Prayer of the Faithful” (“General Intercessions”) and even write out the intentions ahead of time. Conversation with Febian Pikiti in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 August, 2012.

More information is available on the:

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[www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

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### **3. Lay Ecclesial Ministries in Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa**

Over the years the lay ecclesial ministries in SCCs in Eastern Africa have evolved in responding to the contemporary signs of the times. After Vatican II for many years in the Catholic Church there has been a lively debate about the use and meaning of the word “ministry.” Certain people did not want to use the name “minister” for a lay person, but it is more widely accepted now. The popular usage today includes the legitimacy and importance of non-ordained lay ecclesial ministries officially recognized by the Catholic Church. In some cases there is an official installation.

There are various leadership models, types and styles. In the spirit of being a new way of being and becoming church, the emphasis is on service rather than authority. A minister is a servant of the servants. A minister is not a boss, but an animator or facilitator.

It is common for a SCC to have a Chairperson,<sup>1216</sup> Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer (including stewardship) and Assistant Treasurer. The Executive Committee consists of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. Often the Chairperson and Secretary represent the SCC on the Parish Pastoral Council.

Specific lay ecclesial ministries go by many different names, types and responsibilities.<sup>1217</sup> One SCC member may be responsible for more than one ministry. They cover the following:

- Liturgy/Prayer Animator with specific responsibility for leading, facilitating and animating the weekly *Bible Service*. Also called the “Minister of the Word” and the “Bible Coordinator.”<sup>1218</sup>
- Religious Education Animator/Catechesis Animator
- Family Life Animator
- Adult Catechumenate (RCIA) Pastoral Accompanier
- Song Animator
- Justice and Peace Animator
- Marriage Minister<sup>1219</sup> that goes by many names (alphabetically):

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<sup>1216</sup> Called by many names as explained throughout this book.

<sup>1217</sup> Particular countries have particular ministries in the SCCs, for example, the Catholic Men’s Association (CMA) and Catholic Women’s Association (CWA) in Kenya.

<sup>1218</sup> Many Prayer Leaders do not realize that their important ministry of animating the weekly *Bible Service* includes introducing the theme of the Gospel in the context of the liturgical season.

<sup>1219</sup> This person/persons works closely with movements and organizations such as Couples for Christ, Marriage Encounter, Project Rachel and True Love Waits.

1. Marriage Pastoral Accompanier (before and after marriage). Also referred to as Marriage Mentor after marriage.<sup>1220</sup>
2. Single Mother Pastoral Accompanier
3. Marriage Animator (before marriage like a Formation Animator)
4. Marriage Counselor<sup>1221</sup> (after marriage)
  - Youth Animator/Facilitator<sup>1222</sup>
  - Children Animator/Guardian of the Children. Sometimes this person is the PMC Coordinator
  - Good Neighbor/Good Samaritan/Promoter of Community Spirit<sup>1223</sup>
  - Servant of the Poor/Helper of the Needy
  - Health Servant/Volunteer Community Health Care (CHC) Worker or Minister<sup>1224</sup>
  - Projects/Development Coordinator
  - Eucharistic Minister<sup>1225</sup>
  - Healing Minister<sup>1226</sup>

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<sup>1220</sup> The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB)'s "Results of the Consultation in Kenya on the 46 Questions in the *Lineamenta* on *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World* has a very good section explaining how a happily married couple can "mentor" (serve as "mentors") for a newly married couple.

<sup>1221</sup> "Counselor" or Counseling" is a tricky word because for many it is interpreted as "problem-centered." Research surveys in Kenya indicate that many couples faced by marital problems do not seek real counseling. Only 1.8% seek professional psychological counseling. Men in particular resist counseling and deny that they have a "problem" with fidelity, alcohol, spending money, etc. Perhaps "marriage guidance" is a better term.

<sup>1222</sup> The Church of the Nativity in the Lutherville, Maryland, USA has Confirmation Mentors – adult ministers who are like Pastoral Accompaniers of the teenagers during the entire preparation process. It is hoped that the sponsors continue this accompaniment after the reception of the sacrament.

<sup>1223</sup> This neighborhood ministry has many services: welcoming new people into the SCCs; reporting about members who may be sick (such as those with HIV/AIDS), traveling, etc.; helping a member in need; promoting brotherhood and sisterhood and the common good; and encouraging joint activities. For example, in Dar es Salaam the SCCs members may clean the street where they live, enjoy watching a big football (soccer) game together, having a street party with food, drinks, etc.

<sup>1224</sup> This ministry is described at length in "Case Study of Volunteer Community Health Care (CHC) Workers in the SCCs in Kenya" in Joseph Healey, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Agents of Change in the Fight against HIV/AIDS in Eastern Africa." African Jesuit AIDS Network. Nairobi, Kenya. January, 2015. Published in a book on *HIV & AIDS in Africa: Theological Reflection, Public Health, and Social Transformation*. 2016. These volunteer CHC Workers are trained at the Community Health Training Center at St. Theresa's Parish, Eastleigh in Nairobi.

<sup>1225</sup> Although not common, in some parishes a group of neighboring SCCs choose one designated person to bring communion to the sick, etc.

<sup>1226</sup> Although not common, some SCCs choose one designated person to pray over and lay hands on the sick, etc.

- Representative(s) on the Parish Pastoral Council.
- Overall Coordinator. Active SCC member chosen to coordinate the SCCs on the outstation, sub-parish and parish levels.

Most of the attention is on the election of the new chairperson of the SCC, but the election of the leaders of the other lay ecclesial ministries is important too. The pastor of Kiserian Parish in Ngong Diocese, Kenya points out that Catholics who have not been married sacramentally can still be chosen for certain SCCs leadership positions such as:

- Justice and Peace Animator
- Good Neighbor/Good Samaritan/Promoter of Community Spirit
- Servant of the Poor/Helper of the Needy
- Health Servant/Volunteer Community Health Care (CHC) Worker or Minister
- Projects/Development Coordinator

The ideal is to have ongoing formation and training of each type of lay ecclesial minister on a regular basis. This remains a huge challenge and task. In the 1970s and 1980s Mwoleka, the founder of SCCs in Tanzania, began a “Seven-Year Plan to Train Leaders of the Small Church Communities.” Through workshops, seminars and meetings in Rulenge Diocese he and his diocesan training team trained seven types of lay ministers – one ministry per year.<sup>1227</sup> Such training remains arduous work even up to today.

Some YSCCs in Eastern Africa have a special lay ministry: Matron and Patron of the youth communities – adults from the parent (or *Mama Jumuyia*) who serve as the link persons and advisors.

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<sup>1227</sup> See “The Bishop’s Seven-Year Dream” in Joseph Healey, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Black Christian Values*. Joseph G. Healey. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981 and London: SCM Press, 1981, pp. 108-117. Also available in Swahili and German.

#### **4. 13 Steps in the Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Daily Life Connections<sup>1228</sup> Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa<sup>1229</sup>**

**NOTE:** SCC members in Africa normally meet every week in one of their homes as part of the church in the neighborhood.<sup>1230</sup> Usually it is a *Bible Service*. Ideally this is lectionary-based faith sharing and a family-based gathering/meeting. Sometimes food and drink is served. Occasionally there is a pastoral/business meeting. It is not necessary that all these steps be used in each gathering/meeting. The number and order of the steps should be creatively adapted to the local context and situation.<sup>1231</sup> The seven steps of Gospel Sharing of Lumko (South Africa) and the four moments in the process of *Lectio Divina* can be incorporated into the weekly meeting.

1. Opening prayer or song.<sup>1232</sup>

2. Brief reports on the members' lives during the past week (called a "touchdown period"<sup>1233</sup> 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

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<sup>1228</sup> We have discovered that we need an "Explanation of Terms" for each local context/situation.

<sup>1229</sup> Numbers 3-10 give various methods of *Bible Reflection*. There are many more methods. For example, the Emmaus Walk based on *Luke 24:13-35*. In either the whole SCC or in groups of two people, this powerful story of the two disciples meeting Jesus on the road and recognizing him in the breaking of the bread can be retold in the context of our own lives today as SCCs members answer Jesus' question "What things?"

<sup>1230</sup> One practical suggestion comes from the Small Church Communities at St. Thomas More, the Catholic Chapel and Center at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, USA. They suggest the following: "Prepare for each weekly session in a prayerful way. Pause for three minutes and offer a prayer of openness and gratitude before leaving a place and going to your SCC. Approach your SCC reverently and not just as the next activity to attend." *Called To Be Church: Small Church Communities on Campus*, New Haven: Saint Thomas More the Catholic Chapel and Center at Yale University, 2011-2012, p. 346.

<sup>1231</sup> In a rural area where a number of the SCC members do not read, the steps should be fewer and simpler.

<sup>1232</sup> The lyrics (words) of the songs are very important and can be a "teaching moment," an opportunity for prayer and formation.

<sup>1233</sup> The 14 SCCs at Yale University, USA call this step the "Check-In" or the "Roses and Thorns." SCC members share the feeling or experiences that touched them or affected their life -- their good and bad experiences, their successes and failures, their lights and shadows during the past week. The question is not "How are you," but "How are you, *really*?"

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.<sup>1234</sup>

4. Read the Gospel<sup>1235</sup> of the following Sunday (first time).<sup>1236</sup> The Sunday Scripture Readings offer the ordinary lens through which SCC members look at their lives and their world. The reading of the Gospel helps members to discover the Gospel in their lives.

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. Listen to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us.

8. *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible*—Daily Life Connections. Connect, relate and apply the *Bible* (Gospel) to our daily lives<sup>1237</sup> and experience (on both personal and society-wide levels).<sup>1238</sup> 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

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<sup>1234</sup> This step is often passed over or shortened, but is very important in helping SCC members to understand the plan of the liturgical year and how to be lectionary-based Catholics.

<sup>1235</sup> In multi-ethnic and multi-language areas the Gospel passage may be read in two or three different languages, for example, Swahili, Gikuyu and English in Kenya. Sometimes there is a value to read the text in one version of the *Bible*. At other times there is a value to hear different versions of the same Gospel text.

<sup>1236</sup> The *Bible* passage is read slowly, prayerfully and reflectively. Sometimes the SCC members pass the *Bible* around the circle and each person reads one verse. Just like the Lector at the celebration of the Eucharist, the reader in the SCC should prepare ahead of time. After participating in thousands of *Bible* Services and masses over 45 plus years I have experienced the gamut of “preparation:” from the reader who understands “preparation” as merely finding the right page in the *Bible* or *Missal* to the person who spends 20 minutes to pray over and reflect on the text in advance in order to internalize the passage so as to express the meaning better. Especially to Lectors/readers in outstations and subparishes I remind them that “even the pope prepares the *Bible* reading ahead of time.”

<sup>1237</sup> From our research many Eastern Africans find it very hard to connect the *Bible* to daily life in concrete, specific ways, that is, to apply the Gospel passage to concrete lived experience and the immediate local reality. We have discovered that this a skill that has to be learned, practiced and developed in training workshops, etc.

<sup>1238</sup> Some SCC members receive a weekly email message/Smartphone text message/Facebook message/What’sApp message/podcast with additional reflections material that makes the connections between the readings and events happening in the local community, in the Catholic Church and in the world.

the *Bible*. Use the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process of the Pastoral Spiral/Circle/Cycle. Both ways are an experience of faith sharing. SCC members share their reflections sitting together in a circle and for a maximum of five minutes.<sup>1239</sup>

9. Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions or Bidding Prayers).<sup>1240</sup>

10. Collection.

11. Choose a concrete practical action/task<sup>1241</sup> (ideally a community response) to be carried out during the next week. Ideally it is connected to/flows from the Gospel text and is closely

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<sup>1239</sup> Usually SCC members share their reflections in a random order irrespective of theme or content. It is better to build on the themes and content of the previous reflections. Sometimes SCC members can feel the Holy Spirit working as the depth and insights of the reflections flow from each other and build on each other.

<sup>1240</sup> There are many styles and types of prayers: some are composed ahead of time and read during the weekly meeting; others are spontaneous. Some meetings (and the subsequent Sunday Eucharistic Liturgy) used lectionary-based prayers based on the Scripture readings of the Sunday.

<sup>1241</sup> Sometimes the SCC members feel overwhelmed by the needs of their families and neighbors and have trouble choosing a specific practical action especially the “who” and the “when.” The universal adage *one day at a time* comes in handy. I remember the story of a Kenyan man who coordinated the Street Children Project in Nairobi, Kenya. On any day 50 or 60 street children could be lined up to get assistance at his outdoor “station” in Westlands. They would ask for money, food, clothes, a school, a job and so forth. As they milled around his desk in a very noisy, even chaotic, atmosphere the man was asked, “How do you manage with all these children and all these requests at the same time?” “It’s simple,” he answered. “One child at a time.”

Many mantras have been created from this universal adage and idea such as: “Climate action, one bite at a time.” “One by one.” “One at a time.” “One thing at a time.” “One step at a time.” “One thoughtful step at a time.” “One day at a time,” “One home at a time.” “Changing lives -- one child at a time.” “One kid at a time.” “One piece at a time.” “One flipper at a time.” “One paddle at a time.” “One bite at a time.” “Cut one branch of a tree at a time.” “Fight poverty one family at a time.” “Eradicate poverty one family at a time.” “Rebuilding the church one parish at a time.” “Rebuilding one’s life one movement at a time.”

This relates to the African Riddle: *How do you eat an elephant?* ANSWER: *One bite at a time*. This includes chewing slowing and digesting well. Meaning: do or tackle one thing at a time. And do it thoroughly and well. Then move on to something else. This is a “slow, but sure” approach and a different mentality than multi-tasking. To show the popularity of this riddle 14,879 people were reached, 416 people clicked “like,” 191 people clicked “Share” and 26 people posted comments as of 11 September, 2015 on our African Proverbs Website Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/afriprov>).

The sayings *if you’re going to talk the talk, you’ve got to walk the walk*, or *walk it like you talk it* are 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century American alternatives to various old sayings which

related to the pastoral priorities and activities of the parish or local community. Examples: visiting the sick, visiting members who rarely come to the SCC, helping needy people, preparing both children and adult for the sacraments, justice and peace actions, self-reliance, etc.<sup>1242</sup>

This can also be some kind of follow-up/follow-down like a learning or lesson to take home from the meeting. It serves to answer the questions: What have I learned from this meeting? What is my take away? What is my follow-up/follow-down?<sup>1243</sup>

12. Closing prayer or song.

13. Exchange a Sign of Peace.<sup>1244</sup>

**NOTE:** For a complete description in English see: *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Black Christian Values*. Joseph G. Healey. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981 and London: SCM Press, 1981. A Special Edition (32 Years Anniversary Edition printed digitally) was published by Orbis Books in 2013. In Swahili see: *Kuishi Injili (Living the Gospel)*. Joseph G. Healey. Peramiho: Benedictine Publications Ndanda-Peramiho, 2006. A commentary on these steps is also available in articles in *African Christian Studies* (CUEA), *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, *Hekima Review* (Hekima College) and *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission* (Tangaza University College). See also the Seven-Step Gospel Sharing Method of Lumko (South Africa), the four moments of the process of *Lectio Divina* and the steps in the prayer and song book *Tumshangilie Bwana*. Various dioceses and parishes have developed their own handouts describing the various steps.

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epitomize the notion that “talk is cheap,” for example, *actions speak louder than words*, *practice what you preach* and *put your money where your mouth is*. Pope Francis challenges us by the consistency of both his words and his deeds to reach out to the poorest and neediest in whatever ways we understand the meaning of these words.

<sup>1242</sup> Some SCCs include an opportunity for members to express “points to take home,” that is, some idea or insight that they have learned during the meeting that they will use or follow up/down in their ongoing actions.

<sup>1243</sup> A concrete example that I use regularly in reading and reflecting on the Beatitudes (*Matthew* 5:1-12). Verse 9 says: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” In solidarity with Pax Christ International every Friday I pray for specific countries in Africa by name that particularly need peace.

<sup>1244</sup> The SCC members that meet on Mondays at the University of Nairobi, Kenya Science Teachers Campus in Nairobi begin by sharing their experiences of the past week. Then the leader asks if members have any grievances against each other. Then they exchange a sign of peace to reconcile themselves to each other and to restore the friendship that they had before.

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## **5. Utaratibu wa Hatua Kumi na Tatu katika Vikao vya Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo (Swahili Version)**

**NOTE:** SCC members in Africa normally meet every week in one of their homes. Usually it is a Bible Service. Ideally this is lectionary-based faith sharing and a family-based gathering/meeting. Sometimes food and drink is served. Occasionally there is a pastoral/business meeting. It is not necessary that all the steps be used in each gathering/meeting. The number and order of the steps should be creatively adapted to the local context and situation. The seven steps of Gospel Sharing of Lumko (South Africa) and the four moments in the process of *Lectio Divina* can be incorporated into the weekly meeting.

- 1- Sala ya kufungua kikao/Ama wimbo wa kuanzia kikao.
- 2- Kufahamishana kwa ufupi matukio yaliyoingiana na maisha ya wanajumuiya katika juma lilopita. Simulizi fupi kutokana na utekelezaji wa maazimio yaliyolenga majukumu mbali mbali kutokana na kikao cha mwisho cha jumuiya.
- 3- Kupeana utangulizi wa nia ama wazo kuu katika maadhimisho ya liturjia ya juma.
- 4- Kusoma injili ya Jumapili inayofuata kwa mara ya kwanza.
- 5- Kutamka neno, kifungu ama msemu uliokugusa unaotokana na injili iliyosomwa.
- 6- Kusoma injili ya Jumapili inayofuata kwa mara ya pili.
- 7- Kubaki kimya katika hali ya tafakari kwa muda wa dakika chache ili wanajumuiya wasikilize sauti ya Mungu jinsi inavyomzungumzia kila mwanajumuiya katika dhamira na nafsi yake.
- 8- Kushirikishana tafakari katika neno la Mungu. Tafakari hii ihusishe mwelekeo wa maisha ya kawaida kwa utaratibu wa hatua za “Ona,” “Amua” na “Tenda” kama tukio la imani.
- 9- Sala za Waumini.
- 10- Mchango wa jumuiya.
- 11- Kazi ya kutenda. Kuchagua tendo dhahiri litakaloadhimishwa na kutekelezwa katika juma linalofuata. Kwa mfano: Kuenda kuwasabahi wagonjwa.
- 12- Sala ya kufunga kikao ama wimbo wa kumaliza kikao.
- 13- Kutakiana amani ya Kristo.

(Tafsiri na Padri Harrison Yaa wa Jimbo Kuu la Mombasa, Kenya)

## **6. Seven-Step Gospel Sharing (Lumko, South Africa)**

### **1. WE INVITE THE LORD**

-- Will someone, please invite Jesus in a prayer

### **2. WE READ THE TEXT**

-- Let us open...chapter...

-- Will someone, please read verses...

-- Will someone read the same text from a different version or language, if possible!

### **3. WE PICK OUT ANY WORDS AND MEDITATE ON THEM**

-- We pick out any words or short phrases, read them aloud prayerfully and keep silence in between.

-- (afterwards) We read the text again.

### **4. WE LET GOD SPEAK TO US IN SILENCE**

-- We keep silence for...minutes and allow God to speak to us.

### **5. WE SHARE WHAT WE HAVE HEARD IN OUR HEARTS**

-- Which word has touched us personally? (PLEASE NO DISCUSSING OR PREACHING)

### **6. WE DISCUSS ANY TASK WHICH OUR GROUP IS CALLED TO DO (They discuss what the Lord wants them to do as the "Church in the Neighborhood")**

-- A. Report on previous task

-- B. Which new task has to be done?

### **7. WE PRAY SPONTANEOUSLY**

-- All are invited to pray from the heart.

-- (Afterwards) We end with a prayer/hymn which all know.

## **7. Hatua Saba: Njia za Kutafakari Masoma ya Biblia (Lumko, South Africa, Swahili Version)**

### **1. Tumwalike Bwana.**

-- Mmoja amwalike Yesu kwa njia ya sala.

### **2. Tusome neno la Mungu.**

-- Tufungue kitabu cha... sura...

-- Mmoja asome kuanzia mstari wa...

### **3. Tuchague maneno kadhaa na kutafakari juu yao.**

-- Tuchague maneno au fungu la maneno.

-- Tuyasome kwa sauti kwa njia ya sala.

-- Tukae kimya baada ya kila sehemu kusomwa.

### **4. Tukae kimya ili Mungu aweze kuzumgumza nasi.**

-- Tuwe kimya kwa dakika...na kumwacha Mungu azungumze nasi.

### **5. Tushirikishe yale ambayo moyo unatwambia.**

-- Ni neno gani limekugusa moyo wako?

### **6. Tujadiliane kazi ambayo kundi letu limeitwa kutekeleza.**

-- A. Ripoti kuhusu mpango wa kazi ya mkutano uliopita.

-- B. Ni kazi gani mpya tunaweza kufanya? NANI atafanya NINI na ataifanya LINI?

### **7. Tusali sala isiyo na matayarisho ya awali.**

-- Tufunge na ombi/wimbo ambalo kila mtu anajua bila kitabu.<sup>1245</sup>

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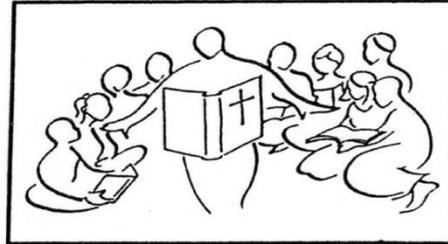
<sup>1245</sup> See *Safari Yetu Pamoja*.

## 8. Group Response Method/Bible -- Mirror Method (Lumko, South Africa)

### BIBLE-MIRROR-METHOD (Group Response)

#### 1. We listen carefully to God's Word

- We invite the Lord in a prayer and welcome him.



- We read the text twice.
- We pick out short phrases, read them aloud three times and keep a pause in between.
- We read the text again.

#### 2. We see our own life reflected in the text.

Let us discuss the following question with the person next to us. We report to the whole group after 3-5 minutes.



- *What life-situation or problem in our parish, village, town or country is similar to the situation mentioned in the text?-- (Do not talk about your personal problems!)*

☞ **Report after 3-5 minutes.**

*(After the report:)*

☞ **Choose one problem to discuss further.**

- *Does anyone know more about this problem?*
- *Why do you think we have such a problem?*

**3. We look at our life-situation with the eyes of God.**

We now imagine ourselves at God's side. We make ourselves one with God and try to look with his eyes at the life situation which we have chosen.

We keep silence for three minutes and ask ourselves:

*'How does God look at our problem?'*

*'What does God think, feel and say about it?'*



*(Perhaps we remember Psalms and other texts from scripture which may have something to do with our life-situation.)*

#### 4. We share on 'God's point of view!'

We tell each other  
what we think God is  
saying to us about  
our problem...



#### 5. We plan in the 'Kingdom Way'.

We ask ourselves:

***What does God want us to do?***

**WHO** is doing **WHAT** and **WHEN**?

*(If a group has chosen an important and difficult problem, the action plan should be discussed at a separate meeting.)*

For making an action plan we use the 'Problem solving Scheme' on the following page. A detailed explanation and examples of how to use this Scheme you will find in AsIPA text A\8.

Before you use this Problem solving Scheme you should narrow down a "huge problem" (eg. Unemployment) to a concrete expression or example of this problem. (eg. 'In our street there are some youth without work!')

**9. Five Steps of the Amos Program**  
**(Lumko, South Africa)**

**Step 1: Look at life.**

**Step 2: Why does this happen?**

**Step 4: We listen to God.**

**Step 4: Search for root causes.**

**Step 5: Plan with firmness and love.**

## 10. The Process of Lectio Divina

*Lectio Divina* (Latin for “Divine Reading”) is a slow, contemplative praying of the Scriptures which enables the *Bible*, the Word of God, to become a means of union with God. Time set aside in a special way for *lectio divina* enables us to discover in our daily life an underlying spiritual rhythm. Within this rhythm we discover an increasing ability to offer more of ourselves and our relationships to the Father, and to accept the embrace that God is continuously extending to us in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.

### 1. Lectio -- reading/listening

The art of *lectio divina* begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear “with the ear of our hearts” as St. Benedict encourages us in the *Prologue to the Rule*. When we read the Scriptures we should try to imitate the prophet Elijah. We should allow ourselves to become women and men who are able to listen for the still, small voice of God (I *Kings* 19:12); the “faint murmuring sound” which is God's word for us, God's voice touching our hearts. This gentle listening is an “atunement” to the presence of God in that special part of God's creation which is the Scriptures.

The cry of the prophets to ancient Israel was the joy-filled command to “Listen!” “Sh'ma Israel: Hear, O Israel!” In *lectio divina* we, too, heed that command and turn to the Scriptures, knowing that we must “hear” -- listen -- to the voice of God, which often speaks very softly. In order to hear someone speaking softly we must learn to be silent. We must learn to love silence. If we are constantly speaking or if we are surrounded with noise, we cannot hear gentle sounds. The practice of *lectio divina*, therefore, requires that we first quiet down in order to hear God's word to us. This is the first step of *lectio divina*, appropriately called *lectio* -- reading.

The reading or listening which is the first step in *lectio divina* is very different from the speed reading which modern Christians apply to newspapers, books and even to the *Bible*. *Lectio Divina* is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally -- not loudly, but intimately. In *Lectio Divina* we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God's word for us this day.

### 2. Meditatio -- meditation

Once we have found a word or a passage in the Scriptures that speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and “ruminate” on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. Christians have always seen a scriptural invitation to *lectio divina* in the example of the Virgin Mary “pondering in her heart” what she saw and heard of Christ (*Luke* 2:19). For us today these images are a reminder that we must take in the word -- that is, memorize it -- and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. This is the second step or stage in *lectio*

*divina -- meditatio*. Through *meditatio* we allow God's word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.

### 3. *Oratio -- prayer*

Prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration-prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. Just as a priest consecrates the elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist, God invites us in *lectio divina* to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our *lectio* and *meditatio*. In this *oratio*, this consecration -- prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

### 4. *Contemplatio – contemplation*

Finally, we simply rest in the presence of the One who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One Who loves us has a name in the Christian Tradition -- *contemplatio*, contemplation. Once again we practice silence, letting go of our own words; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.

## 11. Reading Guide for Understanding the Bible<sup>1246</sup>

### READING GUIDE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORD OF GOD

See Marcel Le Dorze, MEP, *The Bible in 100 Weeks Reading Guide*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2013.

#### 1. Preparation:

- a. Reading of the text is done quietly and meditatively at home after making person prayer for God's guidance. Also to pray for members of your SCC.
- b. Identify the most important themes that are coming from the text as it is presented to you.
- c. The text to be read is the Word of God for us today and must be considered relevant to daily life.

#### 2. Meeting (40 Minutes):

- a. Opening prayer, a hymn or Psalm of praise to God.
- b. Facilitator to animate the meeting.
- c. Each member gives a short verbal or oral narration of the text that was read during the week and pointing out the main themes that are underlined in the text and linking them to daily life.
- d. The facilitator takes notes of the main themes/topics that have been mentioned by the members.
- e. The facilitator presents the main themes that are outline in the prayer manual/guide by stressing making connection to God's plan of salvation.
- f. Members make final comments over the text and the main themes.

#### 3. Shared Prayers (10 minutes):

- a. Spontaneous prayers to be offered by the members while others listen in silence.

#### 4. Conclusion of Meeting (10 minutes):

- a. Any announcements.
- b. Selection of the text for members to read during the course of the week.
- c. The meeting ends with a prayer by any of the members.

### READING GUIDE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORD OF GOD

#### Example of SCC 1: *Isaiah 1 – 2.*

#### 1. Preparation:

- a. Reading of the text is done quietly and meditatively at home after making person prayer for God's guidance. Also to pray for members of your SCC.

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<sup>1246</sup> There are many resources to help children read and understand the *Bible* including a weeklong extravaganza of fun and learning known as Vacation Bible School or VBS. Pioneered by the Protestants it is slowly entering the Catholic parishes during the vacation months.

- b. Identify the most important themes that are coming from the text as it is presented to you.
- c. The text to be read is the Word of God for us today and must be considered relevant to daily life.

## 2. Meeting (40 Minutes):

- a. Opening prayer, a hymn or Psalm of praise to God.
- b. Facilitator to animate the meeting.
- c. Each member gives a short verbal or oral narration of the text that was read during the week and pointing out the main themes that are underlined in the text and linking them to daily life.

### Summary (*Isaiah 1 – 2*):

- Vision of Isaiah concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
  - Children have rebelled despite God's unconditional care, providence and love.
  - "The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib, but Israel knows nothing. My people understand nothing."
  - God is not happy with sacrifices and says, "Let us talk this over. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. ... If you are willing to obey, you shall eat good things of the earth. But if you persist in rebellion, the sword shall eat you instead."
  - If people repent, God is willing to do something new and rebuild Jerusalem which shall stand as God's holy mountain. People will say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord ... he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in his paths."
  - The prophet appeals to the house of Jacob to turn back to the Lord, "O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the Lord."
  - God's power and majesty will conquer all the proud so that his strength will prosper forever.
- d. The facilitator takes notes of the main themes/topics that have been mentioned by the members.
  - e. The facilitator presents the main themes that are outlined in the prayer manual/guide by stressing making connection to God's plan of salvation.
    - Isaiah was chosen by God to be a prophet and transmit God's message to people of Israel, Jacob.
    - God has shown the greatness and the majesty of the One True God in a vision.
    - God complains about Israel's unfaithfulness and ingratitude.
    - The people of Israel were chosen as God's people, to believe in the One God, worship Him alone as the Supreme God.
    - The people of Israel failed to do this, they disregarded God's Word and the prophet Isaiah severely criticized them for these actions.
    - God is ready to show mercy in so far as Israel adheres to the message of the prophet, abandon all evil and return to God.
  - f. Members make final comments over the text and the main themes.

## 3. Shared Prayers (10 minutes):

- a. Spontaneous prayers to be offered by the members while others listen in silence.

**4. Conclusion of Meeting (10 minutes):**

- a. Any announcements.
- b. Selection of the text for members to read during the course of the week.
- c. The meeting ends with a prayer by any of the members

## READING GUIDE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORD OF GOD

### Example of SCC 2: *Isaiah 5 – 6.*

#### 1. Preparation:

- a. Reading of the text is done quietly and meditatively at home after making person prayer for God's guidance. Also to pray for members of your SCC.
- b. Identify the most important themes that are coming from the text as it is presented to you.
- c. The text to be read is the Word of God for us today and must be considered relevant to daily life.

#### 2. Meeting (40 Minutes):

- a. Opening prayer, a hymn or Psalm of praise to God.
- b. Facilitator to animate the meeting.
- c. Each member gives a short verbal or oral narration of the text that was read during the week and pointing out the main themes that are underlined in the text and linking them to daily life.
  - In the parable of the vineyard, the prophet talks about the jealous love of God for Israel.
  - God complains of the infidelity of the people as opposed to his fidelity.
  - "What more could have been done for my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?"
  - This vineyard is the house of Israel.
  - Destruction shall come upon the house of Israel and God will bring judgment upon them.
  - The vision of the Prophet in the Temple of Worship and there God is enthroned on his seat of majesty, while the angels gathered and cried: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."
  - Isaiah says, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."
  - The call of Isaiah as the angel touches his lips and a voice from the smoke says, "Whom shall I send, and who will god for us?" Her I am! Send me. Said Isaiah.
  - Isaiah receives the power from God to bring the message of God to the people and urge them to convert.
- d. The facilitator takes notes of the main themes/topics that have been mentioned by the members.
- e. The facilitator presents the main themes that are outline in the prayer manual/guide by stressing making connection to God's plan of salvation.
  - The image of Israel of God's vineyard refers to God's election of the people which the people of Israel refused and now will be extended to other people. God complains about Israel's unfaithfulness.
  - God chose Israel and was expected to believe in the one God of Israel, worship him and trust in him. But Israel disregards God's Word and they are severely criticized by God.

- God is infinitely holy and can only be recognized with the eyes of faith.
  - In a mysterious way, God manifests himself to all people without exception.
  - Isaiah is called and given the power by God to bring the message to the people.
  - God is the “firm foundation – stone” on which Israel is supposed to rely, but they preferred to rely on military might of the neighboring superpowers.
  - Israel did not trust in God’s promises and becomes an ungrateful child and an unfaithful wife.
- f. Members make final comments over the text and the main themes.

**3. Shared Prayers (10 minutes):**

- a. Spontaneous prayers to be offered by the members while others listen in silence.

**4. Conclusion of Meeting (10 minutes):**

- a. Any announcements.
- b. Selection of the text for members to read during the course of the week.
- c. The meeting ends with a prayer by any of the members

## **READING GUIDE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORD OF GOD**

### **Example of SCC 3: Isaiah 7 - 8.**

#### **1. Preparation:**

- a. Reading of the text is done quietly and meditatively at home after making person prayer for God's guidance. Also to pray for members of your SCC.
- b. Identify the most important themes that are coming from the text as it is presented to you.
- c. The text to be read is the Word of God for us today and must be considered relevant to daily life.

#### **2. Meeting (40 Minutes):**

- a. Opening prayer, a hymn or Psalm of praise to God.
- b. Facilitator to animate the meeting.
- c. Each member gives a short verbal or oral narration of the text that was read during the week and pointing out the main themes that are underlined in the text and linking them to daily life.
  - During the reign of King Ahaz, King of Judah, the King of Israel made alliance with other tribe to wage war and capture Jerusalem.
  - Isaiah goes to Ahaz, King of Judah and assures him that God will protect the city of Jerusalem from destruction.
  - The sign to assure Ahaz of God's protection was that, "the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall be called Emmanuel."
  - The reign of Ahaz will come to an end and the Kingdom will be destroyed by the foreigners because people have refused to trust in the Lord.
  - There is little hope for the people of Israel to survive the destruction that is about to happen among them.
  - The prophet calls of the people of Israel to give honor to the one God alone.
- d. The facilitator takes notes of the main themes/topics that have been mentioned by the members.
- e. The facilitator presents the main themes that are outline in the prayer manual/guide by stressing making connection to God's plan of salvation.
  - God is ready to fulfill his promise to Israel.
  - The child will be born, his name is Emmanuel, God with us.
  - The child will be king and represent God among the people.
  - Much of the land given by God to the people has been taken away.
  - Isaiah prophesized that by the power of God the Almighty, a day of liberation would come.
- f. Members make final comments over the text and the main themes.

#### **3. Shared Prayers (10 minutes):**

- a. Spontaneous prayers to be offered by the members while others listen in silence.

#### **4. Conclusion of Meeting (10 minutes):**

- a. Any announcements.
- b. Selection of the text for members to read during the course of the week.
- c. The meeting ends with a prayer by any of the members

## READING GUIDE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE WORD OF GOD

### Example of SCC 4: Isaiah 10 – 11.

#### 1. Preparation:

- a. Reading of the text is done quietly and meditatively at home after making person prayer for God's guidance. Also to pray for members of your SCC.
- b. Identify the most important themes that are coming from the text as it is presented to you.
- c. The text to be read is the Word of God for us today and must be considered relevant to daily life.

#### 2. Meeting (40 Minutes):

- a. Opening prayer, a hymn or Psalm of praise to God.
- b. Facilitator to animate the meeting.
- c. Each member gives a short verbal or oral narration of the text that was read during the week and pointing out the main themes that are underlined in the text and linking them to daily life.
  - The remnant of Israel and the survivals of the House of Jacob will truly rely on God.
  - God warns the people of Israel of the looming destruction that will happen among them.
  - The remnant of Israel will return to God the liberator and the Almighty. "It shall come to pass in that day that his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck, and this yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing one."
  - It will be a time when God will defeat all the enemies of Israel and the remnants will be restored in the land.
  - A King shall come from the stake of Jesse, "a branch shall grow out of his roots."
  - The qualities of the King who is to come are described:
    - The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, Spirit of wisdom and counsel.
    - Hostilities will come to an end.
    - All people will seek the glory of God, salvation beyond the House of Israel.
    - God will liberate the remnants and bring them back to their land, "There will be a highway for the remnant of His people, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.
- d. The facilitator takes notes of the main themes/topics that have been mentioned by the members.
- e. The facilitator presents the main themes that are outline in the prayer manual/guide by stressing making connection to God's plan of salvation.
  - God punishes the people of Israel because of their infidelity to the covenant. Much of the land given by God has now been taken from them by their enemies
  - The age of darkness for Israel, death, destruction and taking refuge.
  - The prophet assures them that God is ready to restore the remnants of Israel by the power of his Mighty. The day of liberation will come for the remnants.

- A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse and become a King. Pointing to the Davidic Kingship and beyond, prophesy for the coming of Christ.
  - The qualities and personality of the King is clearly described. A model King who will bring about peace, unity, reconciliation, prosperity and bring back all the remnants of Israel.
  - The King will reign over all nations of the earth.
- f. Members make final comments over the text and the main themes.

**3. Shared Prayers (10 minutes):**

- a. Spontaneous prayers to be offered by the members while others listen in silence.

**4. Conclusion of Meeting (10 minutes):**

- a. Any announcements.
- b. Selection of the text for members to read during the course of the week.
- c. The meeting ends with a prayer by any of the members.

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PROPOSED PROGRAM OF BIBLE STUDY IN THE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES FOR THE WHOLE YEAR 2013-2014

MONTH	RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY
October (Month of the Rosary)	In depth study of the Introduction to the Prophets In depth study of Prophet Amos
November	The prophet Hosea
December	The Prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem
January	The Prophet Micah
February	The prophet Zephaniah
March	The prophet Nahum
April	The Prophet Habakkuk
May	The Prophet Jeremiah
June	The Acts of the Apostles
July	The Acts of the Apostles continued
August	Revision of the prophet/s that were not well understood

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## 13. Stories of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa

### 1. Theresa's Old, Plastic Armless Crucifix

In animating the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania in Western Tanzania we used many ways of emphasizing the importance of the practical action part of our weekly *Bible* Service. One Tuesday afternoon I participated in the *Bible* reflections at the home of Theresa, one of the most faithful Christians in Bukiro Village. Following the local African custom she prepared a place for us to pray together outdoors. She arranged straw mats in a circle with fresh flowers in a vase in the middle.

But Theresa was embarrassed to put her old plastic crucifix next to the flowers. The crucifix had no arms. It had probably been brought to Tanzania by an expatriate missionary many years before and passed around several families.

I said to Theresa: "Don't worry, Theresa. This crucifix is fine. I'm sure it has a special meaning for us."

After one of the leaders read the Lenten Gospel there was a period of silence followed by shared reflections. Suddenly it dawned on me what that old, battered, armless crucifix was saying to our group of 15 Christians praying together. Jesus Christ was asking us to be his arms and to reach out to the poor, the needy, the sick, the suffering, the oppressed. The other Christians responded immediately to this reflection. They emphasized the importance of mutual help in the local community. One SCC member quoted one of our favorite Swahili sayings in the outstation: *Words without actions are useless.*

During the last part of the *Bible* Service we decided to help Anna, one of our neighbors who had two sick children. We gathered firewood and fetched water for the mother while she stayed at home with her children. Like Jesus we tried to be men and women for others.<sup>1247</sup>

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<sup>1247</sup> See the story "Theresa's Old, Plastic Armless Crucifix" in Joseph G. Healey (compiled), *Once Upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004, p. 118. Story No. 7 in the "SCCs Stories Database," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 27 September, 2011 [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=626](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=626). African Story No. 488 in the "African Stories Database," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 1 January, 2014, [http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=196](http://afriprov.org/index.php/african-stories-database.html?task=display2&cid[0]=196). "Le Crucifix Sans Bras" in Healey, Joseph (Recueillis), *La Sagesse Africaine: Histoires Vraies, Mythes et Contes*, Kinshasa: Editions Paulines, 2012, pp. 40-41.

## 2. Visiting St. Charles Lwanga SCC

At 5 p.m. on Sunday 15 enthusiastic lay people gather at Peter Macha's home for the weekly meeting of their St. Charles Lwanga Small Christian Community in the Drive-in Estate of St. Peter's Parish in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The SCC members (mainly adults) report on their families' health and local problems in the neighborhood. Then they reflect on one of the Sunday scripture readings: the Epistle of *St. James* that stresses that faith without action is dead. The SCC members decide to help some of the homeless street children in their neighborhood. They plan a party for the youth in their SCC who will soon be confirmed. The meeting includes lively singing in Swahili with clapping and offering special prayer intentions for the sick in their parish and peace in Sudan. For these SCC members the maxim *We are the Church* is not just a slogan, but a way of life that truly applies to them.

St. Charles Lwanga SCC was officially launched on the feast of Epiphany in 1978 and is the oldest of the 38 active SCCs in St. Peter's Parish, all fully involved in the local pastoral life. The bedrock of this community is the family. Married couples host, organize and lead the group. Other people drift in and out; some only really turn up when there's a celebration and a meal. But it's the couples who provide the core stability of the SCC. Currently there are 22 families with a total membership of 96 including children of all ages. St. Charles Lwanga is a model of a family-based<sup>1248</sup> and lectionary-based SCC. The parent SCC started a youth branch, a women's club, and children activities. The SCC is twinned with the Fellowship Group, a small reflection group in the Anglican Rattery Church in South Hams in Devon, England.<sup>1249</sup>

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<sup>1248</sup> Every day there are Morning Prayers and Evening Prayers in one of the homes of a SCC member – for those who can come. The adults see this as a “teaching moment” to help their children learn their prayers and the basics of the Catholic faith. The adult SCC members take responsibility for the children faith formation without waiting for the Catholic Parish (for example, Sunday School) or the Catholic School to do it.

<sup>1249</sup> See the story “Visiting St. Charles Lwanga SCC” in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, p. 100. SCCs Story No. 8 in the “SCCs Stories Database,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website retrieved 27 September, 2011 [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=627](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=627).

### **3. We Need To Run Out and Meet Lucia**

One Thursday afternoon Maryknoll missionary Father Jim Corrigan participated in the *Bible Service* of the St. Charles Lwanga Small Christian Community (SCC) in the Bomani section of Bunda Town, Tanzania. This SCC has a special concern for the increasing number of people with AIDS in Bunda. Martina Chacha is responsible for the ministry of "Good Neighbor" in her small community. She regularly checks on the sick people in the vicinity of Bomani. During the past week Maria Magesa daughter's Lucia returned after over two months in the TB Ward in Bugando Medical Center in Mwanza. Lucia has AIDS and now is too weak to even get out of bed. The family was too embarrassed to tell anyone, but the word slowly got around. Martina told the SCC leaders about Lucia. They decided to discuss how to help her during the Thursday meeting of the SCC members.

The Gospel of the Fourth Sunday of Lent -- the Parable of the Prodigal Son from the 15th chapter of St. *Luke* -- was read and reflected upon. Jim added his thoughts like everyone else. One SCC member pointed out that the father in the story does not wait for his younger son to return. He runs out to meet him. This shows God's great love for us. He is ready to run out to meet us in love, forgiveness and compassionate care.

When the community members discussed a practical action to flow from the gospel it was immediately clear. As the elderly man James put it: "We need to run out and meet Lucia who is suffering." So after the *Bible Service* and meeting everyone walked over to Maria Magesa's home to visit Lucia. It was dark inside the small bedroom and Jim had trouble adjusting to the poor light. Lucia has no husband which is increasingly common these days. Her two young children were sitting quietly in the corner. Lucia herself was lying on her side in bed, too weak to even sit up. Her face was drawn and flushed. Sores on her tongue had bothered her for many days. Her arms were thin and bony. Occasionally Lucia would put her head over the side of the bed and spit into a small can.

Martina Chacha quietly sat down on the bed, held Lucia's hand and told her how much the small community members cared about her. Philipo, the leader of the SCC, explained how suffering can be a special call from God. The SCC's patron saint, Charles Lwanga, had to suffer very much in Uganda before he was burned to death for his Christian faith. There were prayers of intercession and everyone, even the children, laid hands on Lucia to pray for her recovery. Lucia said a weak "thank you." Philipo gave her mother Maria a small donation of flour and money from the small community.

Then there was a painful moment of silence. Everyone realized how many families in the Bunda area has a loved one who is either sick with AIDS or already had died. Many people like Lucia are coming home to die. The disease is ravishing East Africa especially on the other side of Lake Victoria around Bukoba and up into Western Uganda. AIDS has no favorites. Rich and poor, old and young, educated and uneducated, city and rural people alike are getting AIDS or are HIV Positive.

Jim was grateful to be part of this SCC outreach to people suffering from AIDS. Recently he had read about one Catholic doctor who said: "As the Christian Churches in Africa at the beginning of the 21st Century, history will judge us by how generously and compassionately we have responded to the AIDS crisis." At first Jim and Michael, the other priest in Bunda Parish, didn't realize how serious the AIDS pandemic really is. But then in walking around the SCCs, Jim began to discover how many people have AIDS. Most families

try to hide it. The shame is too great. There is a unique stigma attached to AIDS because it was different from other diseases. Most people in Africa get AIDS from multi-partner heterosexual relationships. People don't want to be confronted and have to examine their personal lifestyles. They don't want to face the challenge of behavior modification. Others pass it off as "just another illness." Still others say that it was "just bad luck" or that they are "bewitched."

But Jim knew differently.

Soon he began to understand the "*hali halisi*" (Swahili for the "real situation"). Bunda is on a major truck route. Also many people pass through the town on their way to somewhere else. This compounds the problem. There are a lot of multi-partner relationships. It is so very, very hard to convince people to change this sexual behavior. But Jim knew this is the only way. Yet it is going to take a long time. And many people like Lucia are going to suffer and die painful deaths in the meantime.

As he walked out of Lucia's dark room and was temporarily blinded by the bright African sunlight, Jim wondered if and when he would see Lucia again. But the ministry of love and compassion to Lucia and many like her would continue. Jim was proud that the Bunda Parish leaders and the SCCs had responded so generously. He knew that this was what Christianity is all about. He felt deeply that if they really follows Christ it means being compassionate toward suffering people

The next Sunday Jim Corrigan preached about AIDS in church. He called his homily "Suffering Faces and Hearts in Bunda Today." He got permission from Lucia to tell her story. Respectfully he told the painful journey of Lucia, "one of our own Small Christian Community members." In using the Gospel story of the prodigal the priest challenged the people by asking: "Who is the prodigal? The son? The father? In today's world is it the Lucias? Is it the people who accept and love AIDS patients as they are? Let's admit it. We are afraid to talk about AIDS. And meeting a person who is HIV Positive! That is even worse. How much easier to say: "That is someone else's problem. We have doctors and institutions to take care of these AIDS patients."

"Each age has its own terrible form of dying. In the First Century it was crucifixion. From pictures and films we know what a painful death Jesus Christ suffered on the cross. In the 14th Century it was the Black Death (bubonic plague) that was an epidemic disease that killed one-third of the people in Europe. Today it is AIDS. If Jesus chose the most ignominious form of death in his time to redeem us, would he choose to die from AIDS today?" That got some gasps from the Christians at the 7:30 a.m. Eucharistic Celebration in the Bunda Town Church.

Jim went on to ask the congregation: "What is the last word that will be spoken in human history?" After giving the people time to think a little bit he quoted from one 14<sup>th</sup> century spiritual writer Meister Eckhart who said: The last word of history will be "compassion."<sup>1250</sup> Jim added two other words: "forgiving love -- as in the example of today's gospel about the 'Prodigal Father.'"

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<sup>1250</sup> From Chapter 4 on "A Guest is a Blessing" in *Towards an African Narrative Theology*:

A final question: In a metaphorical or analogous sense what is the last or final word that God will speak in human history? At that last moment of

Jim praised the example of St. Charles Lwanga SCC saying: "Outreach to AIDS patients and their families is a special call and challenge for SCCs in East Africa today. SCCs are a community of believers who care about other people. SCCs are a unique support group in the AIDS ministry. As a communion of extended families the SCCs provide support, encouragement and home care for AIDS patients themselves. We have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters with AIDS. Do not be afraid. Be Christ-like and reach out to others who are suffering. Join local "caring communities" like SCCs and other special support groups for AIDS and HIV Positive people." Reach out in personal ways too."

Near the end of his homily Jim told the story of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta whom many had heard about. Her religious community of the Missionaries of Charity works with the poorest of the poor in Dar es Salaam and Tabora. The missionary priest ended his homily by saying: "In talking about people with AIDS Blessed Mother Teresa tells each of us: 'Today people with AIDS are the most unwanted and unloved brothers and sisters of Jesus. So let us give them our tender love and care and a beautiful smile.' Then Jim asked: "How about us here in Bunda? Are we ready to give at least a smile and hopefully much more to these people who are in such need?"<sup>1251</sup>

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human time, at the end of the Last Judgment, what will God finally say? Over the ages spiritual writers and theologians have tried to answer this question. The fourteenth century spiritual writer Meister Eckhart said that the last word spoken by God will be "compassion" -- that is, forgiving love, deep concern, and tender care for God's own children. Other answers are "Yes," or "Love," or "Forgiveness," or "Amen," or "Alleluia." We think God's last word will be "welcome." "Welcome into everlasting life." This word will be spoken in every language, in every country, in every human heart. This adds an insight to the last word being "come" as used in *Matthew 25:34*: "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" The theology of hospitality will find its fulfillment in God's eternal "come," in God's eternal "welcome."

<sup>1251</sup> This African story is classified as historical fiction. It is based on a true story in Tanzania, but because of our sensitivity to people with AIDS it is written in a fictionalized way. It is posted as African Story No. 533 in the African Stories Database on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 18 August, 2014, [http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=496](http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid[0]=496) In different forms it is published on pages 67-68 of *Once Upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy* and on pages 14-15 of *African Stories for Preachers and Teachers*.

#### 4. Searching for a Symbol of Reconciliation

A Chagga man and woman got married in the Musoma Town Parish Church in Tanzania in 1991. All the arrangements for the wedding went along smoothly and peacefully. The marriage ceremony itself was a big success. SCC members participated. But the organizers of the wedding forgot to give the mother of the bride and her wedding party a vehicle to return to her home after the celebration and feast in the hall. Therefore she was very upset and refused to attend the thanksgiving mass and the small family party the following day.

The leaders said: "What should we do to make amends?" The leaders spent two hours searching for a proper isale leaf to give the mother as a symbol of reconciliation. Then they visited her. In greeting the bride's mother one of the leaders handed her the isale leaf, a very important sign of peace and unity in the culture of the Chagga Ethnic Group. Immediately upon seeing the leaf she smiled, expressed delight, called her relatives, and told everyone that her anger was finished. She happily rejoined the wedding party. Everything went back to normal and the good spirits and close relationships continued as usual.<sup>1252</sup>

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<sup>1252</sup> See the Raphael Chuwa, "Searching for a Symbol of Reconciliation," in

- a. Joseph Healey (compiled), *Once Upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004, p. 101.
- b. Joseph Healey (compiled), *African Stories for Preachers and Teachers*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005, p. 47.

Raphael Chuwa, "Utafutaji wa Ishara ya Upatanisho," Joseph Healey (compiled), *Hadithi za Kiafrika Kwa Wahubiri na Walimu*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006, p. 47.

Raphael Chuwa, "Le Symbole de la Réconciliation" in Joseph Healey Joseph), *La Sagesse Africaine: Histoires Vraies, Mythes et Contes*, Kinshasa: Editions Paulines, 2012, p. 34.

African Story No. 360 in the "African Stories Database," African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 16 August, 2015,

[http://www.afriprov.org/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=138](http://www.afriprov.org/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid[0]=138)

## **14. Alphabetical Summary of the Choices in the Small Christian Community (SCCs) POLL on our SCCs Website**

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

### **The best part of my Small Christian Community is...**

- Action oriented. **Round ten A**
- Active participation. **Round one D**
- Actualize communion ecclesiology at the grassroots. **Round A**
- Adult *Bible* Fellowship. **Round D**
- Adult faith formation. **Round thirty-five A**
- Affinity Group. **Round twenty-nine D**
- Agents of Evangelization. **Round A**
- Aimed at consciousness-raising. **Round twenty-one A**
- All the services/ministries of the sacraments pass through the SCCs. **Round A**
- Anchor of family life. **Round D**
- Applying Gospel to our everyday life. **Round thirty-four A**
- Authentic school of the Gospel. **Round D**
- Avenue of promoting reconciliation among individuals and groups. **Round D**
- Avenue of promoting unity and the common good in the society. **Round D**
- Backbone of the RCIA. **Round D**
- Base of our Christian life. **Round D**
- Basic building block of the church. **Round eleven D**
- Basic cell of the church. **Round D**
- Basic Human Community (BHC). **Round forty D**
- Basic means of evangelization. **Round A**
- Basis for *Bible* Sharing, Prayer and Deep Spirituality. **Round A**
- Beacon of hope. **Round twenty-nine D**
- Bedrock of the church. **Round twenty-fifth D**
- Best platform of forming the faith. **Round A**
- Best way of enhancing community spirit. **Round A**
- Best way of helping us gain intimacy with God. **Round A**
- Best way to smell the sheep. **Round A**
- Bible* as wellspring of constant renewal. **Round A**
- Bible* as basis of members' spiritual lives. **Round A**
- Bible*-based. **Round A**
- Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection. **Round one A**
- Bible* study group. **Round seventeen A**
- Biblically based Small Communities. **Round D**
- Bones and flesh of the parish. **Round D**
- Breaking open the Word of God. **Round thirty-five A**
- Build close and lasting friendships. **Round A**
- Builds your faith and increases your knowledge of Catholic beliefs. **Round A**
- Buzz Groups *Bible* Reflection. **Round eighteen A**
- Call to respond to the suffering Christ. **Round A**
- Catalyst for effective *Bible* Sharing. **Round A**
- Catholic family fellowship. **Round A**
- Celebrations (meals, entertainment, etc.). **Round four A**

Cell Groups. **Round D**  
 Center of communion and formation. **Round D**  
 Center of communion and outreach. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Center of constant missionary outreach. **Round A**  
 Centers of inculturation in the Catholic Church. **Round A**  
 Center of prayer and worship. **Round D**  
 Centrality of the Word of God. **Round thirty-four D**  
 Channel of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Christ-centered community. **Round A**  
 Church at the grassroots. **Round D**  
 Church of the home. **Round twenty-one D**  
 Church of the laity. **Round D**  
 Church in the locality. **Round D**  
 Church in the neighborhood. **Round thirty-three D**  
 Church of participation. **Round D**  
 Church Small Group. **Round D**  
 Church of tomorrow. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Collection/donation to upkeep of parish. **Round twenty-two A**  
 Communion of Communities Model. **Round eighteen D**  
 Communion of families. **Round twenty-seven D**  
 Communion of extended families in the same neighborhood. **Round D**  
 Communitarian ethic. **Round A**  
 Community of believers sharing life. **Round thirty-four A**  
 Community *Bible* sharing. **Round D**  
 Community experience. **Round twelve D**  
 Community of families. **Round twenty-six D**  
 Community of missionary disciples. **Round D**  
 Community of proclaiming the Word of God. **Round thirty D**  
 Community of warm relationships. **Round D.**  
 Community spirit. **Round five D**  
 Concern for others. **Round six A**  
 Connected to my parish. **Round three D**  
 Connecting *Bible* to life. **Round thirty-two A**  
 Connecting faith to life. **Round thirty-one A**  
 Connects God's Word to daily life. **Round A.**  
 Connects people to one another. **Round thirty A**  
 Contemplative group. **Round twenty-three A**  
 Contribute to social transformation. **Round A**  
 Contribution of SCCs to faith formation. **Round A**  
 Cornerstone of the church. **Round D**  
 Deep SCC spirituality. **Round A**  
 Development projects. **Round eleven A**  
 Dialogical. **Round twenty-two D**  
 Dialogue of action. **Round A**  
 Dialog of life. **Round thirty-eight A**  
 Dialogue of interfaith religious experiences. **Round A**  
 Doing things differently in my parish. **Round six A**  
 Domestic communities of faith. **Round thirty A**  
 Door of entry. **Round D**  
 Dynamic church in the midst of the people. **Round D**

Ecclesial structure in the parish. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Ecumenical activities. **Round twenty-two A**  
 Effective method for church renewal. **Round thirty-five A**  
 Effective platform of catechesis. **Round A**  
 Entry point for new church. **Round D**  
 Essential component of the parish's structure and ministry. **Round D**  
 Eucharistic adoration. **Round twenty-four A**  
 Evangelizers in our neighborhood. **Round thirty-seven A**  
 Evangelizing families rooted in SCCs. **Round A**  
 Experienced-base faith sharing. **Round A**  
 Experiencing biblical community. **Round A**  
 Extended Christian families. **Round eighteen D**  
 Extension of the church. **Round D**  
 Extension of good neighborliness. **Round forty A**  
 Faith sharing. **Round thirty-three A**  
 Faith sharing grounded in Scripture. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Faith sharing spirituality. **Round A**  
 Faith sharing within Sunday readings. **Round A**  
 Families as living witnesses of Gospel values. **Round D**  
 Families in the neighborhood. **Round seven D**  
 Families ministering to families. **Round A**  
 Families support one another in times of need. **Round A**  
 Family Church. **Round twenty-two D**  
 Family communities. **Round seventeen D**  
 Family of families. **Round D**  
 Family-like communities. **Round D**  
 Feel at home in my SCC. **Round one D**  
 Field hospital. **Round A**  
 Fixed time each week **Round twenty D**  
 Flesh and blood of the church. **Round D**  
 Focus questions. **Round A**  
 Following Patron/Patroness Saint of my SCC. **Round eight A**  
 Fonts of community life. **Round A**  
 Forum in which adult catechumens listen to Jesus Christ. **Round A**  
 Frontier of evangelization in the AMECEA Region for the laity. **Round D**  
 Force to help renew our faith. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Foundation of the church. **Round D**  
 Freedom to share my deep feelings. **Round five A**  
 Friendliness of members. **Round three D**  
 From the grassroots up. **Round twenty-one D**  
 Fundamental model for being church. **Round D**  
 Fundamental paradigm of the church. **Round D**  
 Future of the church. **Round twenty-seven D**  
 Garden of growth. **Round D**  
 Gathering of families. **Round A**  
 Genuine family of God. **Round D**  
 Gives a new flavor to the African Church. **Round A**  
 Good leadership and coordination. **Round two D**  
 Good mixture of people. **Round four D**  
 Gospel-centered faith. **Round eighteen D**

Gospel sharing. **Round A**  
 Greatly strengthens the unity and faith of parishioners. **Round A**  
 Group Prayer. **Round A**  
 Group Response Method. **Round thirty-eight D**  
 Growing faith in a circle. **Round thirty-one D**  
 Growth Groups. **Round D**  
 Haven for the broken. **Round A**  
 Healing prayers for members. **Round three A**  
 Heart of the church. **Round D**  
 Helps me to connect the Bible and everyday life. **Round three A**  
 Helps me to connect my faith and everyday life. **Round two A**  
 Helps me to go deeper in my faith. **Round twenty-fifth A**  
 Helps me to learn about my Christian faith. **Round five A**  
 Helps me to live my Christian faith. **Round one A**  
 Helps me to prepare for the Sunday Eucharist. **Round four A**  
 Helps the neighborhood to grow as a family. **Round A**  
 Hinge on which pastoral work evolves. **Round A**  
 Home-based. **Round eighteen A**  
 Home-based Communities. **Round eighteen A**  
 Home Church. **Round twenty-three D**  
 Home-based community. **Round twenty-seven D**  
 Home for everyone. **Round eighteen D**  
 Home for faith formation. **Round A**  
 Home Groups. **Round D**  
 Home of communion for the 21st century. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Home of compassion. **Round A**  
 House cell fellowships. **Round seventeen A**  
 House Church Ministry. **Round A**  
 Household of God. **Round twenty-fifth D**  
 Ideal church as community. **Round D**  
 Ideal place for Adult Catechumens. **Round twenty-three D**  
 Importance of group prayer. **Round D**  
 Important way of being church in Africa. **Round D**  
 Inclusive. **Round seventeen D**  
 In contact with the realities and lives of people on the grassroots. **Round A**  
 In service to the Catholic Church as a Field Hospital. **Round A.**  
 Individual and group response in action. **Round A**  
 Instrument in adult faith formation. **Round A**  
 Instrument of evangelization. **Round eighteen A**  
 Instruments of genuine conversion. **Round A**  
 Interconnectedness. **Round seventeen D**  
 Interdenominational. **Round twenty-four D**  
 Intergenerational. **Round fifteen D**  
 Integrating prayer and daily life. **Round fourteen D**  
 Justice and peace concerns. **Round two A**  
 Keepers of our brothers and sisters. **Round A**  
 Kernel of the church in Africa. **Round D**  
 Key pastoral priority in the church. **Round ten D**  
 Laity are not part of the church; they are the church. **Round D**  
 Laity form the engine of SCCs. **Round thirty-nine D**

Launching pad to nurture the laity. **Round A**  
 Learning about other SCCs. **Round ten A**  
 Lectionary-based. **Round eleven D**  
 Lectionary-based faith sharing. **Round twenty-six A**  
 Liberation focus. **Round twelve D**  
 Lifeblood of the larger church. **Round thirty-seven D**  
 Life-changing small group. **Round. D**  
 Life Groups. **Round D**  
 Lifeline of the church. **Round D**  
 Little Faith Sharing Community. **Round D**  
 Living cells of the church. **Round D**  
 Living cells that build up the Body of Christ. **Round D**  
 Living center of evangelization. **Round thirty D**  
 Living the mission *ad gentes*. **Round D**  
 Local family unit. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Local home church group. **Round twenty-four D**  
 Local voluntary leadership. **Round A**  
 Lumko Method. **Round thirty-three A**  
 Lungs of the parish. **Round D**  
 Main cell of evangelization. **Round D**  
 Makes parish life very intense and present everywhere. **Round A**  
 Manageable Group. **Round D**  
 Mass in my SCC. **Round seven A**  
 Meeting in homes. **Round twenty A**  
 Mirror of African household. **Round twenty-four D**  
 Missional small group. **Round twenty-four A**  
 Missionary outreach. **Round eighteen A**  
 Missionary spirit. **Round five D**  
 Mission-minded. **Round twenty-two A**  
 Model of building fellowship among students. **Round D**  
 Model of evangelization at the grassroots level. **Round D**  
 Moral agency of SCCs. **Round D**  
 Most efficient and effective avenue of evangelization. **Round D**  
 Most important lifeline of the parish. **Round thirty-four D**  
 Multi-ethnic small group. **Round D**  
 Multigenerational small group. **Round thirty-one D**  
 Mutual support. **Round thirteen D**  
 Neighborhood Eucharistic Community (NEC). **Round A**  
 Neighborhood evangelism. **Round A**  
 Neighborhood spirit. **Round eight D**  
 Networking Communities. **Round twenty-three A**  
 Networking of friendship. **Round D**  
 Network of SCCs. **Round thirty-five D**  
 New expression of faith and community. **Round D**  
 New face of the church. **Round forty D**  
 New family in the church. **Round D**  
 New mode of being church. **Round D**  
 New model of church. **Round eleven D**  
 New model of small group fellowship. **Round D**  
 New model of small group fellowship. **Round D**

New paradigm of the Family of God. **Round D**  
 New way of being church. **Round ten D**  
 New way of being local church.” **Round D**  
 New way of being parish. **Round twenty-six D**  
 New way of evangelization. **Round D**  
 New way of doing evangelization. **Round D**  
 Non-ordained ministries. **Round twenty-seven A**  
 Nourishes our personal and communal life. **Round A**  
 Nucleus of present and future church. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Oneness as a family of God. **Round A**  
 Ongoing formation. **Round twenty-one A**  
 Online community. **Round D**  
 Online congregation. **Round D**  
 Online family community. **Round A**  
 Online House Churches. **Round thirty-seven D**  
 Online SCCs Resources. **Round thirty-nine A**  
 Online or Virtual SCC. **Round eleven A**  
 Our DNA as Christians. **Round D**  
 Our new extended family in the city.  
 Outreaching church. **Round forty A**  
 Outreach to others. **Round thirty-one A**  
 Parish-based. **Round nine D**  
 Parish Small Group. **Round D**  
 Parishioner-led small evangelization groups. **Round A**  
 Participation of different denominations. **Round sixteen D**  
 Participatory Church. **Round eighteen D**  
 Pastoral accompaniment. **Round thirty-eight A**  
 Pastoral and apostolic identity. **Round D**  
 Pastoral tool of evangelization. **Round D**  
 Peace building. **Round twenty-one A**  
 People for others. **Round fourteen A**  
 Perfect base for charity, prayer and mercy. **Round D**  
 Personal and communal witness. **Round A**  
 Personal relationships and friendships. **Round two D**  
 Personal spiritual growth. **Round D**  
 Pillar of our church. **Round D**  
 Place of compassion. **Round A**  
 Place of concrete reconciliation. **Round A**  
 Place of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Place of solidarity. **Round A**  
 Place of transformation. **Round A**  
 Place where the church as family is experienced. **Round A**  
 Places of communion and prayer. **Round A**  
 Platform of continuous catechesis. **Round A**  
 Post RCIA Support. **Round twenty D**  
 Powerful means of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Powerful vehicles for adult faith formation. **Round A**  
 Practical action and service. **Round six A**  
 Prayer Support Group. **Round A**  
 Praying together for the needs of others. **Round eight A**

Preferred “place” to pass on the Catholic faith. **Round A**  
 Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. **Round twelve A**  
 Promotes the New Evangelization. **Round thirty-three A**  
 Promotes reconciliation and peacebuilding. **Round eight A**  
 Promotion of social transformation. **Round thirty-four A**  
 Reaching out to others. **Round one A**  
 Real sense of community. **Round D**  
 Reflecting on Gospel of following Sunday. **Round fifteen A**  
 Reflection starting with a critical incident. **Round fourteen A**  
 Reflection starting with daily life. **Round fourteen A**  
 Reflective environment. **Round D**  
 Relationship between members. **Round fifteen D**  
 Relationships. **Round A**  
 Relationship with a Twin (Sister) SCC. **Round seven A**  
 Reminder of 1<sup>st</sup> Century House Churches. **Round eight D**  
 Represents the success of African ecclesiology. **Round D**  
 Represents the Universal Church. **Round D**  
 Responds to various challenges that the human person encounters in life. **Round A**  
 Revolutionary paradigm of being a church. **Round D**  
 Rewriting *Bible* passages. **Round A**  
 Roots of *Ecclesia in Africa*. **Round D**  
 Rotation of leadership. **Round six D**  
 Sacraments. **Round sixteen A**  
 SCC (Jumuiya) Mass. **Round thirty-nine A**  
 SCCs are the avenue for encountering the Word of God. **Round A**  
 SCCs as an entry point to family accompaniment. **Round A**  
 SCCs as a way of life. **Round sixteen D**  
 SCCs can change the face of Africa. **Round A**  
 SCCs Capacity Building Program. **Round A**  
 SCCs contribute to social transformation. **Round D**  
 SCCs evangelization. **Round A**  
 SCCs marriage ministry. **Round A**  
 SCCs mentality. **Round D**  
 SCCs networking. **Round thirty-seven A**  
 SCCs processes/methodologies. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 SCCs way of becoming church. **Round D**  
 SCCs way of grassroots evangelization. **Round D**  
 School of communion for the 21st century. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 School of equality. **Round D**  
 School of inculturation. **Round D**  
 School of learning. **Round thirty-four D**  
 School for equality.  
 School for followers of Jesus Christ. **Round twenty-six D**  
 Scripture-based faith sharing. **Round thirty A**  
 Seed of the church. **Round D**  
 “See,” “Judge” and “Act” Process/Method. **Round thirty-seven A**  
 Seeing Jesus Christ in others. **Round three A**  
 Seeks social justice. **Round twenty-six A**  
 Self-actualization of the church. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Self-reliance projects. **Round five A**

Sermon-based group. **Round twenty-five A**  
 Seven-step Gospel Sharing. **Round nine A**  
 Share faith in partnership with others. **Round A**  
 Shares the life of the neighborhood. **Round A**  
 Sharing ideas and ways to evangelize. **Round nine A**  
 Sharing in a small group. **Round twenty A**  
 Sharing prayer requests. **Round A**  
 Sharing the Word of God. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Show that the Spirit is at work. **Round A**  
 Silence after the Bible reading. **Round six D**  
 Smallest cell of the church. **Round thirty-eight D**  
 Small Book Club. **Round D**  
 Small Church. **Round D**  
 Small Church Group. **Round D**  
 Small communities of families. **Round D**  
 Small community of missionary disciples. **Round forty D**  
 Small Covenant Group. **Round D**  
 Small Devotional Group. **Round D**  
 Small Ethnic Community. **Round D**  
 Small Faith-based Community. **Round D**  
 Small group-based. **Round D**  
 Small group dynamic. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Small group faith-sharing resources. **Round A**  
 Small group fellowship. **Round A**  
 Small group focus. **Round thirteen D**  
 Small group friendly *Bible* commentary. **Round A**  
 Small group ministry/ies. **Round sixteen A**  
 Small group resources. **Round thirty-five D**  
 Small group sharing. **Round A**  
 Small group study. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Small Home Church. **Round D**  
 Small Human Community. **Round thirty-nine D**  
 Small Mission Community. **Round thirty-one D**  
 Small neighborhood parish-based group. **Round D**  
 Small Parish Community. **Round D**  
 Small Religious Group. **Round D**  
 Small Spiritual Group. **Round D**  
 Small Story-telling Groups. **Round A.**  
 Small parish without borders. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Small Sharing Group. **Round A.**  
 Smallness of the group. **Round two D**  
 Social action. **Round twelve A**  
 Social activities. **Round nineteen A**  
 Socially organized solidarity. **Round. A**  
 Social outreach activities. **Round thirty-two A**  
 Society in miniature. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Solidarity with others. **Round ten D**  
 Space to share together. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Special structure of evangelization. **Round thirty-eight D**  
 Spirit of belonging. **Round seven D**

Spirit of an extended family. **Round nine D**  
 Spiritual direction small group. **Round A**  
 Spiritual support group. **Round A**  
 Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. **Round four A**  
 Staple of Christian life in Africa. **Round D**  
 Strength of our parish community. **Round D**  
 Strong foundation in our parishes. **Round D**  
 Student-led small evangelization groups. **Round A**  
 Study Church documents. **Round thirteen A**  
 Support and encourage each other in our faith journey. **Round A**  
 Support group. **Round fourteen D**  
 Support group for faith formation. **Round A**  
 Support in time of need. **Round nine A**  
 Sure vehicle to true Christianity. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Sure way of evangelization.  
 Symbol of unity. **Round D.**  
 Togetherness. **Round D.**  
 Tool of evangelization. **Round twenty-seven A**  
 Tool to serve evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Tools in the vineyard. **Round A**  
 Training for SCC leaders. **Round twenty-five A**  
 Training Tools for SCCs. **Round A**  
 Training workshops and seminars. **Round four A**  
 Transform society on the local level. **Round A**  
 Transformation of society. **Round eleven A**  
 Treasure of the Catholic Church in Africa. **Round D**  
 True family of God. **Round D**  
 True way of being the living church. **Round D**  
 Using the new media resources to promote faith life. **Round A**  
 Using the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” Process. **Round seven A**  
 Vehicle for spiritual renewal. **Round thirty-two D**  
 Vibrant communities of faith and service. **Round thirty-two A**  
 Visiting the sick. **Round twenty A**  
 Vital icon for New Evangelization. **Round D**  
 Voice of the Local Church. **Round D**  
 Voice of the people. **Round D**  
 Way for the church to grow. **Round D**  
 Way of making the church more active among the Christian faithful. **Round D**  
 Where the church starts. **Round D**  
 Without borders or boundaries. **Round sixteen D**  
 Word of God Sharing. **Round A**  
 Working together to build community. **Round thirteen A**  
 Work in progress. **Round thirty-two D**  
 Work of the Spirit. **Round D**  
 Young Adults. **Round fourteen D**  
 Young Married Couples. **Round fifteen D**  
 Young Married Families. **Round thirteen D**  
 Youth and children activities. **Round twelve D**  
 YSCC Model of Church. **Round D**

**Total: 444**

222: Dynamics

222: Activities

The question -- The best part of my Small Christian Community is... followed by five choices:

**First Round (April-May, 2009):***Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection.* **Round one A**Feel at home. **Round one D**Helps me to live my Christian faith. **Round one A**Reaching out to others. **Round one A**Active participation. **Round one D**

The leading vote getter was: "Helps me to live my Christian faith." 50

**Second Round (June-July, 2009):**Justice and peace concerns. **Round two A**Good leadership and coordination. **Round two D**Helps me to connect my faith and everyday life. **Round two A**Personal relationships and friendships. **Round two D**Smallness. **Round two D**

The leading vote getter was: "Helps me to connect my faith and everyday life." 46

**Third Round (August-September, 2009):**Connected to my parish. **Round three D**Friendliness of members. **Round three D**Helps me to connect the *Bible* and everyday life. **Round three A**Seeing Jesus Christ in others. **Round three A**Healing prayers for members. **Round three A**

The leading vote getter was: "Helps me to connect the Bible and everyday life." 50

**Fourth Round (October-November, 2009):**Good mixture of people. **Round four D**Training workshops and seminars. **Round four A**Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. **Round four A**Celebrations (meals, entertainment, etc.) **Round four D**Helps me to prepare for the Sunday Eucharist. **Round four A**

The leading vote getter was: “Spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.” 36

**Fifth Round (December, 2009-February, 2010):**

Missionary spirit. **Round five D**  
 Freedom to share my deep feelings. **Round five A**  
 Helps me to learn about my Christian faith. **Round five A**  
 Community spirit. **Round five D**  
 Self-reliance projects. **Round five A**

The leading vote getter was: “Community spirit.” 38

**Sixth Round (March, 2010-April, 2010):**

Rotation of leadership. **Round six D**  
 Concern for others. **Round six A**  
 Silence after the Bible reading. **Round six D**  
 Doing things differently in my parish. **Round six A**  
 Practical action and service. **Round six A**

The leading vote getter was: “Practical action and service.” 52

**Seventh Round (May, 2010-June, 2010):**

Relationship with a Twin (Sister) SCC. **Round seven A**  
 Mass in my SCC. **Round seven A**  
 Sharing with families in the neighborhood. **Round seven D**  
 Using the SEE, JUDGE and ACT Process. **Round seven A**  
 Spirit of belonging. **Round seven D**

The leading vote getter was: “Spirit of belonging.” 53

**Eighth Round (July, 2010-August, 2010):**

Follows Patron/Patroness Saint of our SCC. **Round eight A**  
 Reminder of 1<sup>st</sup> Century House Churches. **Round eight D**  
 Prays together for the needs of others. **Round eight A**  
 Promotes reconciliation and peacebuilding. **Round eight A** 51  
 Neighborhood spirit. **Round eight D**

The leading vote getter was: “Prays together for the needs of others.” 67

**Ninth Round (September, 2010-October, 2010):**

Parish-based. **Round nine D**  
 Seven-step Gospel Sharing. **Round nine A**  
 Sharing ideas and ways to evangelize. **Round nine A**  
 Spirit of an extended family. **Round nine D**  
 Support in time of need. **Round nine A**

The leading vote getter was: "Sharing ideas and ways to evangelize." 52

#### **Tenth Round (November, 2010-December, 2010):**

Key pastoral priority in the church. **Round ten D**  
 Action oriented. **Round ten A**  
 Learning about other SCCs. **Round ten A**  
 New way of being church. **Round ten D**  
 Solidarity with others. **Round ten D**  
 The leading vote getter was: "New way of being church." 54

#### **Eleventh Round (January, 2011-February, 2011):**

Lectionary-based. **Round eleven D**  
 Online or Virtual SCC. **Round eleven A**  
 Basic building block of the church. **Round eleven D**  
 Development projects. **Round eleven A**  
 New model of church. **Round eleven D**

The leading vote getter was: "New model of church." 63

#### **Twelfth Round (March, 2011-April, 2011):**

Youth and children activities. **Round twelve A**  
 Community experience. **Round twelve D**  
 Liberation focus. **Round twelve D**  
 Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ **Round twelve A**  
 Social action. **Round twelve A**

The leading vote getter was: "Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ." 61

#### **Thirteen Round (May, 2011-June, 2011):**

Young Married Families. **Round thirteen D**  
 Mutual support. **Round thirteen D**  
 Small Group focus. **Round thirteen D**  
 Study Church documents. **Round thirteen A**  
 Working together to build community. **Round thirteen A**

The leading vote getter was: "Study Church documents." 36

**Fourteenth Round (July, 2011-August, 2011):**

Young Adults. **Round fourteen D**  
 Integrating prayer and daily life. **Round fourteen D**  
 People for others. **Round fourteen A**  
 Support Group. **Round fourteen D**  
 Reflection starting with daily life. **Round fourteen A**

The leading vote getter was: Two tied at 30.

**Fifteenth Round (September, 2011-October, 2011):**

Young Married Couples. **Round fifteen D**  
 Transformation of society. **Round fifteen A**  
 Intergenerational. **Round fifteen D**  
 Reflecting on Gospel of following Sunday. **Round fifteen A**  
 Relationship between members. **Round fifteen D**

The leading vote getter was: "Relationship between members." 36

**Sixteenth Round (November, 2011-December, 2011):**

Participation of different denominations. **Round sixteen D**  
 Sacraments. **Round sixteen A**  
 Small group ministry/ies. **Round sixteen A**  
 SCCs as a way of life. **Round sixteen D**  
 Without borders or boundaries. **Round sixteen D**

The leading vote getter was: "SCCs as a way of life." 73

**Seventeenth Round (January, 2012-February, 2012):**

Interconnectedness. **Round seventeen D**  
*Bible* study group. **Round seventeen A**  
 Family communities. **Round seventeen D**  
 House cell fellowships. **Round seventeen A**  
 Inclusive. **Round seventeen D**

The leading vote getter was: "Family communities." 58

**Eighteenth Round (March, 2012-April, 2012):**

Extended Christian families. **Round eighteen D**  
 Gospel-centered faith. **Round eighteen D**

Home-based. **Round eighteen A**  
 Instrument of evangelization. **Round eighteen A**  
 Communion of Communities Model. **Round eighteen D**

The leading vote getter was: “Gospel-centered faith.” 54

**Nineteenth Round (May, 2012-June, 2012):**

Participatory Church. **Round nineteen D**  
 Buzz Groups *Bible* Reflection. **Round nineteen A**  
 Home for everyone. **Round nineteen D**  
 Social activities. **Round nineteen A**  
 Missionary outreach. **Round nineteen A**

The leading vote getter was: “Missionary outreach.” 35

**Twentieth Round (July, 2012-August, 2012):**

Meeting in homes. **Round twenty A**  
 Post RCIA Support. **Round twenty D**  
 Fixed time each week. **Round twenty D**  
 Visiting the sick. **Round twenty A**  
 Sharing in a small group. **Round twenty A**

The leading vote getter was: “Sharing in a small group.” 49

**Special Round of top voter getters of the first 20 rounds  
 (September, 2012-October, 2012):**

Family Communities. D  
 Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. A  
 SCCs as a way of life. D  
 Prays together for the needs of others. A  
 New model of church. D

The leading vote getters were: “Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ” and  
 “New model of church.” 46

**Twenty-second Round (November, 2012-December, 2012):**

Aimed at consciousness-building. **Round twenty-two A**  
 Church of the home. **Round twenty-two D**  
 From the grassroots up. **Round twenty-two D**  
 Ongoing formation. **Round twenty-two A**  
 Peace building. **Round twenty-two A**

The leading vote getter was: “Peace building.” 47

**Twenty-third Round (January, 2013-February, 2013):**

Helps upkeep of parish. **Round twenty-three A**  
 Dialogical. **Round twenty-three D**  
 Ecumenical activities. **Round twenty-three A**  
 Family Church. **Round twenty-three D**  
 Mission-minded. **Round twenty-three A**

The leading vote getter was: "Mission-minded." 48

**Twenty-fourth Round (March, 2013-April, 2013):**

Contemplative group. **Round twenty-four A**  
 Ideal place for Adult Catechumens. **Round twenty-four D**  
 Home Church. **Round twenty-four D**  
 Networking Communities. **Round twenty-four A**  
 Strengthen each other in our faith. **Round twenty-four A**

The leading vote getter was: "Strengthen each other in our faith." 77

**Twenty-fifth Round (May, 2013-June, 2013):**

Eucharistic adoration. **Round twenty-five A**  
 Interdenominational. **Round twenty-five D**  
 Local home church group. **Round twenty-five D**  
 Mirror of African household. **Round twenty-five D**  
 Missional small group. **Round twenty-five A**

The leading vote getter was: "Local home church group." 36

**Twenty-sixth Round (July, 2013-August, 2013):**

Bedrock of the church. **Round twenty-six D**  
 Helps me to go deeper in my faith. **Round twenty-six A**  
 Household of God. **Round twenty-six D**  
 Sermon-based group. **Round twenty-six A**  
 Training for SCC leaders. **Round twenty-six A**

The leading vote getter was: "Training for SCC leaders." 59.

**Twenty-seventh Round (September, 2013-October, 2013):**

Community of families. **Round twenty-seven D**  
 Lectionary-based faith sharing. **Round twenty-seven A**

New way of being parish. **Round twenty-seven D**  
 School for followers of Jesus Christ. **Round twenty-seven D**  
 Seeks social justice. **Round twenty-seven A**

The leading vote getter was: "Lectionary-based faith sharing." 48

**Twenty-eighth Round (November, 2013-December, 2013):**

Communion of families. **Round twenty-eight D**  
 Future of the church. **Round twenty-eight D**  
 Home-based community. **Round twenty-eight D**  
 Non-ordained ministries. **Round twenty-eight A**  
 Tool of evangelization. **Round twenty-eight A**

The leading vote getter was: "Tool of evangelization." 45

**Twenty-ninth Round (January, 2014-February, 2014):**

Self-actualization of the church. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Center of communion and outreach **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Faith sharing grounded in Scripture. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Force to help renew our faith. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Nucleus of present and future church. **Round twenty-nine D**

The leading vote getter was: "Faith sharing grounded in Scripture." 57

**Thirty Round (March, 2014-April, 2014):**

Living center of evangelization. **Round thirty D**  
 Community of proclaiming the Word of God. **Round thirty D**  
 Connects people to one another. **Round thirty A**  
 Domestic communities of faith. **Round thirty D**  
 Scripture-based faith sharing. **Round thirty A**

The leading vote getters were: "Connects people to one another" and "Scripture-based faith sharing." 43

**Thirty-first Round (May, 2014-June, 2014):**

Growing faith in a circle. **Round thirty-one D**  
 Multigenerational small group. **Round thirty-one D**  
 Connecting faith to life. **Round thirty-one A**  
 Outreach to others. **Round thirty-one A**  
 Small mission community. **Round thirty-one D**

The leading vote getter was: Three tied for first. 43.

**Thirty-second Round (July, 2014-August, 2014):**

Connecting *Bible* to life. **Round thirty-two A**  
 Social outreach activities. **Round thirty-two A**  
 Vehicle for spiritual renewal. **Round thirty-two D**  
 Vibrant community of faith and service. **Round thirty-two D**  
 Work in progress. **Round thirty-two D**

The leading vote getter was: “Connecting *Bible* to life.” 80.

**Thirty-third Round (September, 2014-October, 2014):**

Promotes the New Evangelization. **Round thirty-three A**  
 Church in the neighborhood. **Round thirty-three D**  
 Faith sharing. **Round thirty-three A**  
 Lumko Method. **Round thirty-three A**  
 Church of tomorrow. **Round thirty-three D**

The leading vote getter was: “Church in the neighborhood.” 49

**Thirty-fourth Round (November, 2014-December, 2014):**

Promotion of social transformation. **Round thirty-four A**  
 Community of believers sharing life. **Round thirty-four A**  
 Centrality of the Word of God. **Round thirty-four D**  
 School of learning. **Round thirty-four D**  
 Applying Gospel to our everyday life. **Round thirty-four A**

The leading vote getter was: “Applying Gospel to our everyday life.” 56

**Thirty-fifth Round (January, 2015-February, 2015):**

Small group resources. **Round thirty-five D**  
 Breaking open the Word of God. **Round thirty-five A**  
 Effective method for church renewal. **Round thirty-five A**  
 Adult faith formation. **Round thirty-five A**  
 Network of SCCs. **Round thirty-five D**

The leading vote getters were: “Breaking open the Word of God” and “Network of SCCs.” 55

**Thirty-sixth Round (March, 2015-April, 2015):**

Community of missionary disciples. **Round thirty-six D**  
 Home-based faith group. **Round thirty-six A**

Small group study. **Round thirty-six A**  
 Sharing the Word of God. **Round thirty-six A**  
 Small parish without borders. **Round thirty-six D**

The leading vote getter was: Community of missionary disciples. 75

**Thirty-seventh Round (May, 2015-June, 2015):**

Lifeblood of the larger church. **Round thirty-seven D**  
 Evangelizers in our neighborhood. **Round thirty-seven A**  
 SCCs networking. **Round thirty-seven A**  
 “See,” “Judge” and “Act” Process/Method. **Round thirty-seven A**  
 Online House Churches. **Round thirty-seven D**

The leading vote getter was: “See,” “Judge” and “Act” Process/Method. 45

**Thirty-eighth Round (July, 2015-August, 2015):**

Dialog of life. **Round thirty-eight A**  
 Group Response Method. **Round thirty-eight A**  
 Pastoral accompaniment. **Round thirty-eight A**  
 Smallest cell of the church. **Round thirty-eight D**  
 Special structure of evangelization. **Round thirty-eight D**

The leading vote getter was: Pastoral accompaniment. 39

**Thirty-ninth Round (September, 2015-October, 2015):**

Small Human Community. **Round thirty-nine D**  
 Laity form the engine of SCCs. **Round thirty-nine D**  
 New way of becoming church. **Round thirty-nine D**  
 SCC (Jumuiya) Mass. **Round thirty-nine A**  
 Online SCCs Resources. **Round thirty-nine A**

The leading vote getter was: New way of becoming church. 25

**Fortieth Round (November, 2015-December, 2015):**

Small community of missionary disciples. **Round forty D**  
 Basic Human Community. **Round forty D**  
 Extension of good neighborliness. **Round forty A**  
 Outreaching church. **Round forty A**  
 New face of the church. **Round forty D**

The leading vote getter was: Small community of missionary disciples. 22

**Forty-first Round (January, 2016-February, 2016):**

Authentic school of the Gospel. **Round D**  
 Dialogue of interfaith religious experiences. **Round A**  
 Fundamental paradigm of the church. **Round D**  
 Field hospital. **Round A**  
 Relationships. **Round A**

The leading vote getters were: Field hospital and Relationships. 85

**Forty-second Round (March, 2016-April, 2016):**

Small group faith-sharing resources. **Round A**  
 Families support one another in times of need. **Round A**  
 Agents of evangelization. **Round A**  
 Space to share together. **Round D**  
 Ecclesial structure in the parish. **Round D**

The leading vote getter was: Families support one another in times of need.

**Forty-third Round (May, 2016-June, 2016):**

YSCCs Model of Church. **Round D**  
 Small faith-based community. **Round D**  
 Beacon of hope. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Extension of good neighborliness. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Channel of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**

**CHECK and REVISE**

Society in miniature. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Affinity Group. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 SCCs processes/methodologies. **Round twenty-nine A**

Sure vehicle to true Christianity. **Round twenty-nine D**

Powerful means of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Small group dynamic. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Extension of good neighborliness. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Home of communion for the 21st century. **Round twenty-nine D**

Local family unit. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 School of communion for the 21st century. **Round twenty-nine D**  
 Tool to serve evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**  
 Place of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**

Heart of the church. **Round D**  
 New way of doing evangelization. **Round D**  
 New way of evangelization. **Round D**  
 Basic means of evangelization. **Round A**  
 Bible-based. **Round A**

Hinge on which pastoral work evolves. **Round A**  
 New expression of faith and community. **Round D**  
 Pillar of our church. **Round D**  
 Sure way of evangelization. **Round D**

Our way of being church. **Round D**  
 Most important lifeline of the parish. **Round thirty-four D**  
 Tools in the vineyard. **A**  
 Evangelizing families rooted in SCCs. **Round A**  
 Neighborhood evangelism. **Round A**

Personal spiritual growth. **Round D**  
 Anchor of family life. **Round D**  
 Staple of Christian life in Africa. **Round D**  
 Lifeline of the church. **Round. D**  
 Lungs of the parish. **Round D**

Center of communion and formation. **Round D**  
 Cornerstone of the church. **Round D**  
 Place where the church as family is experienced. **Round A**  
 Strength of our parish community. **Round D**  
 True way of being the living church. **Round D**

SCCs contribute to social transformation. **Round A**  
 Agents of Evangelization. **Round A**  
 Laity form the engine of SCCs. **Round D**  
 Online community. **Round D**  
 Online congregation. **Round D**

Family-like communities. **Round D**  
 New family in the church. **Round D**  
 Community *Bible* sharing. **Round D**  
 Communitarian ethic. **Round A**  
 Life-changing small group. **Round. D**

Vital icon for New Evangelization. **Round D**  
 Communion of families in the neighborhood. **Round D**  
 Experienced-base faith sharing. **Round A**  
 Family of families. **Round D**

Reflective environment. **Round D**  
 Shares the life of the neighborhood. **Round A**  
 Church of the laity. **Round D**

Focus questions. **Round A**

Gospel sharing. **Round A**

Individual and group response in action. **Round A**

SCCs way of grassroots evangelization. **Round D**

Experiencing biblical community. **Round A**

Model of building fellowship among students. **Round D**

Model of evangelization at the grassroots level. **Round D**

Socially organized solidarity. **Round. A**

Word of God Sharing. **Round A**

Kernel of the church in Africa. **Round D**

Neighborhood Eucharistic Community (NEC). **Round A**

New mode of being church. **Round D**

Prayer Support Group. **Round A**

Represents the success of African ecclesiology. **Round D**

Families as living witnesses of Gospel values. **Round D**

Local voluntary leadership. **Round A**

Most efficient and effective avenue of evangelization. **Round D**

Multi-ethnic small group. **Round D**

Small communities of families. **Round D**

Base of our Christian life. **Round D**

Community of warm relationships. **Round D.**

Dynamic church in the midst of the people. **Round D**

Pastoral tool of evangelization. **Round D**

Way of making the church more active among the Christian faithful. **Round D**

Center of prayer and worship. **Round D**

Haven for the broken. **Round A**

Main cell of evangelization. **Round D**

Church of participation. **Round D**

Ideal church as community. **Round D**

Roots of *Ecclesia in Africa*. **Round D**

SCCs can change the face of Africa, **Round A**

Treasure of the Catholic Church in Africa. **Round D**

Important way of being church in Africa. **Round D**

Networking of friendship. **Round D**

Place of concrete reconciliation. **Round A**

Preferred “place” to pass on the Catholic faith. **Round A**

Strong foundation in our parishes. **Round D**

Importance of group prayer. **Round D**

Instruments of genuine conversion. **Round A**

SCCs as an entry point to Family Accompaniment. **Round A**

Transform society on the local level. **Round A**

All the services/ministries of the sacraments pass through the SCCs. **Round A**  
 Centers of inculturation in the Catholic Church. **Round A**  
 Contribution of SCCs to faith formation. **Round A**  
 Door of entry. **Round D**  
 Garden of growth. **Round D**

Families ministering to families. **Round A**  
 Gathering of families. **Round A**  
 Instrument in adult faith formation. **Round A**  
 Manageable Group. **Round D**  
 Using the new media resources to promote faith life. **Round A**

Place of solidarity. **Round A**  
 Places of communion and prayer. **Round A**  
 Small group-based. **Round D**  
 Small group faith-sharing resources. **Round A**

Best way of enhancing community spirit. **Round A**  
 Best way of helping us gain intimacy with God. **Round A**  
*Bible* as wellspring of constant renewal. **Round A**  
*Bible* as basis of members' spiritual lives. **Round A**  
 Launching pad to nurture the laity. **Round A**

Contribute to social transformation. **Round A**  
 Dialogue of action. **Round A**  
 Dialogue of interfaith religious experiences. **Round A**  
 Voice of the Local Church. **Round D**  
 Voice of the people. **Round D**

Biblically based Small Communities. **Round D**  
 Essential component of the parish's structure and ministry. **Round D**  
 Faith sharing within Sunday readings. **Round A**  
 Living the mission *ad gentes*. **Round D**  
 New model of small group fellowship. **Round D**

Adult *Bible* Fellowship. **Round D**  
 Real sense of community. **Round D**  
 Small group fellowship. **Round A**  
 Small Sharing Group. **Round A**.  
 Small Story-telling Groups. **Round A**.

Life Groups. **Round D**  
 Parishioner-led small evangelization groups. **Round A**  
 Small covenant group. **Round D**  
 Spiritual direction small group. **Round A**  
 Student-led small evangelization groups. **Round A**

Small Book Club. **Round D**  
 Small Church Group. **Round D**  
 Small Devotional Group. **Round D**

Small Religious Group. **Round D**

Small Spiritual Group. **Round D**

Catholic family fellowship. **Round A**

Church Small Group. **Round D**

Parish Small Group. **Round D**

Small Parish Community. **Round D**

Small group sharing. **Round A**

Basic cell of the church. **Round D**

Deep SCC spirituality. **Round A**

Our new extended family in the city. **Round A**

SCCs mentality. **Round D**

Rewriting *Bible* passages. **Round A**

Center of constant missionary outreach. **Round A**

Entry point for new church. **Round D**

Faith sharing spirituality. **Round A**

Fundamental model for being church. **Round D.**

Makes parish life very intense and present everywhere. **Round A**

Bones and flesh of the parish. **Round D**

Greatly strengthens the unity and faith of parishioners. **Round A**

Nourishes our personal and communal life. **Round A**

SCCs are the avenue for encountering the Word of God. **Round A**

Training Tools for SCCs. **Round A**

Backbone of the RCIA. **Round D**

Best platform of forming the faith. **Round A**

Effective platform of catechesis. **Round A**

Our DNA as Christians. **Round D.**

Small group friendly *Bible* commentary. **Round A**

Frontier of evangelization in the AMECEA Region for the laity. **Round D**

Home-based Communities. **Round eighteen A**

SCCs way of becoming church. **Round D**

Small Home Church. **Round D**

Way for the church to grow. **Round D**

Forum in which adult catechumens listen to Jesus Christ. **Round A**

Genuine family of God. **Round D**

Little Faith Sharing Community. **Round D**

Platform of continuous catechesis. **Round A**

True family of God. **Round D**

Living cells that build up the Body of Christ. **Round D**

Place of transformation. **Round A**

SCCs evangelization. **Round A**

School of equality. **Round D**

Spiritual support group. **Round A**

Basis for *Bible* Sharing, Prayer and Deep Spirituality. **Round A**  
 Home for faith formation. **Round A**  
 Moral agency of SCCs. **Round D**  
 Powerful vehicles for adult faith formation. **Round A**  
 Support group for faith formation. **Round A**

Connects God's Word to daily life. **Round A.**  
 Home of compassion. **Round A**  
 School for equality. **Round D**  
 Sharing prayer requests. **Round A**  
 Togetherness. **Round D.**

Build close and lasting friendships. **Round A**  
 Builds your faith and increases your knowledge of Catholic beliefs. **Round A**  
 Living cells of the church. **Round D**  
 Share faith in partnership with others. **Round A**  
 Support and encourage each other in our faith journey. **Round A**

Actualize communion ecclesiology at the grassroots. **Round A**  
 Fonts of community life. **Round A**  
 Online family community. **Round A**  
 Show that the Spirit is at work. **Round A**  
 Work of the Spirit. **Round D**

Church at the grassroots. **Round D**  
 Oneness as a family of God. **Round A**  
 Responds to various challenges that the human person encounters in life. **Round A**  
 SCCs Capacity Building Program. **Round A**  
 SCCs marriage ministry. **Round A**

Best way to smell the sheep. **Round A**  
 Cell Groups. **Round D**  
 Growth Groups. **Round D**  
 Home Groups. **Round D**  
 Laity are not part of the church; they are the church. **Round D**

Gives a new flavor to the African Church. **Round A**  
 Group Prayer. **Round A**  
 House Church Ministry. **Round A**  
 School of inculturation. **Round D**  
 Symbol of unity. **Round D.**

Extension of the church. **Round D**  
 In contact with the realities and lives of people on the grassroots. **Round A**  
 Perfect base for charity, prayer and mercy. **Round D**  
 Revolutionary paradigm of being a church. **Round D**  
 Seed of the church. **Round D**

Avenue of promoting reconciliation among individuals and groups. **Round D**

Avenue of promoting unity and the common good in the society. **Round D**  
 Call to respond to the suffering Christ. **Round A**  
 Keepers of our brothers and sisters. **Round A**  
 Place of compassion. **Round A**

Catalyst for effective *Bible* Sharing. **Round A**  
 Helps the neighborhood to grow as a family. **Round A**  
 In service to the Catholic Church as a Field Hospital. **Round A.**  
 Represents the Universal Church. **Round D**  
 Small Church. **Round D**

Church in the locality. **Round D**  
 Flesh and blood of the church. **Round D**  
 Pastoral and apostolic identity. **Round D**  
 Personal and communal witness. **Round A**  
 Small neighborhood parish-based group. **Round D**

Christ-centered community. **Round A**  
 New paradigm of the Family of God. **Round D**  
 New way of being local church. **Round D**

Top vote getters in the Poll:

SCCs as a way of life. D 86  
 Relationships. A 85  
 Field hospital. A 85  
 Connecting *Bible* to life. A 80  
 Strengthen each other in our faith. A 77  
 Community of missionary disciples D 75  
 Sharing the **Word of God.** A 75  
 Prays together for the needs of others. A 67  
 Family Communities. D 63  
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Updated 8 May, 2016

## **15. Examples of Demonstrations, Role Plays, Questions and Group Dynamic Exercises on the Meaning and Importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa**

### **A. Formal Demonstration of a Small Christian Community *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Life Connections Service**

Eight participants in a SCCs Training Workshop volunteer to sit in a circle in front of the hall or classroom and go through the 13 steps of a weekly *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Life Connections Service. The goal is to demonstrate lectionary-based faith sharing. Usually the Gospel of the following Sunday is chosen. This practical demonstration is valuable on two levels. First, it introduces beginners to the basic steps in how to read and reflect on the *Bible* and to connect the *Bible* to our daily lives. Emphasis is on the **quality** of the sharing and reflection. Second, it reminds active SCC members of the basic steps and helps them to correct mistakes that have crept into their weekly meetings like forgetting the period of silence.

Then the rest of the workshop participants give their evaluation, comments and feedback. The ongoing discussion is based on their collective experience.

## **B. Who is First?**

In various SCCs Training Workshops we use a very simple, but effective demonstration (role play) on unity, cooperation and the “Communitarian Model of Church”.<sup>1253</sup> First, six volunteers walk in single file in one direction. The facilitator asks, "Who is in front?" and all of the workshop participants give the name the person in the front of the line. The facilitator asks, "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 are asked but the names were reversed. Then the facilitator asks the six volunteers to join hands and stand in a circle. When asked, "Who is first?" the participants answer, "No one." When asked, "Who is last?" the participants answer, "No one." The teaching is clear. We are challenged to overcome our intense individualism, excessive competitiveness and exaggerated rivalries to work together in building community and emphasizing a horizontal (a circle) rather than a vertical (pyramid) model of church.

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<sup>1253</sup> 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, Kenya. I have used this demonstration many times including during an international meeting of professors of mission in the USA in 2004.

### C. Draw the Church

In SCC Training Workshops, SCCs Courses and talks we use a demonstration (role play) where three volunteers come to the blackboard and are asked to "Draw the Church" (*Chora Kanisa* in Swahili) without seeing what the other two people beside them are drawing. Then the three drawings are evaluated and discussed by all the participants in the workshop. The majority of drawings are of the church building alone, some drawings are of the church building with people inside. Very few participants draw the church as a Christian Community, a Community of Believers, the "People of God" ("we lay people are the church"), the Church as the Family of God and the House Church of the *New Testament* using symbols of community and unity like the circle and linking signs.<sup>1254</sup>

Most drawings over emphasize the importance of the priest and clerical/and religious leadership – forgetting that 99% of the Catholic Church are lay people.

This can lead to a discussion of the People of God Ecclesiology from the Second Vatican Council, Communion Ecclesiology (the parish as a "communion of communities"), the Church as Concentric Circles and the Church-as-Family Ecclesiology from the First African Synod in Rome in April, 1994.<sup>1255</sup> The discussion can also reflect on the sacred character of the church that Jesus by extension calls "my Father's house" (*John 2:15*).

A similar exercise is to ask: If a newspaper headline or a radio/TV headline starts: "The Catholic Church Says..." who do you think the "Church" is in this context? In a survey of lay people in Tanzania 95 % said: "the Bishops." We have a long way to go to change this mentality of seeing the Catholic Church as a hierarchical institution (a top down approach).

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<sup>1254</sup> "The parish is not principally a structure, a territory, a building. A parish is first all a community of the faithful. That is the task of the parish today: to be a community, to rediscover itself as community." St. John Paul II to the Parish Focolarini, March, 1986.

<sup>1255</sup> St. 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.

## **D. Passing on a Message**

An effective communications exercise in SCC Training Workshops is the demonstration (role play) of “Passing on the Message.” Participants are divided into groups of six sitting together in a line or row. The first person in the group is told or read a story with a message of various names, events and facts. He or she tells this message to the next person and then to the next person down the line until the end. The last person in each group then tells what he or she heard to all the workshop participants. Then the original story/message is told or read to the whole group. Workshop participants give comments and feedback on the process of passing on the message. What has been left out? What has been added? Is the basic meaning of the original story/message still recognizable?

The style of the demonstration (role play) can varied according to the number of participants and the local context.

This is a good demonstration in improving the listening skills of SCC members. It is practical because at times we are challenged to pass on a message clearly and accurately. For example, an announcement on a coming SCCs Workshop is made at the end of the Sunday Mass in the Parish Church. This announcement is passed on to the subparish and then to the outstation and then to the weekly SCC meeting and finally to a person who was not at the meeting. Has the announcement/message been passed on clearly and accurately?

## **E. Rewriting Bible Passages**

An interesting exercise is for the SCC members to rewrite *Bible* passages in an African context. Some examples mentioned in this book.

- i. Parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke* 10:25-37).
- ii. Epiphany of the Lord (*Isaiah* 60:1-6 and *Matthew* 2:1-12).
- iii. St. Paul's Teaching on Equality (*Colossians* 3:11).

## **F. Topics of Specific Role Plays on Small Christian Communities**

- a. *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection in a Small Group: Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* is essential part of a SCC. A practical role play (demonstration) of six to eight SCC members sitting around in a circle and reflecting on the Gospel of the following Sunday is very helpful for people to understand more deeply and practice Steps 4-8 as follows:

Step 4: Read the Gospel of the following Sunday (first time).

Step 5: Mention a word, phrase or image in the Gospel that strikes you the most.

Step 6: Read the Gospel of the following Sunday (second time).

Step 7: Silence. Listening to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us.

Step 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).

Then the whole audience gives their comments and feedback.

- b. Pastoral problems facing Small Christian Communities in the parish: the harm of gossip among Small Christian Community members, tensions in marriage, infidelity, misuse of money and weak leadership. EXAMPLE: During one of the Peacebuilding Seminars for the Small Christian Community leaders of Christ the King Catholic Parish in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya on Saturday, 7 March 2009 there was a role play on infidelity in marriage. Leaders of the Small Christian Communities were encouraged to gather information and facts and then patiently and sensitively listen to members' views. Having done so, then address the matter "*kijumuiya*" that is, involving the other members of the Small Christian Community. Gossip causes a lot of ill feelings such as in the group, raises suspicions, anger, distrust and so needs to be handled carefully. There is a need for a proper reconciliation service after any such events.
- c. Tribalism, negative ethnicity, poverty, insecurity, instability, abuse and corruption in the urban slums. EXAMPLE: During one of the Reconciliation and Peacebuilding Seminars for the Small Christian Community leaders of Christ the King Catholic Parish in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya on Saturday, 7 March 2009 there was a role play on the causes of instability in Kibera slums. Kibera is a very populous slum located in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya and its inhabitants come from almost all the ethnic groups in Kenya. The residents live from hand to mouth in desperate conditions such as poor infrastructures. Their main concern is to meet their very basic human needs. Due to this diversity and vulnerability it was one of the hot spots of the post-election violence in 2008 with examples of tribalism, negative ethnicity, instability and other problems. Hence the need for a reconciliation and peacebuilding seminar.
- d. Social issues such as abortion, drug abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, human trafficking, prostitution and unethical behavior.

e. *Bible Stories*:<sup>1256</sup>

- i. “Samaritan Woman at the Well” (*John* 4:4-42). Theme of unity in diversity. Jesus breaks barriers between ethnic communities (Jews and Samaritans) and man-women relationships by talking with the Samaritan woman.
- ii. “Unforgiving Debtor” (*Matthew* 18: 22-35). Theme of forgiveness in the context of the reconciliation programs in parishes after the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya.
- iii. “The Good Samaritan” (*Luke* 10:25-37). Themes of love, compassion and service to others. There are many creative opportunities. Children and youth can do a role play on this parable during a SCC meeting or workshop. The short Scripture music video “Who Is My Neighbor” (5:57 minutes in the *Parables Alive!* Series produced by Paulines Africa Books and Audiovisuals<sup>1257</sup> can be played during a SCC meeting or workshop followed by discussion. This music video retells the classic Good Samaritan story in a contemporary African setting and context. It tells the story of “The Good Muslim” who is a porter at the railway station in Nairobi, Kenya and has a powerful message about overcoming stereotypes and divisions to show love to people who are different from us. This is one of the many contemporary adaptations of the famous *Bible* parable in an African context.
- iv. “That Person is You.” SCC members are invited to participate in the story of the two disciples walking to the village of Emmaus (*Luke* 24:13-35). Who is the “other” disciple, the companion of Cephas who is the only person named. The answer: “You”. “What things” (see verse 19) do you want to talk over with Jesus Christ?
- v. A Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR) Session in the SCC based on the Gospel story in *Mark* 6: In verse 7 Jesus sends out the 12 disciples two by two to preach and to heal. Then verse 30: “The apostles rejoined (gathered together with) Jesus and reported all they had done and taught” (also found in *Luke* 9:10). This is the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process or methodology starting with the disciples’ mission experience. Then Jesus says to them in verse 31: “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while.” Silence is an important part of the reflection process. And a period of rest the disciples start a new action.
- vi. “No, This is the First Time You are Reading This Gospel.” A SCC member reads a particular Gospel text – either the Gospel of the following Sunday or a well-known story or teaching in the *New Testament*. We ask the SCC

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<sup>1256</sup> Drawn from many sources such as: Stories performed at Annual SCCs Open Day at Our Lady Queen of Peace (OLQP) Parish, South B, Nairobi, Kenya on 30 October, 2011. Youth Plays as part of the Sunday Homily. African youth can find *Bible* Readings long and boring (for example, the Gospels during Lent). But acting out the story can be entertaining, informative and educational. DVDs/Videos.

<sup>1257</sup> <http://www.paulinesafrica.org/audiovisual.html>

Workshop participants if they have ever heard or read this Scripture text before. Some answers are: “Yes, I have read this passage many times.” “We use this Gospel in the Sunday readings. “This is a common text in our religious education classes and talks.” Then we answer: “No, This is the First Time You are Reading This Gospel.” This demonstration reminds the SCC members that they are hearing/reading this Gospel (or any other *Bible* text) – for the first time. Not because the story is new, but the context, the local situation, the contemporary reality (today, now, at this moment as we are personally involved) are new and can bring new insights and applications.

These role plays and demonstrations can include different creative ways of reading and reflecting on the *Bible*.<sup>1258</sup> One way is to read the Gospel slowly and meditatively using the method of Ignatian contemplation that engages our active imagination. This involves the method of “contemplation/composition of time and place.” We visualize the event as if we are making a movie. We place ourselves in the scene and lose ourselves in the story. We attend to the details -- the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings of the event. We don’t worry if our imagination is running too wild. Contemplating a Gospel scene is not simply remembering it or going back in time. Through the act of contemplation, the Holy Spirit makes present a mystery of Jesus’ life in a way that is meaningful for us now. We use our imagination to dig deeper into the story so that God may communicate with us in a personal, evocative way. See more at: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/ignatian-contemplation-imaginative-prayer> **NOTE:** In the *Spiritual Exercises* contemplation is a very active way of praying that engages the mind and heart and stirs up thoughts and emotions. In other spiritual traditions contemplation has quite a different meaning. It refers to a way of praying that frees the mind of all thoughts and images.

Another is a communal reading of the *Bible* when each SCC member reads a verse in turn or a paragraph at a time.

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<sup>1258</sup> After participating in over 1000 weekly meetings of SCCs around the world in the last 40 years I have seen three styles:

1. The leaders and other SCC participants merely reread, retell or rephrase the actual Scripture reading.
2. The leaders and other SCC participants explain the meaning of the actual Scripture reading: historical background, exegesis of the text, etc. – a *Bible* study approach. A helpful mantra is: “Everything in the *Bible* is true. Some of it happened.”
3. The ideal: The leaders and other SCC participants connect the actual Scripture reading to our daily lives, our lived reality.

## **G. Where is the Nearest Catholic Church?**

How can we explain that "we are the church" -- that the Catholic Church is not just the bishops and the priests, that the church is the whole community of believers, that the church is Christian people in given local area, that lay people (often ordinary people at the "base") take responsibility for *their* Local Church communities. During workshops and seminars we pose the following situation: A stranger comes up to you on the street in your town 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 cathedral is over there near the high school" to "I'll be glad to walk to the church with you." Participants always be surprised to hear that perhaps the best answer to the question "Where is the church" is to point to oneself and say: "I am the church" (that is, as a member of the "community of believers").

At a workshop in Nairobi, Kenya 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 or her to my SCC."

## **H. How Many Missionaries Are in the Room?**

I enjoy shocking African audiences, especially lay people, when I ask them. “When St. John Paul II was asked, “What was the most important day of your life,” what do you think he answered? Many thought he would answer, “When I was elected pope” or “The day I became a bishop.” But he quickly answered, “The day I was baptized.” He recognized that the day he was baptized he fully become a child of God and began participating in the life of the Trinity. Through his Baptism into the Christian community he became responsible to be a missionary and to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to others.

During SCCs Meetings I like to remind people that every Catholic is a missionary by virtue of his or her Baptism. The most effective way is to ask the question: “How Many Missionaries Are in the Room?”

Here is how it happened when I participated in the weekly meeting of St. Catherine of Siena SCC in Queen of Heaven Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese on Monday, 28 July, 2014. We were a total of 19 participants: 16 lay people, two priests and one religious sister. When I asked the SCC members how many missionaries were in the room, I kept getting the answer “three.” This is the standard and most common answer. Then one woman suddenly said “19.” I asked her to stand up and everyone clapped. Yes, she “got it.” I hope everyone in that SCC remembers.

## **I. Special Exercise to Identify Obstacles/Problems in the Growth/Development of SCCs and Find Practical, Pastoral Solutions**

Many SCC Training Workshops and Seminars in Eastern Africa begin with this practical exercise. This is a new way of conducting a workshop or seminar. After participant introductions, the first session is not a lecture on SCCs (deductive and from the top down), but this practical, pastoral, experiential exercise (inductive and from the bottom up).

Step 1: From their personal experience workshop participants identify some 20 or 25 common obstacles/problems in the growth/development of their SCCs on the local level.

Step 2: Participants vote for their top five or six choices, that is, the obstacles/problems that they would like to analyze more in depth and to find solutions.<sup>1259</sup>

Step 3: Analyze and discuss in depth these most common and troubling obstacles/problems using the resources of the *Bible*, social analysis (history, anthropology, economics, politics, sociology), theological reflection, pastoral experiences and propose practical, pastoral solutions. Most important is to learn from the experience of other SCCs and how they solved these obstacles/problems on the local level.<sup>1260</sup>

Step 4: Make an Action Plan and Timetable to carry out these practical, pastoral solutions.

Two concrete examples: First, many SCC Workshops and Seminars in Eastern Africa identify “lack of youth in our SCCs” as a major obstacle/problem. One solution is to start specific Youth SCCs in which the youth take responsibility for their own regular lectionary-based faith sharing and a wide variety of other activities.

Second, many SCC Workshops and Seminars in Eastern Africa identify “there are few men in our SCCs” as a major obstacle/problem. Our SCC Training Team feels there are practical solutions. One is to politely but firmly challenge the assumption that men are superior to women,<sup>1261</sup> and that men have more leadership skills than women. Help the men

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<sup>1259</sup> Steps 1 and 2 can take place ahead of time when the SCC Training Team meets with SCC leaders, members of the Parish Pastoral Council, catechists and parish staff.

<sup>1260</sup> As I travel around the most frequent question that I get is: How do other SCCs practically solve these obstacles/problems?

<sup>1261</sup> Vincent Donovan, CSSp dramatizes this challenge in the short story “In the Eucharist There Is Neither Male Nor Female:” *Christianity Rediscovered*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005, pp. 91-92.

to appreciate equality, working together, collaboration and sharing gifts and skills in the SCC. Another is to encourage activities and projects in the SCCs that attract men more than simply being part of a prayer group. It important to give the men a certain status and dignity so they feel wanted and needed.

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There is a long-standing tradition of Maasai men in East Africa never to eat in the presence of Maasai women. In their minds, the status and condition of women were such that the very presence of women at the time of eating was enough to pollute any food that was present. But here in the Eucharist we were at the heart of the unchanging gospel that I was passing on to them. They were free to accept that gospel or reject it, but if they accepted it, they were accepting the truth that in the Eucharist, which is to say in Christ, "there is neither slave nor free, neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female."

They did accept it, but it was surely a traumatic moment for them, as individuals and as a people, that first time when I blessed the cup, or gourd in this case, and passed it on to the woman sitting next to me, told her to drink from it, and then pass it on to the man sitting next to her. I don't remember any other pastoral experience in which the "sign of unity" was so real to me. And I was not surprised some time later when a group of teenage girls told me privately that the *ilomon sidai* ("good news") that I talked about constantly, was really good news for them.

## 16. Using the “See,” “Judge,” and “Act” Process/Method as Part of the Pastoral Spiral

Future Challenge/Priority/Action No. 6 states: “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.”

The Pastoral Spiral process/methodology is explained and demonstrated in many places in this Ebook. Here are two resources:

### Guidelines for the “SCC Practicum Write-up”

1. **See (or Ona/Tazama)**: Describe the actual experience that you had in the SCC. When? Where? How long was the activity/gathering? Number of SCC members present (men, women, youth, children)? What did they do? Number and quality of the *Bible Sharings/Bible Reflections*. Did they connect to daily life? What was the spirit/feeling/style of the gathering?
2. **Judge (or Amua/Tafakari)**:<sup>1262</sup> Evaluate, assess and critique the actual experience. Use various methods and tools of Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR):
  - a. *Bible*.
  - b. History.
  - c. Theology (ecclesiology, pastoral theology).
  - d. Social and Cultural Analysis (sociology, politics, psychology, anthropology).
3. **Act (or Tenda)**: What actions did the SCC members decide on? What recommendations for further action do you have for the SCC members especially related to pastoral planning? What actions (if any) are you personally going to take (this is related to any learnings that you had from the experience)?

**Updated:** 1 April, 2016

### Example of a SCC Practicum Write-up

#### SEE

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<sup>1262</sup> There is a lot of discussion (and even disagreement) on the best words to use. Alternate words in Swahili are *tafakari* and *thatmini*.

*Bible Service and Meeting of St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC), Waruku (an informal settlement) in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese, Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday afternoon, 22 February, 2009 from 2:15 to 4:15 p.m. Swahili. At Clementina Mulongo's (the SCC's new Treasurer) home. Total of 25 participants: 13 women, 12 men. Mixed ethnic groups. All three readings of the following Sunday (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent, 1 March, 2009) especially the Gospel: Mark 1:12-15. 14 bible verses cited. Only three Bible reflections (two men, one woman). Five petitions ("Prayer of the Faithful").*

The number of *Bible* reflections was shortened because of the long pastoral and business agenda (plus the fact that SCC does not meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month):

1. Deaconate of Joseph in St. Austin's Parish on 28 March, 2009.
2. *Zamu* of the SCC at the parish masses on Sunday, 1 March, 2009.
3. Meaning of Lent and the 2009 Kenya Lenten Campaign.
4. Marriage of Maureen Achieng and Chrispin Odhiambo on 7 March, 2009.
5. Short comment by a newcomer to the SCC with an explanation of typical financial problems.

Discussion on various financial collections. Materials on the 2009 Kenya Lenten Campaign and various booklets in Swahili on marriage, etc. were handed out.

## **JUDGE**

No silence between the Scripture readings. A very active SCC, but decision-making is always long and complicated, for example, deciding on what gifts to give to the new deacon and to the new married couple. It was pointed out that last year the materials on the 2008 Kenya Lenten Campaign got "stuck" in one home and were not passed around. The Chairperson had to leave early and the Assistant Chairperson had more trouble running the meeting especially collecting and recording financial contributions. Serving tea and *mandazi* in the middle of the meeting was distracting. Later I pointed out that bad habits can creep into the *Bible Service* part of the weekly gathering: SCC Members "teaching" rather than sharing during their *Bible Sharings/Bible Reflections*. One sharing included a long, long story that was not connected to the theme of the scriptures.

## **ACT**

Decision to have an extra St. Kizito SCC Meeting on another day to cover all the agenda listed above. SCC leaders stayed behind to work on implementation and follow-up. Trying to solve two problems privately after the meeting: Dispute over the amount of the gift from the SCC Fund to a needy SCC member. The plan for a memorial mass in Machakos for the son of the Vice Chairperson who was killed in an automobile accident is to be implemented *kijumuiya* later in the year.

Prepared by:  
Rev. Joseph G. Healey, M.M.  
Updated 1 April, 2016

## **17. SCC Reflection on Adoptive Parent Families**

**NOTE:** This SCC Reflection is adapted from *The Journey of Faith – 5: Together in Jesus’s Family*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2012. It is based on *Matthew* 18:5 and 25:40; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) Nos. 2379, 1654; and *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC), No. 218. It helps SCCs in the ongoing formation of couples and the deeper understanding of family and marriage.

### **1. Learn from an African Story**

In most African cultures, childlessness is considered a curse. This is one of the reasons given for polygamy, a practice that is still encouraged. Stephen and Caroline had been married for five years and no children came their way. It was painful for the couple as they had become the talk of the African village. In fact, some of Stephen’s friends thought that Caroline was not the best choice for him and advised him to marry another woman. Stephen’s parents also kept pressurizing them. They wanted to see their grandchildren before dying and joining their ancestors.

It was a time of crisis for the couple. Both knew that it was against the Church’s teaching for Stephen to marry another wife. The Small Christian Community, however, was constantly on their side. They tried to encourage them to keep faithful to their marriage and kept advising them to consider adoption since they had all the possibilities to care for children. This was not agreeable to the parents of Stephen since they wanted their own grandchildren.

Stephen and Caroline however, stood firm and planned to choose adoption rather than break their marriage. Three months later a young couple who were members of the Small Christian Community lost their lives in a terrible road accident, leaving behind three little children. It was a sad moment for the entire community. Stephen and Caroline offered to adopt these children as other relatives were financially unable to meet their needs. Though a sad incident, Stephen and Caroline were happy that they could take these children as their own and provide for all their necessities.

### **2. Lessons from the African Story**

1. With the support of their SCC Stephen and Caroline stood firm together despite the pressure that came from friends and family. In this way, they confirm the fact that their marriage remains valid and meaningful despite being childless. They can “nevertheless have a conjugal life full of meaning, in both human and Christian terms. Their marriage can radiate a fruitfulness of charity, of hospitality and of sacrifice” (CCC, 1654).

2. “The Gospel shows that physical sterility is not an absolute evil. Spouses who suffer from infertility after exhausting legitimate medical procedures should unite themselves with the Lord’s cross, the source of all spiritual fecundity. They can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services to others” (CCC, 2379).

3. When faced with childlessness, it is important to seek advice from the right people. These include qualified medical people and those who would help to keep the marriage stable. Stephen and Caroline choose to listen to their Small Christian Community and finally opt for adoption and to keep the unity of their marriage.

**18. Questionnaire on Fidei Donum Priests Animating the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Kenya Today (Nairobi, Kenya)<sup>1263</sup>**

1. Do you personally belong to a SCC?

If yes, describe it.

2. Do you celebrate Mass in the homes of SCC members?

How is the homily done?

3. Write some words/phrases to describe the role of a priest in a SCC in Kenya today.

4. Number of SCCs in Kenya today \_\_\_\_\_

5. Number of SCCs in AMECEA (Eastern Africa) today \_\_\_\_\_

6. How important are SCCs in your parish?

7. How important are SCCs in your diocese?

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<sup>1263</sup> This is a sample of a questionnaire used in SCCs workshops, seminars, meetings and other training sessions. The starting point is not a lecture or a talk but the participants' personal, practical, pastoral experience. The 13 participants (12 priests and one bishop) at the Fidei Donum Priests Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya on 25 April, 2013 formed St. Mark SCC for the duration of the workshop (based on the saint of the day).

## **19. Questionnaire on Evaluating the Small Christian Community Priority in a Parish or Diocese**

### **On the parish level:**

Arriving in a parish a person can rather quickly evaluate the quantity and quality of the SCCs in the parish. First, on the more informational level:

How many SCCs are in the parish?

Are the SCCs listed on the parish bulletin board?

Are the SCCs mentioned in the homily?

Are the SCCs mentioned in the Prayer of the Faithful?

Are the SCCs mentioned in the announcements?

Are the SCCs mentioned in the parish bulletin (paper and online)?

Are books, booklets and pamphlets on SCCs included in the sale of religious literature?

Are books, booklets and pamphlets on SCCs in the parish library?

Then the deeper questions:

How many SCCs in the parish do lectionary-based faith sharing on a weekly basis, that is, read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday?

Do the SCCs' weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible--Daily Life Connections* directly contribute to the content of the Sunday homilies and other teachings of the priests and other parish leaders?

Does the Parish Pastoral Team model a small community style? Is lectionary-based faith sharing a regular part of the meetings of the Parish Pastoral Team?

How are SCCs integrated in the pastoral structure of the parish? How are SCCs represented on the Parish Pastoral Council?

How are the SCCs different from the Small Apostolic Groups in the parish?

Are the SCCs just one of many pastoral ministries in the parish or fundamental to the whole structure and life of the parish?

Is there a coordinator of SCCs on the parish level? Full time? Part time?

Do the lay ecclesial ministers, coordinators and animators in the Pastoral Ministry of SCC have regular meetings and workshops? How is the coordination and training carried out?

How many pastoral activities of the parish pass through the SCCs?

Are the sacraments sometimes celebrated in the SCCs?

Are religious services and activities like the Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, the Way of the Cross, etc. coordinated through the SCCs?

How much parish fund raising is coordinated through the SCCs?

Do the SCCs have self-help projects?

How do the SCCs participate in justice and peace activities?

Is there an annual SCC Day in the parish?

Is the pastor (and other parish leaders) committed to this Small Christian Community Model of Church? Do the priests, religious and lay ecclesial leaders emphasize the importance of SCCs in their talks?

Are SCCs highlighted on the Parish Website?

How do the SCCs in the parish use the internet especially the social media? Facebook? What's App? YouTube?

**On the diocesan level:**

Are SCCs a major part of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan?

Is there a coordinator of SCCs on the diocesan level? Full time? Part time?

Are there regular meetings and workshops of SCCs coordinators and animators at the diocesan and deanery levels?

Is the bishop (local ordinary) committed to this Small Christian Community Model of Church? Does the bishop emphasize the importance of SCCs in his talks?

Is there an annual SCC Day in the diocese?

Are SCCs a major part of the Diocesan Synods?

On the diocesan level how do the SCCs use the internet especially the social media?

Updated 5 March, 2016

**20. Sample of the Program/Timetable of a SCCs Workshop<sup>1264</sup>:  
National Youth SCCs Workshop on the Theme “Youth  
Embrace the Word of God in SCCs”**

**THEME: YOUTH EMBRACE THE WORD OF GOD IN SCCs**

**VENUE: SALESIAN CENTRE, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**

**DATES: 2 – 4 DECEMBER, 2013**

**Monday 2 December, 2013: Day One**

- Arrival of participants
- Meeting of Steering Committee (AMECEA Facilitators Team, National Pastoral Coordinator, Youth Coordinator, 2 participants: girl/boy)
- Evening after Supper:
  - Touchdown period: self-introduction, brief sharing on personal experiences of SCCs and expectations for the workshop.
  - Sharing of roles and responsibilities, structure of the program/timetable.
  - Creation of four Youth SCCs.
  - Discussion on plan for SCCs Mass to be led by Fr. Joe Healey the following day.

**Tuesday, 3 December 2013: Day Two**

- SCCs Mass
- Touchdown period discussion continues.
- “Sharing on the AMECEA Pastoral Priority of SCCs (1973 – 2013) with focus on Zambia.”
- “Focus on Youth in SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Centrality of the Word of God in SCCs.”
- Lectionary-based faith sharing in four Youth SCCs: *Matthew* 3:1-12 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent).
- Evening: DVD on SCCs.

**Wednesday, 4 December 2013: Day Three**

- Learnings, questions and comments from the 1<sup>st</sup> Day.
- Using **SEE – JUDGE – ACT** reflection method in four Youth SCCs.
  - a. Explanation of the method/process.
  - b. Practical Experience in four Youth SCCs.
- “Interacting with Youth in the Social Media.”
- “An Experience of *Bible* Sharing in four Youth SCCs.”
- Evaluation and the Way Forward
- Evening: DVDs on AMECEA.

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<sup>1264</sup> After many years of experience in participating in SCCs Workshops, Seminars, Meetings and Conferences a very good “learning” is that we should be energized by the people who come, not de-energized by the people who do not come.

<b>DAY/DATE</b>	<b>TIME (HRS)</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>RESOURCE PERSON</b>
<b><u>Monday 2 Dec.</u></b>	16:00	Arrival of Delegates/Registration Meeting of Steering Committee.	
	18:30	Supper	
	20:00	Opening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opening remarks</li> <li>- Touchdown: self-introduction, brief sharing on their experience of SCCs and expectations for the workshop.</li> <li>- Sharing of roles and responsibilities, structure of the program/timetable.</li> <li>- Creation of four Youth SCCs</li> </ul> <p>Bed Time</p>	
<b><u>Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec.</u></b>	06:30	SCCs Mass	Fr. J. Healey
	07:30	Breakfast	All
	08:00	Opening Remarks: Secretary General SCCs as AMECEA Pastoral Priority	Fr. C Lungu Fr. F. Pikiti
	10:30	Health Break	
	11:00	Focus on Youth in SCCs in the AMECEA Region	Fr. J. Healey
	12:30	Lunch	
	14:00	Centrality of the Word of God in SCCs	Fr. F. Pikiti
	16:00	Health Break	
	16:30	Lectionary-based faith sharing in four Youth SCCs <i>Matthew 3:1-12 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent)</i>	Fr. J. Healey
	18:30	Supper	
	20:00	DVD on SCCs	Fr. J. Healey
	22:00	Bed Time	
<b><u>Wednesday 4 Dec.</u></b>	06:30	SCCs Mass	Fr. F. Pikiti
	07:30	Breakfast	All
	08:00	Learning, questions, comments of Day One	Fr. J. Healey
	10:30	Health Break	
	11:00	Using SEE – JUDGE – ACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explanation of the method</li> <li>- Practical experience</li> </ul>	
	12:30	Lunch	
	14:00	Interacting with Youth in Social Media	Fr. J. Healey
	16:00	Health Break	
	16:30	An experience of Bible Sharing in four Youth SCCs	Fr. F. Pikiti
	18:30	Supper	
	20:00	DVDs on AMECEA	Fr. J. Healey

	22:00	Bed Time	

## **21. Sample of an African Inculturated Small Christian Community Mass -- Jumuiya Mass (Nairobi, Kenya)**

How are Small Christian Communities (SCCs) concretely a “New Model of Church” and a “New Way of Being Church” in Africa today. One practical example is the special celebration of the Eucharist in a SCC, usually in the home of one of the members. What we call a “*Jumuiya Mass*” (*jumuiya* means “community” in Swahili, the main language of Eastern and Central Africa). The plan for a *Jumuiya Mass* in an institutional or larger group setting is as follows. African countries represented are marked in **bold**:

### **African Inculturated Small Christian Community (Jumuiya) Mass on Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Ordinary Time, Year I**

12 Noon

Hekima College  
Jesuit School of Theology  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Wednesday, 23 February, 2011

1. Entrance Songs:
  - “*Nalifurahi Sana*” (No. 6 in *Hymnal*).”
  - “Here I Am Lord.”
2. Introduction by Celebrant Father Joseph Healey, M.M.
3. Penitential Rite following the order of the **Zaire** (now the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**) Rite. An African Exchange of Peace using a sign of peace from **South Sudan and Sierra Leone**: Place your right hand on the left shoulder of the other person and say “Peace” in our home language/mother tongue. At the end sing: “Bind Us Together, Lord” (No. 361 in *Hymnal*).
4. First Reading: *Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)* 4:11-19 followed by Silence (*Lectio Divina*).
5. After First Reading instead of the Psalm sing: “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace” (on sheet).
6. Gospel:
  - a. Introduction to Shared Homily: NO Preached Homily. Instead Buzz Groups, a feature of group dynamics. First, participants are encouraged to experience the proclaimed Gospel using the method of “Composition of Time and Place.” A mental representation of the scene/place of the Gospel story involves seeing in our imagination the people, the buildings, the nature, the interaction, the actions, etc. In our praying the Gospel we consider all the people involved in the scene including ourselves and consider their words, actions and relationships. We apply our five senses to the events. We enter into the story as participants.

- b. *Matthew* 9:38-40.
  - c. Silence (*Lectio Divina*).
  - d. Five minutes of sharing in Buzz Groups of two or three people each reflecting on the two readings and applying them to Africa today (connecting the *Bible* and our faith to our daily life). Guided question: “What *Bible* words, phrases or verses struck you and what do they mean for our lives today?”
7. Spontaneous "Prayers of the Faithful" starting from our everyday local experience in English and in our home language/mother tongue ending with the Shona (**Zimbabwe**) name for Jesus Christ: “The One Who Turns Things Up-side-down.”
  8. Offertory Song: “In Bread We Bring You, Lord” (No. 186 in *Hymnal*).
    - f. *Our Father*: Substitute "Food" rather than "Bread" to express solidarity with hungry and starving people in Northern **Kenya** and other places in Africa and to appreciate that many African languages do not have a word for "Bread."
  10. Before Communion: **Ugandan** proverb: *Relationship is in the eating together*.
  11. Communion Song: “*Tazama, Tazama*”<sup>1265</sup> (on sheet).
  12. Prayer after Communion: The ending uses the Sukuma (**Tanzania**) names for Jesus in the coming Lenten season: “Jesus Christ the Great Healer and Victor over Death.”
  13. Concluding Rite: Saying about being sent: *When you go down from the altar of sacrifice, bring not the ashes, but the fire*. “The Mass is beginning, go in peace to announce the Gospel of the Lord.”
  14. Recessional Song: “*Upendo*” (No. 318 in *Hymnal*).

Prepared by St. Josephine Bakhita SCC, the members of the class Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today (TE14)

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<sup>1265</sup> The lyrics of this song are a powerful teaching moment. A refrain is *ndugu kuishi pamoja* (“friends living together”)...*kwa umoja* (“in unity”)...*kwa mapendo* (“in love”). There are references to joyfully gathering together, forgiving one another and living together with Jesus Christ in our midst.

## **22. African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Small Christian Communities (SCCs)**

African Proverbs and Small Communities go hand in hand. There are thousands and thousands of African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories<sup>1266</sup> on the themes of belonging, brotherhood and sisterhood, collaboration, communion, community, consensus, cooperation, family, intimacy, marriage participation, mutuality, partnership, personal relationships, sharing, solidarity, teamwork, union, unity and working together (and their opposites). In turn, African Small Christian Communities use African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories in their calendars, discussions, liturgies, meetings, planning, prayers, reflections and sharing. 146 popular African proverbs and sayings on community and community-related themes listed alphabetically are:

*Alive, we live in the same house or under the same roof. Dead, we rest in the same tomb.*

*An army of well-organized ants can bring down an elephant.*

*Bananas cook best when bunched in a pot (Neighbors do good things together).*

*Bangles sound when there are two.*

*A bird builds its nest using feathers of other birds.*

*Blood is thicker than water.*

*Blood relationships don't often procure mercy; favor comes only by divine connection.*

*A boat cannot go forward if each rows his or her own way.*

*Brotherhood and sisterhood does not mean physical resemblance but mutual assistance.*

*Brothers are like calabashes, even if they knock each other, they don't break.*

*Carve with your friends; alone you cut yourself.*

*Cross the river in a crowd and the crocodile won't eat you.*

*The child who stays near his or her mother does not fall into the trap.*

*The cooking pot sits on three stones.*

*The cows never run away from her calves*

*Eating together promotes friendship.*

*Eating together strengthens brotherhood and sisterhood; there is nothing like brotherhood and sisterhood.*

*A family is like a forest, when you are outside it is dense, when you are inside you see that each tree has its place.*

*Friendship is eating and sharing with friends.*

*Good-bye until we meet again.*

*Grasp all, lose all.*

*The guinea fowl says that it goes in pairs so that one would see what the other does not see.*

*The hen with chicks doesn't swallow the worm.*

*A herd is comprised of animals of all ages.*

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<sup>1266</sup> A Search for the word “community” on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website reveals 50 results (hits), retrieved on 2 April, 2014, <http://afriprov.org/index.php/search.html?searchword=community&ordering=&searchphrase=all>

A Search for the word “community” on the Small Christian Communities Website reveals 53 results (hits), retrieved on 2 April, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/search.html?searchword=community&ordering=&searchphrase=all>

*A herd of aged animals has no future.*  
*Hoes that dig together never miss to knock at one another.*  
*Home is best.*  
*The hoes of two people cultivating together in a field clash (hit against each other).*  
*I am because we are; we are because I am.*  
*I belong by blood relationship. Therefore I am.*  
*If creeping plants could unite, they'll easily tie up an elephant.*  
*If God lives as a community, we must do the same.*  
*If you get a fine harvest of maize don't break your local brotherhood and sisterhood.*  
*If you want to go fast, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk with others.*  
*It is the gathering of people that gave birth to discussion.*  
*It is the teeth that are together that bite meat.*  
*It takes a whole village to raise a child.*  
*It takes many hands to capture a buffalo.*  
*The journey of one person is a problem. The journey of two persons together easily gets them to the top of the mountain.*  
*Let the guest come so that the host may benefit (get well).*  
*Let us pull together (English translation of the Swahili saying Harambee)*  
*Life is when you are with others; alone you are like an animal.*  
*Like ants, eat little and carry the rest back to your home.*  
*Like ring and finger.*  
*Little and little, fills the measure.*  
*A lone traveler is swept by a stream.*  
*Many beads form one necklace.*  
*Many beads threaded onto a single string.*  
*Many bells on the legs make a loud sound.*  
*Many hands make light work.*  
*Many pieces of firewood keep the fire burning until the morning*  
*Many sticks burn together.*  
*Mountains never meet but people do.*  
*A neighbor is a second cloth.*  
*Neighbors share meat.*  
*No matter how powerful a person is, he or she cannot make the rains fall or his or her farm alone.*  
*No matter how skinny, the son always belongs to his father.*  
*Not to aid one in distress is to kill him/her in your heart.*  
*One does not love if one does not accept from others.*  
*One<sup>1267</sup> finger does not (or cannot) kill a louse.*  
*One finger does not kill a flea.*  
*One finger does not play a drum.*  
*One finger does not remove a thorn.*  
*One finger nail does not crush a louse.*  
*One grain does not make porridge.*

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<sup>1267</sup> In analyzing hundreds of African proverbs on unity and community we found that certain patterns and emphases clearly emerge. Most common is the "one...does not..." pattern to teach the inadequacy and weakness of individualism and a person working alone. Conversely proverbs using the pattern "Two..." communicate unity, cooperation, strength, and success. This includes the importance of sharing and working together in the family, SCC, neighborhood, village and town. See Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African*, pp. 113-28.

*One hand alone does not tie up a parcel.*  
*One hand cannot clap.*  
*One hand does not catch a buffalo.*  
*One hand does not collect corn meal.*  
*One hand does not cultivate a field.*  
*One hand does not nurse a child.*  
*One hand does not tie a parcel.*  
*One hand washes the other.*  
*One head does not hold up (or carry) a roof.*  
*One knee does not bring up a child.*  
*One person is thin porridge or gruel; two or three people are a lump (handful) of ugali (stiff  
 cooked meal/flour from sorghum or millet).*  
*One person's arms alone do not encircle an ant hill.*  
*One white ant does not build an ant hill.*  
*The one with many uncles slept hungry.*  
*The one who eats with you is not ready to die with you; only he or she who is born with you is  
 (Meaning: A brother or sister sticks closer than a friend).*  
*The one who encounters problems in a crowd will be helped.*  
*The pain for one of us is the pain for all of us.*  
*Those who move together remind each other.*  
*A person cannot dance well on one leg only.*  
*The person who does not listen to an elder's advice gets his or her leg*  
*The person who eats alone dies alone.*  
*The porcupine lovingly licks her spinney (thorny) offspring.*  
*Pull together! Work together! Let us sing together!*  
*Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.*  
*The quiver hangs from the strap and the strap hangs on the shoulder.*  
*Those who eat together do not eat one another.*  
*Reconciliation is strengthened by eating together.*  
*Relationship is in the eating together.*  
*Relationship is a space filled by eating.*  
*Ring and finger don't separate.*  
*Sharing is wealth.*  
*A single bracelet does not jingle.*  
*A single stick may smoke, but it will not burn.*  
*A single thumb does not kill a louse.*  
*The snake like walking alone and that is why it is killed.*  
*The speed of a whole herd of buffalos depends on the slowest one at the back compare A  
 chain is only as strong as its weakest link).*  
*Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.*  
*There is always room for one more person at the table.*  
*There is no hyena without a friend.*  
*They help each other like white ants.*  
*Three stones support the cooking pot.*  
*Things are interdependent.*  
*Those who move together remind each other.*  
*Together like basket and food.*  
*Together use the long way to get there rather than the short cut that does not get there.*  
*To put a roof on the walls of a hut needs the joining of hands.*  
*To stay together is brotherhood and sisterhood.*

*Two ants do not fail to pull one grasshopper.*  
*Two eyes see better than one.*  
*No matter how big an eye is, two eyes are better than one (together, we can do more).*  
*Two ants do not fail to pull one grasshopper.*  
*Two fingernails kill a louse.*  
*Two hands wash each other.*  
*Two or more people scared by a lion will make a good company in the forest.*  
*The umbilical cord and strap in which the cord is wrapped is like mother and child.*  
*United we stand, divided we fall (universal proverb very popular in Africa).*  
*Unity is the real thing.*  
*Unity is power.*  
*Unity is strength; division is weakness.*  
*A visitor is always for the community.*  
*A visitor is a guest for two days. On the third day give him or her a hoe.*  
*A visitor is never an interruption.*  
*The voice of many is heard by God.*  
*The voice of the people is the voice of God.*  
*Through unity we stand.*  
*A water pot cannot stand on its own without a support.*  
*We create the path by walking (originally from Spanish).*  
*We rather than I.*  
*Whenever there is a feast everyone is welcome.*  
*When a leaf falls to the ground, the tree gets the blame/the shame goes to the tree.*  
*When minds are one, what is far comes near.*  
*When one finger is injured, the whole hand is stained with blood.*  
*When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion.*  
*When there is a death in your family there is a death in our family.*  
*When there is a death in your SCC there is a death in our SCC.*  
*When they work together strings of bark can tie up an elephant.*  
*When a woman is hungry she says: "Roast something for the children that they may eat."*  
*Where there are many, nothing goes wrong.*  
*Where there are many people God is there.*  
*Wisdom is like fire. People take it from others.*  
*You cannot break a bundle.*  
*You marry into a household/family and not only to your husband.*  
*Your home is your home.*  
*Your mother is your mother even if she has a small leg.*

## **23. African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Family and Marriage**

It is interesting to analyze these proverbs and sayings and understand their use in family gatherings and discussions, SCCs meetings, counseling sessions, etc. They are classified in the three categories in Chapter 12: family life, raising children and marriage ministry/marriage preparation/marriage counseling. Here are 106 examples:

### **Family Life** (40)

- *A united family eats from the same plate* (Ganda, Uganda).
- *The family that prays together stays together* (universal proverb very popular in Africa)
- *Vultures are less likely to be found (due to bloodshed caused by fighting) in a homestead of family with a responsible man as the head* (Yoruba, Nigeria).
- *No matter how useless a person may seem to another, they mean the world to their family* (Zulu, South Africa).
- *So much of what is great has sprung from the closeness of family ties* (Africa).
- *Members of the same family are open to each other and can discuss anything* (Samburu, Kenya).
- *Dine with a stranger but save your love for your family* (Ethiopia).
- *Fighting does not build a family* (Kamba, Kenya).
- *When brothers fight to the death, a stranger inherits their father's estate* (Ibo, Nigeria).
- *Issues/things of the family should not be displayed in public* (English equivalent: *Do not wash your dirty linen in public*) (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *Do not show your nakedness in public, that is, don't share family secrets in public including to children* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *Tall stories destroy family relationships* (Luba--Katanga, DRC).
- *Blood is thicker than water* (many African languages).
- *Brotherhood and sisterhood does not mean physical resemblance but mutual assistance* (Africa).
- *Even the fool has relatives* (Alur, DRC).
- *You will die poor if you rely on relatives* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *Eating together strengthen brotherhood [and sisterhood]; else there is nothing like brotherhood [and sisterhood]* (Tongo, Ghana).
- *One hand washes the other* (Meru, Kenya).
- *Impatience with your brother or sister is in the flesh; it doesn't reach the bone* (Mamprussi, Burkina Faso).
- *Brothers [and sisters] are like calabashes; even if they knock each other, they don't break* (Bunyoro, Uganda).
- *Brothers are like ants, they never fight each other but attack the enemy together* (Bunyoro, Uganda).
- *If you get a fine harvest of corn/maize, don't break your local brotherhood and sisterhood* (Bembe, Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC, Tanzania).
- *I belong by blood relationship. Therefore I am* (Ghana).
- *I am because we are; we are because I am* (Zulu, South Africa, Swaziland).

- *Blood relationships don't often procure mercy; favor comes only by divine connection.*
- *Any sheepfold without siblings has no life because sooner or later it will be finished* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *A herd of aged animals has no future* (Luhya, Kenya).
- *It's better to have a bad mannered brother than none* (Luo, Kenya).
- *A visitor is a guest for two days. On the third day give him or her a hoe.* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *Let the guest come so that the host may benefit (get well)* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *The person who does not listen to an elder's advice gets his or her leg* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *Like ants, eat little and carry the rest back to your home* (Bembe, Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC, Tanzania)
- *Do not look at how small my egg is; one day it will hatch into a cock and feed my entire family* (Luhya, Kenya).
- *The fetus that is afraid of criticism is never born* (Rwanda, Rwanda).
- *Women give birth with other women* (Alur, DRC and Uganda).
- *You only have one mother* (many African languages).
- *A mother is the cornerstone of a family* (Somali, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia).
- *Your friend's mother is your mother too* (Digo, Kenya).
- *A child does not laugh at the ugliness of its mother* (Uganda).
- *When you follow in the path of your father, you learn to walk like him* (Ashanti, Ghana).

### **Raising Children** (33)

- *The hen with baby chicks doesn't swallow the worm* (Sukuma, Tanzania).<sup>1268</sup>
- *A hen's feet cannot kill its chicks* (Ganda, Uganda).
- *A cow never runs away from her calves.* (Bemba, Zambia).
- *A cow's horn cannot kill its calf.* (Kalenjin, Kenya and Uganda).
- *A hen's feet cannot kill its chicks* (Ganda, Uganda proverb).
- *When the woman is hungry she says, "Roast something for the children so they might eat"* (Akan, Ghana).
- *A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm* (Yoruba, Nigeria).
- *A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long* (Ibo, Nigeria).

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<sup>1268</sup> A full explanation can be found on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 26 May, 2014, <http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/29-2003proverbs/194-october-2003-proverb-qthe-hen-with-baby-chicks-doesnt-swallow-the-wormq-sukuma-tanzania.html>

- *The old woman looks after the child to grow its teeth and the young one in turn looks after the old woman when she loses her teeth* (Akan, Ghana).
- *Who loves the mother must love the children also* (Bemba, Zambia).
- *A child who is not taught by its mother will be taught by the world* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *The person who has not traveled widely thinks his or her mother is the only cook (the best cook)* (many African languages).
- *A stupid cow leads her calf near the road.* (Hema, Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC).
- *Why do you behave like a woman whose son has just gotten married?* Maasai (Kenya, Tanzania).
- *A child that has never visited another man's farm will brag that his or her father's farm is the biggest* (Yoruba, Nigeria).
- *No matter how skinny, the son always belongs to his father* (Kipsigis, Kenya and Galla, Ethiopia).
- *You can only resemble the parents that gave birth to you. For a cow does not give birth to a sheep* (Yoruba, Nigeria).
- *The child's appearance/respect/dignity mirrors that of a parent* (Chichewa, Malawi).
- *A snake gives birth to a snake* (Zulu, South Africa).
- *You are the child of a duck; take care of yourself* (Sukuma, Tanzania).
- *You must treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It is loaned to you by your children* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *The happiness of a parent is the laughter of a child* (Ganda, Uganda).
- *Children are the reward of life* (African).
- *If you think education is costly, try ignorance* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *Nobody teaches a baby to believe in God* (Akan, Ghana).
- *By crawling a child learns to stand.* (West Africa).
- *A stick is straightened while still young* (many African languages).
- *It takes a whole village to raise a child* (Igbo and Yoruba, Nigeria Proverb).
- *A heavy burden weighs heavily on both sides* (Bemba, Zambia).
- *Children of a hippo play in all the pools of water in the river or the lake* (Bemba, Zambia).
- *A water pot cannot stand on its own without a support* (Luo, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda).
- *One finger cannot kill a louse* (many African languages).
- *One knee does not bring up a child* (Sukuma Tanzania proverb).<sup>1269</sup>
- *One hand does not nurse a child.* Swahili, East and Central Africa Proverb.

### **Marriage Ministry/Marriage Preparation/Marriage Counseling (33)**

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<sup>1269</sup> Some of the Sukuma proverbs cited here are explained in Kamati ya Utafiti wa Utamaduni Bujora, *Kugundua Mbegu za Injili: Hekima ya Kisukuma na Lugha Mbalimbali juu ya Familia na Ndoa -- Kitabu cha Pili*, Peramiho: Benedictine Publications Ndanda -- Peramiho, 1993. The English translation is *Discovering Seeds of the Gospel: The Wisdom of Sukuma and Different Languages on Family and Marriage -- Book II*. The cover of the book is the Jesus Mafa painting of the Holy Family.

- *A home is for a husband and a wife* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *A good home is made of a good woman* (Tiv, Nigeria).
- *A home without a wife is dead* (Luyia, Kenya)
- *To be happy in one's home is better than to be a chief* (Yoruba, Nigeria).
- *A happy man marries the girl he loves, but a happier man loves the girl he marries* (African proverb).
- *Home is best* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *One who married for love alone will have bad days but good nights* (Arabic, Egypt).
- *He has not gotten married yet* (figurative). *He does not have a stove yet* (literal) (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *A faithful woman is a crown to her husband* (Gusii, Kenya).
- *Wife is the wealth* (Tembo, Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC).
- *If you marry a monkey for his wealth, the money goes and the monkey remains as is* (Egyptian proverb).
- *My beloved* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *If a woman has a gentle tongue, her husband will never refuse to eat her food.*
- *Educate a woman, educate a nation* (Fanti (Ghana).
- *The journey of marriage is far, far* (Ashante, Ghana).
- *Marriage is the main post of the hut* (African)
- *Marriage is like a peanut/groundnut; you have to crack it to see what is inside* (Akan, Ghana).
- *Marriage is like a book; every page/day is a new lesson.* (Ewe, Ghana).
- *Marriage is a school.* (Tetela, Democratic Republic of Congo).
- *No one gives away a woman to a man in marriage and provides him a bed besides* (Ga, Ghana).
- *The house that is built well (like a fixed faith) doesn't move any longer* (Lwalu, Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC).
- *Any goat can serve as bridewealth unless it has a defect* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *A single person cannot counsel a married couple* (Luo, Kenya and Tanzania).
- *An uncircumcised person can never advise a circumcised person (concerning adulthood including marriage)* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *A monogamist sleeps with his wife even when she is sick* (Esan, Nigeria).
- *The cow does not feel the weight of its two horns* (Amharic, Ethiopia).
- *One piece of wood by itself cannot cook food* (Amharic, Ethiopia).
- *The hoes of two people cultivating together in a field sometimes clash (hit) against each other* (Sukuma, Tanzania).
- *Hoes that dig together never miss to knock at one another* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *Two calabashes in a basin of water will by all means touch each other but not break each other* (Ewe, Ghana, Togo, Benin and
- *"Now the marriage begins," says the woman who has been beaten with thorns* (Nigeria).
- *Come we stay* (Kenya).
- *Character is like pregnancy; you cannot hide it for long* (Chewa, Malawi).



## **24. Constitution of St. John the Evangelist Small Christian Community (Nairobi, Kenya)<sup>1270</sup>**

### BACKGROUND

St. John the Evangelist Small Christian Community in St. John the Baptist Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya was founded in 1999 by the then Parish priest, Father John Kiongo. It was known as “Jumuiya ya Father” until it was officially given the name it uses at present. The SCC was established primarily to accommodate the non-Gikuyu speaking population of the parishioners. Over time, however, the SCC has grown and accommodates all parishioners.

#### Name

The name shall be St. John the Evangelist Small Christian Community

#### Aim

To share the Word of God and support each other as a Christian community. To nourish each other spiritually as Christians

#### Objectives

- To promote Christian lifestyle of the members
- To promote unity of the members
- To promote good neighborliness
- To promote socio-economic development of the members

#### Members

Members of the SCC shall be residents of the parish and shall also be parishioners at the out-station where the SCC is domiciled.

One shall obtain and retain membership of the SCC by:

- Paying the prescribed registration fee
- Participating in the meetings and activities of the SCC
- Participating in financial contribution of the SCC and parish as required
- Upon completion of the probation period of six months

Members shall lose/relinquish their membership if:

- They change their residence to within the borders of another parish. If this happens the member shall be issued with a letter of recommendation to the new parish.
- They do not participate in the meetings and activities of the SCC for eight consecutive weeks, without justifiable explanation to the executive committee.
- They do not participate in the financial contributions of the SCC as required, without justifiable explanation to the executive committee.

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<sup>1270</sup> As an example of the usefulness of these two printed constitutions of SCCs: A person from Mombasa, Kenya wrote to the “info” email address of our SCCs Website: “I am a member of Holy Ghost Cathedral Church, Mombasa, Kenya. On Sunday 30 March, 2014 we shall be electing our SCCs office bearers. Kindly and urgently send me with the correct format of election or the one the church prefers most.” We referred them to the full texts of these two printed constitutions that are available in our free, online Ebook on our SCCs Website.

## Meetings

There shall be meetings of the SCC as follows:

Weekly meeting – will be held every Sunday, other than the third Sunday of the month, for prayers and *Bible* discussion. (Appendix 2)

Monthly meeting – will be held every third Sunday of the month as an open forum for members to discuss matters affecting the SCC.

Special meetings – will be called in the event of:

Activities organized on any other day other than Sunday

Crisis affecting any member of the SCC

The quorum at monthly and special meetings shall be 15 members.

## Executive committee

The executive committee shall constitute members duly elected as per the elections schedule of the parish. The committee shall comprise of the following members:

### Chairperson

The chairperson shall:

Chair meetings and co-ordinate activities of the SCC

Represent the SCC at the pastoral council meetings

Ensure spiritual, economic and social growth of the SCC

Ensure members perform tasks assigned to them

Promote co-operation with other SCCs in the parish

### Vice chairperson

The vice chairperson will perform the duties of the chairperson in his or her absence.

### Secretary

The secretary shall:

Keep a written record of the proceedings of every meeting

Present reports to members whenever called upon to do so

Any other duties allocated by the chairperson

### Assistant secretary

The assistant secretary will perform the duties of the secretary in his/her absence

### Treasurer

The treasurer shall

Keep a record of the assets of the SCC

Keep a record of all money received and paid out of the SCC kitty

Present statement of account monthly

Any other duties allocated by the chairperson

### Code of conduct

Members shall be of good conduct as expected of a Christian.

Members shall be encouraged to attend Mass regularly and to receive various Sacraments.

The SCC shall give its opinion to the church on any member prior to administration of any Sacrament to the member.

Behavior classified as gross indiscipline may lead to suspension of the member. (Appendix 3)

### Finances

The finances of the SCC shall comprise its assets and cash balances

Raising finances

Registration fee shall be Ksh.300

Every member shall pay a monthly contribution of Ksh.50

Harambee shall be held weekly. The main guest shall contribute a minimum of Ksh.200

Every other member who is present shall contribute a minimum of Ksh.20

Members who are absent may send Ksh.20

Contribution for events

Wedding of a member. Each member will contribute a minimum of Ksh.100

Death of a member or spouse or child of a member. Each member will contribute a minimum of Ksh.100

Donations as may be made by members or any other person

Use of finances (Appendix 4)

Finances will be used for prescribed purposes

For the normal operation of the SCC

Approval from members shall be sought, prior to spending, where the intended use is not among those prescribed.

Custody of finances

The treasurer shall maintain a record of all assets of the SCC and their physical location.

Cash shall be held in trust for the SCC at the bank account of the parish.

Accountability for finances

A report on the financial position of the SCC shall be made available to members at every monthly meeting.

Members shall be free to air their opinions on the financial report upon its presentation.

Amendment of the Constitution

Any clause of this constitution shall be amended by resolution of a simple majority in a meeting attended by two-thirds of all bona fide members. Any appendix may be amended by resolution of a simple majority of bona fide members at a monthly or special meeting.

Dissolution and disposal of assets

The SCC shall be deemed dissolved in the event that:

The parish ceases to exist. In this case, the assets of the SCC shall be deemed to belong to the archdiocese.

The pastoral council resolves to split the SCC into two or more Small Christian Communities. In this eventuality, the inventory of the SCC shall be valued and shared proportionately among the resultant Small Christian Communities.

Upon agreement of ALL members in a meeting attended by two-thirds of bona fide members of the SCC. If this happens the assets of the SCC shall revert to the parish.

## **APPENDICES TO CONSTITUTION OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Membership**

A register of members and all the sacraments they receive shall be kept and updated as necessary.

Efforts shall be made to assist members receive sacraments they do not receive already

Induction of new members into the SCC shall be based on a standardized induction program.

**Appendix 2****Program for weekly meetings**

Opening hymn

Opening prayer

*Bible* reading and reflection

*Bible* discussion

Register

Collections

Announcements

Prayer of the faithful

Closing prayer

Duration of the meeting will not exceed one hour

**Appendix 3**

The following will be considered gross indiscipline:

Fighting during meetings, at home or at any other place that may diminish the reputation of the member.

Use of insulting language by a member against another member, against members of the clergy or against other parishioners while in the precincts of the parish.

Inappropriate relationships between/among members such as extramarital affairs.

Misappropriation of funds of the SCC

**Appendix 4****Use of finances**

Wedding -- In addition to the cash raised for this occasion, Ksh.3 000 shall be withdrawn from the treasury to purchase a present for the couple at a wedding occasion involving a bona fide member. Any cash balance shall be given to the couple.

Sickness -- Ksh.2 000 shall be given, from the treasury, to a bona fide member following admission to hospital. Ksh.1 000 shall be given from the treasury of the SCC to a bona fide member following the admission to hospital of the spouse or child of the member.

Death -- When a bona fide member dies Ksh.10 000 shall be given to the bereaved from the treasury of the SCC in addition to the cash raised for such events. Where the deceased does not satisfy the qualification for bona fide membership the executive committee shall have discretion over the amount to be paid from the treasury. If the death is that of a spouse or child of a bona fide member, Ksh.5 000 shall be paid from the treasury in addition to the cash raised for such events.

Travel -- The executive committee shall have discretion over the amount to be withdrawn from the treasury as travelling fares for members appointed to represent the SCC.

Any other important activity not described above, at the discretion of the executive committee.

Refund -- No cash refund shall be made to any member of the SCC at the time of separation.

**Appendix 5****Various occasions**

Matrimony

Support for preparations and other related matters as may be agreed by members.

Bereavement

When a member is bereaved, all the membership of the SCC will accord all the necessary support to the bereaved member/family in terms of but not limited to:

Daily prayer meetings during the period of mourning

Fund raising to cater for expenses during the period of mourning  
Accompaniment by at least two members to the place of burial, should it be away from  
Nairobi.<sup>1271</sup>

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<sup>1271</sup> Text contributed by Kenyan layman Paul Njuki.

## **25. Constitution of St. Joseph Small Christian Community** **(Nairobi, Kenya)**

NAME OF THE GROUP: Saint Joseph Small Christian Community, a constituent group of the Holy Family Minor Basilica, Nairobi Archdiocese, Nairobi, Kenya.

OFFICE OF OPERATION: The Holy Family Minor Basilica, Nairobi.

**ADDRESS:**

St. Joseph Small Christian Community  
c/o The Holy Family Minor Basilica  
Archdiocese of Nairobi  
P.O. Box 40891-00100  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Email: [stjosephchristains@gmail.com](mailto:stjosephchristains@gmail.com)

ABOUT OUR PATRON: St. Joseph, the Spouse/Husband of Mary and Foster Father of Jesus.

**Feasts:**

March 19 for Joseph the Spouse/Husband of Mary  
May 1 for Joseph the Worker.  
Sunday after Christmas for Feast of the Holy Family

**PROFILE:**

He was a carpenter, a working man (*Matthew 13:55*). He wasn't rich for when he took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised and Mary to be purified he offered the sacrifice of two turtledoves or a pair of pigeons, allowed only for those who could not afford a lamb (*Luke 2:24*).

Despite his humble work and means, Joseph came from a royal lineage. Joseph's genealogy marks his descent from David, the greatest king of Israel (*Matthew 1:1-16* and *Luke 3:23-38*). Indeed the angel who first tells Joseph about Jesus greets him as "son of David," a royal title used also for Jesus.

Joseph was a compassionate, caring man. When he discovered Mary was pregnant after they had been betrothed, he knew the child was not his but was as yet unaware that she was carrying the Son of God. He planned to divorce Mary according to the law but he was concerned for her suffering and safety.

Joseph was man of faith, obedient to whatever God asked of him without knowing the outcome. When the angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him the truth about the child Mary was carrying, Joseph immediately and without question or concern for gossip, took Mary as his wife. When the angel came again to tell him that his family was in danger, he immediately left everything he owned, all his family and friends, and fled to a strange country with his young wife and the baby. He waited in Egypt without question until the angel told him it was safe to go back (*Matthew 2:13-23*).

Joseph loved Jesus. His one concern was for the safety of this child entrusted to him. Not only did he leave his home to protect Jesus, but upon his return settled in the obscure town of Nazareth out of fear for his life. When Jesus stayed in the Temple we are told Joseph

(along with Mary) searched with great anxiety for three days for him (*Luke 2:48*). Joseph treated Jesus as his own son for ever and over the people of Nazareth (*Luke 4:22*) Joseph respected God. He followed God's commands in handling the situation with Mary and going to Jerusalem to have Jesus circumcised and Mary purified after Jesus' birth. He took his family to Jerusalem every year for Passover, something that could not have been easy for a working man.

Joseph is also patron of the Universal Church, fathers, carpenters, and social justice. Scripture has left us with the most important knowledge: who he was -- "a righteous man" (*Matthew 1:18*).

In His Footsteps: Joseph was foster father to Jesus. There are many children separated from families and parents who need foster parents.

Prayer: "Saint Joseph, patron of the universal Church, watch over the Church as carefully as you watched over Jesus, help protect it and guide it as you did with your adopted son. Amen."

#### HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF OUR SCC:

After one year of intense Adult Catechism (RCIA) in 2010/2011, and upon successful "graduation" (Adult Baptism at the Easter Vigil, April, 2011), members of the group, through the advice and help of their Catechist – Deacon Oscar, and Father Simon Peter Kamomoe, Father-in-charge, Holy Family Minor Basilica, decided to form a Small Christian Community.

They named the SCC St. Joseph Small Christian Community in Honor of Saint Joseph the Spouse, Husband of Mary and Foster Father of Jesus.

#### MISSION OF THE SCC:

To emulate our Patron Saint, to ultimately give our lives, grow and strengthen our faith and that of our neighbors in the new found joy and purpose in GOD, through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### VISION OF THE SCC:

To transform our lives and those around us

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE SCC:

- To listen to Scripture and share our understanding of it.
- To recount the experience of our life since we last met, using a Christian viewpoint as we talk and listen.
- To talk over some of our problems in life and try to help each other with them in terms of Christian faith.
- To help each other with personal decisions on the basis of our faith.
- To socialize every so often.
- To make some group decisions on social action issues or assisting people who need our help.

- To discuss ways of living our Christian faith in our professions or places of work.

#### MEMBERSHIP:

- Membership is out of own free will, irrespective of gender, age, color or race.
- Two passport photos required for an identity card and the others for filing. A membership form to be duly be filled and kept for future reference.
- All above 18 years of age are however required to contribute a monthly subscription of Kshs. 200/= for SCC's upkeep and development. No backdate for the amount for a new member.
- Note that all members are assumed to have been there from the formation of the SCC. New members to be inculcated into the St. Joseph culture.
- Once one is a member, membership is open to his/her immediate relations.
- Where a member is married then both spouses are obliged to contribute individual monthly contributions irrespective of the spouse's attendance.
- Each member is entitled to all rights and privileges of the SCC from the time of joining.
- One ceases to be a member:
  - i) Out of free will,
  - ii) Loss of life,
  - iii) Under extremities of expulsion,
  - iv) When one fails to attend three consecutive meetings with no adequate explanation.

Apologies to be done within 48 hours to the meeting.

#### OFFICE BEARERS:

The SCC shall consist of the following office bearers:

- i) Patron.
- ii) Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.
- iii) Secretary and Vice Secretary.
- iv) Treasurer.
- v) Organizing Secretary.
- vi) Liturgist.
- vii) Welfare officer.
- viii) Music Coordinator.
- ix) Caterer.
- x) Storekeeper.
- xi) Executive committee consists of:
  - Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Welfare Officer, Caterer and organizing secretary.
  - The executive committee shall meet once every month.
- xii) Advisory committee consisting of:
  - Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Welfare officer, Patron, Organizing Secretary, vice chairpersons and any member selected by the SCC.
  - The advisory committee shall meet when need arises.

#### ELECTIONS:

- All elections shall be held every 3 years.
- All office bearers shall be practicing Catholics.
- All office bearers shall assume duties from the date of election until the succeeding election, but shall be eligible for reelection for not more than two consecutive terms.
- Any office bearer who ceases to be a member of the SCC shall automatically cease to be an office bearer – thereof
- The advisory committee shall have such powers by resolution to remove an official from office and to fill such a vacancy, or any other vacancy created, at any time or during a general meeting.
- An official who wishes to resign from office shall do so having satisfactorily handed over to the Advisory Committee within 14 days notice.

#### DUTIES OF OFFICE BEARERS:

##### a) The Patron.

He is the patron, and overall overseer of the SCC in all issues; both spiritually and in all other businesses.

##### b) Chairperson.

- Unless prevented by illness or other sufficient cause, he/she shall preside over all the SCC's meetings.
- Shall represent the affairs of the SCC at any given forum.
- Be a signatory to the SCC's accounts.
- Shall resume matters of the SCC in consultation with the executive officials.
- Shall perform all other duties assigned by the advisory committee.

##### c) Vice Chairperson.

- Shall perform any duties of the Chairperson in his/her absence, or any duty assigned by the chairman or advisory committee.

##### d) Secretary.

- Shall deal with all the general administration of the SCC.
- Shall attend and take minutes at all seatings under the supervision and direction of the chairperson/vice chairperson.
- Shall keep all minutes of meetings and preservation of records of all meetings for the SCC.
- Shall be responsible for the preparation of periodicals; pamphlets, newsletters, or such instructional matters as the advisory committee may instruct the production thereof.
- Shall attend to and deal with all correspondences and shall issue notices convening and prepare agendas for all meetings.
- Be a signatory to the SCC.

##### e) Vice Secretary.

- Shall perform all the duties of the secretary in his/her absence and such other duties as shall be assigned by the secretary, chairman or advisory committee

- Shall assist the treasurer in his/her absence.
- f) Organizing Secretary.
- Shall organize and co-ordinate all activities of the SCC, or as assigned by the advisory group.
  - In his absence, any member may voluntarily assist or as assigned by the SCC.
  - He/she will work closely with the welfare officer.
- g) Treasurer.
- Shall act under authority of advisory committee, or chairperson.
  - Shall be principal accounting officer of the SCC.
  - Shall receive and also disburse under the direction of the advisory committee all monies belonging to the SCC.
  - Shall issue receipts and vouchers for all money transactions.
  - Shall ensure that proper books of accounts are properly prepared, preserved and made available for inspection
  - Shall be a signatory to the SCC's accounts.
  - In his/her absence, the vice secretary may handle petty cash or receive collections.
  - Reserve in her possession a minimum of Kshs. 10,000/= for emergency.
- h) Liturgist.
- Shall coordinate liturgy in the SCC meetings and during animation.
  - Shall assist the SCC in selecting and following the church calendar.
  - Shall be the official spokesperson of the SCC on spiritual matters.
  - Shall handle/welcome all new members and nourish them spiritually and update them on SCC's agenda.
- i) Welfare officer.
- Shall look into the wellbeing of the members and advise the advisory committee.
  - Shall be in-charge of counseling matters of the SCC or individual members, and taking general welfare of the members as given by rules governing the SCC.
  - Will be in-charge of welfare account records i.e. contributions during weddings; hospital or members relative as governed by the SCC's rules or in all needy situations.
  - Shall assist SCC's members in co-coordinating such activities as weddings; or visits to members during times of need.
  - Will identify needy situations and advise the advisory committee.
- j) Music coordinator.
- Co-ordinate all collaborations between other choirs.
  - Coordinate singing in the SCC.
- k) Advisory Committee.
- Shall represent the SCC in the Parish Council, hence shall attend all Parish Council meetings (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer).
  - Shall give direction to SCC and the members as a whole

- Resolve and or approve all major undertakings of the SCC.
- Approve all money transactions by the SCC.
- Shall be the disciplinary committee of the SCC when such matters arise.
- Shall seek ways and means of raising funds for all charitable activities of the SCC.
- Shall consist of the chairman; secretary, treasurer, welfare officer and organizing secretary and patron.
- 50% of members by resolution in writing shall petition the patron to convene a special general meeting to discuss a disciplinary or urgent matter that has arisen touching on office bearers or any other member as a last resort.
- Shall identify areas of assisting and advising the church.

#### MEETINGS:

- i) The SCC shall meet every Sunday at 10.00 a.m.
- ii) The venue is Father's parking area unless told otherwise.
- iii) The SCC will use Resource Center at St. Dominic Hall and the room attached for office matters.

#### ORDER OF SUNDAY MEETINGS:

- i) Opening prayers
- ii) Praying the rosary
- iii) Singing -- at least a chorus
- iv) Share at least one of the readings of that day, i.e. either 1st reading, psalms; 2nd reading or Gospel reading. Silence followed by *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*.
- v) Prayer of the faithful
  - For church
  - For families
  - For the sick
  - For the country
- vi) Discuss any other business
- vii) Concluding prayers to include
  - St. Joseph Prayer
  - Any other prayers
- viii) As guided by the schedule planned.

#### POLICY ON FINANCES AND SCC SUPPORT:

1. Each member shall contribute Kshs. 200/=monthly for SCC operations
  - The SCC account shall allocate Kshs. 10,000 in the following situations
    - i) Wedding – In form of a gift for such amount when any of our member conducts a wedding in the church
    - ii) Hospital admission – Kshs.10, 000/=in cash during hospitalization (of the member, children, or spouse). Help for extended family will be voluntary contribution from members and not from the SCC account.
    - iii) Loss of life – Kshs. 20,000/= to the member's next of kin during loss of life of the said member, and 10,000 for the nuclear family i.e. parents of the member, child of the member or spouse of the member.

2. The SCC shall also raise funds from its catering projects.

NOTE: Where such needs not covered by amount stipulated, the welfare officer in consultation with the advisory committee shall ask/request members to make a voluntary contribution to attend to such needs.

NOTE: Communication should be done directly to the welfare officer whenever need arises.

\*For any correspondences, the secretary shall be given an amount approved by the advisory committee for facilitation of the activities of the SCC, e.g. communication and transport.

NOTE: The executive committee shall discuss the SCC's finances before the fourth Sunday of the month and present the same to the members on the fourth Sunday of the month.

#### ELECTIONS:

- Shall be called by the advisory committee.
- All members to attend.
- Shall be held every 3 years.
- All positions to be filled.

#### OTHER SCC ACTIVITIES:

This will be elaborately covered in the SCC's calendar of events.

- CHARITY.

The SCC shall conduct matters of charity once every quarter, through visit of a home or as advised otherwise by the committee

- RETREAT.

(Several days event, well observed especially Christmas or Lent)

- RECOLLECTION (one-day event)

The SCC shall have a Recollection Day once every quarter.

- END OF YEAR PARTY.

- There shall be at least one end-of-year party whose expenses shall be met by the SCC's account. All family members will be invited.

- SPORTS.

- Will have sports at least twice a year.

PRAYER TO ST. JOSEPH: "Litany of St. Joseph"

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy on us.  
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.  
God the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.  
Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy on us.  
Holy Mary,  
pray for us.  
St. Joseph,  
pray for us.  
Renowned offspring of David,  
pray for us.  
Light of Patriarchs,  
pray for us.  
Spouse of the Mother of God,  
pray for us.  
Chaste guardian of the Virgin,  
pray for us.  
Foster father of the Son of God,  
pray for us.  
Diligent protector of Christ,  
pray for us.  
Head of the Holy Family,  
pray for us.  
Joseph most just,  
pray for us.  
Joseph most chaste,  
pray for us.  
Joseph most prudent,  
pray for us.  
Joseph most strong,  
pray for us.  
Joseph most obedient,  
pray for us.  
Joseph most faithful,  
pray for us.  
Mirror of patience,  
pray for us.  
Lover of poverty,  
pray for us.  
Model of artisans,  
pray for us.  
Glory of home life,  
pray for us.  
Guardian of virgins,  
pray for us.  
Pillar of families,  
pray for us.  
Solace of the wretched,  
pray for us.  
Hope of the sick,  
pray for us.

Patron of the dying,

pray for us.

Terror of demons,

pray for us.

Protector of Holy Church,

pray for us.

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
spare us, O Lord!

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
graciously hear us, O Lord!

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us.

V. He made him the lord of his household.

R. And prince over all his possessions.

Let us pray. O God, in your ineffable providence you were pleased to choose St. Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother; grant, we beg you, that we may be worthy to have him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we venerate as our Protector: You who live and reign forever and ever. R. Amen.

This CONSTITUTION was AGREED on this date: \_\_\_\_ OCTOBER 2012

CHAIRPERSON

SECRETARY

PATRON

## Select Annotated Bibliography of Books, Booklets, Articles, Reports, Papers and Printed Materials and Other Resources<sup>1272</sup> (328)

*Ad Gentes – Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church: With Pastoral Theological Reflections to Assist the Readers*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015.

Includes an “Introduction” by Patrick Mwanja, CSSp, 12 Questions for Reflection and the text of the *Decree* itself.

Adinda, Pamela, "KENYA: Lumko Program Steering Small Christian Communities' Meetings toward Bible Oriented Approach, *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 113, 9 October 2015.

African Continent and African Countries Articles on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page,”  
[www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

Africa Faith and Justice Network (compiled and edited), *The [First] African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.

*The African Bible* (especially the African-related commentaries and footnotes), Nairobi: Paulines Africa, 1999.

*The African Synod Comes Home -- A Simplified Text*, Pauline Publications Africa, 1995.

*Africa Study Bible*, Wheaton, IL: Oasis International Ltd, 2012.  
<http://www.africastudybible.com>

Developed by Africans for Africans, the *Africa Study Bible* will transform lives by bringing God’s Word to His people in language that speaks directly to their hearts and relates Scripture to their everyday lives. The *Bible* will be published initially in English using the New Living Translation and other major languages will follow. The study notes are being written by African pastors and scholars. The African contextualized study notes including African Proverbs and Stories are helpful for SCC members to connect Scripture to their daily lives.

“AFRICA: Prioritize SCCs Bishop Urges Church,” *Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 76, Friday, 28 September, 2012. Available in

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<sup>1272</sup> Certain books, booklets, journals, magazines, articles, reports and DVDs are chosen to show the overall historical development of SCCs in the AMECEA Region especially during this 1973-2016 period. A great deal of this *Bibliography* can be found online in various online databases, digital documents libraries, digital libraries and websites. Click on the hyperlinks or go to online resources such as (alphabetically): Academia, Africabib, ATLA Religion Database (90 results for “Joseph Healey”), Docstoc, DSpace, EBSCO Host, Google Books (contains the online version of many books on SCCs), Google Scholar (104 results for “Joseph Healey”), Mikado (75 results for “Joseph Healey”), JSTOR, Questia, Refdoc, Readbag, ResearchGate, Scribd, Taylor & Francis and WorldCat.

email message dated 28 September, 2012 and on the CISA Website,  
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<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=fbebc85e-4ba4-4c20-a8f7-917a6375a662%40sessionmgr113&hid=107>

Healey, Joseph, "Basic Christian Communities: Church-Centered or World-Centered?" *Missionalia*, 14: 1 (April, 1986).

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1. Under the "African Continent" under "Africa" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 6 June, 2015, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/TCCRSA.pdf>.
2. Orbis Books Version on the Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 6 June 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/12816789/Beyond\\_Vatican\\_II\\_Imagining\\_the\\_Catholic\\_Church\\_of\\_Nairobi\\_I](https://www.academia.edu/12816789/Beyond_Vatican_II_Imagining_the_Catholic_Church_of_Nairobi_I)
3. Mikado Website, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, <http://www.mikado-ac.info/home-uk.html>

This article treats:

1. "Rethinking the Structures and Styles of Governing and Decision-making."
2. "From the Perspective of SCCs in Eastern Africa."
3. "Pastoral Solutions to the Two Meanings of the Eucharistic Famine in Africa."
4. "Integrating African Process and African Content."
5. "Relevance for the Catholic Church in North America and Europe."

Healey, Joseph, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications – CUEA Press Double *Spearhead* Nos. 199-200 (Print Version 2012 and 1st Reprint 2014). 163 pages. The Online Digital Version regularly updated from the 2012 print version is available as a free online Ebook containing 722 pages as of 7 February, 2016 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>

[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf)

[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf)

Catholic University of Eastern Africa -- CUEA (go to: Library Tab>E-Resources>Electronic Journals>Scroll to Small Christian Communities (logo on the right at the bottom)

<http://www.cuea.edu> **ADD CHECK**

Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College Library. Accessible only on campus on the Library's Computer (go to: Network>SERVER1>Ebooks>Ebook on SCCs. When needed enter username: administrator and password: 1234).

Hekima College (go to: Hekima College Library>[Click here to access online](#))  
<http://library.hekima.ac.ke/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=422146>

Tangaza University College (go to: Library>E-Resources>Under Open Access List> Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa  
<http://www.tangaza.org>

Tangaza University College Digital Repository, retrieved on 8 September, 2015,  
<http://41.89.26.9:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/181>

**ADD CHECK**

Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 3 March, 2015,  
[https://www.academia.edu/9245872/Building\\_the\\_Church\\_as\\_Family\\_of\\_God\\_Evaluation\\_of\\_Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_in\\_Eastern\\_Africa](https://www.academia.edu/9245872/Building_the_Church_as_Family_of_God_Evaluation_of_Small_Christian_Communities_in_Eastern_Africa)

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Google Scholar, retrieved on 26 August, 2015,  
[https://scholar.google.com/scholar?start=30&q=%22Joseph+G+Healey%22&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0,31](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?start=30&q=%22Joseph+G+Healey%22&hl=en&as_sdt=0,31)

Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa. This book treats the following 16 headings:

- “SCCs in the Historical Perspective of 55 Years (1961 to 2016) in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Quantitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Qualitative Evaluation of the Growth of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Four Case Studies of SCCs in Eastern Africa.”
- “How SCCs Promote Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa.”
- “SCCs’ Contribution to the Praxis and Theology of the Church as Family of God in Eastern Africa.”
- “Evaluation of the Impact of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “Evaluation of the Influence of AMECEA’s SCCs in Africa and Around the World.”
- “The Future is Now: Using the Internet to Promote SCCs in Africa and Around the World.”
- “Promoting the Missionary Outreach of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “SCCs’ Involvement in the New Evangelization in Eastern Africa.”
- “SCCs Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa.”
- “How SCCs Are a New Way of Being/Becoming Church in Eastern Africa.”
- “How SCCs Are a New Pastoral Model of Church in Eastern Africa.”
- “Future Challenges, Priorities and Actions for SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “General Conclusions: The Way Forward.”

Healey, Joseph, “Comparing ‘Basic’ and ‘Small’ Christian Communities.” *AMECEA Documentation Service (ADS)* 48/284 (8 May, 1984).

Healey, Joseph, “Description of January to April 2013 Seminar Course” at Hekima College, Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2013, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 2 August, 2013,  
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/kenya/232-description-of-january-to-april-2013-seminar-course-at-hekima-college-nairobi-kenya.html>

Healey, Joseph, Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College Nairobi, Kenya Final Annotated Syllabus of Two Credit Course, “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today (PET190),” Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2014, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 10 February, 2015,  
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Healey, Joseph. “Evolving A World Church from the Bottom Up: An Analysis and Interpretation of 3,500 Different Names, Titles, Terms, Expressions, Descriptions and Meanings for and about Small Christian Communities/Basic Christian Communities in the World with 11 Case Studies from Six Continents,” Background Paper for the International Consultation on "Rediscovering Community -- International Perspectives," University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA, 8-12 December, 1991, Notre Dame: Privately printed, 1991, 33 pages. Sections of the paper are published in:

- Joseph Healey, MM, “Twelve Case Studies of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa,” Radoli, Agatha (ed.), *How Local is the Local Church? Small Christian Communities and Church in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* 126-128, 1993. pp. 59-103.
- The newsletter of Latin American/North American Church Concerns (LANACC).

It is presumed that these names refer to small apostolic groups, not just small groups. We purposely avoided the broader and more generic name “small groups” by itself that is used in so many different ways in North America today. We did not research the many types of Small Prayer Groups, Small Self-help Groups and Small Support Groups because they are outside the specific meaning and purpose of Small Christian Communities. Our research did not specifically treat the many names in other Christian Churches including the Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. We did not have the opportunity to document some of the many names used in the fast growing Hispanic Catholic Churches. Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is an umbrella term used in this list and is the most common name worldwide.

**NOTE:** This research was informally updated in 2015 to include over 5,000 names with many new Names, Titles, Terms, Expressions, Descriptions and Meanings added. This expresses the rich diversity of this new way of being church.

Healey, Joseph, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Back Christian Values*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press, 1981. A Special Edition (32 Years Anniversary Edition printed digitally) was published by Orbis Books in 2013. The Swahili version is *Kuishi Injili (Living the Gospel)* and the German version is *Auf Der Suche Nach Dem Ganzen Leben: Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften in Tansania*.

Chapter Four (pages 95-150) is on “Small Christian Communities” and contains photographs and eight sections on the life and ministry of SCCs in Nyabihanga Village in Rulenge Diocese in Western Tanzania.

Healey, Joseph, Final Annotated Syllabus of Two Credit Core Course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today (PTC418),” Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2012, Small Christian

Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 10 February, 2015,  
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/syllabus2.pdf>

Healey, Joseph, Final Annotated Syllabus of Two Credit Core Course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today (PTC418),” Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2013, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 2 August, 2013,  
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/kenya/223-january-to-march-2013-scc-course-syllabus-at-tangaza-university-college.html>

Healey, Joseph, Final Annotated Syllabus of Two Credit Core Course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today (PTC418),” Tangaza University College (CUEA), Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2015. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 10 February, 2015,  
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/jan2014syllabust.pdf>

This syllabus has been revised and updated over the past seven years following the development of SCCs in the changing context of Eastern Africa. For example, the topics/themes of the “internet/social media/social networking” and “mission/evangelization” are not taught as separate weeks but are integrated in the content throughout the course and included in the exam questions.

If Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are a “New Way of Being (Becoming) Church” and a “New Model of Church in Africa Today” this challenges us to a new way of teaching about SCCs and a new way of learning about SCCs. The traditional model has been for a priest or sister (representing 1% of SCC members) to teach the course. But 99% of the SCC members are lay people. So we see a **new model of team teaching** that would include:

1. Since it is an academic course a qualified person in pastoral theology – a priest, sister, brother, layman or laywoman with the proper academic degree.
2. A layman.
3. A laywoman. **NOTE:** This is essential because our research shows that 75% of the members of SCCs in Eastern Africa are laywoman.

A key challenge is “team teaching” (the presenters sit in on each other’s classes) rather than just “shared teaching” (various people teach one or more classes on a rotation basis).

Healey, Joseph, Annotated Syllabus of Two Credit Core Course, “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today (PTC418),” Tangaza University College (CUEA), Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2016. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 7 February, 2016,  
[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/syllabus\\_jan\\_march2016.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/syllabus_jan_march2016.pdf)

Healey, Joseph, “Four African Evaluate SCCs in East Africa,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)* 29:5 (October, 1987): 266-277.

Healey, Joseph G., “Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities/

Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa,” in Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church*, Volume 2, "Theology of One World" series of Mission Aachen, Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2013. German version, "Entwicklungsgeschichte der Kleinen Christlichen Gemeinschaften /Kirchlichen Basisgemeinschaften in Afrika,” Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften: Impulse für eine zukunftsfähige Kirche*, ThEW2, Theologie der Einen Welt, Freiburg: Herder, 2012. Missio Website, retrieved on 9 August, 2015, [http://www.missio-hilft.de/media/thema/theologie/thew/2/ThEW\\_2-4-1\\_Healey.pdf](http://www.missio-hilft.de/media/thema/theologie/thew/2/ThEW_2-4-1_Healey.pdf)

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1. Under the "African Continent" under "Africa" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 4 February, 2015, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/231-historical-development-of-the-small-christian-communitiesbasic-ecclesial-communities-in-africa.html>
2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 26 August, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/15186477/Historical\\_Development\\_of\\_the\\_Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_Basic\\_Ecclesial\\_Communities\\_in\\_Africa](https://www.academia.edu/15186477/Historical_Development_of_the_Small_Christian_Communities_Basic_Ecclesial_Communities_in_Africa)
3. Mikado Website, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, <http://www.mikado-ac.info/home-uk.html>

The very first Small Christian Communities (SCCs)/Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) in Africa started in DRC in 1961. The very beginning of SCCs in Eastern Africa can be traced back to the parishes of the Luo-speaking Deanery (especially Nyarombo, Ingri and Masonga Parishes) in North Mara in Musoma Diocese in northwestern Tanzania in 1966. The AMECEA Study Conference on "Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s" in Nairobi, Kenya in December, 1973 stated: "We have to insist on building church life and work on Basic Christian Communities in both rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work take place: those basic and manageable social groups whose members can experience real inter-personal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working." This pastoral policy was in the context of the statement: "We are convinced that in these countries of Eastern Africa it is time for the Church to become truly local, that is, self-ministering, self-propagating and self-supporting." This is rooted in the theology that SCCs are not optional, but are the basic unit/basic cell/basic building block/basic foundation/most local expression of the Catholic Church.

The AMECEA Study Conference on "Building Small Christian Communities" took place in Nairobi, Kenya in 1976. The key statement was: "Systematic formation of Small Christian Communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come in Eastern Africa." This is the single most important statement made about SCCs. The meeting went on to affirm the essential ecclesial character and characteristics of Small Christian Communities by stating: "The [Small] Christian Communities we are trying to build are simply the most local incarnations of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church."

A major step was the First African Synod in Rome in April, 1994 on the theme "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission to the Year 2000" with five main topics: "Proclamation of the Good News of Salvation", "Inculturation," "Dialogue", "Justice and Peace" and the "Means of Social Communications." Of the 211 interventions during the first

two weeks of the First African Synod, there were 29 interventions on SCCs (the fourth highest number after the topics of justice, inculturation and laity).

The last 10 years has seen the increasing involvement of SCCs in promoting forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa. There is considerable documentation on how some of the 20,000 base communities (another name for SCCs) were involved in the reconciliation and healing ministry in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. Research in Kenya, Rwanda and Sudan indicates that women are better in peacemaking than men. Men tend to emphasize power and control while women emphasize personal relationships. The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) in Lusaka, Zambia produced guided reflection pamphlets on justice and peace topics for SCCs to generate faith-based action. The various reflection methods in the Lumko Program especially related to social justice are used throughout Africa.

Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church in the nine AMECEA countries. Tanzania has over 60,000 SCCs and Kenya has over 45,000 SCCs. Since 1973 they have been a key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa as a “New Way of Being (Becoming) Church” and a “New Pastoral Model of Church.”<sup>1273</sup> The rich experience of the church in Eastern Africa especially pastoral, parish-based SCCs is contributing to the other parts of Africa and to the World Church. SCCs is a pastoral model of church integrally connected to the structures, ministries and activities of the parish. This helps local Catholics feel that “they are the church” and more responsible (“ownership”) for church life and decision making. SCCs are becoming more involved in justice and peace issues.

What is the future? Many African SCCs have emerged from reading the contemporary signs of the times in Africa and responding to today’s reality. Cardinal Polycarp Pengo of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and the former President of SECAM, calls SCCs “a special or privileged instrument of evangelization.” Tanzanian theologian Laurenti Magesa emphasizes: “For the future of Christian mission, specifically in Africa, we can say without hesitation that the development of small faith communities is an indispensable requirement.” They can play a major role in the New Evangelization. Already as a new way of being church and a new model of church (closely related to the Church as Family and the Communion of Communities Models of Church) African SCCs are influencing the World Church. SCCs in Africa will continue to develop in the spirit of the Spanish proverb popular with the Base or Basic Christian Communities in Latin America: *We create the path by walking.*

Healey, Joseph, “How African Small Christian Communities Implement the Pastoral and Missionary Vision of Vatican II,” *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*, 2013/2, pp. 71-102,

Tangaza University College Website, retrieved on 10 February, 2015,  
<http://www.tangaza.org/theology/Tangaza%20Journal%202013-2.pdf>

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<sup>1273</sup> See the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page”

[www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

Available in different online versions:

1. Under the “African Continent” under “Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 4 February, 2015, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/249-how-african-small-christian-communities-implement-the-pastoral-and-missionary-vision-of-vatican-ii.html>.
2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 4 February, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/10496747/How\\_African\\_Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_Implement\\_the\\_Pastoral\\_and\\_Missionary\\_Vision\\_of\\_Vatican\\_II](https://www.academia.edu/10496747/How_African_Small_Christian_Communities_Implement_the_Pastoral_and_Missionary_Vision_of_Vatican_II)
3. Google Scholar, retrieved on 26 August, 2015, <http://41.89.26.9:8080/jspui/handle/123456789/180>

As we continue to celebrate the 50-year Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, we recall the historical foundations of African Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the People of God Model of Church and in the communion ecclesiology of Vatican II. A study of five documents of Vatican II reveals that Small Christian Communities are one of the great fruits of the council and an awakening of the church as the People/Nation of God. The founding fathers of AMECEA had a vision of implementing Vatican II’s ecclesiology of communion in Eastern Africa that focused on the communion (koinonia) and service (diakonia) aspects. Both African Synods built on the foundations of Vatican II and highlighted the pastoral and missionary role of SCCs.

This article integrates the positions of three speakers at the Theological Symposium 2013. Pastoral, parish-based SCCs are part of the “new face” of the parish and a significant part of a new way of being parish from below. The parish is a communion or network of SCCs within the “communion of communities” ecclesiology. Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa. Kenya alone has over 45,000 SCCs. We are optimistic that the experience of SCCs as a New Model of Church from the grassroots as witnessed by SCC members in Africa will bring significant changes in new pastoral structures corresponding to our contemporary communion ecclesiology and the ecclesial reality on the local level.

The Spanish translation is “Como Las Pequeñas Comunidades Cristianas Africanas, Implementan La Pastoral y Visión Misionera Del Vaticano II,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 11 September, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/304-como-las-pequeñas-comunidades-cristianas-africanas-implementan-la-pastoral-y-visión-misionera-del-vaticano-ii.html>

Healey, Joseph, “How Small Christian Communities Promote Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa,” in *The Journal for Peace and Justice Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Winter, 2010): 43-60,

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2. ResearchGate Website, retrieved on 26 February, 2015, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joseph\\_Healey2](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Joseph_Healey2)

### 3. Academia.edu Website

<https://princeton.academia.edu/JosephHealey>

Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa. Tanzania alone has over 60,000 and Kenya alone has over 45,000 SCCs. Increasingly SCCs are promoting reconciliation, justice and peace, the three main themes of 2009 Second African Synod. This essay treats the following headings: “Tracking the Historical Shifts of SCCs,” “SCCs’ Increasing Involvement in Justice and Peace Issues,” “*Case Study of SCC Involvement in the Kenya Lenten Campaigns 2009 and 2010*,” “Involving Youth in Small Christian Communities,” “SCCs Using the Internet Especially Facebook” and “SCCs as Facilitators of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa.” One major change is the increasing use of a Pastoral Theological Reflection Process such as the “Pastoral Circle” (the well-known “See, Judge and Act” methodology starting from concrete experience) to help SCCs to go deeper. Now more and more SCCs in Africa are reflecting pastorally and theologically on their experiences, often using the tools of social analysis.

Healey, Joseph, “How and Why Our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Course at Tangaza Was Different, *The Update*, April, 2016, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website. retrieved on 2 April, 2016, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/SCC\\_COURSE\\_DIFFERENCE.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/SCC_COURSE_DIFFERENCE.pdf)

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Healey, Joseph, “Impact of Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA Region” in *National Mirror*, 22:04 (May, 2011): 16.

Healey, Joseph, *Important Quotations Related to African Ecclesiology*, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 2 April, 2016, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/African\\_Ecclesiology.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/African_Ecclesiology.pdf)

Healey, Joseph, “Innovations and New Trends in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today” in *Hekima Review*, Vol. 40 (May, 2009): 85-100, *Hekima Review* Website, retrieved on 19 July, 2014, <http://library.hekima.ac.ke/journals/index.php/hekimareview/article/view/559>  
<http://library.hekima.ac.ke/journals/hekimareview/issue/view/40>

Available in different online versions:

1. Under the “African Continent” under “Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 19 July, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/105-innovations-and-new-trends-in-small-christian-communities-sccs-in-africa-today.html>

2. Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns (MOGC) Website, retrieved on 25 August, 2015

<http://archive.maryknollogc.org/regional/africa/Together-with-Africa/May%202009%20Hekima%20Review%20Article.pdf>

3. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 25 August 2015.

[https://www.academia.edu/15160038/Innovations\\_and\\_New\\_Trends\\_in\\_Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_SCCs\\_in\\_Africa\\_Today](https://www.academia.edu/15160038/Innovations_and_New_Trends_in_Small_Christian_Communities_SCCs_in_Africa_Today)

Today there are over 90,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the eight AMECEA countries of Eastern Africa. Kenya alone has over 35,000 SCCs. The past year has seen innovations in the development of SCCs in Africa including Highlights of the SCC Practicum Papers, Case Studies of SCC Involvement in Peacemaking/Peacebuilding and in the Kenyan Lenten Campaign 2009 and Expanding the SCC Global Collaborative Website. A careful assessment of these experiences can help chart new trends in the future of the Catholic Church in Africa. This can lead to deeper theological reflection especially in the context of evolving a contemporary African Christian Theology that includes African Narrative Theology and the Theology of the Church Family of God in Africa.

Healey, Joseph, "Joseph Healey, MM's Articles, Books, Reports, Documents, DVDs/Videos and Workshops/Seminars on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa and USA – Listed Chronologically," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 4 March, 2015. 18 pages.

Healey, Joseph, "A Journey with Archbishop James Odongo: Celebrating Our Living AMECEA History," *CANAA Online Newsletter*, 29 January, 2015, retrieved on 31 January, 2015, <http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php/home/16-latestnews/175ugandan-retired-archbishop-to-celebrate-his-episcopal-golde-jubilee> and *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, Issue 078 (January 30, 2015), retrieved on 31 January, 2015, [http://amecea.blogspot.com/2015/01/amecea-journey-with-archbishop-james.html?utm\\_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=92ea633749-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_85fa866553-92ea633749-6746297](http://amecea.blogspot.com/2015/01/amecea-journey-with-archbishop-james.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=92ea633749-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-92ea633749-6746297)

Describes the events when Archbishop Odongo was chairman of AMECEA between 1973 and 1979 including: The AMECEA Study Conference on "Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s" in Nairobi, Kenya in December, 1973 that stated: "We have to insist on building church life and work on Basic Christian Communities in both rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work take place: those basic and manageable social groups whose members can experience real inter-personal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working." The AMECEA Study Conference on "Building Small Christian Communities" in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 1976. The key statement was: "Systematic formation of Small Christian Communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come in Eastern Africa." This is the single most important statement made about SCCs.

Healey, Joseph, "Learning from Critical Incidents in the Stories and Experiences of SCCs around the World" in Workshop on "International Experiences of SCCs." 2007 National Joint Convocation on Small Christian Communities, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota. 9-12 August, 2007. St. Paul: Unpublished Talk. 2 pages.

Healey, Joseph, "Let the Basic Christian Communities Speak: Some Pastoral Theological Reflections on Portezuelo and Beyond," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XI, No. I, (January, 1983),

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2. Google Scholar Website, retrieved on 19 June, 2015,
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4. Academia.edu Website [file:///C:/Users/Joseph/Downloads/Let\\_the\\_Basic\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_Speak%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Joseph/Downloads/Let_the_Basic_Christian_Communities_Speak%20(2).pdf)

The Basic Christian Community is a growing phenomenon in the Christian Churches today especially in the Roman Catholic Church. Basic Christian Communities (hereafter referred to as BCCs) are variously called Basic Ecclesial Communities, Small Christian Communities, and Popular Christian Communities with different shades of meaning. This article begins with some pastoral theological reflections on the BCCs in Latin America, specifically in the Roman Catholic Parish of Portezuela in Chillan, Chile. The particular experience of Tanzania is introduced to compare the BCCs in Latin America and Africa.

Healey, Joseph, "The Need for an Effective Bible Reflection Method in SCCs in Africa," 156-59, *Biblical Pastoral Bulletin*, 8 (1989), 28-29. *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)* 37/3 (May, 1995). Another version is Joseph G. Healey, "Finding the African Bait," *New People*, 6-9 (1990), 10-11.

Healey, Joseph, "New Learnings in Animating a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa Today," *African Christian Studies (CUEA)*, Vol. 24, No.2 (June, 2008): 7-37. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 16 January, 2016, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/102-new-learnings-in-animating-a-small-christian-communities-sccs-model-of-church-in-africa-today-.html>

Major headings as follows:

1. New Method of Teaching/Learning about SCCs
2. Checklist of Activities in SCCs in Africa Today
3. Challenge of Tribalism and Ethnicity in SCCs in Kenya
4. Symbols to Promote Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in SCCs
5. Pastoral Theological Reflection Process in SCCs
6. 22 Criteria to Evaluate a Typical Neighborhood Parish-Based SCC
7. Survey of Catholic Major Seminaries and Institutes of Theology
8. Animators of Small Christian Communities, Not Leaders or Bosses
9. How SCCs in Africa Can Participate in Larger Events of Catholic Church

Available in different online versions:

Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 16 January, 2016,  
[https://www.academia.edu/20301838/New\\_Learnings\\_in\\_Animating\\_a\\_Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_SCCs\\_Model\\_of\\_Church\\_in\\_Africa\\_Today](https://www.academia.edu/20301838/New_Learnings_in_Animating_a_Small_Christian_Communities_SCCs_Model_of_Church_in_Africa_Today)

Healey, Joseph, “New Research on Different Names, Titles, Terms and Expressions for Small Christian Communities (SCCs),” Paper No. 1 for Breakout Session on “One Hand Washes the Other: Sharing the Missionary Outreach of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa,” Mission Congress 2015, Houston: Photocopied Paper, 2015.

Healey, Joseph (compiled), *Once Upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004. Available as an Ebook on Amazon (for Kindle), Google and Barnes and Noble (for Nook). Also available in different editions in French, Polish, Spanish and Swahili.

Healey, Joseph, “Planning Workshop in Burkina Faso Emphasizes Networking among Small Christian Communities,” Nairobi: Privately Photocopied, 2015. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 16 August, 2015,  
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/340-planning-workshop-in-burkina-faso-emphasizes-networking-among-small-christian-communities.html>

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1. “BURKINA FASO: Small Christian Community Planning Workshop Recommends Formation of SECAM-MISSIO Small Christian Community (SCCs) Networking Team,”

*AMECEA Online Newsletter* 14 August, 2015, retrieved on 16 August, 2015.

[http://amecea.blogspot.co.ke/2015/08/burkina-faso-small-christian-community.html?utm\\_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=c7432ca593-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_85fa866553-c7432ca593-6746297](http://amecea.blogspot.co.ke/2015/08/burkina-faso-small-christian-community.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=c7432ca593-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-c7432ca593-6746297)

2. Don Bosco Onyalla and Joseph Healey, “SECAM Workshop in Burkina Faso Emphasizes Networking among Small Christian Communities in Africa,” 13 August 2015. *CANA News Updates*, retrieved on 16 August, 2015,  
[http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=360:secam-workshop-in-burkina-faso-emphasizes-networking-among-small-christian-communities-in-africa&catid=16:latestnews&Itemid=103&lang=en](http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=360:secam-workshop-in-burkina-faso-emphasizes-networking-among-small-christian-communities-in-africa&catid=16:latestnews&Itemid=103&lang=en)

Fourteen delegates from six African countries (Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Togo and Zambia) and from Bolivia and Germany participated in a “Planning Workshop on Networking among Small Christian Communities (SCCs)/Base Christian Communities (BCCs) in Africa” in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from 6 to 9 August, 2015. The main “Recommendation for the Way Forward” is summarized as follows:

The consultative meeting that was attended by SECAM and Missio delegates recommended the creation of a SECAM-MISSIO Small Christian

Communities (SCCs) Networking Team. It is supposed to be a small team whose membership will be those pastoral agents who are actively involved in the promotion of this ecclesial model.

The Networking Team will promote information and sharing of experiences about the importance of SCCs in the Local Churches of Africa, reciprocal theological reflection with the Department of Theology of Missio in Germany and interaction with other continental bodies where SCCs are seen as a new way of being church.

Healey, Joseph, "Praxis is Prior to Theology: Theological Foundations of International SCC Twinning," *Mission: Journal of Mission Studies/Revue des sciences de la mission*, XI: 1, 2004, pp. 29-43. Docstoc Website, retrieved on 14 June, 2015, <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/34096200/Praxis-is-Prior-to-the-Theology>

Healey, Joseph, "Promoting SCCs in Africa via the Internet," Chapter 26 of Joseph Healey, and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005; Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006; and Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2006.

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2. Orbis Books Website, retrieved on 26 August, 2015, <http://www.orbisbooks.com/chapters/1-57075-618-X.pdf>
3. Google Scholar, retrieved on 26 August, 2015, <http://www.orbisbooks.com/chapters/1-57075-618-X.pdf>
4. Academis.edu Website [file:///C:/Users/Joseph/Downloads/Promoting\\_SCCs\\_via\\_the\\_Internet%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Joseph/Downloads/Promoting_SCCs_via_the_Internet%20(1).pdf)

Healey, Joseph, "Promoting Small Christian Communities in Africa through the Internet" in *International Journal of African Catholicism (IJAC)*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Winter, 2011), *IJAC* website, retrieved on 8 June, 2015, [http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131001/promoting\\_small\\_christian\\_communities\\_in\\_africa-1.pdf](http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131001/promoting_small_christian_communities_in_africa-1.pdf)

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1. Under the "African Continent" under "Africa" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 25 August 2015. <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/177-article-in-the-online-journal-internationaljournal-of-african-catholicism-ijac-volume-2-number-1-winter-2011-pp.html>
2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 25 August 2015. [https://www.academia.edu/15171767/Promoting\\_Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_in\\_Africa\\_through\\_the\\_Internet](https://www.academia.edu/15171767/Promoting_Small_Christian_Communities_in_Africa_through_the_Internet)
3. Google Scholar, retrieved on 26 August, 2015, [http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131001/promoting\\_small\\_christian\\_communities\\_in\\_africa-1.pdf](http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131001/promoting_small_christian_communities_in_africa-1.pdf)

Today there are over 90,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs in short) in the eight AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa. Kenya alone has over 35,000 SCCs. The internet (websites specifically about SCCs in Africa, online journals, online learning sites, search engines like Google, social networking sites like Facebook and YouTube, blogs, email messages, etc.) in this digital age can dramatically expand our knowledge and understanding on two levels. First, the internet can help SCCs in Africa to share their experience with the rest of the world. Through the internet and other forms of the new information technology members of African SCCs can feel part of the World Church.

Second, the internet can help people around the world learn about SCCs in Africa. This essay treats the following headings: “Tracking SCCs in Africa,” “History of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website” [www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)), “Content of the Africa Section of the SCCs Website,” “Small Christian Communities Facebook Pages and Groups,” “Promoting the Voices of Women, Youth and the Marginated” and “The Future is Now for SCCs in Africa.”

Healey, Joseph, "Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa in the Light of *The Joy of the Gospel*." Chapter in Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Evangelii Gaudium: Voices of the Universal Church*, Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc, 2015. Volume 7 in the “One World Theology Series” published by Aachen, Missio. German translation in Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Evangelii Gaudium: Stimmen der Weltkirche*, ThEW7, Theologie der Einen Welt, Freiburg: Herder, 2015.

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2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 7 January, 2016, [https://www.academia.edu/9286415/Promoting\\_Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_in\\_Eastern\\_Africa\\_in\\_the\\_Light\\_of\\_The\\_Joy\\_of\\_the\\_Gospel](https://www.academia.edu/9286415/Promoting_Small_Christian_Communities_in_Eastern_Africa_in_the_Light_of_The_Joy_of_the_Gospel)
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[https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22Joseph+G+Healey%22&btnG=&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C31](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22Joseph+G+Healey%22&btnG=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C31)

4. Tangaza University College Digital Repository Website, retrieved on 7 January, 2016, <http://41.89.26.9:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/183>

Pope Francis is very popular in Africa and his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel* has received an enthusiastic response. Catholic in the Local Churches in Eastern Africa immediately began using the book in private and public prayer, homilies, talks, recollection days, retreats, workshops, seminars and classes in the constituent colleges connected to the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). The pope’s pastoral, practical, down to earth style appeals to many people. The book has been very helpful and inspiring to members of the 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the AMECEA Region.

This article treats:

1. "Case Study of a SCCs Workshop."
2. "Key Passages in *The Joy of the Gospel*."
3. "An African Theologian Reflects on SCCs."
4. "Pope Francis' Dream of a Missionary Option."

Healey, Joseph, "The Role of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Implementation of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa," AMECEA Consultation on the Second African Synod, Nairobi: AMECEA Office, Unpublished Paper, 15 September, 2009, 5 pages.

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1. Under the "African Continent" under "Africa" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 26 August, 2015: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/132-theroleof-small-christian-communities-sccs-in-theimplementation-of-reconciliation-justiceand-peacein-africa.html>
2. Catholic Peacekeeping Network (CPN), Notre Dame Website, retrieved on 26 August, 2015, <https://cpn.nd.edu/assets/14982/healey2.doc>
3. SEDOS (Service of Documentation and Study) Website, retrieved on 26 August, 2015, [http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles/doc\\_view/1655-amecea-consultation-on-the-second-african-synod](http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles/doc_view/1655-amecea-consultation-on-the-second-african-synod)

Healey, Joseph (Recueillis), *La Sagesse Africaine: Histoires Vraies, Mythes et Contes*, Kinshasa: Editions Paulines, 2012.

Healey, Joseph, "SCCs Workshop Mombasa Archdiocese," *National Mirror* 22:05, June, 2011, 11.

Healey, Joseph, "Sharing the Missionary Outreach of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa," Paper No. 2 for Breakout Session on "One Hand Washes the Other: Sharing the Missionary Outreach of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa," Mission Congress 2015, Houston: Photocopied Paper, 2015.

Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and the New Way of Being Maryknoll in Africa." Maryknoll Society of Fathers and Brothers Africa Regional Assembly, Arusha, Tanzania. May, 1999. Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 3 pages. Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Africa Region Website, Retrieved 27 February, 2015, <http://www.maryknollafrica.org/ComHealeyDocs4.htm>

Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Agents of Change in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS in Eastern Africa," African Jesuit AIDS Network, Nairobi: Published Paper, 17 pages, 2015. To be published in a book on *Current Christian Perspectives on HIV and AIDS in Africa: Theological Reflection, Public Health Crises, and Social Transformation*, Orbis Books, 2016.

Available in different online versions:

1. Under the “African Continent” under “Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 30 March, 2015, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/scc\\_targets.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/scc_targets.pdf)
2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 30 March, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/11714158/Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_SCCs\\_as\\_Agents\\_of\\_Change\\_in\\_the\\_Fight\\_against\\_HIV\\_AIDS\\_in\\_Eastern\\_Africa](https://www.academia.edu/11714158/Small_Christian_Communities_SCCs_as_Agents_of_Change_in_the_Fight_against_HIV_AIDS_in_Eastern_Africa)

Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa that have some kind of planned practical action, service and pastoral, social and mission outreach to local problems and challenges such as people with HIV/AIDS. SCC members are important agents of change and transformation in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The first goal of this paper is to analyze the reality of people with HIV/AIDS in Eastern Africa today. The second goal is to demonstrate that the active involvement of SCC members in reaching out to people with HIV/AIDS as responders, health care workers, caregivers, counselors, etc. is a pastoral and social priority. This is the Ministry of Compassionate Accompaniment. SCC members have a special opportunity to minister to families and couples affected by HIV/AIDS in Eastern Africa such as caring for millions of AIDS orphans and counseling discordant couples. Specific stories, case studies and examples are cited to illustrate these goals in the context of developing an African narrative ecclesiology.

Healey, Joseph, “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Domestic Church in the Context of African Ecclesiology,” Paper delivered at the Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA), Nairobi, Kenya. 6 August, 2014. Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 15 pages, in Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe E. (ed.), *The Church We Want: Foundations, Theology and Mission of the Church in Africa Conversations on Ecclesiology*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015.

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2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 3 March, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/8022439/Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_as\\_Domestic\\_Church\\_in\\_the\\_Context\\_of\\_African\\_Ecclesiology](https://www.academia.edu/8022439/Small_Christian_Communities_as_Domestic_Church_in_the_Context_of_African_Ecclesiology)
3. Mikado Website, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, <http://www.mikado-ac.info/home-uk.html>

Today there are over 180,000 Small Christian Communities in the nine AMECEA countries. For example, Tanzania has over 60,000 and Kenya over 45,000 SCCs. We can describe an African SCC as the Domestic Church, the church in the neighborhood. SCCs are also called domestic communities of faith. 90% of the SCCs in the AMECEA Region are geographical/territorial, parish-based groups that are an official ecclesial structure in the Eastern African pastoral model of church, an official

pastoral policy and an instrument/ vehicle/tool of evangelization.

This article treats four sections:

1. "Historical Perspective of SCCs in Africa."
2. "Reading the Signs of the Times in Africa."
3. "Case Study of SCCs in Family and Marriage Ministry in Africa."
4. "The Way Forward in Eastern Africa."

Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities in Africa," Breakout Sessions, Ignatian Family Teach-in for Justice (IFTJ), Georgetown Hotel and Convention Center, Washington, DC, 2011. Washington, DC: Unpublished Talk, 12-13 November 2011,

Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA Region: An Evaluation of Their Growth and Impact" in *The Faculty of Theology of CUEA Celebrates the Golden Jubilee of AMECEA*. General Editor: John Lukwata. 13th Interdisciplinary Theological Session (2011). Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2013.

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Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities: Lived Faith Creating Contextual Theologies in Africa," Nairobi: Unpublished article, 2012, 17 pages. To be published in the forthcoming book Robert White (ed.), *Practicing Contextual Theology in the Global South: Pastoral Communication in Local Cultures*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2017. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website retrieved 19 July, 2014, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/230-small-christian-communities-lived-faith-creating-contextual-theologies-in-africa.html>

Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa," Nairobi: Published Paper, 2015. Online *International Journal of African Catholicism (IJAC)*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Summer, 2015), 48-156, *IJAC* website, retrieved 11 October, 2015, [http://www.saintleo.edu/media/953345/summer\\_2015\\_family\\_edition\\_final.pdf](http://www.saintleo.edu/media/953345/summer_2015_family_edition_final.pdf)

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1. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 16 June, 2015, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/marriage\\_ministryEA.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/marriage_ministryEA.pdf)
2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 16 June, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/13028804/Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_SCCs\\_Promote\\_Family\\_and\\_Marriage\\_Ministry\\_in\\_Eastern\\_Africa](https://www.academia.edu/13028804/Small_Christian_Communities_SCCs_Promote_Family_and_Marriage_Ministry_in_Eastern_Africa)
3. *Human Dignity Journal* (Tangaza insert in the Polish Journal *Roczniki Nauk o Rodzinie*, 2015).
4. Chapter 12 in Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*. The Online Digital Online Version is available as a free Ebook containing 667 pages as of 11 October

- August, 2015 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html>
5. Tangaza University College Digital Repository Website, retrieved on 8 September, 2015,0  
<http://41.89.26.9:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/183>
  6. Mikado Website, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, <http://www.mikado-ac.info/home-uk.html>

The nine AMECEA Countries participated in the III Extraordinary World Synod of Bishops on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization" in Rome from 5-19 October, 2014. In Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) were part of the consultation process and answered 11 of the 39 questions in the poll. Research on the 180,000 SCCs in Eastern Africa reveals that SCCs elect lay ministers/animators/coordinators for specific groups such as couples (married and engaged), youth and children and for specific pastoral ministries such as Catechesis, Justice and Peace, Religious Education, Sacraments and Spiritual/Religious Formation. A SCC is a communion of families. The SCC is an important support group for families and promotes a family culture. The SCC is both a place and a path for the pastoral care and evangelization of families and marriages. This praxis of SCCs in Africa is contributing to the development of the theology of the Church as Family of God.

Now SCCs in the AMECEA Region are preparing for the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the "The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World" to take place in Rome from 4-25 October, 2015. The meeting will "seek working guidelines in the pastoral care of the person and the family." We are challenged to continue to explore how SCC members and others can accompany families and couples who are wounded. This is the Ministry of Compassionate Accompaniment. This is part of the imperative for all Catholics to go to the margins of society to serve the poor, migrants and those without hope. Pope Francis also emphasizes the importance of welcoming, listening to and accompanying young people today.

After the October, 2015 Synod of Bishops itself there will be an ongoing process involving collegiality and subsidiarity. There will be follow-up meetings and various commissions related to pastoral solutions to the challenges of family and marriage. Ongoing discussion and decision-making will take place on the local level through national episcopal conferences. Pope Francis is expected to issue a *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation* with an ongoing plan of action that includes concrete pastoral solutions. SCCs help to promote this family and marriage ministry.

Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities: "Promoters of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa" in Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace – the Second Africa Synod*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2011: 59-70.

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<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/197-small-christian-communities-promoters-of-reconciliation-justice-and-peace-in-eastern-africa.html>
2. Google Books Website, retrieved 25 June, 2015,

[https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=z426BgAAQBAJ&pg=PT70&lpg=PT70&dq=small+christian+communities+in+eastern+africa&source=bl&ots=fkjCGcMxig&sig=9IML1CO3jsvwhjBL3Hu0Sp6ao34&hl=en&sa=X&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=small%20christian%20communities%20in%20eastern%20africa&f=false](https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=z426BgAAQBAJ&pg=PT70&lpg=PT70&dq=small+christian+communities+in+eastern+africa&source=bl&ots=fkjCGcMxig&sig=9IML1CO3jsvwhjBL3Hu0Sp6ao34&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=small%20christian%20communities%20in%20eastern%20africa&f=false)

The French Translation is: “Les Communautés chrétiennes de base: Promotrices de la réconciliation, de la justice et de la paix en Afrique Orientale.”

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/303-les-communaut-es-chretiennes-de-base-promotrices-de-la-reconciliation-de-la-justice-et-de-la-paix-en-afrique-orientale.html>

Healey, Joseph, “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family Ministry in Eastern Africa,” *Hekima Review*, No. 50 (May, 2014): 54-67, *Hekima Review* Website, retrieved on 2 March, 2015, <http://library.hekima.ac.ke/journals/hekimareview/article/view/851> <file:///C:/Users/Joseph/Downloads/851-109-1-PB.pdf>

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1. Under the “African Continent” under “Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 26 August, 2015, [http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/family\\_ministry.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/family_ministry.pdf)
2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 4 February, 2015, [https://www.academia.edu/11194197/Small\\_Christian\\_Communities\\_SCCs\\_Promote\\_Family\\_Ministry\\_in\\_Eastern](https://www.academia.edu/11194197/Small_Christian_Communities_SCCs_Promote_Family_Ministry_in_Eastern)
3. Digital Repository, Tangaza University College Website, retrieved on 26 August, 2015, <http://41.89.26.9:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/182>

The nine AMECEA Countries prepared for the III Extraordinary World Synod of Bishops on "The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization" that took place in Rome from 5-19 October, 2014. In Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are part of the consultation process and answered 11 of the 39 questions in the poll. Research on the 180,000 SCCs in Eastern Africa reveals that SCCs elect lay ministers/animators/coordinators for specific groups such as couples (married and engaged), youth and children and for specific pastoral ministries such as Catechesis, Justice and Peace, Religious Education, Sacraments and Spiritual/Religious Formation. A SCC is a communion of families. The SCC is an important support group for families and promotes a family culture. The SCC is both a place and a path for pastoral care and evangelization. This praxis of SCCs in Africa is contributing to the development of the theology of the Church as Family of God.

Healey, Joseph, “Small Christian Communities Promote Themes of the 2009 2<sup>nd</sup> African Synod” in *Hakimani – Jesuit Journal of Social Justice in Eastern Africa*, Vol. 1 (2009): 4-11. <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/103-small-christian-communities-sccs-promotethemes-of-the2009-second-african-synod.html>

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Healey, Joseph, "Small Faith Sharing Groups: Searching for Better Models on College Campuses, **ADD**

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4. "African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Family and Marriage."

Healey, Joseph, "Three Case Studies of African Christology among the Sukuma People in Tanzania," *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*, 2011/1, pp. 5-26. Tangaza University College Website, retrieved 19 July, 2014, [http://www.tangaza.org/theology\\_theology/Tangaza%20Journal%202011-1.pdf](http://www.tangaza.org/theology_theology/Tangaza%20Journal%202011-1.pdf).

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2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 30 March 2015, <https://www.academia.edu/9297381/Three Case Studies of African Christology among the Sukuma People in Tanzania>
3. "Three Case Studies of African Christology" in *L'église en Afrique 50 ans après les indépendances/The Church in Africa 50 Years After States Independence : Actes du colloque de l'ATA, Nairobi, du 8-12 Nov. 2010*. Ed. par Association of African Theologians/ Associação dos Teólogos Africanos/Association des Théologiens Africains; éd. par Nathanaël Yaovi Soédé et Ignace Ndongala. Abidjan: Editions ATA, 2013, pp. 241-248. Footnote 3" treats "local Sukuma communities in Tanzania, be they Small Christian Communities (SCCs) or local chapters of our Sukuma Research Committee." <http://afriprov.org/index.php/bibliography/575-three-case-studies-of-african-christology-among-the-sukuma-people-in-tanzania.html>
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My colleague, Donald Sybertz and I, have carried out research among the Sukuma people, the largest ethnic group in Tanzania. This article primarily consists of three case studies of Christology in an African context. The first case study is "Jesus Christ as Eldest Brother/Intercessor". The Sukuma people's name for Jesus Christ is "Eldest Brother/Intercessor". It is the eldest brother, the first born male who offers sacrifice in the Sukuma Ethnic Group tradition. Jesus Christ is the intercessor to the one God who is called the Creator and Source and *Liwelelo* ("God") in Sukuma.

The second case study is “The African Jesus Teaching in African Parables”. If we truly believe that Jesus Christ is present with us now then the African Jesus encourages us to teach the good news of salvation in African parables. There is a story of the Sukuma called “The Parable of the Two Brothers”. For a story of African origin this “African parable” has interesting parallels with “The Parable of the Prodigal Son” (*Luke 15:11-32*).

The third case study is “An African Reading of the Bible”. Jesus Christ taught in parables and stories that were hidden by their very nature. In our ministry with the Sukuma people in Tanzania we asked the local Christians to choose a specific story from the New Testament that they like to interpret within their own African culture and values. After a lot of discussion they chose the “Parable of the Friend in Need in *Luke 11: 5-8*.”

Finally we examine the “Sukuma People’s Different Way of Doing African Christian Theology”. This article is an attempt at describing an evolving Sukuma Christology from below, from the communal experience of the Sukuma people in Tanzania. It is important to look also at the process or methodology of this theology that includes African Palaver Theology. The local Sukuma communities in Tanzania, be they Small Christian Communities (SCCs) or local chapters of our Sukuma Research Committee, are indeed theologizing from their own experience and context. This is the local African Christian community theologizing. Local gatherings of SCCs reflecting on their daily lives in light of the gospel can be a real theological locus or theological moment.

Healey, Joseph. “29 Year (1986-2015) Journey of St. Jude Thaddeus Small Christian Community (SCC) in Tanzania and the World.” Originally published as one of the “Examples of African Narrative Theology and Practical Evangelization” in Chapter Three on “Church as the Extended Family of God” in the book *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (1996). Updated version as of August, 2002 was presented at a Workshop on International SCC Twinning, National SCC Convocation, San Antonio, Texas, USA on 1 August, 2002. Updated version as of July, 2014 is included in Chapter Four on “Three Case Studies of SCCs in Eastern Africa” in the Ebook on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 19 July, 2014.

[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build\\_new.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf)

Healey, Joseph. “Urban and Rural Models of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa,” Nairobi: Photocopies Paper, 2015, 14 pages. To be published in *Anthology of African Christianity*, 2016. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 3 August, 2015.

[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/urban\\_rural.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/urban_rural.pdf)

This article treats six sections:

1. “Introduction”
2. “Protestant/Pentecostal Model”
3. “Catholic Model”
4. “Historical Perspective of the Catholic Model”
5. “Findings in Evaluating SCCs in the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa”
6. “New Directions of SCCs in Eastern Africa”

Healey, Joseph, *What Language Does God Speak: African Stories about Christmas and Easter*, Nairobi: St. Paul Publications Africa, 1989. Swahili Edition: *Je, Mungu Anasema Lugha Gani: Hadithi za Kiafrika juu ya Noeli na Pasaka*, Peramiho: Benedictine Publications Ndanda-Peramiho, 1993.

The dedication of this book is: “To the members of Small Christian Communities in East Africa.” The Introduction states: “These 16 real life stories – eight stories about Christmas and eight stories about Lent and Easter – all have a setting in East Africa. Most of these stories come from my grassroots experience of sharing with men, women, youth and children here in Tanzania and Kenya – listening to, talking with, discussing with and reflecting with ordinary people about African Christianity. In particular, I have learned a great deal from sharing with people in Small Christian Communities (SCCs). In fact, SCC members have helped to write some of these stories out of their own experience.”

Healey, Joseph, “What Is The Way Forward? Where Do We Go From Here? Some Reflections on the Evangelizing Ministry of St. Paul Inside the Walls in Preparing for the Synod of Bishops Fourteenth Ordinary General Assembly on the “The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Modern World” in Rome from 4-25 October, 2015 in the Spirit and Vision of Pope Francis.” Madison, New Jersey: Unpublished Paper, 6 December, 2014. 6 pages. Under the “United States of America” under “North America” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

[http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/inside\\_the\\_wall.pdf](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/inside_the_wall.pdf)

Healey, Joseph and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005; Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006; and Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2006. Available as an Ebook on Amazon (for Kindle), Google and Barnes and Noble (for Nook).

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<https://books.google.com/books?id=YsJ3CAAQBAJ&pg=PP1&dq=Small+Christian+Communities+Today:+Capturing+the+New+Moment&hl=en&sa=X&ei=S9eLVYH3HMW2-AGJo4vADA&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Small%20Christian%20Communities%20Today%3A%20Capturing%20the%20New%20Moment&f=false>

How can churches in America, modeling the oldest Christian communities, renew themselves from within? They can look to examples of thriving Small Christian Communities within their own country and throughout the world. This inspiring book shows what is happening now across six continents to give pastors and lay leaders of every denomination encouragement through useable examples from their counterparts around the world.

The editors have pooled together a wealth of information from different continents and cultures. The book is composed of 26 articles divided into six parts with a very personal forward by Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor. The representatives from different cultures capture the life and spirit of their respective communities. In each culture they work a little differently and, at the same time, one is astonished to see how similar they are. Each community can learn from the other a lot; therefore twinning of communities, also suggested in the book, opens up newer avenues. The various attempts at bringing together the Small Christian Communities through internet are also discussed. In the contemporary world of

communication explosion online communities could also become a reality.

This book is a timely contribution to the Christian ministry in the twenty-first century. Across the world people are looking for a new Pentecost in our Christian churches, and it is going to happen through small communities rather than mega churches. This book provides the basic tools for that renewal.

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Healey, Joseph, Rose Musimba and Febian Pikiti, "The Experience of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa (AMECEA Region) in Light of the African Year of Reconciliation (AYR) from 29 July, 2015 to 29 July, 2016," Nairobi: Privately photocopied, 2015. To be published in a booklet by SECAM.

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1. JNNK are centers (the hub of the wheel)/origin of inculturation in the Catholic Church.
2. JNNK is one of the pastoral priorities of our diocese so
  - a. The Pastoral Department should have a Priest Coordinator of SCCs in the diocese.
  - b. Guidelines concerning SCCs should cover the structures, prayer, finances and community services in SCCs.
  - c. All the services/ministries of the sacraments should pass through the SCCs.

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- Zemale, Terese Josephine, *Christian Witness through Small Christian Communities*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* No. 121, 1992.
- Zwack, Daniel, "Christian Community--African Style," *Channel*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967).

## DVDs/Videos/Presentations/Audio-Visual Resources (46)<sup>1274</sup>

*The African Synod Comes Home*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1995.

*AMECEA Family of God: Celebrating a Golden Jubilee of Evangelization in Solidarity*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2011.

*The Bible Alive* (Swahili Version is *Biblia Hai*). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1988.

*Bird's Eye View of the LUMKO Way of Being Church*. Nairobi: Powerpoint Presentation. 2014.

*Celebrating 180,000 Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa: Msgr. Thomas Kleissler Award*. Plainfield, NJ: Renew International, 2013. Available on the SCC Website and on the YouTube Website, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqkhWgOwTRE>

*Celebrating Service to Mission: The Maryknoll Journey (1911-2011 Worldwide and 1946-2011 Africa)*. Nairobi: Creativecamera Ltd, 2011.

Charles Ndege's Religious Paintings, the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Africa Region Website, retrieved 24 July, 2014, <http://www.maryknollafrika.org/HealeyAlbum2.htm> and the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 24 July, 2014, <http://www.afriprov.org>

*The Church in the Neighborhood: Small Christian Communities* (with Swahili and Arabic Versions). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1995. Segment I: "Life and Activities of SCCs." Segment II: "Services (Ministries) in the SCC."

*Discussion on Global Small Christian Communities Especially in Africa: Small Christian Communities in Africa and Beyond: A Conversation between Sr. Marie Cooper and Fr. Joe Healey, MM*. Plainfield, NJ: Renew International, 2012. Available on the SCCs Website and on the YouTube Website, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HR1ypNUEaAg>  
*Doing the Will of God: The Story of the Servant of God Maurice Michael Cardinal Otunga*

<sup>1274</sup> A number of these resources can be found online such as on YouTube and other websites. Then they can be classified as "Digital Resources" or "Digital Media" described as:

Any media that are encoded in a machine-readable format. Digital media can be created, viewed, distributed, modified and preserved on computers. Computer programs and software; digital video; web pages and websites, including social media; data and databases; digital audio, such as mp3s; and e-books are examples of digital media. Digital media are frequently contrasted with print media, such as printed books, newspapers and magazines, and other traditional or analog media, such as film or audio tape.

Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia Website, retrieved on 24 July, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_media)

(1923-2003). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2013.

“Maryknoll Fr. Joseph Healey Speaks about Small Christian Communities in Africa.”

Interview on the Vatican Radio Website. 6 May, 2013.

[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/05/06/maryknoll\\_fr.\\_joseph\\_healey\\_speaks\\_about\\_small\\_christian\\_communities/en3-689689](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/05/06/maryknoll_fr._joseph_healey_speaks_about_small_christian_communities/en3-689689)

*50 Years of AMECEA*. Lusaka: Catholic Media Services, 2011.

*The Fish Group*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1990.

*History of the Kenya Lenten Campaign and Explanation of the Theme and Materials for the 2014 Campaign*. Nairobi: Powerpoint Presentation. 2014.

*Imagine That: Small Christian Communities*. Notre Dame: Fatima Media Ministry and Buena Vista, Inc., 1996. 22 minute video on the “Second International Consultation on Small Christian Communities” at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, USA, October, 1996. Notre Dame: Fatima Media Ministry and Buena Vista, Inc., 1996.

*It's a Small Church After All (Spanish Version is Ven Con Nosotros)*. 46 minute video on the “Third International Consultation on Small Christian Communities” in Cochabamba, Bolivia, USA, November, 1999. Notre Dame: Fatima Media Ministry and Buena Vista, Inc., 2000.

*Kariobangi -- A Parish Dynamo*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1985.

*Methodology of Social Transformation: Training for Civic and Development Educators*. Nairobi: Institute of Social Ministry in Mission, Tangaza University College, 2015. Manual with 10 DVDs (videos). Adapted for use in local communities by Jacob Jeketule Soko.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE AND METHODOLOGY
2. INTRODUCTION TO THE PASTORAL CYCLE
3. HISTORY OF THE PASTORAL CYCLE
4. DEFINING INSERTION
5. CONDUCTING INSERTION
6. SOCIAL ANALYSIS
7. PROBLEM TREE
8. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
9. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS
10. ACTION

*Never Again! Never again should Kenya walk the path of the 2007-2008 post-election violence*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2011.

*Njia Mpya ya Kuishi na Kueneza Injili: Jumuyia Ndogo za Kristo (Swahili for A New Way of Living and Proclaiming the Church: Small Christian Communities)*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1985.

Presents 12 Cases Studies of SCCs in East Africa as a “Teaching” Video. One is “The Missionary SCC” about a SCC in Iramba Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania that regularly visits Christians that have drifted away from the Catholic Church and encourages the starting of new SCCs.

*Opening a Door on African Theology and Music.* Portrays the life and ministry of Ndoleleji Research Committee in Shinyanga, Tanzania. Ndoleleji, Tanzania: YouTube Website, 2011.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kf6HC67CbD8&list=UUPt7naU3SfuLxcrIO-Z4YLA&index=8&feature=plcp>

Orobator, Agbonkhanmeghe “The Vatican II Experience in Sub-Sahara Africa,” Creighton University Center for Catholic Thought “Catholic Comments” Podcast on 30 June, 2014. 16:03 minutes.

<http://cucatholicctr.org/2014/06/the-vatican-ii-experience-in-sub-saharah-africa>

*Our Gracious Cardinal: Reflections of Cardinal Otunga as He Celebrates His 50 Years of Priesthood.* Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2001.

*Parables Alive!* Series of seven Scripture Music Videos. One example is “The Good Muslim” that retells the classic Good Samaritan story in a contemporary African setting and context. Nairobi: Paulines Africa Books and Audiovisuals, 2011.

“Photo Gallery” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, 2012-2014. <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/photo-gallery.html>

*Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s.* Nairobi: AMECEA Office: Sound-Slide Show Privately Produced, 1973.

*Rediscovering Community -- International Perspectives.* 45 minute video on the “First International Consultation on Small Christian Communities” at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, USA, December, 1991. Notre Dame: Fatima Media Ministry, 1992.

“SCCs in Eastern Africa.” Interview on “Thy Kingdom Come Program” on Radio Maria, 2008. <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/resources/116--radio-program-on-sccs.html>

*Small Christian Communities: The Heart of the Church.* Lusaka: Catholic Media Services TV Studios, 2008.

*Small Christian Communities: Africa and Asia.* Maryknoll, NY: Common Table Series of Videos, n.d.

*Small Christian Communities in Tanzania,* Sound-slide Show of 94 color slides converted into a video, Nairobi: SONOLUX Media, Africa Service, and Maryknoll: VIDCOM, 1978.

*Small Christian Communities on the Move around the World.* SCCs Webinar (Web Conference) originating at the University Notre Dame, South Bend Indiana, USA on 12 February, 2014. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website,

<https://nd.webex.com/nd/ldr.php?RCID=33c6a241cda474ea3d78a705d1451a12>

*Sowing the Seed: New Evangelization. St. John Paul II Parish Evangelizing Teams*, Nairobi: Creativecamera Ltd, 2011.

*The Social Media Revolution 2014.*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eUeL3n7fDs>

*Social Media Video 2013: The Social Media Revolution 4. Written by Erik Qualman.*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUCfFchw1w>

*St. Austin's Church Way of the Cross 2015 by Members of the Junior Youth*, Nairobi: A Josphat Mulinya Video Production, 2015.

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/videos/327-st-austins-church-way-of-the-cross-2015.html>

*St. Austin's Church Way of the Cross 2015 by Members of the Small Christian Communities*, Nairobi: A Josphat Mulinya Video Production, 2015.

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/videos/327-st-austins-church-way-of-the-cross-2015.html>

*Synod of Hope*, Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1993.

*17<sup>th</sup> AMECEA Plenary Assembly and Golden Jubilee Celebrations*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2011.

*United and Peaceful Kenya...The Change I Want To See: 2013 Lenten Campaign Launch, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2013, Nyayo National Stadium, Nairobi*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2004.

Various DVDs on the "Life of Jesus Christ," the Apostles, Books of the *Bible* and the History of the Catholic Church (both film and animation).

*Walking with the Eastern African Church in Mission*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2004.

*We Are The Church -- Lay Involvement in the Church*. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1998.

*We Are the Church: The Life and Activities of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa Including Highlights of the RENEW Gala 2013 in New Jersey, USA.* New Vernon, NJ: Powerpoint Presentation, 2013. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/north-america/united-states-of-america/251-renew-gala-pdf--final.html>

*Welcome to a Presentation by Chishimba Chishimba on Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church*. Lusaka: Powerpoint Presentation, 2015.

## Internet Resources/Websites/E-Resources (80)

Academia.edu

<https://princeton.academia.edu/JosephHealey>

Acton Publishers

[www.acton.co.ke](http://www.acton.co.ke)

Africabib -- Africana Periodical Literature Bibliographic Database

<http://www.africabib.org>

African Ethnologue

<https://www.ethnologue.com/world>

African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories (including the “African Stories Database” and “Facebook Page”)

<http://www.afriprov.org>

Alexa Web Information Company

<http://www.alexa.com>

Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com>

AMECEA (including the sub-domains of Communications, Pastoral and Justice and Peace)

[www.amecea.org](http://www.amecea.org) )

*AMECEA News Blog/AMECEA Online Newsletter*

<http://amecea.blogspot.co.ke>

AMECEA Gaba Publications

<http://www.gabapublications.org>

America

<http://www.americamagazine.org>

Ask

<http://www.ask.com>

Attracta Search Visibility Technology

[www.attracta.com](http://www.attracta.com)

BibleGateway (32 searchable versions of the Bible in English)

<http://www.Biblegateway.com>

Bing

[www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com)

Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) News Africa

<http://www.cisanewsafrika.com>

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) -- Kenya

<http://www.cjpckkenya.org>

Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA) (including *CANAA Blog*, *CANAA News Updates* and *CANAA Online Newsletter*)

[www.canaafrica.org](http://www.canaafrica.org)

<http://www.canaafrica.org>

Catholic Search Engine

<http://www.catholicsearch.net>

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

<http://www.cuea.edu>

Catholic University of Eastern Africa Gaba Campus Eldoret

<http://www.cuea.edu/gaba>

Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University, Kenya

<http://www.kucatholic.or.ke>

Daily Gospel

<http://dailygospel.org>

(a service from [evangelizo.org](http://evangelizo.org))

DB Utume Blog including the *Jambo You(th)* weekly online newsletter

<http://dbyouthbook.blogspot.com>

Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM)

[www.ecmmw.org](http://www.ecmmw.org)

Facebook

<http://facebook.com> including:

Archdiocese of Lusaka Youth Facebook Page

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/196941513776884/334481956689505/?notif\\_t=group\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/196941513776884/334481956689505/?notif_t=group_activity)

Holy Cross Youth Dandora Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/113631995367088>

Jambo Youth Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/124330554391106>

JPII Evangelizing Teams Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/JPII-Evangelizing-teams/1477925152465530>

KUCC Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC)  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1549609615274202>

Regina Caeli Youth Facebook Page  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Regina-Caeli-Youths/266829426758782>

Small Christian Communities Facebook Page  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

St. Bakhita SCC Facebook Page  
[https://www.facebook.com/groups/169604069738674/736909729674769/?notif\\_t=group\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/169604069738674/736909729674769/?notif_t=group_activity)

St. Gonzaga Gonza SCC Youth Group Facebook Page  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/gonzagagonzascc>

St. Vincent Pallotti Church Youth Information Facebook Page  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/110531205762326>

Fides  
<http://www.fides.org>

Fresh Expressions  
<http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk>

Google  
<http://www.google.com>

Google Scholar  
[http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22Joseph+G+Healey%22&btnG=&hl=en&as\\_sdt=0%2C31](http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22Joseph+G+Healey%22&btnG=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C31)

Hekima College including Library E-Resources  
<http://www.hekima.ac.ke>

Hekima Review  
<http://library.hekima.ac.ke/journals/index.php/hekimareview>

Intentional Eucharistic Communities  
<http://www.intentionaleucharistic.org>

Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection (JCTR)  
<http://www.jctr.org.zm>

Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) especially the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Pontifical Missionary Societies and Family Life Program  
<http://www.kccb.or.ke>

Maryknoll Institute of African Studies (MIAS)  
<http://www.mias.edu>

Maryknoll Mission Archives including the Blog

<http://maryknollmissionarchives.org>

Mikado Mission Library and Catholic Documentation Center (Missio, Aachen, Germany)

<http://www.mikado-ac.info/homeuk.html>

Missio

[www.missio-hilft.de](http://www.missio-hilft.de)

Moodle (Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya) Virtual Learning Environment.

Course on “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today” (PTC418)

<http://moodle.tangaza.org/course/view.php?id=589>

National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC)

<http://www.naprc.faithweb.com>

The National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC) is an alliance of parishes committed to a new vision of parish based on the purpose of building an atmosphere in which ordinary people help each other regularly connect their faith and life. This is achieved in two ways:

1. Doing the things that we do differently.
2. Forming Small Church Communities (SCCs).

A key is that parishes are restructured into parish-based SCCs that are a “communion of communities.”

NAPRC offers workshops, conferences, and resources towards this goal.

New People Media

[www.newpeoplemedia.com](http://www.newpeoplemedia.com)

Opera Mini

<http://www.opera.com>

Orbis Books

[www.orbisbooks.com](http://www.orbisbooks.com)

Origins Online CNS Documentary Service

<http://www.originsonline.com>

Parish without Borders

<http://www.parish-without-borders.net>

Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) -- Archdiocese of Hartford

<http://www.sccquest.org>

Paulines Africa Books and Audiovisuals

<http://www.paulinesafrica.org>

Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS) – Kenya

<http://www.pmskenya.org>

Presentation Ministries

<http://presentationministries.com/community/community.asp>

RENEW International especially RENEW Africa

<http://www.renewintl.org>

ResearchGate

<https://www.researchgate.net/home.Home.html>

Sacred Space

<http://www.sacredspace.ie>

SECAM – SCEAM

<http://www.secam-sceam.org>

SIL "Ethnologue" (detailed information on thousands of African languages)

<http://www.sil.org/ethnologue>

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative and Small Christian Communities Facebook Page

[www.smallchristiancommunities.org](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Documents of the 2009 Synod of Bishops Second Special Assembly for Africa” in “Timeline in the History and Development of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Especially Eastern Africa,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 13 March, 2013.

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/107-timelinein-thehistory-and-development-of-small-christian-communities-sccs-in-africa-especially-eastern-africa.html>

Small Groups

[Small Groups.com](http://SmallGroups.com)

Tablet

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk>

Provides an occasional article on SCCs/BCCs/CEBs around the world and valuable background information on the Global Church and the “context” of small communities.

Tangaza University College including Library E-Resources and Digital Repository

<http://www.tangaza.org>

Toolkit for Small Faith Sharing Groups on Catholic Campus Ministry Association Website

[http://www.ccmnet.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=167&Itemid=201](http://www.ccmnet.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=167&Itemid=201)

2009 Second African Synod

Tübingen University Library Database (Tübingen, Germany)

[www.ub.uni-tuebingen.de](http://www.ub.uni-tuebingen.de)  
[www.uni-tuebingen.de/en/facilities/university-library.html](http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/en/facilities/university-library.html)

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Africa's Commitment (Africae Munus)*  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africaemunus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africaemunus_en.html)

*Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God*  
[http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino\\_23\\_ii\\_specialeafrica-2009/02\\_inglese/b30\\_02.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_23_ii_specialeafrica-2009/02_inglese/b30_02.html)

*Final List of [57] Propositions of the 2009 Synod of Bishops Second Special Assembly for Africa. The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, Synodus Episcoporum Bulletin, October, 2009.*  
[http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino\\_23\\_ii\\_specialeafrica-2009/02\\_inglese/b33\\_02.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_23_ii_specialeafrica-2009/02_inglese/b33_02.html)

#### Vatican

[www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)  
<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vaticEaan/en.html> (for English)  
[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/index.htm) (Synod of Bishops)

#### Vatican Radio

<http://en.radiovaticana.va>

#### Yes, Africa Matters

<http://sites.google.com/site/yesafricamattersorg>

#### 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>

#### What Apps (Applications)

African Proverb Research

African Proverbs

KUCC

Laudete

The Pope App

Whispers in the Loggia

<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com>

Wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Zambia Episcopal Conference

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

ZENIT

<http://www.zenit.org>

## About the Author

Father Joseph G. Healey, MM is an American Maryknoll missionary priest who lives in Nairobi, Kenya. He came to Kenya in 1968 and founded the Regional Catholic Bishops Association (AMECEA) Social Communications Office based in Nairobi. Presently he teaches a full semester core course on "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a New Model of Church in Africa Today" at Tangaza University College (CUEA) and Don Bosco Salesian Theological College and a SCCs Seminar on "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today" at Hekima College (CUEA) in Nairobi. He facilitates SCC Workshops and animates SCCs in Eastern Africa. He is a member of the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team. He is an ordinary member of the St. Kizito Small Christian Community in the Waruku Section of St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese.

He co-edited *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* (Orbis Books and Paulines Publications Africa) and is the Moderator of the [Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website \(www.smallchristiancommunities.org\)](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org). He co-authored *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Orbis Books and Paulines Publications Africa) and is the Moderator of the [African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website \(www.afriprov.org\)](http://www.afriprov.org). He contributed a chapter on "Small Christian Communities: Promoters of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa" in *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace – the Second African Synod* (Orbis Books and Acton Publishers) and a chapter on "Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa." in *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church* (Herder and Claretian Publications). His most recent book is *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications – CUEA Press Double *Spearhead* Nos. 199-200 (2012). The book is updated every month and is available as a free online digital (electronic) Ebook on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/ebooks/47-ebooks-.html> He has helped to produce a number of videos and DVDs on SCCs as well as coordinate radio and TV programs.

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