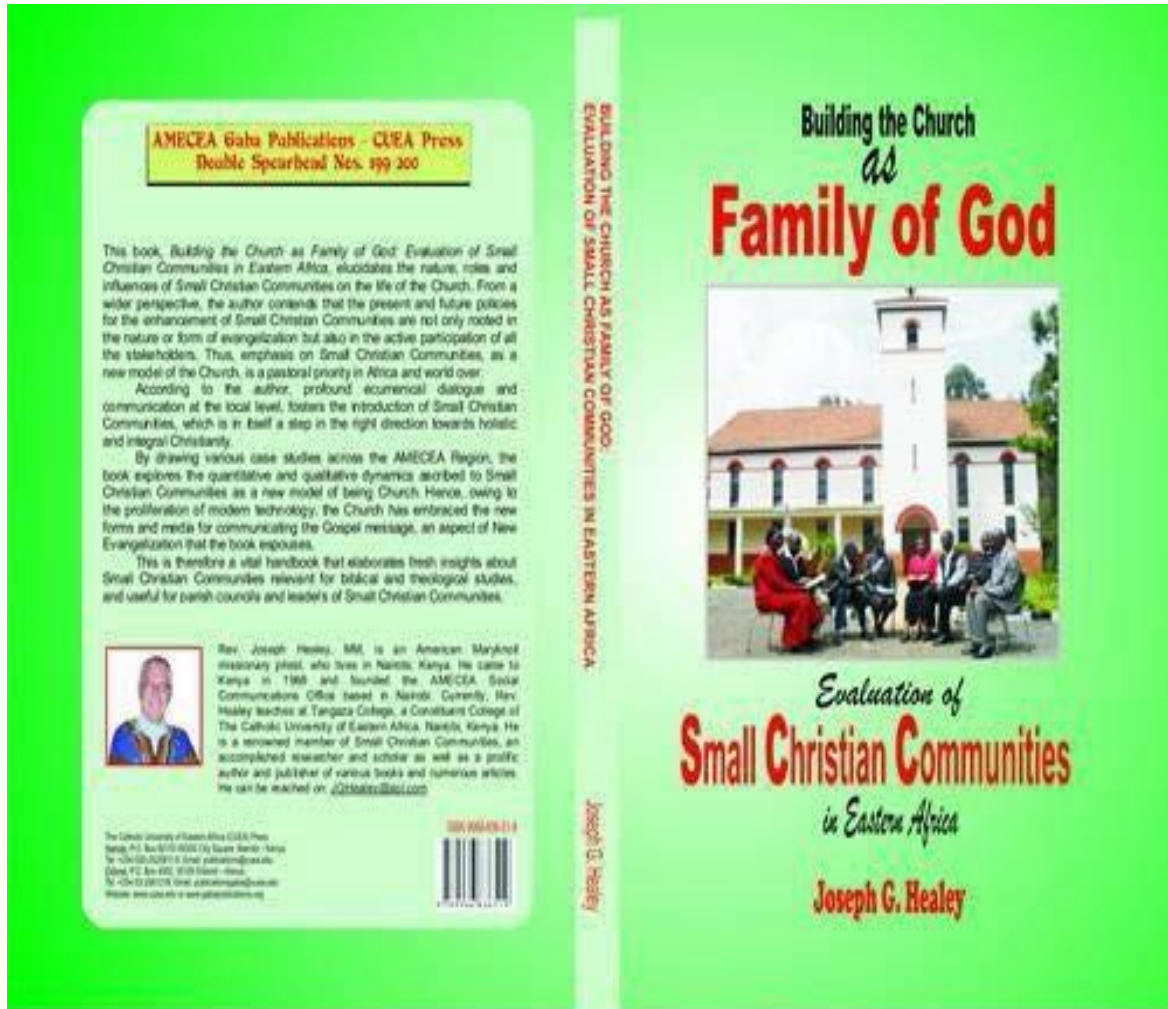


Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa

By Joseph G. Healey, MM



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Map of the Nine AMECEA Countries



Dedication

To the founders and visionaries who created [AMECEA](#)¹ Small Christian Communities (SCCs)² 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 2002.³

¹ AMECEA is an acronym for "Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa." It is a service organization for the [Catholic] 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 Associations/Conferences of [SECAM](#) (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar).

Language is complicated. For many years the Catholic Bishops in Kenya were known as the Kenya Episcopal Conference. Then the number of Protestant Churches in Kenya, including Evangelical Churches and Pentecostal Churches mushroomed, some using the name "Episcopal" in their titles. The Secretary General of the [Catholic] Kenya Episcopal Conference would get phone calls such as: "Is this the Zion Episcopal Conference or the African Episcopal Church?" So the Kenyan Catholic Bishops changed their name to the clearer Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB).

² 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 Catholic parishes and dioceses, the official pastoral policy of the Catholic bishops, a pastoral, ecclesial model of the Catholic Church and an official structure of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa (AMECEA countries). In a Webinar on "Synodality in Africa" DRC Theologian Sister Josée Ngalula emphasized, "We already have a new and important pastoral structure in Africa on the grassroots level -- the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) or Basic Christian Communities (BCCs). We have to use and consolidate this basic structure to help us listen to the People of God especially lay men and lay women." Josée Ngalula, Webinar on "Synodality in Africa," 18 November, 2021. Quoted in Virtual International Church Reform Network (ICRN) General Conference "Around the Globe: What the Synod Process Looks Like in Different Parts of the World." Saturday, 29 January, 2022.

SCCs is a pastoral, ecclesial model of the Catholic Church in Africa. The new language is spiritual conversation, mutual listening and prayerful discernment. SCCs represent the spirit of Synodality and the Synodal Process.

³Other bishops who are among the first generation, pioneer founding fathers of SCCs in the AMECEA countries were Bishop Vincent McCauley, CSC (the Bishop of Fort Portal, Uganda who was both the Chairperson of AMECEA (1964-1973) and Secretary General of AMECEA (1973-1979) (who died in 1982), Bishop Joseph Blomjous, MAfr, the bishop of Mwanza Diocese, Tanzania (who died in 1992), Bishop James Holmes-Siedle, MAfr, the bishop of Kigoma Diocese, Tanzania (who died in 1995), Cardinal Maurice Otunga, the archbishop of Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya (who died in 2003), Bishop Colin Davies, MHM,

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

the bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya (who died in 2017), Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki the archbishop of Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya (who died in 2020) and Archbishop James Odongo, the archbishop of Tororo Archdiocese, Uganda and Chairperson of AMECEA from 1973-1979 (who died in 2020).

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), Archbishop Boniface Lele of Mombasa Archdiocese, Kenya (who died in 2014), Bishop Rodrigo Mejia, SJ, the retired bishop of the Soddo Apostolic Vicariate, Ethiopia, Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, the retired Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Bishop Method Kilaini, the Auxiliary Bishop of Bukoba Diocese, Tanzania, Bishop John Oballa, the Bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya, Cardinal Antoine Kambanda, the Archbishop of Kigali Archdiocese, Rwanda and Archbishop George Tambala, OCD, the Archbishop of Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi.

Of these 18 bishops 11 are diocesan bishops and seven belong to religious congregations and societies.

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 50-year (1973-2023) period.
- The African theologians who have articulated the theological framework for this new model of church from the bottom up. The frequency of their names in this Ebook indicate their importance and influence.
- The teams of SCC animators, facilitators, trainers and coordinators who have developed a Training of Trainers (TOT) or Training of Facilitators⁴ style of training and leadership.
- The members of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team (based in Nairobi, Kenya),⁵ the Small Christian Communities (SCCs)

⁴ 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 tools and resources.

⁵ Presently the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team under the coordination of the Pastoral Department of AMECEA has 16 members: 15 Africans (12 from Kenya, one from Zambia, one from Malawi and one from Tanzania), and one expatriate missionary based in the USA. There are seven laymen, three laywomen, five priests and one religious sister. The age range:

80s: 2

70s: 1

60s: 1

50s: 3

40s: 1

30s: 3

20s: 5

Their names in alphabetical order are: Emmanuel Chimombo, Joseph Healey, Rita Ishengoma, Peter Kyalo, Bernard Mberere, Moses Muriira, Lawrence Murori, Rose Musimba, Nancy Njehia, Francis Njuguna, Alloys Nyakundi, Alphonse Omolo, Collins Ongoma, Febian Pikiti, Pauline Wakibiru and Edwin Wesonga.

NOTE: In the ever shifting landscape of politically correct and inclusive language, “expatriate,” the common British word, or “international” is preferred to “foreign.”

Global Collaborative Website⁶ Coordinating Team⁷ and the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Email Mailing List⁸ and their collaborators who continue to evaluate the past, celebrate the present and explore the future.⁹

- St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC members.
- And especially the SCC members themselves who have shared with us and taught us so much about this new way of being (becoming) church.

⁶ The plan for the “Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website” was hatched during the National SCC Convocation in San Antonio, Texas, USA in August, 2002. It was officially begun as the “Small Christian Communities in North America Collaborative Website” by RENEW International in its office in Plainfield, New Jersey in 2004 under the coordination of Michael Brough, the Director of RENEW International with the domain name www.smallchristiancommunities.org. The website was handed over from Terry Ricard, the Director of RENEW International to Joseph Healey, the present Moderator of the website in 2008. From a continental website it became an international website with the name “Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website.”

Transferring the domain name and the digital files were complicated. The present copyright at the bottom of the Home Page is: “© [Copyright] 2004-2023 Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website. All rights reserved -- AMECEA Pastoral Department.” A very good explanation is found in Barbara Darling, “Small Christian Communities in North America Collaborative Website” (pages 182-184) in Joseph Healey, Chapter 26, “[Promoting SCCs Via the Internet](#),” in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 (Second Printing 2006, New Cover 2014); Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006 (1st Reprint 2011, 2nd Reprint 2012, 3rd Reprint 2017); and Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2006.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Presently the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Email Mailing List has 40 members.

⁹ The complete list of SCCs Email Mailing Lists/SCCs Networks are:

- a. AMECEA 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 15¹⁰ neighborhood, parish-based SCCs in [St. Austin’s Parish](#)¹¹ in [Nairobi Archdiocese](#). We are five men and two women representing five ethnic groups¹² 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 (now called Moderator) 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 called St. Austin’s SCC that covered the whole Waruku area. Four new SCCs were formed in this geographical area. Irish Spiritan missionary priest Father Martin Keane, CSSP was the pastor at the time. 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. In 2021 St. Kizito SCC became too big so we gave birth to St. Monica SCC. The paved road in Waruku is the dividing line between our two SCCs.

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](#)

¹⁰ SCCs of Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Austin, Boniface, Charles Lwanga, Francis, John, Josephine Bakhita, Jude Thaddeus, Kizito, Mary, Michael, Monica, Padri Pio and Petro Mwamba.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.”

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.

St. Agatha Joy Women’s Training and Tailoring Group is the name of the sewing club of women in our SCC.

We are honored that one of our members, Father Joseph Healey, MM,¹³ whom we call *Mwanajumuiya Padri*¹⁴ *Joseph* (“SCC member Father Joseph” in Swahili) has written this important book and shared the life and experiences of SCCs. It tells the history of 190,000 SCCs in nine countries in Eastern Africa. 48,000 of these SCCs are here in Kenya. SCCs are the Catholic Church itself. Other Apostolic Groups in the parish are specialized and voluntary like the Catholic Men, Catholic Women, Choir, Legion of Mary, St. Vincent de Paul and Pontifical Missionary Childhood. But our SCCs are the foundation of the parish. They 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.¹⁵ Read about SCCs in all the countries in Eastern Africa and how they are a new pastoral 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) and our Small Christian Communities Global

¹³ From 1976 to the present I have been a full member or an honorary member of the following SCCs (alphabetically by the saint’s name) that are physical SCCs, online SCCs or hybrid:

Charles Lwanga (3 June)

Isidore of Seville (4 April)

Jude Thaddeus (28 October)

Kizito (3 June)

Martin de Porres (3 November) – two different SCCs

Nyabuliga (a section of the village of Nyabihanga, Tanzania – the geographical place name used before saints’ names become popular)

Nyagasense (a section of the village of Iramba, Tanzania – the geographical place name used before saints’ names become popular)

Thérèse (Theresa of the Child Jesus) (1 October)

¹⁴ Padri: a priest or clergyman or “Father” in English.

Padre: Used as a form of address for a priest or “Father” in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

¹⁵ Ebook is short for “electronic book,” and uses either a computer, mobile device, or ebook reader to display long-form texts in book form. Ebooks have multiple digital “pages” that people can navigate through, and are often packaged as a PDF document so they can easily be sent from one user to another.

Collaborative Website (www.smallchristiancommunities.org) and our SCC “[Facebook Page](#).”¹⁶

Ubarikiwe (“May you all be blessed” in Swahili).

Catherine Katumbi
 Joseph Kihara
 Conrad Kimori
 Josphat Mulinya
 Sammy Ngunga
 Michael Orondo
 Anastasia Syombua
 Members of St. Kizito SCC, Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya
 22 October, 2011 (day before World Mission Sunday).
 Updated on 13 May, 2013 and updated again on 17
 April 2022.
 Nairobi, Kenya

¹⁶ Our SCCs Facebook Page started on 2 February, 2010. It is mentioned 59 times in different forms in this Ebook as of 18 September, 2019.

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 versions and editions.¹⁷ 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 evaluation¹⁸ and assessment of SCCs to learn from the past and to help plan for the future. This includes ongoing strategic follow-up.¹⁹

¹⁷ “Versions” is used when the manuscript was going through various draft forms. “Editions” was used after it was printed for the first time and got an ISBN Number.

¹⁸ In many evaluations of AMECEA meetings, conferences and workshops, it has been emphasized that the preparation stage gets an A rating, the meetings, conferences and workshops themselves get an A rating, but the evaluation and implementation stage and follow-up/follow-down get only a C rating, and even at times a D+ rating. Specifically for SCC meetings, conferences and workshops this challenges us in include in the ongoing strategic plan evaluation and assessment, 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 favorably 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.”

¹⁹ 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.

Another evaluation tool or discernment tool is the role of the Devil's Advocate that was formerly an official position within the Catholic Church: one who "argued against the canonization (sainthood) of a candidate in order to uncover any character flaws or misrepresentation of the evidence favoring canonization." In common parlance, the term Devil's Advocate describes someone who, given a certain point of view, takes a position he or she does not necessarily agree with (or simply an alternative position from the accepted norm), to explore the thought further, to expose it to a thorough examination. This is not a negative method, always against someone and something. This person helps to ask **CHECK**

We should not feel threatened by the term “evaluation” as though we are going to be criticized or held under a microscope. Evaluation should be constructive rather than critical, thus the expressions “constructive criticism” and “positive critique.”²⁰ The overall purpose is to how to improve our SCCs, how make our SCCs better, how to learn from our mistakes. A key is to first, to recognize our mistakes and failures.²¹ This includes appreciating the meaning of an “honest mistake.” 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.²²

Related to evaluation is the term “post-mortem.” A project post-mortem is a process, usually performed at the conclusion of a project, to determine and analyze elements of the project that were successful or unsuccessful and the lessons learned. It has been popularized in discussing a sports event after it takes place and a newspaper after it has been published.

Good evaluation is based on grassroots experience. A key insight comes from American philosopher and educator John Dewey: “We do not learn from experience... We learn from reflecting on experience.”²³ He said that careful, critical reflection is essential for growth and development. We should use challenging questions, probe deeper, and evaluate deeper leading to improvement.

This includes asking challenging questions about SCCs. They are not meant to criticize or to be taken personally, but to make our SCCs better.

In many “Best Practices” exercises real and depth evaluation is often hard to come by. People are reluctant to give honest feedback for the reasons of being misunderstood or of offending other people.

²⁰ After evaluating a Young Adult Symposium, Sister Eleanor Gibson said, “If we do not critique, we do not improve.”

²¹ We should not be afraid to “wash our dirty laundry in public”/“wash our dirty linen in public” (British and Australian) or “air our dirty laundry in public”/“air our dirty linen in public” (American and Australian) --- meaning to reveal our mistakes and failures in public. Yet many Christian Church leaders in Africa don’t like to reveal their weaknesses, shortcomings, vulnerability in public. They easily become defensive. See the Gikuyu, Kenya proverb *Do not wash your dirty linen in public.*

The opposite saying is *to sweep something under the rug*, that is, to hide something damaging or unpleasant and try to keep it secret. Unfortunately this is often the position the Catholic Church in hiding a scandal (especially if it is sexual abuse or financial mismanagement). Transparency and openness are better.

²² 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.”

²³ Peirce adds, “Knowledge comes from participating in, rather than observing, the world we are trying to understand.”

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 17th 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 “**First Edition**” (ISBN 9966-836-51-9, six chapters, 163 pages, 202 footnotes) was updated, revised and published as a paperback book as a Double *Spearhead* Nos. 199-200 by AMECEA Gaba Publications – CUEA Press in 2012. It included 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,²⁴ by publishing books.

This edition continued to be updated as a free, offline digital edition (that is also called an “Ebook” or an “Electronic Book”) on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website.²⁵ It included further research in 2012--2023 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 included applying the Apostolic Exhortations *The Joy of the Gospel* and *The Joy of Love* to Eastern African SCCs. This edition included new interviews with pastoral agents in Eastern Africa on all levels and new Case Studies of SCCs.²⁶ The underlying

²⁴ At a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya it was said: “Inculturation is just as important in North Americas as it is in Africa.”

²⁵ The writing style, formatting, footnoting and bibliography follows a “user friendly” method of the author.

²⁶ Over the period 2012—2022 new chapters were gradually added based on new data: “Promoting the Missionary Outreach of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.” “SCCs’

principle is ongoing evaluation and systematic follow-up to make the SCCs in Eastern Africa better.

The “**Second Edition**” (ISBN 9781981045631, 17 chapters, 1,108 pages, 1396 footnotes) was published as a Ebook and Print on Demand paperback on Amazon in May, 2018. This edition includes extensive research in the United States in 2015-2018 on SCCs in parishes and in college campus ministry programs and the 2017-2018 Focus on Young People (Youth, College Students and Young Adults).

The “**Third Edition**” (ISBN 9798680914878, 18 chapters, 1,166 pages, 1,488 footnotes) was published as a Ebook and Print on Demand (POD) paperback on Amazon in August, 2020. This edition includes the 2018-2020 Focus on Young People (Youth, College Students and Young Adults) and Online Small Christian Communities.

The “**Fourth Edition**” (19 chapters, 1,514 pages, 1,514 footnotes) will be published as a Ebook and Print on Demand paperback on Amazon in 2024. This edition includes Case Studies and experiences during the March, 2020-2023 Covid-19 pandemic and during the 2021-2024 Synod of Bishops.

The free version of this digital Ebook is regularly updated offline from the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and available online at:
https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Build_new.pdf

Involvement in the New Evangelization in Eastern Africa.” “SCCs Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa.” “Tracking the Growth of Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).” “Online Small Christian Communities” and “The Role of SCCs in the Synodal Church in Africa.”

Today there are over 195,000²⁷ Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church²⁸ in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa.²⁹ This book treats the following 18 headings:

²⁷ 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).”

²⁸ 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, Home Fellowship Groups, Small 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 Churches (*Eglise de maison* in French), House Fellowships, Prayer Circles and Spiritual Growth Groups in the Evangelical and 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 organized 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 socializing 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.

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>

²⁹ There are also important distinctions in the Catholic Church worldwide between (“small” is presumed in most of the titles if not stated):

Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

Small Base Communities (SBCs).

Small Ecclesial Communities (SECs).

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

Small Family Communities (SFCs).

Small Focus Communities (SFCs).

Small Parish Communities (SPCs).

Basic Christian Communities (BCCs).

Basic Church Communities (BCCs).

Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).

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

Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs). Sometimes written as Ecclesial Base Communities (EBCs).

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

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

In Portuguese-speaking Africa: *Pequenas Comunidades Cristãs (PCCs)*.

In French: *Communautés Eclesiales de Base (CEBs)* or simply *Communautés de Base (CBs)* or *Petites Communautés Chrétiennes (PCCs)*.

Also in Spanish: *Pequeñas Comunidades Cristo (PCCs)*.

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.” Many people wrongly equate “base” and “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/unit of the ecclesial structures. It is constituted of members as one cell of the greater community. In some Latin American countries and in 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 Base Christian Community (BCC or CCB in Spanish) meeting in a home (see my experience in Puente Alto Parish in 1980) and the Base Ecclesial Community (BEC or

CEB in Spanish) meeting in a church building in a geographical zone where the sacraments are celebrated (see my experience in San Alberto Parish in 1980).

Maryknoll missionary priest Father Tom Henehan, MM writes:

In Chile I was fortunate to follow the ministry of Dick Braun, Tom Cronin and Jim Weckesser in the San Alberto Parish in Santiago, Chile. Dick had developed a two-year family catechetical program in the 1960s that generated Base Christian Communities (BCCs – the Spanish acronym is CCB) usually made up of 5-10 families. These were nourished by the Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs -- the Spanish acronym is CEBs) where sacraments were celebrated and relationships with social movements were developed. The parish was made up of 16 CEBs each of which were organized around a chapel. The local bishop would come to the parish annually to install 120-130 lay ecclesial ministers that were the backbone of the pastoral ministry of the parish. (Tom Henehan email message to the author, 9 November, 2019).

Action-based Small Christian Communities (ABSCCs)

Adult Small Communities (ASCs)

Basic Faith Communities (BFCs)

Basic Human Communities (BHCs)

Basic Parish Communities (BPCs)

Bible Reading Groups (BRGs)

Bible Study Groups (BSGs)

Campus Small Communities (CSC)

Catholic Base Communities (CBCs)

Catholic Faith Communities (CFCs)

Cell Churches (CCs)

Cell Groups (CGs).

Christian Base Communities (CBCs).

Christian Ecclesial Communities (CECs).

Christian Life Communities (CLCs).

Church in the Neighborhood Communities (CNCs).

Coffee Meet-ups.

Digital Small Christian Communities (DSCCs).

Ecclesial Base Communities (EBCs).

Faith Circles.

Faith Communities.

Faith Exploration Communities (FECs).

Faith Households.

Faith-sharing Small Communities (FSSCs).

Family Small Christian Communities (FSCCs)

Focus Communities (FCs).

Grassroots Christian Communities (GCCs).

Group Groups (GGs)

Home-based Communities (HBCs)

Home Groups (HGs).

House Churches (HCs)

Household Churches (HCs).

Household Church Communities (HCCs).
 House Meetings (HMs).
 Intentional Christian Communities (ICCs).
 Intentional Collaborative Communities (ICCs).
 Intentional Communities (ICs).
 Intentional Communities of Faith (ICFs).
 Intentional Eucharistic Communities (IECs).
 Interfaith Groups (IGs).
 Interfaith Small Communities (ISCs).
 Junior Small Christian Communities (JSCCs) or *jumuiya ya vijana*.
 Listening Circles (LCs).
 Ministry/Organization Small Communities.
 Multiethnic Small Communities (MSCs).
 Neighborhood Church Communities (NCCs).
 Neighborhood Gospel Groups (NGGs).
 Ongoing Small Groups (OSGs)
 Online Small Christian Communities (OSCCs).
 Online Small Faith-sharing Communities (OSFCs).
 Lectionary-Based Faith Sharing Communities (LBFSC).
 Life Groups (LGs).
 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 Ecclesial Communities. In French: *Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes* (CEVs).
 Living Christian Communities (LCCs).
 Local Faith Communities (LFCs).
 Local Neighborhood-based Communities (LNCs)
 Parish-based Small Faith Communities (PSFCs)
 Parish Youth Groups (PYGs).
 Parish Young Adult Groups (PYAGs).
 Peer Group Young People Small Faith Sharing Communities (YPSFSCs).
 Popular Christian Communities (PCCs).
 Prayer Circles (PCs).
 Real life faith discussion small group.
 Scripture-based Small Faith-sharing Communities (SSFCs)
 Small Apostolic Groups (SAGs)
 Small *Bible* Sharing Groups (SBSGs).
 Small Bible Study Groups (SBSGs).
 Small Catholic Communities (SCCs).
 Small Christian Base Communities (SCBCs)
 Small Christian Faith-sharing Communities (SCFSCs).
 Small Christian Groups (SCGs).
 Small Church Communities (SCCs).
 Small Circles (SCs)
 Small Circles of Hope (SCHs).
 Small Communities (SCs).
 Small Communities of Faith (SCFs).
 Small Communities of Faith-sharing (SCFSS).
 Small Communities of Young People (SCYPs).

Small Communities of Young Seekers (SCYSS).
Small Discernment Communities (SDCs).
Small Ecclesial Communities (SECs).
Small Ecclesial Groups (SEGs).
Small Ecumenical Communities (SECs).
Small Faith Groups (SFGs).
Small Faith Reflection Groups (SFRGs).
Small Faith Sharing Communities (SFSCs).
Small Faith Sharing Groups (SMSGs) or Small Groups of Faith-sharing (SGFS).
Small Family Communities (SFCs)
Small Fraternal Communities of Faith (SFCFs)
Small Fraternal Local Communities (SFLCs)
Small Household of Faith (SHFs).
Small Human Communities (SHCs).
Small Intentional Communities (SICs).
Small Intentional Eucharistic Communities (SIECs).
Small Intentional Mission Communities (SIMCs).
Small Interfaith Communities (SICs).
Small Lay-led Communities (SLCs)
Small Local Church Communities (SLCCs).
Small Local Faith Communities (SLFCs)
Small Local Gatherings.
Small Mission Communities (SMCs)
Small Neighborhood Communities (SNCs).
Small Parish Communities (SPCs).
Small Prophetic Mission Communities (SPMCs)
Small Reading Groups (SRGs).
Small Rural Faith Communities (SRFCs)
Small Scripture-based Faith-sharing Communities (SSFCs)
Small Searching (Seekers) Communities (SSCs).
Small Sharing Groups (SSGs).
Small Study Groups (SSGs).
Small Units of our Christian Faith.
Small Young Seekers Communities.
Special group within the Catholic Church.
Table Discussion Groups (TDGs).
Truly Synodal Small Faith Communities (SSFCs).
Virtual Small Christian Communities (VSCCs).
Young Adults Small Christian Communities (YASCCs).
Young Adults Small Empowerment Communities (YASCCs).
Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).
Young People Small Faith Sharing Communities (YPSFSCs).
Young Professionals Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).
Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs).
Zoom Small Communities (ZSCs)

- SCCs in the Historical Perspective of 62 Years (1961 to 2023) 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.”
- “Seven Case Studies of SCCs in Eastern Africa.”
- “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.”
- “Online Small Christian Communities.”
- “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.”
- “Tracking the Growth of Young People³⁰ Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).”

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 Nairobiian*, 8-14 August, 2014, p. 4).

³⁰ We should be aware of shifting terminologies and meanings. The *Preparatory Document* for the October, 2018 synod stated: “The word ‘youth’ refers to persons who are roughly 16 to 29 years old, while bearing in mind that the term needs to be adapted to local circumstances. In any case, it is good to remember that the term ‘youth,’ in addition to referring to persons, is a stage of life that each generation understands in an unequal, original manner.”

Terminology varies according to the local place and context. Worldwide, “young people” is the umbrella term that covers:

- a. “youth” (often referring to teenagers, adolescents and those in high school),
- b. college students and
- c. “young adults” (after college in their 20s).

On the advice of young people around the world, Vatican documents on the synod have now officially shifted from using “youth” to using “young people.”

In Swahili, the main language of Eastern Africa, *vijana* (often translated as “youth”) covers the 16 to 35 age bracket. While the dictionary allows “youths” in the plural, by far the most common use is to use “youth” as a plural noun.

Due to the cultural context in Eastern Africa we are using the terms:

- “How SCCs Are a New Way of Being/Becoming Church in Eastern Africa.”³¹
- ”How SCCs Are a New Pastoral Model of Church in Eastern Africa.”
- “The Role of SCCs in the Synodal Church in 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 27 Resources ranging from “Checklist of 16 Common Activities” to “13 Steps in the SCCs Weekly *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Daily Life Connections Service”³² 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 16 member AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team (five priests, one Religious Sister, eight laymen and two laywomen) and an additional informal SCCs Research Teams 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. I have been involved, directly and indirectly in seven World Synods of Bishops. Over the years I have served at various AMECEA activities, meetings and events in official and unofficial capacities. Bishops Vincent McCauley referred to me as one of AMECEA’s Roving Ambassadors.

Thus I have been privileged to serve the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa for 55 years of AMECEA’s history (1968-2023). I am grateful that I still recall a lot of the active institutional memory of AMECEA. 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.

Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) as the umbrella term.

Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) for SCCs in secondary schools/high schools.

Young Adults Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) for the post college years that includes Young Professionals Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).

³¹Ugandan diocesan priest Frederick Tusingire insightfully points out: “The Catholic Church will have attained maturity when the ideals of these communities have been achieved, and SCCs are no longer considered as the new way of being church, but as the usual and real way of being church.” Frederick Tusingire, *The Evangelization of Uganda: Challenges and Strategies*, Kisumu: Marianum Publishing Company, 2003, p. 206.

³² After a great deal of research we distinguish between *Bible* Sharing and *Bible* Reflection – the latter usually is a deeper experience that connects the *Bible* to daily life and includes Faith-sharing.

A summary of my 26 African names (alphabetically)³³ gives an interesting insight to my life and ministry during my 55 years in Africa (1968-2023) and especially how Africans see me. Behind each name³⁴ there is a rich story. Most of these names were given to me. A few I chose myself:

1. *AMECEA Roving Ambassador*. Bishop Vincent McCauley, the Secretary General of AMECEA, gave me this name. Over the years I have tried to promote and to make known the vision and practice of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa around the world.

2. *Bwana Fili* (Swahili, East and Central Africa). In the years that I served as the Social Communications Secretary of AMECEA (1968-1974), I would travel with a large black leather case/file holder overstuffed with files and papers. When Father Valerian Laini, the Social Communications Secretary of the Tanzania Catholic Secretariat in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania saw me coming, he would joke, “here come *Bwana Fili* (Swahili for “Mr. Files”).

3. *Bwana Kazi* (Swahili, East and Central Africa). Gradually the large black leather case/file holder that I carried around during my years at AMECEA Office became a symbol of my working hard so I also got the name *Bwana Kazi* (Swahili for “Mr. Work”).

4. *Kijana wa Zamani* (Swahili, East and Central Africa). I am now 85 years old. At our first class on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya the students, all in their 20s, started calling me *mzee* (the Swahili word for “elder”) as a title of respect. But I said, “No. No. Not yet. Not yet. Please give me another name.” So, the next day they started calling me *kijana wa zamani* that means “a youth from a long time ago.” I like that better. Another version is *mzee kijana* that translates literally as “elder youth,” but also means “a youth from long ago.”

5. *Kipkoech* (Kalenjin, Kenya). Means “dawn.” In the Kalenjin tradition a person is officially named after the time of day when he or was born.

6. *Kofi* (Akan, Ghana). In Ghana a person is officially named by the day of the week that he or she was born. I was born on Friday so I am called *Kofi*.³⁵

³³ Further research indicates that all 26 names are nouns.

1. 18 names are personal characteristics/behavior/activity/place.
2. 5 names are based on the time of day or the weather when I was born.
3. 3 names are based on the African culture (family and clan).

³⁴ In a conversation with Indian scholar Anil Khamis in Nairobi, Kenya on 5 August, 2018, he explained that most African names are based on kinship/relationship or an event/activity (day of week, time of day, event that occurred on that day). Most of my names fit this pattern.

³⁵ Kofi is an important name in Ghana. Kofi Anan was the Secretary General of the United Nations. There are well-known writers, musicians and sport stars with the name. My friend the Methodist minister and theologian Kofi Amoateng explains:

The Akan names are not just day names. They also constitute the creation narratives (see Daniel Oduro-Mensah in *Akanism and Hebrewism: Akan-Mesopotamian Links and Earlier Civilization*). The Akan original name

7. *Mabula* (Sukuma, Tanzania): The Sukuma seminarians at the Maryknoll Formation House in Nairobi asked if they could give me a second Sukuma name. They choose *Mabula* that means “born in the rainy season.” It is tonal so very hard to pronounce with an emphasis on the first syllabus.. A silent “h” preceeds the “b.”

8. *Mogaka* (Gusii, Kenya and Kuria, Kenya/Tanzania): The Gusii people in Kenya have close relationship with the Kuria people in Kenya and Tanzania. For the Gusii *Mogaka* is both a family or kinship name and a title of respect meaning “elder.” For the Kuria it is a title of respect meaning “elder.” In African languages the word “elder” often more than just an “old person” or an “aged person.” In traditional African society the “Council of Elders” was a leadership structure and even today the elders have special authority and responsibilities in such customs such as circumcision, marriage, funerals, etc. For the Gusii people it also means someone who cares for another person/takes care of another person/is concerned about another person.

9. *Muiio* (Kamba, Kenya). The Kamba elders in Machakos gave me this name that means “peace” feeling that I am a person who loves peace.

10. *Mwanafunzi* (Swahili, East and Central Africa).). To be faithful to this new way of being church³⁶ my main credibility as a priest 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. I am not the boss. 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”). In African culture I will always an outsider, a foreigner, a learner, a student. I learn from my African friends and the African culture.

11. *Mwanajumuiya* (Swahili, East and Central Africa). As I travel around Eastern Africa facilitating SCCs Workshops, I am called *mwanajumuiya* that means “a member of a SCC” (not “child of a SCC”). A really committed, totally dedicated SCC member is called *Mwanajumuiya Damu Damu* that literally means “a member of a SCC blood blood.” This comes from how really committed, totally dedicated Catholics were described in Moshi, Tanzania and other traditional Catholic areas as *Mkristo Damu Damu* that literally means “a Christian blood blood.” Often I introduce myself as *Mwanajumuiya* Padri Joseph Healey.

for God is “Kwa”. One would realize that all the names of Akan people, apart from Friday male borns, start with “Kwa”. See the following:

1. Sunday = “Kwasiada” = the day God descended to begin creation. A person born on this day is Male = Kwasi; Female = Akosuo.
2. Saturday = Memeneda = the day of satisfaction. A male born on Saturday is “Kwame” = God became satisfied (with His creation).
3. Friday = Efieda = the day God homed human beings as caretakers of His creation. On Friday God created humans and gave them creation as their home. A male born on Friday is Kofi. Kofi = Kwafieda = God’s homing of human beings day. Therefore, Kofi people have a settled life. They are stable people.

³⁶ This expression is used in many different ways and contexts in the Catholic Church today.

12. *Mwenda* (Meru, Kenya). I facilitated a Small Christian Community Workshop in Meru, Kenya in April, 2016. It was a lively, inactive workshop and my sharing and input were greatly appreciated. On the last day of the workshop the leaders gave me the name *mwenda* meaning in Kimeru “the one who is loved.”

13. *Mzungu -- Padri Mzungu* (Swahili, East and Central Africa).. The African children like to call out to me “*mzungu, mzungu*” that means a “foreigner” or a “white person” when I pass by. The polite ones called me *Padri Mzungu*. I would answer back “*Mimi sio mzungu, mimi ni Mwafrika*” that means “I am not a foreigner, I am an African.” I have fun especially with the young boys and girls. I would ask one of them to hold out his or dark brown or black arm and compare it to my white arm. I would ask him if he gets a cut on his arm what happens. He says, “red blood appears.” “And if I get a cut on my arm? I reply. He answers, “red blood appears.” I smile and say, “So we are the same.”

14. *Networker* (English, Kenya): When I started the Social Communications Office of AMECEA in Nairobi in 1968, I was naturally referred to as a “communicator.” But with the importance today of the digital world, the internet³⁷ and social media, I am now more accurately called a “networker.”

15. *Nsemi ombago* (Sukuma, Tanzania). After many years of serving with Father Don Sybertz, MM on the Sukuma Research Committee with headquarters at the Sukuma Cultural Centre, Bujora, Mwanza, Tanzania, the Sukuma elders gave me this name that literally means: *The person who makes marks on the trees* and figuratively: *The person who makes/builds. The person who has good personal relationships and friendships with other people. The person who communicates/networks well.* It comes from a Sukuma proverb/story. The Sukuma story is called “The Parable of the Two Brothers.” From this Sukuma story comes the Sukuma proverb: *To make marks on the trees.* The theme of the story and the proverb is “Good Personal Relationships in Life.” The meaning is that to make/build good personal relationships and friendships with people is a very important priority in our lives.

16. *Omondi* (Luo, East Africa). After living in Kenya for many years a Luo elder said, “it is time for you to have a Luo name.” In the Luo tradition a person is officially named after the time of the day when he or she was born. I was embarrassed that I didn’t know when I was born. I wrote my brother in the USA and he sent me a copy of my birth certificate. I was born in Detroit, Michigan, USA at 6:45 a.m. (early morning) on Friday, 29 April, 2018. So I become *Omondi* (person born in the early morning). So my full name is Joseph *Omondi* Graham Healey. It is interesting that if I had been born a few minutes earlier I would have received the Luo name for “dawn,” that is, I would have been born at dawn/sunrise.

17. *Padri Dot.Com* (English, Kenya): Concerning the computer, internet, social media and the whole digital world, I have always thought I was old-fashioned, pre-historic, behind the times and being dragged kicking and screaming into the new online/virtual/digital world. But others think that I am making a valiant effort to keep up with the younger generation and even come to me for advice and suggestions (that’s a laugh!). I use the Dutch proverb *In the*

³⁷ The preferred spelling today of “internet” is with a small “i” (that is, lower case). The principle is that when a new communications medium is in its first generation it is capitalized. Then after a certain number of years of popular usage it becomes lower case. See the history of “radio” and “television.”

land of the blind the one-eyed person is king. Along the way I began teaching our SCCs Course partially online so I got the name *Padri Dot.Com*. Now I am challenged to keep learning so that I don't lose my not-deserved reputation.

18. *Phiri* (Chewa, Malawi): Most researchers say “*Phiri*” means “Mountain” in Chewa and Tonga. This surname has spread all over southern Africa. For many years I did not have a Chewa name although I had many Malawian friends and associates. Then a Malawian priest studying at CUEA in Nairobi said, “Your Chewa name should be *Phiri* that is a well known and respected name.” Others agreed. That was that.

19. *Ssentamu* (Luganda, Uganda). Bishop Joseph Mukwaya, then Father Mukwaya, succeeded me as the second AMECEA Social Communications Secretary. We became close friends. He was a member of the Buffalo Clan of the Baganda Ethnic Group in Uganda. He arranged for me to be officially initiated into his Buffalo Clan in Mityana, Uganda and I received the Luganda name *Ssentamu* that means "large cooking pot." It was the name of his deceased older brother. Here is an extraordinary coincidence. Before the initiation ceremony in 1990 we visited Joe Mukwaya's home parish of Nattyole in Uganda. At the entrance to the parish we met the primary school headmaster in the rain. Spontaneously the bishop asked him what name I should receive. Out of the blue he answered: “*Ssentamu*.”

20/21. *Student/Learner*. At meetings and on Zoom Calls I like to introduce myself as a *Student/Learner* for two reasons that are connected to my two main missionary ministries in Eastern Africa. First, in studying African culture and traditions (for example, African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories) the Africans are my teachers and I am a *Student/Learner*. Second, in the Small Christian Communities Model of Church the lay people are the leaders and we priests, sisters and brothers are the *Students/Learners*.

22. *Troublemaker*. Another name I like to be called is “troublemaker.” I like to ask hard questions of myself and others. This includes fighting against a clerical, hierarchical, patriarchal, exclusive Catholic Church. Against women being second class. Against various injustices. Asking hard questions to make the SCC Model of Church better.

23. *Tsetse fly*. During my 55 year journey in Africa I have been called other names. One I particularly enjoy is “tsetse fly.” When my good friend Don Sybertz was finishing his booklet *Tears of Joy*, John Mbonde, the other editor and I, used to hound him to finish. So Don called us tsetse flies and referred to the Sukuma proverb *I have been bitten by a tsetse fly*. This humorous Sukuma proverb in Tanzania refers to a person who relentlessly pesters another person until he or she pays off a debt. There is a similar Sukuma proverb that says *To promise an eye to a blind person* meaning that the blind person will pester you until you fulfill your promise. The proverb also refers to a person who, like a tsetse fly, persistently and relentlessly keeps coming after you again and again until he or she gets what the person wants. Well, we kept after Don until he finished the booklet in three languages – Sukuma, Swahili and English. In the “Introduction” he thanked “Fr. Joe Healey and John Mbonde for their constant and persistent nagging that gave me the impetus to write this story.”

24. *Wafula* (Luyia,³⁸ Kenya). After living in Kenya for many years a Luyia Family living in Nairobi said I needed a Luyia name. I was born in April that is traditionally a month of rain and the planting season. So the choice was obvious – *Wafula* that means “born in the rainy season.” The wife Agnes was born in April so she has the feminine equivalent *Nafula*.

³⁸ Also can be spelled Luhya.

The couple's second born son was also born in April and received the name *Wafula*. It took me a long time to learn that the accent is on the first syllable.

This Luyia name gave me a new appreciation of being born in the rainy season and how so much of African life is connected to rain and to the agricultural cycle.

25. *Wamwaki* (Gikuyu, Kenya). For some years I facilitated SCC Workshops in the Gikuyu-speaking parishes in Kenya. I do not know Gikuyu language. Several Kikuyu friends suggested possible names for me that were variations of being a member of the SCC in Gikuyu. Finally a Kikuyu elder in Limuru, Kenya named Paul Karanja Wamwaki said that I deserved a specific Gikuyu name: Wamwaki. *Mwaki* literally means "fire" in Gikuyu. 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 *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. So it became the common word for SCC. So I was given the name *wamwaki* that means "a member of a *mwaki* or SCC." Everyone says it is the perfect name for me. Paul Karanja Wamwaki said that now I need the full Kikuyu Initiation Ceremony when the SCC members slaughter a goat and have other rituals.

26. *Zoom Priest* -- *Zoom Padri* (English, USA). During the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic Zoom became very important as a secure, reliable video platform that powers our communication needs including meetings, chat, phone, webinars, and online events. I celebrate a Catholic mass on Zoom every Sunday for family and friends. I participate in Zoom Gatherings of different kinds every week. So my family gave me the nickname the Zoom Priest.

It is very timely that this critical evaluation and assessment first started in the same year as the 17th 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 July, 2011. There has also been additional ongoing evaluation and assessment in 2012-2023. December, 2023 marks the Golden Jubilee of SCCs in the AMECEA Region (1973—2023). 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 just a program or project in the parish, but a way of life."³⁹ That is why we resist giving a definition of a SCC.

³⁹ 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.

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”⁴⁰ 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) and/or online, 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 practical pastoral and social outreach takes place.
- A SCC is a small group that focuses on Scripture, faith-sharing⁴¹ 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.
- 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.

⁴⁰ 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.

⁴¹ Many Catholics are not comfortable with faith-sharing/sharing one’s faith in direct and public ways. They say they are not worthy, not qualified. They do not want to feel vulnerable. To make it real we are called to share our struggles, our weaknesses, our questions, our doubts, the bumps on the road of our faith journey/our journey of faith.

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!*”⁴² That means “Small Christian Communities, Hooray!” Let’s try it. “*Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo...Oyee!*” Again. “*Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo...Oyee!*”

⁴² 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 62 Years (1961 to 2023) in the AMECEA Region 43

When we look through the window of our 1961 to 2011 50-year jubilee period in AMECEA, and now 12 years beyond, surprisingly, Small Christian Communities (SCCs)⁴⁴ in

⁴³ 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.

⁴⁴ Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is an umbrella term used in this book and is the common expression for this new way of being/becoming 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 or Brand 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)*.

This research was informally updated in 2021 to include over 5,500 entries with many new Names, Titles, Terms, Expressions, Descriptions and Meanings added. This expresses 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

Africa fill this entire historical window.⁴⁵ An interesting “Timeline” in the history and development of SCCs emerges.⁴⁶ 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").⁴⁷ 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

Ministries Website, retrieved on 19 March, 2012.

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

⁴⁵ 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).

⁴⁶ 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.”

⁴⁷ Actes de la VIe Assemblée Plénière de l’Épiscopat du Congo. Léopoldville 1961 [20 novembre — 2 décembre], Édition: Secrétariat Général de l’Épiscopat du Congo [Congo-Léopoldville 1961] 133).

only way to make the church more "African"⁴⁸ and close to the people.⁴⁹ 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."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ 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 Congolese (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

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>

⁴⁹The 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.

⁵⁰ 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 Communities⁵¹ in Africa started in the then Belgian Congo in the late 1950s (then DRC at independence in 1960, then Zaire from 1971 to 1997 and now DRC again) and officially in 1961, the very year that AMECEA started.⁵²

Then came the historic Second Vatican Council (1962-65).⁵³ Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are not specifically mentioned in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, but are clearly implied. The traditional geographical parish is considered the basic juridical unit of the Catholic Church so there is no mention of Subparishes, Outstations/ Mission Chapels and SCCs, that is, nothing “smaller” or “lower” than the parish. The same applies to the revised *1983 Code of Canon Law*. While SCCs are not specifically mentioned in the code, they 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.”

One of these structures is SCCs. In the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa (the nine AMECEA countries) the SCC is an official pastoral, ecclesial structure in the parish. The SCCs officially participate in the parish leadership structures. Each SCC (or a group of SCCs) has a representative on the Outstation/Mission Chapel, Subparish or 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.

Small Christian Communities developed as a result of putting the communion ecclesiology and teachings of Vatican II into practice.⁵⁴ 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

⁵¹ 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.

⁵² 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.

⁵³ 11 October, 2012 was the 50th 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 council.

⁵⁴ 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.”

and likeness of God. This identity manifests itself in our deepest needs for love, happiness, community and family...Meaning of “Assembly.”

No. 17 refers to the Trinitarian understanding of the church as “the People of God,⁵⁵ the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁶

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.⁵⁷ 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.

“Article 3: Forming a Christian Community” (Numbers 15-18 of the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church - Ad Gentes*) does not talk about SCCs as such, but mentions the importance of ecclesial communities, associations and groups connected to the lay apostolate.

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”⁵⁸ when he originally called the council. The

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ 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

⁵⁷ 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*.”

⁵⁸ St. Paul VI describe the importance of being constantly aware of the changes in society in this striking image: “You must continually stand at the window, open to the world. You are

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).

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.”⁵⁹

Massimo Faggioli points out how in the 2020s Synodality and the Synodal Process is bringing something new both theologically and institutionally:

It is expressive of the global dimension of the Catholic Church with all its diversity and contrasts—the real challenge of the twenty-first century. Though bishops and superiors of religious orders were represented [at earlier synods], so were other members of the church; thus, global Catholicism supplemented the papal primacy of the nineteenth century [Vatican I] and episcopal collegiality of the twentieth [Vatican II] with Ecclesial Synodality. Instead of using the method of *disputatio*, it adopted “spiritual conversation” as a way to grasp the *consensus fidelium*.

It’s also expressive of a concept of synodality that differs from earlier phases (especially in the post-1985 *Communio Ecclesiology*), when synodality was seen as a dimension of the life of Local Churches and the relations among them... This is no longer the synod of bishops but rather a synod with bishops.⁶⁰

In giving enthusiastic support to Base Ecclesial Communities Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, SDB,⁶¹ Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras describes them as “the great fruit of Vatican II.”⁶² The Kenyan book of prayers and songs, *Tumshangilie*

obliged to study the facts, the events, the opinions, the current interests and the thought of the surrounding environment.”

⁵⁹ “Theological Interpretation of the Bible Today” in David Tracy, *A Short History of the Theological Interpretation of the Bible Today*, Fortress Press, 1984.

⁶⁰ Massimo Faggioli, “The Synodal Journey Continues: But Course Corrections Are Needed,” *Commonweal Magazine*, 8 November, 2023, retrieved from the online version, 19 November, 2023, [The Synodal Journey Continues | Commonweal Magazine](#)

⁶¹ It is interesting that Rodriguez Maradiaga was appointed to be the coordinator of a group of nine cardinals (Council of Nine) worldwide established by Pope Francis to advise him and to study a plan for revising the *Apostolic Constitution* on the Roman Curia.

⁶² 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.

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.”⁶³

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.”⁶⁴

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 Pentecost with the introduction of Small Christian Communities in Africa.”⁶⁵ 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.”⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷

⁶³ Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, First published in 1953, (London: Geoffrey Chapman Revised Edition, 1985), p. 341.

⁶⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

⁶⁵ 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

⁶⁶ Nicholas Segeja, “Summary Notes” on *The Development and Ecclesiology of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in AMECEA Countries*, Nairobi: Unpublished Course Notes at CUEA, 2010, p. 4.

⁶⁷ 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.

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.”⁶⁸

Latin America,⁶⁹ Africa and Asia (especially the Philippines⁷⁰) all pioneered the

⁶⁸ Michael Snyder in an email message to the author dated 25 June, 2013.

⁶⁹ 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. Salesian missionary priest Father Jim 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, Brazil to launch a community catechetical/evangelization movement in Barra do Parai out of which small communities [CEBs] eventually emerged.” (Jim O’Halloran, *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 these local small communities (CEBs). On Sundays the catechists led a liturgical service similar to the mass that was being celebrated by the Catholic priest pastor in the distant Mother Church in the parish. As American Holy Cross theologian Father Robert Pelton explains these liturgies were the forerunner of the “Sunday Services Without a Priest.” 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.

*The terminology is complex:

Portuguese-speaking Brazil: Comunidades Eclesiais de Base (CEBs).

Portuguese-speaking Africa: Pequenas Comunidades Cristãs (PCCs).

Spanish: Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs).

English: Base or Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).

⁷⁰ Basic Ecclesial Communities started in Mindanao in the Philippines in 1967 and 1968. BECs started with the social justice advocacy ministry of Maryknoll priests including Ed Gerlock in connection with the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) that is one of the largest organizations of rural workers in the Philippines --a socio-political movement run by peasants and for peasants. Conversation with American Maryknoll Missionary Father Jerry Burr, MM, 6 August, 2013.

development of a SCC/BCC/BEC/CEB 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 South⁷¹ *simultaneously* experienced the extraordinary growth of SCCs.⁷² Small Christian Communities are a global phenomenon. They have developing on every continent. Scottish minister Ian Fraser has observed that “Small Christian Communities are the result of the spontaneous combustion of the Holy Spirit all over the world.” Thus the

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.

⁷¹ 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,” “developing world,” “least developed countries,” “less advanced countries” emerging countries,” and the “Third World” that are condescending, pejorative, offensive and a stereotype 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 negative terms are: “economically developing countries;” “economically emerging countries;” “economically developing south;” and “economically underprivileged countries.” The newer language is: “Global South countries” (geographical rather than economic); and “Southern Hemisphere” (geographical belt across Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia).

Equally “Global North” is being increasingly used to describe the economically wealthier countries of the Northern Hemisphere especially Europe and North America. **NOTE:** “The Third World is a label originated as a way to [categorize countries](#) that didn’t align with Western countries or the former Soviet bloc. It’s now often used to describe poor countries, or developing countries, and by extension, mostly nonwhite majority countries.” Charles Blow, “Tucker Carlson and White Replacement,” *New York Times*, 12 April 2021, p. A18. Retrieved in the online version, 12 April, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/11/opinion/tucker-carlson-white-replacement.html>

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

⁷² 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>

emergence of SCCs is basically a development that is indigenous to different continents and countries at the same chronological time. However much familial relationship they may have, developments on the different continents and countries each display their own point of departure, given the respective socio-cultural and ecclesiastical contexts/situations on each continent and country.

Thus, contrary to some misinformed interpretations, the African experience did not come from Latin America, but developed on its own.⁷³ African SCCs developed mainly as a pastoral, parish-based model of church. O'Halloran confirms this by saying:

During the 1971 [World] Synod of Bishops⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵

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

⁷³ 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.

⁷⁴ In the [Roman Catholic Church](#), the Synod of Bishops is an advisory body for the [Pope](#). It is described in the [Code of Canon Law](#) (CIC) as "a group of bishops who have been chosen from different regions of the world and meet together at fixed times to foster closer unity between the Roman Pontiff and bishops, to assist the Roman Pontiff with their counsel in the preservation and growth of faith and morals and in the observance and strengthening of ecclesiastical discipline, and to consider questions pertaining to the activity of the Church in the world" (Canon 342 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*). In terms of the official reports and overall documentation of the various synods, it is said that "those who control the process control the content."

⁷⁵ James O'Halloran, *Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Companion*, p. 23.

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 other in logic or historical development’ [American theologian Father Roger Haight, SJ].⁷⁶

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.⁷⁷

There are other historical misconceptions: First, that Eastern Africa SCCs are a cell model of church with communistic and socialistic overtones. This has resulted in unfounded fears of control, uniformity and politicizing. In the 1960s and 1970s expatriate missionaries from European countries such as Poland came to Eastern Africa. At first they were against SCCs because of their negative experience of the cells in the communist world in Europe. Gradually they understood that the Pastoral Model of the AMECEA Region was very different and became supportive.

Second, that SCCs are a parallel church along the lines of the independent Christian (especially Evangelical and Pentecostal) sects. As a clear pastoral, parish-based model, the experience of Small Christian Communities in the AMECEA Region is very Catholic and within the 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.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁷ 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.

⁷⁸ Based on a conversation with Zambian Archbishop Thesphore George, the Archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia in Lusaka on 30 November, 2013.

Although St. 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."⁷⁹

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."

Democratic Republic of the Congo Sister Josée Ngalula, RSA points out that these strong magisterial affirmations continued in St. 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.

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.⁸⁰ Paul VI's challenges pave the way for the Local Church⁸¹ 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 metaphor⁸² of a trickle of water that grows into a small stream that

⁷⁹ We say that "the Kingdom is God is here, but not yet" meaning that on earth we experience the kingdom partially (such as in the Sacrament of the Eucharist), but in heaven we will experience the fullness of the kingdom. In his doctorate dissertation Tanzanian priest and theologian Father Wilbert Gobbo says: "In the Social Trinitarian Model, SCCs are like a 'foretaste' (prolepsis) of the Kingdom of God."

⁸⁰ Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 2.

⁸¹ 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."

⁸² This metaphor can be compared to the historical and scientific search for the source of the Nile River that is a major north-flowing river in northeastern Africa and is commonly regarded as the longest river in the world. The Nile River has two major tributaries, the White Nile and Blue Nile. The White Nile is considered to be the headwaters and primary stream of the Nile itself. The Blue Nile, however, is the source of most of the water and silt. The White Nile is longer and rises in the Great Lakes region of central Africa, with the most distant

grows into a narrow river that is fed by many tributaries and slowly grows into a mighty river that became an 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 Africa⁸³ (and the whole of English-speaking Africa) can be traced back to the joint pastoral and missionary efforts of the American Maryknoll missionaries⁸⁴ in three rural parishes in the Luo-speaking Deanery (Nyarombo,⁸⁵ Ingri and Kowak Parishes⁸⁶) in North Mara in Musoma Diocese in northwestern Tanzania in

source still undetermined but located in Rwanda – probably a small trickle of water leading into a small stream that finally empties into the very large Lake Victoria.

⁸³ 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

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 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.

⁸⁴ Based on conversations with many Maryknollers over the years including Fathers Frank Breen, George Cotter, Ed Hayes, Mike Kirwen, Dan Ohmann, John Sivalon, Dave Smith, Don Sybertz; Mike Snyder and Tom Tiscornia; Brothers Kevin Dargan and Francis TenHoopen; Sisters Katie Erisman, Janice McLaughlin and Janice Srebalus.

A good summary is Frank Breen, “Excursus: Small Christian Communities,” *Maryknoll History in Africa*, Volume Three (Musoma Diocese – 1961 to 2015), Maryknoll, NY: Privately Printed, 2016, pp. 237-241.

⁸⁵ See Frank Breen, “Nyarombo, Our Lady of Grace Parish,” *Maryknoll History in Africa*, Volume Three (Musoma Diocese – 1961 to 2015), Maryknoll, NY: Privately Printed, 2016, pp. 229-237.

⁸⁶ 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

1966. Then these small communities spread to two other Luo-speaking parishes Masonga and Tatwe.

This new type of evangelization and pastoral activity began with research on the social structures and community values of the African Initiated Churches (AICs)⁸⁷ especially the Legio Maria⁸⁸ (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 in 1966.⁸⁹ She observed that for the Catholic Church to be successful in evangelizing the Luo people it had to enter into and interact with the Luo peoples’ style of basic community life. It was clear that the Catholic priest could not visit everywhere in Luoland to provide the pastoral care and do missionary outreach. Also the priest did not want everything to wait until he came to a local village and local Christian community. So it was important for the local Catholic Luo communities to have their own regular 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 for “small group” or “society;” the plural is *vyama*) and “small communities of Christians” (forerunner of SCCs).⁹⁰ This was the SCC Model of Church from below, from the grassroots.

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.

⁸⁷ Also called African Instituted Churches, African Independent Churches and African Indigenous Churches.

⁸⁸ “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 (DRC), 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

⁸⁹ 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.

⁹⁰ 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 Eglises Africaines*, Bandundu, Kinshasa: Centre D’Etudes Ethnologiques, 1970; Marie-France Perrin Jassy, “*Face au changement: Former des*

In a *Mission Diary* American priest Dan Zwack, the pastor of Nyarombo Parish (who eventually left Africa and Maryknoll) reported that in July, 1966, Marie France presented her initial report to the Luo Deanery, although her research was not yet complete. Zwack became very excited about her findings and had her move to Nyarombo Parish, where Marie France continued to visit the meetings of the *chamas* that were being started at that time.

Zwack gave a long account of these activities and how he responded in a diary written in March, 1967. Here are some excerpts from this diary:

Marie-France was invited to do a study within the Luo Deanery, a group of five adjacent parishes, of the various African separatist churches in the area, with special reference to the Legion of Mary. She set about making a statistical survey of all the Pentecostal sects she could contact, which came to twelve. She tabulated and compared their origins, structures, worship, social activities and peculiarities, their impact upon members and outsiders, the types which adhere to such groups, and the staying power of the societies and members.

We [Maryknoller missionaries] had discussed and tried many ways to create communities amongst our people, but found no real success. We thought only along European models and categories, and these don't work here. Our sociologist showed us the patterns of Luo community life that she had discovered and how the indigenous African churches invariably were coming up with new pastoral solutions based on these patterns. Why shouldn't we learn from these churches what African religious community means and encourage our people to do the same?

The sects put great stock in extemporaneous prayer at public and private worship, and in prayers for the sick or for disturbed persons whom they consider possessed by devils. For several years I had been trying, with indifferent success, to help our catechumens with such prayer, but at least the catechists were familiarized with it. So, we had been preparing the ground for such plantation. I had also been trying to introduce native forms of singing, with little success, but at least the catechists knew I was trying. And I was trying to impress on the catechumens that the only law of their new religion is love.

In July of 1966 I put the whole thing plainly before two groups of catechumens, to form communities of prayer and mutual help, with their own leaders and activities. I played recordings of songs from the sects, which delighted the catechumens, who sang along with them, swaying back and forth. We also had the sick sit on chairs in the middle of the group, for whom several people would pray extemporaneously. Then all of us would lay our hands on each sick person's head. Then the sick person would be lifted up

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.

while we prayed something like: “May the Lord Jesus Christ restore you to health and peace.”

Later some Christians told me that they had secretly been praying for the sick and only now learned that it was approved Christian practice!!

Each group chose six leaders, three men and three women, to whom I read passages from the gospels about the Christian idea of leadership as humble service. They adopted the rite of washing the feet of members as a regular feature of their meetings. The catechists helped but it was all so congenial to their mentality that they easily fell in with it. The groups engaged in activities, such as helping someone whose garden [farm] got behind, cutting grass for a thatched roof, or building a hut for another.⁹¹

Zwack gave a update nine months later called “The Communities Parish” in the January, 1968 *Nyarombo Mission Diary*:

I sent a diary telling of our work in founding neighborhood communities among our Christians. Now almost a year later one can say that the work progresses on all fronts. If one were to characterize this work it would be “personalist” – an outlook that puts the greatest value on the person, in himself or herself, and his or her relationship with everyone else.

This is summarized by Maryknoll missionary priest Father Frank Breen, MM as follows:

In the late 1960s, beginning in the North Mara section of Musoma Diocese, Maryknollers initiated the community-based ecclesial model that become known as Small Christian Communities. This model has now spread to all countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and is the pillar of the pastoral structure of the Catholic Church, especially in urban areas.⁹²

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.⁹³

⁹¹ Daniel Zwack, *Nyarombo Mission Diary*, Nyarombo, Tanzania: Privately Printed, 27 March, 1967.

⁹² Frank Breen, “Maryknoll in Africa,” *Interchange*, Volume 37, Number 2 (2017), page 10.

⁹³ 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

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.”⁹⁴

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,⁹⁵ Ingri Parish had 22 small communities and Kowak Parish had 25 small communities. As many as 80% of the local Catholics participated.⁹⁶ 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.⁹⁷

Carney adds:

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.⁹⁸

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

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>

⁹⁴ Gerry Proctor, *A Commitment to Neighborhood: Base Ecclesial Communities in Global Perspective*, Liverpool: Unpublished MPhil Dissertation, 2012, p. 70.

⁹⁵ See Daniel Zwack, *Nyarombo Mission Diary*, January, 1968.

⁹⁶ Some of this explanation is based on a conversation of Michael Kirwen, MM with the author in Nairobi on 30 April, 2014.

⁹⁷ Joseph Carney, *The History of the Functional Structure*, pps. 232-233.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

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 1975.⁹⁹

This is documented in *The Buffaloes: A Story Commemorating Maryknoll Society's 50 Years in Tanzania, 1946-1996*:

Frank (Ace) Murray was one of the most creative and innovative Maryknollers in East Africa. He was assigned to the then Africa Region in 1948 and worked in Tanzania until he left the region in 1972 and later Maryknoll in 1974. First Frank worked among the Luo in North Mara. He assisted a French sociologist, Marie-France Perrin Jassy, in a study of the Luo African Independent Churches in North Mara and their style of basic community life. Although 1973 and 1976 are considered the official starting points for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the AMECEA countries, the very beginning of SCCs can be traced back to Nyarombo Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania in 1966 with this research on the social structures and community values of the Luo Ethnic Group.

Moreover, Small Christian Communities became the model of church in parts of the dioceses where Maryknoll worked several years before this approach to building the church was officially adopted by AMECEA churches. The famous Luo deanery, home to several of our more famous [human] "buffaloes" was instrumental in promoting this ecclesiological thinking and practice.¹⁰⁰

Jassy's research led to several pastoral innovations. The "Sunday Service Without a Priest" led by the catechist¹⁰¹ 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.

American Maryknoll Sister Catherine Erisman, MM adds:

⁹⁹ 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.

¹⁰⁰ *The Buffaloes: A Story Society's 50 years in Tanzania, 1946-1996*, Dar es Salaam, privately *Commemorating Maryknoll* printed, 1996, 10, 54. 55.

¹⁰¹ 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.

A priority of the church at this time was building Small Christian Communities, called *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo* or *JNN* in Swahili. Two Maryknoll Fathers, Dan Zwack and Jerry Pavis, had built up these communities in Nyarombo Parish and [Maryknoll] Sisters Barbara Lambert and Barbara Nowak were in ministry there from 1969 to 1971 as integral members of the parish team. The Luo tribe lived in Nyarombo and the Christians had splintered off into many churches. These splinter groups were very popular, as they blended aspects of Christianity with their animist background. The Nyarombo Parish made strong efforts to assimilate church and culture with 28 active Small Christian Community groups in the parish. The sisters helped prepared community leaders, held prayer meetings and helped the catechists prepare liturgies. From the sisters the women learned health care and domestic arts...Sister Barbara Lambert later wrote of her remembrance of Nyarombo: “It seems that Nyarombo was meant to be a Camelot – a dream that happened for a short time – one shining example of how beautiful and happy pastoral work can be.”¹⁰²

These Luo-speaking parishes were in North Mara and part of Musoma Diocese, Tanzania on the border with Kenya. Across the border was the area that is now Homa Bay Diocese. The Italian Passionists came to Homa Bay in 1970 to serve in Luo-speaking parishes. It would be interesting to research if they used this “*Chama Model of Church*.” Some of the local diocesan priests in Musoma Diocese were against it.

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 the Sukuma people to use proverbs to get a deeper understanding of Scripture. These groups were the forerunners of SCCs. Cotter’s missionary method was to gather the Sukuma Christians in small circles of eight to 10 people. A key was that these Small Reflection Groups started with life (Sukuma proverbs) and then went to the *Bible*. This experience 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*.”¹⁰³

During the Seminar Study Year (SSY)¹⁰⁴ in Tanzania in 1969 coordinated by the Bukumbi Pastoral Institute in the then Mwanza Diocese the concept and praxis of SCCs that

¹⁰²Erisman, Catherine, *Maryknoll Sisters Tanzania 60 Years*. Maryknoll, NY: Privately Printed, 2015, 47-48.

¹⁰³ Based on the author’s conversation with George Cotter, Maryknoll, New York, USA, 25 June, 2013.

¹⁰⁴ 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. He was assisted by American Maryknoll Sister Patricia Madden, MM. 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.

were then called "Local Church Communities" were first articulated as a priority in both rural and urban parishes. American Maryknoll missionary Father Daniel Zwack, MM (with comments by Bishop Blomjous, Fr. Stephen Haule and Mr. L. A. Mantanwa) presented the plan of the rural parish of Nyarombo in Musoma Diocese (see above) in a working paper on "Rural Parishes" in 1969 Seminar Study Year, *Summaries and Questions for Discussion in Each Catholic Diocese, Parish and Subparish on "The Church in Tanzania Today: Its Tasks and Priorities,"* Mwanza: Privately Printed, 1969. He stressed "the neighborhood community of some 50 adults within two or three miles of one another; this is the local community." This revised paper later became "Problems and Possibilities in Rural Parishes of Tanzania," Position Paper No. 9, 1969 National Seminar Study Year, Bukumbi: Printed Paper, 1969.

At the SSY 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 10 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.¹⁰⁵

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.¹⁰⁶

This is confirmed in the Findings of the National Seminar. The one paragraph on "Summary/Conclusions on the Rural Parishes" referred to new forms of ministry, but nothing specifically on small communities. The one paragraph on "Summary/Conclusions on Urban Areas and Parishes" referred to the importance of the urban apostolate, but nothing specifically on small communities.

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 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

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.maryknollafrika.org/History8.htm>

¹⁰⁵ J. Brouwer, "Problems and Possibilities in Towns and Cities of Tanzania," Position Paper No. 10, 1969 National Seminar Study Year, Bukumbi: Printed Paper, 1969.

¹⁰⁶ 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.

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.¹⁰⁷” 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.”¹⁰⁸

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.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the African family consists not only of the living but

¹⁰⁷ One possibility is that some of Paolo Friere’s ideas, methods and processes entered Eastern Africa through books such as Anne Hope, and Sally Timmel, *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers*, 3 volumes, published by Mambo Press, in Gweru, Zimbabwe.

¹⁰⁸ Andrew Edele, MAfr, “Establishing Basic Christian Communities in Lusaka, Zambia,” *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin* 81 (1980), p. 22.

¹⁰⁹ “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 restrict its use in public discourse.

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 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.¹¹⁰

In 2013 this parish was 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 “village neighborhood” in the language of the Kalenjin people. The Christian *Kokwet* “met about twice a month in the

¹¹⁰ 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.

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.”¹¹¹

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.¹¹²

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 bishop founder of SCCs in Tanzania. Mwoleka visited the *vyama* in the parishes of North Mara in Musoma Diocese and other community experiments.

He started lectionary-based small communities in Rulenge called *Vikundi vya Injili* (Swahili for “Gospel Groups”). Gradually they become known in Swahili as *Jumuyia Ndogo Ndogo za Kristo* (« Small Christian Communities”). They were neighborhood communities of families that would come together weekly for prayer, *Bible* Sharing and practical activities. They paralleled the *Nyumba Kumi Kumi* (Swahili for « Ten Houses »), the socialistic plan of villagization of President Julius Nyerere and the Tanzanian Government to group

¹¹¹ Irish Kiltegan priest Fintan McDonald, “Pastoral Experiment in Kalenjin,” *Mirror*, February, 1972, p. 2.

¹¹² “The Christian Community – Basis for Liturgical Celebration,” *Liturgy and Life in Rural Africa*, Kampala: Gaba Pastoral Papers No. 20, 1971, pp. 1-2.

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, if 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 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.¹¹³

Malawian Missionary of Africa Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr¹¹⁴ (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 these Catholic small family communities 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.

Todd Stratham states:

Already in his first pastoral letter as bishop, Kalilombe called on the laity to take their rightful place in the Catholic Church’s life and mission, advocating for the establishment of small groups (*Miphakati*) of the faithful who could consider together how to improve the Church’s life and ministry, and work together to promote education, health, justice and general well-being in their communities. In this, Kalilombe was a leading African advocate of the ecclesiological model of “Small Christian Communities” [SCCs] (or “Basic Ecclesial Communities”), which was an idea widespread in many Majority World Catholic churches in the wake of the Second Vatican Council’s discovery of the “theology of the laity.” As a complement to traditional parish ministry, SCCs sought to be authentic incarnations of the gospel at the local level, whereby the gospel would be inculturated in the social, cultural, and religious life of the people.

¹¹³ 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.

¹¹⁴ Todd Stratham, “Kalilombe, Patrick,” *Dictionary of African Christian Bibliography* retrieved on Dictionary of African Christian Bibliography Website on 4 July, 2023, <https://dacb.org/stories/malawi/kalilombe-patrick> Written from the viewpoint of a Protestant academic it does not mention Kalilombe’s contribution to AMECEA.

From 24 November, 1973 to 24 August, 1975 Kalilombe held a Mini-Synod¹¹⁵ 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: Our Diocesan Pastoral Planning Project*. 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* in Chewa (“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, outstation and Small Christian Communities. 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.¹¹⁶

The Pastoral Letter introduced the Mini-Synod that had five sessions that laid down the “Guidelines” and “Regulations” for the running of the church life and activities at the Small Christian Communities (*Miphakati*) level.

¹¹⁵ A complete report on this Mini-Synod is found in the CUEA Master’s Thesis by Vincent Fredrick Mwakhwawa:

[Improving Participation of the Laity in Small Christian Communities: a Pastoral Challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Malawi](#). Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website retrieved on 13 March, 2022.

As a footnote to AMECEA history this first historic synod in Lilongwe, Malawi in 1973 was called in Chewa, the local Malawian language, “*Mpingo Ndife Tonse*” (the need for active participation of the laity) The second diocesan synod in 2004 to 2006 was called “*Tiyende Limodzi*” (importance of collaborative ministry and unity). Archbishop George Desmond Tambala facilitated the third Archdiocesan Mini Synod in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi from 30 July 2022 to August 2023 on the theme “Discerning with the Holy Spirit.” He states: “We want to take advantage of the Synod [on Synodality) that is happening globally so that we can as well isolate some issues that are very relevant for our Local Church and find possible solutions which will give a better direction to our archdiocese.” In the spirit of the *Acts of the Apostles* he said: “It is only when we do things together that we can say we and the Holy Spirit have decided.”

¹¹⁶ “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

Kilaini points out the SCCs link to the African Bantu philosophy and practice of family and clan (*Ubuntu*). Both Mwoleka's home language and culture of Haya in Bukoba, Tanzania (and neighboring dioceses) and Kalilombe's home language and culture of Chewa in Lilongwe, Malawi (and neighboring dioceses) reflect the African Bantu cultural values of family and clan upon which the SCCs Model of Church is built. Perhaps this connection to Bantu languages and culture is the key to understanding why in English-speaking Africa SCCs started in the AMECEA Region, the countries in Eastern Africa originally connected to the British Empire such as Tanzania and Malawi. This "Bantu connection" is very different from some of the languages and cultures of West Africa such as in Ghana and Nigeria.

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 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."¹¹⁷

This historical research is very enlightening. It shows that already in the original 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, 1973.¹¹⁸ The AMECEA Bishops were known for being pastoral minded and interested in grassroots evangelization.¹¹⁹ So they had a pastoral sense and concrete pastoral priorities as they entered this meeting in 1973 to plan for the future.

¹¹⁷ Max Stetter in an email message to the author dated 3 August, 2011.

¹¹⁸ 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," *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 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

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.

¹¹⁹ A concrete example is when the then Bishop Anthony Mayala made a Pastoral Visitation to Iramba Parish in Musoma, Tanzania where I was pastor. He spent five full days celebrating Mass at the main parish center and the four sub-parishes on consecutive days with three days

This AMECEA 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,¹²⁰ both in living and working.”¹²¹ 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.”¹²²

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.” In the script 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.¹²³

Looking back we see the importance of putting into practice the challenge of Kalilombe. During this 1973 AMECEA Meeting he said that “every bishop,¹²⁴ priest, brother,

for Confirmations. He met with the Iramba Parish Pastoral Council and participated in one SCC gathering.

¹²⁰ Ugandan Archbishop John Baptist Odama points out that the SCCs pastoral priority and SCCs model of church is founded on African cultural values of community and family. He uses the example of Africans building their houses in a circular or round shape. Then the people sit in a circle inside the house so that everyone can see each other’s faces. Sharing is easier. This promotes community spirit and values. John Baptist Odama, “Talk at the Opening of the SCCs Training the Trainers Workshop For Those Serving in Refugees Ministry,” Lodonga Spiritual Center, Arua, Uganda, 10 August, 2018.

¹²¹ “Guidelines for the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 16, No 1 & 2 (1974), p. 10.

¹²² *Ibid*, p. 9-10.

¹²³ 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.

¹²⁴ 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 168 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 0.89% (less than 1%) 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.

and sister (and as a corollary, every Catholic) should participate in a particular SCC – not as a leader, but as an ordinary member.”¹²⁵ This reinforces a key priority that ecclesologically all Catholics (priests, religious and lay people) participate in this new way of being/becoming church. Everyone by his or her Baptism is a potential SCC member.¹²⁶

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 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.¹²⁷

Tanzanian Bishop Method Kilaini described 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.” He shocked some Catholics when he joined his SCC members to sweep the church when it was their responsibility. 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.”

During a Sunday Homily at Holy Cross Parish, Dandora, Nairobi on 16 September, 2018 Bishop John Oballa Owaa of Ngong Diocese, described his personal membership in St. Augustine SCC. He surprised, even shocked, the congregation when he said that he sweeps the church with his SCC members when it is their turn. He quoted St. Augustine: “For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a duty; the latter a grace.”

¹²⁵ 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.

¹²⁶ 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>

¹²⁷ **ADD FROM PRINTED BOOK**

Let us remember that the leaders of the SCCs are the lay people. This is one reason why SCCs are a new way of being/becoming church, a new model of church.¹²⁸ 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.”¹²⁹

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. In Sangu’s report 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.”¹³⁰ 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 (SLCCs). 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.¹³¹ Christian communities at this level will be best suited to develop

¹²⁸ Another way of understanding this “newness” of the SCCs Pastoral, Ecclesial Model of Church 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.” So the SCCs Model of Church is not like the various church movements -- the Marian Movement, the Charismatic Movement, the new Ecclesial Movements, etc. It is different as a “New Way of Being Church” from the grassroots, from below.

¹²⁹ 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.

¹³⁰ 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. Also published in *AMECEA Documentation Service*.

¹³¹ 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.

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.¹³²

African bishops present at this 1974 World Synod of Bishops IV Ordinary General Assembly Fourth Ordinary Synod of Bishops, 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 in Rome the seven AMECEA Delegates divided the major themes with Kalilombe being responsible for "Basic Christian Communities." Ugandan Cardinal Emmanuel Nsubuga (who died in 1991) of Kampala Archdiocese'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.¹³³

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

¹³² James Sangu, "Report," p. 217.

¹³³ Emmanuel Nsubuga, "Three Archbishops from Africa Elected to Synod of Bishops Council," *AMECEA Information*, 24 October, 1974, p. 1.

cooperation with the clergy.”¹³⁴ So already the AMECEA SCC Key Pastoral Priority (officially to be formulated in 1976) was beginning to take shape.

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

In same year Cardinal Emmanuel Nsubuga, Archbishop of Kampala, convoked a Kampala Archdiocesan Synod to deliberate on the Small Christian Communities as an adopted pastoral program in the archdiocese. After the synod, the cardinal said: “The one-week synod that started on 11 August, 1974 and ended on 16 August, 1974 at Ggaba National Seminary was intended in the first place to evaluate what we had proposed in the first five years’ plan, and secondly, to make a new plan in response to new needs. This time we have to build up a strong Christian Community starting from the family.”¹³⁵

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.¹³⁶

In June, 1975¹³⁷ 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.”

¹³⁴ “Messages to Eastern Africa Are Highlight of Synod of Bishops Follow-up,” *AMECEA Information*, 13 November, 1974, p. 1.

¹³⁵ This history is well documented in Ambrose Bwangatto, “A Church Struggling to Answer Her Missionary Vocation,” Kampala: Privately Printed, 2018.

¹³⁶ Method Kilaini, “Small Christian Communities,” p. 2.

¹³⁷ 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.

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 will be carried out by means of Small Christian Communities."^{138 139} 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.¹⁴⁰

We have a rich history of SCCs in post-conciliar documents. The World Synod of Bishops took place in Rome in October, 1974 and St. 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.

¹³⁸ 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."

¹³⁹ 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.

¹⁴⁰ The life, apostolic activities and pastoral vision of Mwoleka are described in John Joseph Rwechungura, *Mjue Askofu Christopher Mwoleka: Mtume wa Upendo Upeo wa Yesu*, Karagwe. Tanzania: Privately Printed, 2012.

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 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 St. 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 small 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."¹⁴¹ 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.”

¹⁴¹ 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

The AMECEA Study Conference on “Building Christian Communities” took place in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 1976.^{142 143} The key statement was: "Systematic formation of Small Christian Communities should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come in Eastern

¹⁴² 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.

¹⁴³ 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.

Africa.”¹⁴⁴ This is the single most important statement made about SCCs.¹⁴⁵ Kalilombe stated that this decision

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.¹⁴⁶

Thus Kalilombe emphasized that the setting up of Small Christian Communities formed a “decisive turning point”¹⁴⁷ 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

¹⁴⁴ AMECEA Study Conference on "Building Christian Communities," "Conclusions," *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, 18, 5 (October, 1976), p. 250. The precise meaning of “**the key pastoral priority...**” is in the context of planning for the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s. Later it became “**a key pastoral priority ...**” in the context of broader and more inclusive pastoral priorities such as formation and training of personnel, marriage and family, religious education, development and social services and specialized apostolates.

¹⁴⁵ 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 example, see: Annotated Syllabus of Two Credit Course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today,” Nairobi: Hekima University College and Tangaza University College, 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Patrick Kalilombe, "An Overall View of Building 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).

¹⁴⁷ Patrick Kalilombe, *ibid.* p. 266.

to build are simply the most local incarnations of the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.”¹⁴⁸

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 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.¹⁴⁹

During this AMECEA meeting the word “small”¹⁵⁰ was specifically chosen to avoid certain undertones of the word “basic.” Archbishop 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.¹⁵¹

Blomjous was an influential observer at this meeting. Tanzanian theologian Father Laurenti Magesa points out:

¹⁴⁸ Conclusions, *ibid.* p. 250.

¹⁴⁹ Vincent McCauley, “Introduction,” 1976 AMECEA Study Conference, *ibid.*, p. 249.

¹⁵⁰ 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.”

¹⁵¹ 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

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.¹⁵²

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 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."¹⁵³ 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.¹⁵⁴

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

¹⁵² 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.

¹⁵³ *The Community Called Church*. Volume 5 of an Experimental Source-book for Religious Education, *Spearhead* No. 60 (December, 1979), p. ii.

¹⁵⁴ Patrick Kalilombe, “Biblical Background of Christian Communities,” *AFER*, 1976, p. 12.

It is significant that the AMECEA Bishops had the vision of the centrality of the *Bible* in the development of SCCs from the very beginning. After great deal of research and consultation, by 2020 we have determined that one of the five essential characteristics of the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa is: “Weekly lectionary-based faith-sharing that connects the Gospel to daily life.”

fact deal with and conceptualize the SCC as a club, even though they might give a verbal acknowledgement of their building block nature.¹⁵⁵ 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 Small Christian Community has all the ingredients – characteristics – of the universal church.¹⁵⁶

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.¹⁵⁷

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

¹⁵⁵ Michael Kirwen in an interview with the author in Nairobi in September, 1983.

¹⁵⁶ James O'Halloran, *Small Christian Communities*, p. **ADD**

¹⁵⁷ Claver, *Making*, p. 103.

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 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.¹⁵⁸

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:

¹⁵⁸ Laurenti Magesa, “The Joy of Community in Small Christian Communities,” *New People*, No. 149, March-April, 2014, pp. 22, 24.

- a SCC is a communion of families.^{159 160}
- 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 (Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) is a communion of regional bishops' conferences.

¹⁵⁹ Below the parish level Vatican documents and Pope Francis himself use the term “family communities” that can be understood in different senses including Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

In commenting on contemporary USA in his book *Strangers in a Strange Land: Living the Catholic Faith in a Post-Christian World*, American Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia Archdiocese states:

It's really going to be the family that's going to be the primary tool that God will use to evangelize, beginning with their children of course. But then families associating together in smaller groups, support groups of one another will be very important in the future as well. As parishes are supposed to be, but they're institutions now rather support groups. Secondly, find ways for those families to network in some circumstances, for instance in a parish, right?

Charles Chaput in John Allen, "Philly's Chaput on a Post-Christian Culture, 'Amoris', and More," CRUX, 2 March, 2017, CRUX Website, retrieved 5 March, 2017, <https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2017/03/02/phillys-chaput-post-christian-culture-amoris>

Chaput's analysis is right, but he doesn't go far enough. These small support groups could be dynamic SCCs in the parish that are a “communion of families.” Then the parish becomes a “communion of SCCs.”

¹⁶⁰ “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>

- The Universal Catholic or the World Church or the 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 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.¹⁶¹

1978 saw the birth of *Bible Sharing/Gospel Sharing* at the Lumko Missiological Institute in South Africa.¹⁶² 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.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ The bishops’ interventions appear in the entire issue of “The African Bishops Speak,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (February, 1978).

¹⁶² From 1970 to 1986 Fritz Lobinger worked at the Lumko Missiological Institute, the Pastoral Institute of the Episcopal Conference for the implementation of [Second Vatican Council](#) in South Africa. Starting in 1974 he visited Brazil several times to study the work of education theorist [Paolo Freire](#). He produced training materials and led training sessions throughout South Africa. At Lumko, Lobinger contributed significantly to the development of the pastoral model of Small Christian Communities, including the model of [Bible Sharing](#).

Due to Lobinger’s connection to Latin America and the Lumko SCC connection to Eastern Africa, it is wrongly assumed that the CEBs of Latin America influenced the development of SCCs in the AMECEA Region. This is not true.

¹⁶³ Oswald Hirmer, *Our Joy in Being Catholic: Our Catholic Customs and Beliefs*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2007, p. 87.

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.¹⁶⁴ The facilitators of these courses have been Kenyan Loreto Sister Ephigenia Gachiri, IBVM based in Kajiado, Kenya 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.” Loreto Sister Jane Frances Mulongo, IBVM succeeded Gachiri in 2022.

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 Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese. He said it would take nine years to implement fully the Lumko Way of Being Church.¹⁶⁵

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.¹⁶⁶ There are serious gaps in the content. Our evaluation indicates that new SCC manuals should be written on (alphabetically): Addiction, Child Safeguarding/Child Protection, Ecology/Environment, Family, Human Trafficking, Marriage, Internet/Social Media and Youth/Adolescence. Now we could add: Synodal Church, the Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and Online SCCs.

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."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ 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>

¹⁶⁵ Ephigenia Gachiri conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 5 March, 2015.

¹⁶⁶ 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.”

¹⁶⁷ One comment heard from lay people in Eastern Africa is, “We lay people are the victims of the next pastor/parish priest who comes along.” A similar comment: “We lay people are held hostage by the priorities of the next pastor.” Practically this means that in the clerical, hierarchical-style of the Catholic Church, a parish can have an effective pastoral plan of

Dutch Mill Hill missionary priest Hans Burgmann, MHM introduced SCCs in Kisumu Diocese in 1979. It was part of the new urban apostolate among the poor. The first SCCs were in St. Joseph's Parish, Milimani.

The AMECEA Plenary Study Conference on "The Implementation of the AMECEA Bishops' Pastoral Priority of Building Small Christian Communities: An Evaluation"¹⁶⁸ took place in Zomba, Malawi in August, 1979.¹⁶⁹ The then Bishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a'Nzeki gave a paper on "Implementing AMECEA's Pastoral Priority." There were case studies of "Christian Communities in Mbarara 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.¹⁷⁰

active SCCs, but a new pastor can come in and change this overnight. When I asked some Catholic priests in Kenya about this issue, they answered, "We priests are the victims of the next bishop who comes along."

¹⁶⁸ Ghanaian Scripture scholar and Missionary of Africa Bishop 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.

¹⁶⁹ 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 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.

¹⁷⁰ AMECEA, Conclusions of the Study Conference of the AMECEA Plenary 1979: *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, Vol. 21, No. 5 (1979), p. 266.

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. It said: “Structurally, the Small Christian Community is the most local unit of the Church. The family is the domestic church, but of its very nature it has to reach out to other families, and the Small Christian Community is made up of several family groups. Family catechesis is therefore at the heart of the formation of Small Christian Community.”¹⁷¹ 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,¹⁷² 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.¹⁷³

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.”¹⁷⁴

The “Conclusions” of the Study Conference made many concrete recommendations. Unfortunately there is a big gap between the ideal and the real. So only a careful evaluation can determine if the following recommendations have been implemented:

1. Young people with representation on the Parish Pastoral Council and other bodies.
2. Small Christian Communities need to be more fully integrated into the training programs in seminaries.
3. No Christian Community can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist.
4. The ordained priesthood and the general priesthood of the faithful are in collaboration, not competition.¹⁷⁵

There are eight Regional Episcopal Conferences in [SECAM](#) (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar). These three consecutive AMECEA Plenary Meetings (1973, 1976, 1979) clearly show that AMECEA mandated that

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

¹⁷² 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.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 268-272.

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) be the key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa. Why? Why AMECEA? Why Eastern Africa?¹⁷⁶ How did these changes occur?

1. Was it the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Was this a spirit moment? Was this a *kairos* moment?
2. Was it a “critical mass” of SCC pastoral and ecclesial experiences and activities on the local, grassroots level in all five original AMECEA countries starting in the late 1960s?
3. Was it the African cultural values of family, community and unity as a sociological foundation on the local, grassroots level found in the ethnic groups in Eastern Africa?
4. Was it the vision and practice of AMECEA as a regional bishops conference? As a service organization to the five national bishops conferences, it could do planning, experimentation and research on a regional level that a national bishops conference could not do.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Concerning English-speaking West Africa our research applied to parishes in Nigeria and Ghana the five essential characteristics or criteria of the AMECEA SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa. All these essential characteristics or criteria are in the context that in Eastern Africa SCCs are a way of life, not just a program or project in the parish.

1. Size: 15-20 members participate in the weekly physical gatherings of the SCC. The total number of members may be much larger.
2. Weekly lectionary-based faith-sharing that connects the Gospel to daily life.
3. Structurally connected to the parish as a “community of communities” pastoral, ecclesial model of church.
4. Regular practical action and outreach.
5. Ongoing formation and training of SCC leaders and members.

Retired Nigerian Cardinal John Onaiyekan of Abuja Archdiocese pointed out that the SCC Model of Church has never been a pastoral priority in Nigeria because Nigeria has a strong Small Apostolic 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 such as the Confraternity of Christian Mothers, St. Joseph Community for Men, and St. Theresa Sodality for Girls. These groups, associations and organizations do not use lectionary-based *Bible* readings on a regular basis. Conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 21 August, 2012.

Theology students from Ghana in my SCCs classes in Nairobi from 2010-2019 have emphasized that in Ghana there is more focus on small devotional groups than on SCCs. These groups do not use lectionary-based *Bible* readings on a regular basis.

¹⁷⁷ “The three AMECEA Conferences were a great inspiration to get involved in the experiment of being church in a new way. Whereas bishops conferences usually are more concerned with preserving traditions, this was a time of farsighted and courageous ecclesiology.” Max Stetter, email message to the author, 27 July, 2020.

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5. Was it the inspiration and vision of four or five charismatic bishops¹⁷⁸ (and other church leaders) who read the contemporary signs of the times in the Catholic Church and the local culture in Eastern Africa?
6. Was it the assistance of theologians in Eastern Africa who helped the bishops to go deeper in their reflections and theologizing? The SCCs Model of Church evolved in the context of communion ecclesiology in the Local Church in Africa.¹⁷⁹
7. Was it the positive reception of this SCCs Model of Church by the Christian lay faithful in Eastern Africa (affirmation of the *sensus fidelium*).

Various church observers have said that, with different emphases, establishing Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as the key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa was a combination of all the above examples. There was change and growth in both the theology and the practice.

Clearly there was an ongoing growth process as the Eastern African bishops and other church leaders' understanding of SCCs, and their commitment to SCCs, developed over this seven year period (1973 – 1979).¹⁸⁰ Over the period of the three meetings the bishops and delegates developed a consensus on the importance of SCCs as the key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa including both the new theological foundations and the new pastoral practices. This was a similar process to how the bishops who participated in the Second Vatican Council developed a consensus on key documents over the four sessions. The four year period (1962-65) with theological input, reading, reflection, discussion and discernment in between each session produced deeper and more quality documents. Both collegiality and synodality were work guided by the Holy Spirit.

In commenting on the AMECEA process or methodology during this 1973 – 1979 period Laurenti Magesa states: “The assistance of theologians in Eastern Africa (specifically the Gaba Pastoral Institute and Gaba publications) was a critical element.”¹⁸¹ I had the opportunity to visit the Gaba Pastoral Institute in Kampala, Uganda during this time. I recall

¹⁷⁸ It is noteworthy that two creative bishops who helped to design this SCC Model of Church were elected to the AMECEA Board at the 1973 Meeting: Kalilombe as Vice-Chairman and representative of Malawi and Ndingi as representative of Kenya. Bishop Vincent McCauley, CSC was Secretary General of AMECEA (1973-1979).

¹⁷⁹ Laurenti Magesa cleverly adapts a Nigerian proverb to say, *it takes the whole village to raise this new baby called the SCC model of church.*

¹⁸⁰ Many are concerned that the new and younger bishops in the AMECEA Region today have not gone through this same learning process and so do not have the same convictions and commitment as the earlier generation.

¹⁸¹ Laurenti Magesa, email message to the author, 25 July, 2020.

joining the staff in the Faculty Sitting Room after supper. Theologians like Brian Hearne and Aylward Shorter would be part of a theological thinktank. They would theologize together in a palaver theology or conversation theology style. Out of these encounters came publications like *The Community Called Church*. Volume 5 of an Experimental Source-book for Religious Education, *Spearhead* No. 60 (December, 1979). The chapter on SCCs is significantly entitled "The Small Christian Community as Basic Cell of the Church."

Along with his leadership in promoting parish-based SCCs in Rulenge Diocese, Mwoleka was involved in developing an African model of the Catholic Integrated Community -- CIC (*Katholischen Integrierten Gemeinde* in German and *Jumuiya ya Mkamilishano* in Swahili) that is an apostolic community within the Roman Catholic Church. Mwoleka's dream was...**ADD**

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 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.

SECAM officially launched SCCs as a pastoral priority in Africa in 1984 stating:

We recommend to Episcopal Conferences, assemblies and associations in Africa to do all they can to encourage the emergence of a pastoral plan for SCCs or Small Ecclesial Communities that are able to undertake integral activities of evangelism and development.¹⁸²

The Uganda Episcopal Conference declared SCCs a national policy in 1985.¹⁸³

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

¹⁸² *African Ecclesial Review* (AFER), Vol. 26, No. 5 (October, 1984), p. 259.

¹⁸³ Catholic Bishops of Uganda, *Celebrating our Ancestors in the Faith*. Kisubi: Marianum Press, 1985, Nos. 23-24.

SCCs in Eastern Africa.”¹⁸⁴ He recommended the introduction of Mobile SCCs Training Teams¹⁸⁵ to facilitate 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 optional¹⁸⁶ in our churches; they are central to the life of faith and the ministry of evangelization.”

A major step was the First African Synod¹⁸⁷ 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.¹⁸⁸

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

¹⁸⁴ 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.

¹⁸⁵ In conversations over the years with two Secretary Generals of the Uganda Episcopal Conference – Fathers Joseph Obunga and John Kauta – both felt that the best pastoral solution for developing SCCs in Uganda was not setting up an office at the National Catholic Secretariat in Kampala, but to set up Mobile SCCs Training Teams to visit the dioceses, seminaries and pastoral centers.

¹⁸⁶ 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.”

¹⁸⁷ The full official title is the “First Special Assembly of the Synod of African Bishops.”

¹⁸⁸ Cecil McGarry (ed.), *What Happened at the African Synod?*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995, p. 146.

way for us of being a church in our African countries."¹⁸⁹ 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."¹⁹⁰

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.¹⁹¹ 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."

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

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Mayala, "Ninth General Congregation," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 18, 1339 (May 4, 1994), p. 10.

¹⁹⁰ Zacchaeus Okoth, "Eighth General Congregation," *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6 in Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, Unpublished Manuscript, 2021, 72.

¹⁹¹ 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.

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.¹⁹²

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.¹⁹³

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-up¹⁹⁴ 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. Christopher Cieslikiewicz writes:

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 Pastoral Council¹⁹⁵ leaders would be chosen from

¹⁹² François Kabasele Lumbala, "The Church as Family in Africa," *Concilium* 1995/4, p. 93.

¹⁹³ 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>

¹⁹⁴ A more accurate word is "follow-down" (or "follow-thru") because the natural process is to get the recommendations down (that is, carried out) on/to the local, grassroots level.

¹⁹⁵ 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

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.¹⁹⁶

This can also be seen in diocesan synods on the local level. 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. There are recommendations on how to development the SCCs Model of Church on the grassroots level.

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 2002.¹⁹⁷ 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 curriculum¹⁹⁸ of the Major Seminaries and houses of formation of both men and women.”

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.

¹⁹⁶ 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, p. 99.

¹⁹⁷ 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 40th Welcome to Tanzania 40th

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

¹⁹⁸ 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.

Describing the pastoral involvement of parish-based SCCs in Dar es Salaam Christopher Cieslikiewicz writes:

"Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (*Revelations 2:7*). We see the phenomenon of SCCs in the Dar es Salaam Archdiocese as a great sign of the times and the powerful voice of the Holy Spirit. By the year 2004 there were more than 2,000 SCCs in the 46 parishes of the archdiocese and their number is ever increasing. There is not a parish without SCCs and the number of SCCs range from 16 up to 117 in a given parish. Structurally it is a large network that truly transforms a parish into a *community of communities*. In this way SCCs help the parish to become really a living community. Without any doubt these communities have become a powerful force of renewal of the parish structures thanks to pastoral decision to make SCCs the priority for the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam in 1995.¹⁹⁹

The AMECEA Study Conference in Mukono, Uganda in 2005 on "Responding to the Challenges of HIV and AIDS²⁰⁰ within the AMECEA Region" has one pastoral resolution that emphasizes: "Active involvement of SCCs in reaching out to people with HIV and 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,

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

¹⁹⁹ Cieslikiewicz Christopher, "Pastoral Involvement of Parish-based SCCs in Dar es Salaam," p. 99.

²⁰⁰ **HIV** is a virus that may cause an infection, but **AIDS** is a disease or a condition or a syndrome. Being infected with **HIV** can lead to the development of **AIDS** which stands for "acquired immunodeficiency syndrome." **AIDS** develops when **HIV** has caused serious damage to the immune system. **AIDS** consists of having **HIV** plus having a very low count of CD4 cells. CD4 cells are part of the immune system, and are attacked/destroyed by **HIV**.

violence and tribalism/ethnicity, street children, sick people, bereaved people and other needy people.²⁰¹

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 59-year history. Holmes-Siedle's evaluation of SCCs in the AMECEA Region after 17 years, the AMECEA Pastoral Department's survey after 20 years²⁰² 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 47 years (1973-2020).

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 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, Swahili and Gikuyu 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

²⁰¹ Nigerian theologian Father Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, SJ documents the SCCs' outreach to people with HIV AND AIDS and to refugees in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV AND AIDS, Refugees and Poverty*, Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), pp. 86-179.

²⁰² Rereading this survey after 25 years in 2020 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.

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.²⁰³ 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,”²⁰⁴ “Pastoral Ministry and Management,” “Pastoral Planning and Organization” and “Social Media/New Media²⁰⁵ in Pastoral Work and Evangelization.” These are being offered as both Electives, Seminars and Short Courses.

The AMECEA Study Conference in Lusaka, Zambia in 2008 was on "Reconciliation through Justice and Peace." It was the 16th 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.”

²⁰³ 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.

²⁰⁴ 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.”

²⁰⁵ “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 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 and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media

Over time terms such as the “new media,” “modern media” and “contemporary media” have blurred because they have a specific historical context. Each historical age has its own “new media,” “modern media” and “contemporary media” and they change with time. Back in the 1940s television was referred to as one of the new media, specifically one of the new mass media. Today the terms social media and digital media are more common.

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”)²⁰⁶ 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 (CEVs).”

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 16th 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

²⁰⁶ 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.

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*." English Bishop Colin Davies, MHM, the former bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya sees these resources as "a very complete list of what would be required of SCCs"²⁰⁷ in their pastoral activities and evangelization.

Small Christian Communities are mentioned seven times in the "Final List of [57] Propositions"²⁰⁸ 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 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."

²⁰⁷ 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.

²⁰⁸ 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*.

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-based²⁰⁹ 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.²¹⁰ *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 Protestants²¹¹ 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.²¹² Now African 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. Matia

²⁰⁹ 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.

²¹⁰ 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.

²¹¹ Some prefer using the term “separated brothers and sisters.”

²¹² 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.

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 smartphone. 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 and writer 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.²¹³ If you do not read and pray the Scriptures, you are not an adult Christian. Catholics who become evangelicals understand this.²¹⁴

²¹³ 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.”

²¹⁴ 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>

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 *Laudate*), and as podcasts (Daily Readings from the *New American Bible*).²¹⁵ Reading the daily Scripture readings is a wonderful way to nourish your spirit at any time of the year, but especially during Advent.²¹⁶

Traditionally Catholics have not read the *Bible* regularly in the way that Protestants, and especially Evangelical Christians, do. Yet if a lectionary-based Catholic reads and reflects carefully on the readings of Sunday Mass this would mean 3 readings a week x 52 weeks = 156 x the 3-year Sunday lectionary cycle = 468 readings. Add 12 for special feasts like Christmas that can occur in the middle of the week and one gets 480 Scripture readings mainly the *New Testament*. So over a period of three years a conscientious Catholic can read and reflect on much of the *Bible* and most of the *New Testament*. Going a step further we are called and challenged to read and reflect on the *Bible* every day. For the weekday mass readings this would mean 2 readings a day x 6 days x 52 weeks = 624 x the 2-year weekday lectionary cycle = 1250 Scripture readings that combine both the *Old* and the *New Testament*. One of the choices in the July -- August, 2017 Poll on the SCCs Website is: "Daily Scripture-based Faith-sharing."

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.

²¹⁵ 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.

²¹⁶ 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>

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).²¹⁷

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, retreats, Recollection Days, 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 communities and groups.

One characteristic of being a lectionary-based Catholic is to choose a particular word or phrase or verse (or an image) from the daily readings, and especially the Sunday readings, -- called a mantra -- to use as a Bible mantra or Gospel mantra prayer mantra or action verse during the day and during the week. Such a particular word or phrase or verse from the Gospel of the following Sunday can nourish and sustain a person or a small community all day and all during the week. The expressions in bold are particularly influential/important/significant (18).

Some examples: "Accept the Kingdom of God like a child," "the Advocate, the Holy Spirit will teach you everything," "after he had suffered," "after much debate had taken place," "afterwards he changed his mind," "all are alive for God." "all ate and were satisfied," "all day long, both at the temple and in their homes, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming the Messiah, Jesus," "all filled with the Holy Spirit," "all nations shall come to God's light," "all that is mine is yours," "all things are possible for God," "All this I do for the sake of the Gospel," "the Almighty has done great things for me," "always and everywhere," "an ear [to] listen to what the Spirit is saying," "angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream," "announce... proclaim," "anointed with oil many who were sick," "another parable," "the apostles reported all they had done and taught," "appointed 72 others," "are you envious because I am generous?" "Arise. I appoint you as a witness of what you have seen." "as the Father has sent me, so I send you," "as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved," "as the Lord spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me," "ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you," "as you go make this proclamation: the Kingdom of heaven is at hand," "at once they left their nets," "at your command, I will lower the nets," "at your word I," "bad and good alike," "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," "bear his or her own cross," "became white as light," "because of his or her persistence," "because of the hardness

²¹⁷ Laurenti Magesa, "The Joy of Community," p. 26.

of your hearts," "be compassionate as your heavenly father is compassionate," "be doers of the word and not hearers only," "be fruitful; multiply, fill the earth and subdue it," "the beginning of his signs," "be firm, steadfast," "be handed over," "be it done to me according to your word," "believe," "be prepared," "be watchful, be alert," "blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth/land," "blessed are the peacemakers," "blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God," "blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness/ for holiness' sake for theirs is the Kingdom of God," "blessed are those who have not seen and yet they have believed", "blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it," "blessed are you who believed," "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," "behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high," "behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age," "be merciful to me a sinner," "be opened!" "be vigilant at all times," "book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ," "both the new and the old," "born of the house of his servant David," "bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world," "bring glad tidings to the poor," "but Mary sat at home," "but she was greatly troubled at what was said," "but God sent me," "but to serve," "by another way/route," "by the finger of God I drive out demons," "by another way/route," "by himself to pray," "by patient endurance you will save your lives," "by prayer and petition with thanksgiving," "by saying this you are insulting us too," "call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven." "care for orphans and widows in their affliction," "carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ," "carry his or her own cross," "carrying the cross himself," "a child is born to us, a son is given us," "children of God," "children of the Most High," "chosen who call out to God day and night," "Christ would suffer and rise," cleanse first the inside of the cup cleanse first the inside of the cup "cleanse first the inside of the cup," clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience," "clothing the naked," "come over to Macedonia and help us," "come and see," "come, share your master's joy," "come and stay at my home/house," "come to me," "come to me, all of you," "come to me, all who labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you/give you rest," "come," "come, and you will see," "come let us rebuild our nation," "come, [you who are] blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation/foundation of the world," "the coming of the Son of Man," "community of believers," "compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem," "courage," "the Creator made them male and female," "cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it," "daily pressure/ burden on me of my deep concern for all the churches," "the day was growing hot," "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will fulfill the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah," "decided to divorce her quietly," "deserted place by himself," "discern what is of value," "disciples were first called Christians," "distributed the loaves to those who were reclining" [that is, everyone], "do here in your native place," "do not be afraid," "do not be afraid, he has risen!" "do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me," "do not judge," "do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid," "do not worry," "do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'," "don't let anyone look down on you because you are young," "do to others whatever you would like have them do to you" ("so always treat others as you would like them to treat you"), "do you also want to leave," "do you not yet have faith," "do you want to become his disciples, too," "do you want to be made well," "draw your strength from the Lord," "endure your trials as discipline," "enduring many sleepless nights," "enlarge the space of your tent," "except this foreigner?" "even if someone should rise from the dead," "even the dogs eat the scraps," "everyone who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches," "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead," "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead," "fasted for forty days and forty nights," "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," "the Father who sent me," "the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf," "the Father will give you another

Advocate/Counsellor," the Father will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth," "favor of the Lord was upon him," "fear no one," "the fig tree may bear fruit in the future," "filled with the Holy Spirit," "firm foundation that is Jesus Christ," "firstborn from the dead," "firstborn of all creation," "first be reconciled to your brother or sister," "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep," "flee to Egypt," "follow me," "follow me and I will make you fisherfolk," "food that endures for eternal life," "forgive your brother and your sister from your heart," "for every tree is known by its own fruit," "for God provides for his beloved during sleep," "for in one Spirit we were all baptized one body," "for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say," "for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us," "for Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans," "for the life of the world," "For to me life/to live is Christ, and death is gain," "for the sake of the gospel," "for I was sent for this purpose," "for this purpose I have been sent/have I come," "for when I am weak, then I am strong," "for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them," "for where your treasure is, there also your heart will be," "from her poverty," "from now on do not sin any more," "fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity and kindness," "fruit of righteousness is sown in peace," "fruit of the tree shows the care it has had," "gathered all they found, bad and good alike," "gift of God is eternal life," "give me a drink," "give me this water," "give the Holy Spirit," "given to a people that will produce its fruit," "gives his life as a ransom for many," "gives life to the world," "gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones," "glorify," "go and do likewise," "go and from now on do not sin anymore," "go and proclaim the Kingdom of God," "go and tell John what you see and hear," "go first and be reconciled with your brother or sister," "go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find," "go therefore and make disciples of all nations," "go into the whole world and make disciples of all nations," "go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature," "go to your inner room," "God blessed them [Adam and Eve] and said: 'Be fruitful; multiply, fill the earth and subdue it,'" "God causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike," "God does not ration his gift of the Spirit" "God has visited his people," "God-Hero," "God is not the God of the dead but of the living," "God is with us," "God makes the sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust," "God of hope fills you with all joy and peace," "God of the living," "God saw all that God made and indeed it was very good," "God's chosen ones," "God provides [food] for his beloved during sleep," "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," "God speaks in various ways," "God who gives endurance and encouragement," "God will be with you and never fail you," "God will see to it that justice is done to them speedily," "good news of great joy," "great cloud of witnesses," "great is your faith," "great mercy," "hand of the Lord was with him," "has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God," "have faith in God," "have mercy on me, O God," "have no anxiety at all," "hear the word of the Lord, O nations, proclaim it on distant coasts," "hears the word of the Kingdom," "hears the word of the Kingdom" "heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit," "he cured them," "he died for us so that we may live together with him," "he had to rise from the dead," "he has filled the hungry with good things," "he learned obedience from what he suffered," "he must go to Jerusalem," "he must increase, I must decrease," "he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," "he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem," "he [John] saw and believed," "he set his face to go to Jerusalem," "he spent the night in prayer to God," "he stayed there two days/he remained for two days," "he taught them as one who had authority," "he was amazed," "he was amazed at their lack of faith," "he was lost and has been found," "he was a Samaritan," "he was transfigured before them," "he went around all of Galilee," "he went away sad for he had many possessions," "he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit," "he would withdraw to deserted places to pray," "Herodias harbored a grudge against John," "here am I; I come to do your will," "send me," "here I am, send me," "here there is no Gentile or Jew, slave or free," "his disciples remembered that he

had said this," "his food was locusts and wild honey," "his mother kept all these things in her heart," "the hope that does not disappoint," "Holy Spirit and fire," "Holy Spirit has been warning me," "The Holy Spirit said, 'set apart for me Barnabas and Paul,'" "the Holy Spirit and we have decided," "Holy Spirit will come upon you," "Holy Spirit will teach you all things/everything and remind you of all I told you," "Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name," "house divided against itself cannot stand," "House of David," House of Jacob," "household of God," "how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news," "how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" "how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?," "hurl him down headlong," "I am the Alpha and the Omega," "I am the bread of life," "I am the gate/I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture," "I am the Good Shepherd," "I am He, the one speaking to you," "I am the light of the world," "I am the living bread," "I am the resurrection and the life," "I am the servant of the Lord," "I am the way and the truth and the life," "I am meek and humble of heart," "I am not worthy," "I am with you always, even until the end of the world/the end of the age," "I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling," "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me," "I chose you and appointed you," "I desire/want mercy," "I did not come on my own, but God sent me," "I face daily the pressure/burden of my care/concern for all the churches," "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation," "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts," "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," "if I go, I will send him to you," "I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions," "I give thanks to my God always on your account," "I give them eternal life," "I go and prepare a place for you," "I have called you friends," "I have called you by your name," "I have come so that they may have eternal life and have it more abundantly/to the full," "I have come to abolish but to fulfill," "I have come to set the world on fire," "I have compassion for the crowd," "I have conquered (overcome) the world," "I have found my sheep that was lost," "I have found the coin that I lost," "I have given you a model to follow," "I have life because of the Father," "I have power to lay my life down and power to take it up again," "I have seen the Lord," "I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me," "I may preach there also," "immediately the man's ears were opened," "I must be in my Father's house," "I must go to the other towns too," "I must proclaim/preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also; for this purpose I was sent/I was sent for this purpose," "I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also," "I myself will/shall give you words and a wisdom," "increase our faith," "inspired by the Holy Spirit," "in humility value others above yourselves," "in three days I will raise it up," "in the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world," "I rejoice in what I am suffering for you," "I shall place my spirit upon him," "I thank my God every time I remember you," "I want to see," "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat," "I will do it. Be made clean." "I will give you rest," "I will lay down my life for the sheep," "I will not leave you orphans," "I will send to you the Spirit of truth," "if it dies, it produces much fruit," "if one member suffers, all suffer together with it," "if only we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him," "if today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts," "if you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it," "if you had been here, my brother would not have died," "if you have faith nothing will be impossible for you," "if we persevere," immediately took counsel against him," "increase our faith," "[in Corinth Paul] went to a house belonging to a man named Titus Justus," "infant lying in the manger," "In him [God] we live and move and have our being." "in my Father's house there are many rooms/dwelling places/mansions/abodes," "in my name," "in parables," "in secret," "in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk," "in the power of the Holy Spirit," "in the world you will have trouble/tribulation/suffering, but take courage, I have overcome the world," "in three days I will raise it up," "invite to the feast whomever you find," "I say as the Father told me," "it

became known that he was at home, "It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us," "It is I. Do not be afraid," "It is the Lord," "It is my Father who glorifies me," it is my Father who glorifies me, it is my Father who glorifies me, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife," "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements," "I shall raise him on the last day," "I will not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," "Jacob the father of Joseph," "Jesus appointed seventy-two other disciples whom he sent ahead of him in pairs," "Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John," "Jesus Christ emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men," "Jesus Christ humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death even death on a cross," "Jesus Christ is able for all time to save those who come to God through him," "Jesus interpreted/explained/expounded to them in all the Scriptures [the things concerning himself]/[what was said] in all the Scriptures concerning himself," "Jesus journeyed from one town and village to another," "Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," "Jesus passed through the midst of them," "Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit," "Jesus resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem," "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit," "Jesus saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever," "Jesus saw their faith," "Jesus sent ahead of him in pairs," "Jesus sent out these Twelve," "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert," "Jesus was praying," "Jesus was revealed to his disciples," "Jesus went about doing good works and healing all," "Jesus went up the mountain," "just have faith," "John the Baptizer appeared in the desert," "the kingdom of God/heaven belongs to these children," "the kingdom of God will be given to a people that will produce its fruits," "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," "the kingdom of heaven is like...," "the kingdom of God/heaven is like a mustard seed," "the kingdom of God is among you," "the kingdom of God is yours," "the kingdom of God/heaven will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce a rich harvest/its fruit," "knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you." "lack of faith," "the last will be first and the first will be last," "Lazarus was carried away by angels," "lead me in the way everlasting," "lead you where you do not want to go." "lend expecting nothing back in return," "let her keep this for the day of my burial," "let it be done for you according to your faith," "let us keep awake," "let us not grow weary in doing good" (another version: "let us not give up in doing good"), "let the children come to me," "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly/rich as it is," "let us go on to the nearby villages," "let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles and pray at all times," "let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,'" "life in his name," "a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower," "lilies of the field," "like a mustard seed," "listening to them," "listen to him," "listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches," "live in the Spirit," "live/remain/abide in me as I live/remain/abide in you," "the Lord added to their number those who were been saved," "the Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want," "the Lord of hosts," "the Lord is my light and salvation," "the Lord is the strength of my life," "the Lord stood by me and gave me strength," "Lord, to whom shall we go; you have the words of eternal life," "the Lord worked with them," "the lost one," "love," "love God with all your heart," "love our neighbor as ourselves," "love your neighbor as yourself," "Lydia said 'come and stay at my home,'" "Magi (wise men, astrologers) from the East," "make justice your aim," "makes the deaf hear and he mute speak," "make straight/ready the way of the Lord," "making his way to Jerusalem," "many came to believe in him," "Mary arose and went with haste," "Mary has chosen the better part," "Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,'" "Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart," "the Master has need of them/it," "may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace," "may have eternal life," "may it be done to me according to your word," "may see the light," "may they be one as we are one," "members of the household of God," "memorial feast," "message is heard through the word about Christ," "message of the cross is the power of God," "ministers

of a new covenant," "ministry of the Word," "moved with compassion," "must deny himself/herself, take up his cross and follow me," "must serve the needs of all," "my appointed time draws near," "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness," "my Heavenly Father has revealed this to you," "my house shall be a house of prayer." "my kingdom does not belong to this world," "my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling in Christ Jesus," "my sheep hear my voice," my words will not pass away, "nations shall walk by your light," "necessity of praying always and not losing heart/not to lose heart/without becoming weary," "new teaching with authority," "new wine is poured into new [fresh] wineskins," "ninety-nine in the hills," "no one can serve two masters," "no prophet is accepted in his own native place," "not as I will, but as you will," "not I, however, but the grace of God that is with me," "not seven times, but seventy-seven times," "nothing is impossible for God," "now have I seen," "observe the Word of God," "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good," "O woman, great is your faith!" "on account of the Son of Man," "one child/one little one," "one of these little ones," "one's life does not consist of possessions," "the one who does the will of my Father in heaven," "the one who humbles himself or herself," "the one who is least among all of you is the one who is the greatest," "the one who sent me," "the one who treated him with mercy," "only faith working through love," "only the Father," "on whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain," "opened the Scriptures to us," "ought not the Messiah/was it not necessary that the Christ suffer these things and then enter into his glory?," "our citizenship is in heaven," "out of the depths I call to you O Lord. Lord hear my cry," "out of joy," "the owner of the house." "the Pharisees sneered at him," "passed from death to life," "Paul, called to be an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God," "peace be with you," "people kept coming to him from everywhere," "people will sit at table in the Kingdom of God," "perplexed, but not driven to despair," "person entrusted with more," "Philip proclaimed Jesus to him," "pick up your mat and go home," "poor widow putting in two mites,"/"poor widow put in two very small copper coins," "plans are made in human hearts, but from the LORD comes the tongue's response," "pray for those who mistreat you," "pray in the Holy Spirit," "pray that you have the strength" "pray to your father in secret," "pray without ceasing," "preaching and one who treated him with mercy," "people kept coming to him from proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God," "pray always," "praying always with joy," "preached in Jesus Christ's name to all the nations," "prepare the way of the Lord," "pressure of my concern for all the churches," "proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," "proclaiming the good news of God," "proclaim on the housetops," "proclaim the gospel of peace," "proclaim the Kingdom of God," "proclaim the Kingdom of God," "proclaim justice," "a prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household," "the promise the almighty made to our fathers," "publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does," "put on love the bond of perfection," "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," "put out into deep water," "quiet, come out of him," "ready to open immediately," "reason for your hope," "receive the Holy Spirit," "receives not me, but the One who sent me," "receiving the Word [of God] in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit," "recline at table in the Kingdom of God," "reflecting/pondering on these things in her heart," "rejoice and be glad," "rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer," "rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near," "rejoice so that they may share in my joy," "remain in me, as I remain in you," "remains in me and I in him/her," "remember me when you come into your kingdom," "renounce all that he or she has," "repay to God what belongs to God," "repent," "reported all they had done and taught," "rescue me because of our faithful love," "returned to give thanks to God," "revealed them to the childlike/infants," "rich in what matters to God," "right side of the boat," "righteous will shine like the sun," "rise, and do not be afraid," "rise, take up your mat and walk," "the sabbath was made for humans," "salvation has come to this house,"

“salvation of God,” “a Samaritan traveler was moved with compassion,” “scribes and Pharisees began to act with hostility toward him.” “seed sown on rich soil,” “seek first the Kingdom of God,” “seek/search for justice,” “to search/seek out and to save what was lost,” “send him [Lazarus] to my father’s house,” “sent them in pairs (twos),” “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God,” “Set your hearts on God’s Kingdom first, and on God’s saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well,” “settled accounts with them,” “settle the matter on the way,” “seventy-two others whom he sent in pairs ahead of him,” “shall have eternal life,” “sharing your bread with the hungry,” “she gave birth to her firstborn son,” “the sign he had done,” since they had not repented, “sir, leave it for this year also,” “sleepless nights and hunger,” “so do not be afraid,” “so do not worry,” “so Mary Magdalene ran,” “so that they may all be one.” “someone else will dress you,” “some seed fell on rich soil,” “sons and daughters of the resurrection,” the Son of Man came eating and drinking,” “the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory,” “the Son of Man coming in the clouds,” “the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve,” “the Son of Man is Lord of the sabbath,” “the Son of Man is to be handed over,” “the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day,” “the Son of Man must suffer greatly,” “the Son of Man will come,” “so she [Mary Magdalene] ran, “so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit,” “so that you may not appear to be fasting,” “so they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem,” “so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth.” “sown on rich soil,” “speak to them in parables,” “speak the truth in love,” “spent the night in prayer,” “the Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert,” “the Spirit gives life,” “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” “the spirit of an unclean demon,” “the Spirit of God descending like a dove,” “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” “the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot accept,” “the Spirit of truth will guide you to all truth,” “the Spirit of your Father speaking through you,” “standing by the cross of Jesus,” “stay awake,” “stop judging,” “strength that comes from God,” “suffer dishonor for the sake of the name,” “suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope,” “take courage,” “take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you,” “take courage; it is I;” do not be afraid,” “take Mary your wife into your home,” “take up your cross daily,” “take up your cross and follow me,” “tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you,” “teach and to preach in their towns,” “testify to the truth,” “that foundation is Jesus Christ,” “that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us,” “that the Word of God may speed on and triumph,” “that this cup pass,” “that you may tell your children and grandchildren,” “their hearts are far from me,” “their lack of faith,” “then they accompanied him to the ship,” “then they came to Capernaum,” “there am I in the midst of them,” “there is a baptism with which I must be baptized,” “there is a house for us from God that is everlasting,” “there is neither slave nor free person,” “there is a season for everything; a time for every occupation under heaven,” “there was given me a thorn in my flesh,” “therefore, stay awake/watch,” “these little ones,” “they abandoned their father Zebedee,” “they abandoned their nets,” “they all ate and were satisfied,” “they all ate until they had enough,” “they announced all these things to the eleven and to all the others.” “they are choked by the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life.” “they became enraged,” “they departed for their country by another way,” “they escorted him to the ship,” “they left everything and followed him,” “they made him carry it [cross] behind him,” “they may see your good deeds and glorify your Heavenly Father,” “they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy,” “they returned to Jerusalem with great joy,” “they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem,” “they went forth and preached everywhere,” “they went from village to village proclaiming the good news,” “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,” “they will be called children of God,” “they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover,” “things that come out from within,” “thinking [not] as God does,” “this day you will be with me in paradise,” “this is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another/if you love one another,” “this is my

blood of the covenant," "this is my body," "this is the will of my Father," "this is truly the savior of the world," "this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven," "this kind can only come out through prayer," "this man was a Samaritan," "those who have not seen and have believed," those who hear the word of God and act on it." "those who hear the word of God and act on it," "through accompanying signs," "through the cross," "through the Holy Spirit," "through this belief," "through those who hear the word of God and act on it," "thrown down the rulers from their thrones," "Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day," "tiny whispering sound," "today you will be with me in paradise," "to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self," "to every season," "to fulfill," "together with some women," to give his life as a ransom for many, "to God what belongs to God." "to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst," "to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord," "to seek and save what was lost," "to serve," "to us a child is born, to us a son is given," "transcendent power belongs to God and not to us," "trust in the Lord with your whole heart and do not rely on your own understandings," "the truth will set you free," "twelve wicker baskets with fragments," "the two Marys ran to announce this to his disciples," "unless each of you forgives your brother and your sister from your heart." "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit," "unless your righteousness/goodness surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees," "until the day he was taken up," "until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead," "until the whole batch was leavened/rises," "until you have been clothed with power from on high," "yes, Lord," "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah," "you also must be prepared," "you also testify," "you are all sons and daughters of light/of the day," "you are anxious and worried about many things," "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God," "you are the light of the world," "you are not far from the Kingdom of God," "you are the Son of God." "you are thinking as human beings do," "you are thinking [not] as God does," "you are witnesses of these things," "you cannot serve both God and money/mammon," "you did not recognize the time of your visitation," "you do not know when the appointed time will come," "you have revealed them to the childlike," "you must be prepared in the same way," "you ought to wash one another's feet," "you shall love your neighbor as yourself," "you will be able to tell them by their fruits," "you will find rest for your souls," "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you," "your alms may be in secret," "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit," "your brother will rise again," "your faith has saved you," "your Father has been/is pleased to give you the kingdom," "your Father who sees what is hidden," "your joy may be complete," "your light must shine before others," "your light must shine in the sight of men and women," "your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now," "your sorrow will turn to joy," "your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path," "wash one another's feet," "was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" "watch," "water shall come out of it, that the people may drink," "we are ambassadors for Christ," "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," "we await new heavens and a new earth," "we cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard." "we have the mind of Christ," "when I am weak, I am strong," "when you give a feast invite the poor," "we had hoped," "we have/hold this treasure in earthen vessels/clay jar so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us," "we may be called the children of God," "we must celebrate and rejoice," "we ought to stop troubling the Gentiles," "we proclaim Christ crucified." "weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning," "well did Isaiah prophesy about your hypocrites," what can I offer to/give back to the Lord for all he has done for me? "what Christ has accomplished through me," "what God has united, humans must not divide," "what I tell you in the dark, you must speak in the light," "what you have seen and heard," "whatever you ask in my name, I will do," "whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you," "when I am weak then I am strong," "when Jesus saw their faith,"

“when Quirinius was governor of Syria,” “when the Son of Man had risen from the dead,” “when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed,” “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” “where you go I will go,” “whoever does the will of God,” “whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me,” “why do you not know how to interpret the present time?” “widow contributed from her poverty,” “with God all things are possible,” “with great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,” “with all your heart,” “with the Holy Spirit and fire,” “with many such parables he spoke the word to them,” “witness,” “...will be able to come between us and the love of God,” “will of my Father,” “who brings from the storeroom both the new and the old,” “who do you say that I am?” “who is my neighbor?” “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” “who then is this about whom I hear such things?” “whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord,” “whoever does the will of my Heavenly Father,” “whoever eats this bread will live forever,” “whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life,” “whoever humbles himself/herself will be exalted,” “whoever loses one’s life will save it,” “whoever receives me receives the one who sent me [the Father],” “whoever receives one child...receives me,” “whoever receives the one I send receives me,” “whoever therefore humbles himself/herself as this little child,” “whoever humbles himself/herself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven” “whole city was shaken,” “whom he also named apostles,” “whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie,” “woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” “woe to you,” “the wolf shall live with the lamb,” “worship God in spirit and in truth,” “write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.”

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.”²¹⁸

Mantras have many uses. A church or home can be decorated with liturgical themes and verses from the scriptures: on banners, wall posters, TV monitors, drawings, photographs, plaques, calendars, etc.

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.

Another way of being a lectionary-based Catholic is to choose a particular person in the *Bible*, or more specifically in the Sunday Gospel, to be your companion during the week. Say that on Monday in the First Week of Advent you read the Gospel of the following Sunday (Second Sunday of Advent). You choose John the Baptist to be your companion (and conversely you are his companion). For the next six days you walk with him (and conversely he walks with you). By Sunday you have gotten to know him much better and he leads you into themes of preparation, repentance and simple lifestyle of the Advent Season. Your participation in the Sunday Eucharistic Celebration is deeper and richer.

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

²¹⁸ James O’Halloran, *Living Cells*, p. 207.

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. Various programs, such as the Seven Steps,²¹⁹ are already being practiced by many Particular Churches (Local Churches)²²⁰ on the African continent. This

²¹⁹ This refers to the Seven-Step Gospel Sharing of Lumko (South Africa).

²²⁰ 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.

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.²²¹

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 solidarity²²² 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.”²²³

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 4 November 2017, <http://www.tangaza.ac.ke/theology/img/journals/Tangaza%20Journal%202012-2.pdf>

For me the “Particular Church” is somewhat static. But “Local Church” is dynamic conveying a sense of being alive, growing, evolving. 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.

²²¹ *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.

²²² The importance of the value of solidarity reminds me of my personal practice of getting up every day at 3 a.m. I do this for various reasons. One reason is that I am in solidarity with African farmers who wake up very early in the dark and walk one to two hours to their fields and African city workers who wake up very early in the dark and board buses for the one to two hours trip to their downtown jobs.

²²³ 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.

The Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of the Congo under the Patronage of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo sponsored the 27th 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 17th AMECEA Plenary Assembly on “AMECEA Family of God Celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Evangelisation in Solidarity” took place in Nairobi, Kenya 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 Family of God: Celebrating a Golden Jubilee of Evangelization in Solidarity*²²⁴ 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

²²⁴ While the DVD 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.

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.²²⁵
- c. Religious men and women.
- d. Priests.²²⁶
- e. Seminarians.
- f. Youth.
- g.

Resolution No. 5: “Evaluating and Revitalizing the AMECEA Pastoral Option of Establishing Small Christian Communities.”²²⁷

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.”

²²⁵In 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.

²²⁶ 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.”

²²⁷A 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, Lwagiri, Uganda.”

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)*²²⁸ in Ouidah, Benin in West Africa on 19 November, 2011. Sections related to SCCs are:

²²⁸ 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 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

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

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 or Church in the Home) 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.”²²⁹

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 struggle²³⁰ for justice and peace. The Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and the ‘new communities’ are fundamental structures for fanning the flame of your Baptism.”

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>

²²⁹ Laurenti Magesa, “Translating Theology into Pastoral Action, *New People*, No. 137, March-April, 2012, p. 19.

²³⁰ The word “struggle” is mindful of the common Portuguese call for action: *A luta continua. The struggle continues.*

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 analyze 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.²³¹

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 Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) or 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.' 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."

²³¹ "Pope's Address to Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)," *Zenit: The World Seen from Rome Daily Dispatch*, 9 February 2015.

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*.²³² 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.”

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.²³³

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.

²³² “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>.

²³³ “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.

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.²³⁴

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.

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.²³⁵

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:

²³⁴ Bukina Faso Scripture Scholar Father Paul Bere, SJ helped me very much to interpret the original French text of this Apostolic Exhortation.

²³⁵ *Vatican Information Service*, Number 203, 20 November, 2011, Vatican Information Service Website, retrieved on 21 November, 2011, <http://www.visnews-en.blogspot.com>.

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.²³⁶

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.²³⁷

One example is the growing influence of Protestant fundamentalists and Pentecostals²³⁸ especially through aggressive sects that has been discussed during various

²³⁶ Peter Henriot, “Steps Forward and Back,” *Tablet*, 3 December 2011, pp. 11-12.

²³⁷ 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.

²³⁸ 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).

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-Christian²³⁹ 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 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

²³⁹ 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. Non-ordained. 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.

This extends to many expressions having a negative, judgmental, even pejorative tone that should be avoided: (alphabetically) cohabitating, fallen-away Catholic, inactive Catholic, lapsed Catholic, living in sin, prodigal child, wayward person.

A specific term is the "nones" that refers to the "religiously unaffiliated." In surveys many people answer "none of the above." This term is a negation and does not reflect their spiritual longings. An enormous number of people see themselves as spiritual persons and have a spiritual hunger. In one research study about 72% of the self-identified "religiously unaffiliated" say they believe in a higher power of some sort and about 20% say they believe in the Judeo-Christian God. All this is in the context of people not identifying with/being part of the Institutional Church. Especially young people speak not of a formal, codified religion, but of religious strains, and millennials have a disenchantment with Christian organized religion.

A related issue is how Catholic writers and speakers use the expression/term "the church" as though we Catholics have the market on that term. Other Christian denominations fault us on this. My recommendation is to use expression/term "the Catholic Church" the first time and then the context of an article, book or speech carries the other times that just "the church" is used.

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.²⁴⁰

A SCCs Workshop on “How Small Christian Communities in Africa Receive²⁴¹ 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 held²⁴² 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 to SCCs) for prayer, *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection and discussion: four English-speaking SCCs, two French-speaking SCCs and one Portuguese speaking SCC.

²⁴⁰ 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.

²⁴¹ For a full explanation of the meaning of “Reception” see Footnote 169.

²⁴² After living 48 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.*

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.²⁴³

Bishop Obbo pointed that some of the SCCs were simply prayer groups. “The time has come for SCCs to be elevated to serious *foras* for serious Church discourses such as interpreting and implementing church documents,”²⁴⁴ 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.²⁴⁵

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 of the Apostles* 2: 42-47). He emphasized the 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

²⁴³ “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=wwsrx.f.dh=n5dd0=tw25a1cc=008&x=pv&7:8j&x=cc&0f:33idNCLM>

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ “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.

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!²⁴⁶

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.²⁴⁷

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.”²⁴⁸

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 (IDPs). 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:

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

²⁴⁶ BICAM -- CEBAM Webiste, retrived on 26 February, 2015, <http://www.bicam-cebam.org/newsinfo.php?id=58&/lang=en>

²⁴⁷ Febian Pikiti in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 18 January, 2013.

²⁴⁸ *Pastoral Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Nairobi 2013*, Nairobi: Archdiocese of Nairobi, 2013, page 17.

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.²⁴⁹

A second Case Study is the Rhino Refugee 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.”²⁵⁰

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.²⁵¹

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.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos*, pp., 149, 196.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

²⁵¹ 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

²⁵² 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,’ can affect a transformation... the lived spirituality of accompaniment is grounded in the very

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.²⁵³

life of Jesus.” Claude Barbour and Eleanor Doidge, “Mission as Accompaniment” in Stephen Bevans, (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

²⁵³ 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 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).

Retired Bishop Colin Davies (died in 2017) provides an interesting summary of this 1961 to 2012 period. Along with retired Ugandan Archbishop James Odongo, Archbishop Emeritus of Tororo Archdiocese, Uganda (died in 2020) and retired Tanzanian Bishop Gervase Nkalanga, formerly of Bukoba Diocese, Tanzania (died in 2015), Davies was one of the last three bishops in the AMECEA Region who participated in the Second Vatican Council in Rome. In a wide ranging interview²⁵⁴ 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.²⁵⁵

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**. 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

²⁵⁴ Colin Davies in an interview with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 24 March, 2012.

²⁵⁵ Laurenti Magesa, “The Joy of Community,” p. 22.

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 dialog, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration.²⁵⁶ 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 dialog 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.²⁵⁷ This kind of integration²⁵⁸ will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.

Archbishop 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.²⁵⁹ 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.” These SCCs actively participate in evangelization.

The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) prepared the AMECEA 18th Plenary

²⁵⁶ 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.

²⁵⁷ Footnote 29, *ibid.*

²⁵⁸ An excellent example of integration is the website of the Office of Evangelization, Small Christian Communities and Adult Faith Formation in the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida, USA. It has many SCC Resources. <http://dosp.org/evangelization>

²⁵⁹ Hubertus van Megen in a conversation with the author, Lilongwe, Malawi on 16 December, 2013.

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 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. He said: “Our Christians were highly involved; they felt the ownership of the event and were willing to support it the best they can.”²⁶⁰

During a meeting of 31 SCCs leaders (18 women 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 Department²⁶¹ 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.²⁶²

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

²⁶⁰ George Buleya in “MALAWI: ECM is Set for the 18th 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+AmeceaNews+%28AMECEA+NEWS+BLOG%29

²⁶¹ It has been pointed out that the Pastoral Department is the “heartbeat” or “lung” of AMECEA. The mission of AMECEA is essentially pastoral.

²⁶² “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.

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 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.²⁶³

The “Communiqué of the 18th AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Lilongwe, Malawi (16th to 26th 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.”

²⁶³ Adapted from Philip Odoi, "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=a6dbddd43-AMECEA_Online_Newsletter_6_5_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-a6dbddd43-67462977

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 13 on “SCCs Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa.”

The 50th Anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council was on 8 December, 2015. With many books and articles being written and conferences held, the “Reception of Vatican II” was widely discussed.²⁶⁴ This was an opportunity to revisit Catholic Church history in Africa and to learn from the past 50 years. From the perspective of SCCs in Eastern Africa we are rediscovering the importance of two of the founders -- Kalilombe and Mwoleka. Their vision of the theology and praxis of Vatican II’s Communion Ecclesiology

²⁶⁴ “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>

An important document is John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful on Matters of Doctrine* (1859).

helped create the path for the establishment and development of Eastern African SCCs. Other key people were Ndingi and McCauley.

The new Cardinal for Rwanda, Cardinal Antoine Kambanda the first-ever Cardinal in the landlocked Great Rift Valley East African nation, will continue to prioritize family apostolate in what he considers the rebuilding of “internal structures” that the country requires. In an interview with EWTN News Nightly on Monday, November 30 following the November 28 consistory, Cardinal Kambanda describes the family as “the domestic church” and “foundation of the society.” Cardinal Kambanda said that he will continue to spearhead “the efforts to rebuild the internal structures (and) relationships, especially the family.”

His message about prioritizing family apostolate is in line with his promotion of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a way of being church in Rwanda. “May all our SCCs celebrate that we have a new cardinal in Africa: Cardinal-elect Antoine Kambanda, the Archbishop of Kigali, Rwanda. He is a big supporter of the SCC Model of Church. He emphasizes SCC Formation and Grassroots Evangelism,” Father Joseph Healey, a member of the Maryknoll Society who is a specialist expert on SCCs posted on his Facebook page on 25 October, 2020 the day Pope Francis named the 13 new Cardinals. “He sent a Rwandese diocesan priest to Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya to study for a Master's degree in Pastoral Theology with specialization in SCCs.”

89-year-old Archbishop James Odongo, Archbishop Emeritus of the Catholic Archdiocese of Tororo, Uganda died on 4 December, 2020 at St. Francis Nsambya Hospital in Kampala, Uganda. The then Bishop Odongo was Chairperson of AMECEA from 1973-1979. The SCCs Model of Church was established as a key pastoral priority at the 1973 and 1976 AMECEA Plenaries. Odongo is considered one of the founding fathers of SCCs in the AMECEA countries and promoted the importance of SCCs everywhere.

The 2021 – 2024 Synodal Process in the Catholic Church introduced a new chapter in the history of SCCs in Eastern Africa.

NOTE: This first historical chapter covers 1961 to 2023. It is “a work in progress.” The great advantage of online writing is that you can edit, change and add as you go along. Professional historians say that you cannot write accurate “critical” history about the recent past. You have to wait to let time take its course, specifically 25 years later. So we will treat 2023 on later. This particular chapter focuses on the 1973 to 1979 period to highlight the origin of the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa.

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

We have a good overall picture. Today there are over 195,000 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 50,000 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)²⁶⁵ 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.

When I left Dar es Salaam Archdiocese in January, 2007 it had 49 parishes. As of 31 December, 2011 Dar es Salaam Archdiocese had 3,040 SCCs in its 67 parishes. As of 31 August, 2018 Dar es Salaam Archdiocese had 5,555 SCCs in its 111 parishes (based on approximately 50 SCCs each in the 111 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.²⁶⁶ 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.

²⁶⁵ 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.

²⁶⁶ “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*

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.”²⁶⁷

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,²⁶⁸ 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,²⁶⁹ 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.²⁷⁰

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

Faith and Self-Reliance. Pastoral Letter of H.E. John Cardinal Njue, Archdiocese of Nairobi Family Day 2012, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2012, p. 12.

²⁶⁷ In Aloysius, "Discovering God's Marvels: Facts & Curiosities about the *Kenya Catholic Directory 2006*," *Seed* 18:7-8 (July-August, 2006), pp. 10-11.

²⁶⁸ Patrick Nzao in a conversation with the author in Kibwezi, Kenya on 2 June, 2012.

²⁶⁹ 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.”

²⁷⁰ 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.

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.

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.²⁷¹

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.²⁷² 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%.²⁷³

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

²⁷¹ 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.

²⁷² "Catholic Church by Country," retrieved on Wikipedia on 17 August, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_by_country#Africa

²⁷³ "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.²⁷⁴

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 2100.²⁷⁵

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'."²⁷⁶ 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.²⁷⁷
- 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.²⁷⁸
- 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%).²⁷⁹

²⁷⁴ 2012 *World Population Review*, retrieved on 28 August, 2014, <http://www.worldreview.info/content/africas-population-boom>

²⁷⁵ "Analysis: Latest Population Forecasts," *Zenit: The World Seen from Rome Daily Dispatch* Email, 9 August, 2015.

²⁷⁶ John L. Allen, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*, New York: Doubleday, 2009, p. 17.

²⁷⁷ The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa" (April 2010), <http://www.pewforum.org>.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *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 2010.²⁸⁰ 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.”²⁸¹

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.²⁸²

This present evaluation relies on the [32 Criteria to Evaluate a Typical Small Christian Community \(SCC\) in Eastern Africa](#) (found as Appendix No. 2) that are explained as follows:

Our SCCs Research Team has established 32 criteria for evaluating²⁸³ a typical neighborhood parish-based Small Christian Community (SCC) in an urban, urban-rural

²⁸⁰ 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>.

²⁸¹ 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>

²⁸² 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

²⁸³ 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.²⁸⁴ 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 1973-2023 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 20 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 cementing the bonds of belonging and togetherness (See Titus Amigu,

²⁸⁴ 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.

“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.”²⁸⁵

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 Sudan²⁸⁶ and Sudan have had a unique history due to the many years of war, violence, political turmoil, tribalism and uprootedness. But

²⁸⁵ 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.

²⁸⁶ 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.

research shows that even in heavily Muslim²⁸⁷ countries like Sudan, SCCs can have a special presence. Writing about the places in Africa where Missionaries of Africa serve, Richard Baawobr, MAfr 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.²⁸⁸

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.²⁸⁹

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 Recollection 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 Director of the Palica Center in Juba Archdiocese, said: “SCCs are the most appealing

²⁸⁷ 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.

²⁸⁸ 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>

²⁸⁹ The Swahili language spoken in Eastern and Central Africa uses very effective wording for these three stages: *kuunda*, *kuimarisha* and *kudumisha*.

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?²⁹⁰

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, 2012.²⁹¹ 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.”²⁹²

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.²⁹³ 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.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ 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.

²⁹¹ 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.”

²⁹² Palica Team, “Building Christian Community,” Wau: Privately Duplicated, 2012.

²⁹³ Mark Kumbonyaki Soro, conversation with the author in Nairobi, 7 May, 2014.

²⁹⁴ 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 Rite²⁹⁵ (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.²⁹⁶

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.²⁹⁷

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.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ 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.

²⁹⁶ 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.

²⁹⁷ Described on the Ethiopian Catholic Church (ECC) Website, <http://www.ecs.org.et>, retrieved 30 December, 2013.

²⁹⁸ *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*.²⁹⁹ 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.³⁰⁰

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.³⁰¹

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

²⁹⁹ Some Ethiopian students and students with pastoral experience in Ethiopia in our SCCs Courses have written interesting and challenging course papers on *Mahber*.

³⁰⁰ 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.

³⁰¹ Abune [Bishop] Kidane Yebio in an email message to the author dated 14 July, 2011.

called the brothers or sisters of the *meadi* or cup. Eating together is a very 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.³⁰²

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.³⁰³ 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.³⁰⁴

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.

³⁰² Alazar Abraha, "Building a Christian Community and Communion," *New People*, 145 (July-August, 2013), p. 10.

³⁰³ Normally the *Mahber* consists of separate men and women groups such as Gabriel for men and Mary for women.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Mengesha Toma, OFM Cap, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 15 February, 2014 and Ethiopian layman Abel Musse, 17 February, 2014.

- Offering economic support to needy members of the small community itself and in the neighborhood.

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.”³⁰⁵ Mejia states that “Mahber has a a different DNA than SCC.”³⁰⁶

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.”³⁰⁷

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.³⁰⁸ 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

³⁰⁵ 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.

³⁰⁶ Rodrigo Mejia, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 7 August, 2014.

³⁰⁷ Berhaneyesus Souraphiel in a video interview in the DVD *50 Years of AMECEA*. Lusaka: Catholic Media Services, 2011.

³⁰⁸ 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.”³⁰⁹

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.³¹⁰ 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.³¹¹ 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 used. This method is continued in the Capuchin Novitiate in Emidebir Diocese and

³⁰⁹ Abel Muse, email message to the author dated 18 April, 2014.

³¹⁰ Interview with Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Gabriel Meskel Magino, OFM Cap, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 15 February, 2014.

³¹¹ Conversation with Tsegaye Keneni, Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, 20 February, 2014.

the Capuchin Franciscan Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Addis Ababa Archdiocese.³¹²

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.”³¹³

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.”³¹⁴

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

³¹² Interview with Ethiopian Capuchin Abba Gabrielyesus, OFM Cap, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 14 February, 2014.

³¹³ 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 University College Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations, Nairobi, Kenya, 7 August, 2014.

³¹⁴ *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 seven-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.³¹⁵

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

³¹⁵ 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 Groups³¹⁶ (also called parish associations/sodalities/organizations) or the traditional outstation/village church. They comprise approximately 80% 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.”³¹⁷

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.³¹⁸

Other types are called Specialized SCCs or Special Interest Communities that comprise approximately 20% of the SCCs in the AMECEA Region and are growing fast.³¹⁹

³¹⁶ 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.

³¹⁷ Alphonse Omolo in an email message to the author dated 5 October, 2011.

³¹⁸ Paulino Mondo, *Small Christian Communities: An Ideal Means for Renewing the Church Within AMECEA Countries*, Eldoret: Unpublished Paper, 2009, p. 2-3.

³¹⁹ Sometimes these Specialized SCCs are Support Groups with a spiritual dimension. For example, separate Small Christian Communities (SCCs) of men and women who reflect on their medical HIV/AIDS Status.

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.*³²⁰

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"³²¹...

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.³²²

³²⁰ This is based on the Spanish poem:

*Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.
wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking.*

of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado (1875 – 1939). See Antonio Machado, *Campos de Castilla* (1912)

Compare with the Buddhist saying that goes *the path is made in the walking*. An African proverb says: *The path is made by walking*. A Tonga, Malawi proverb says: *A path is made by walking the same way many times*.

³²¹ 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.

³²² 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.

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.³²³ The second kind is 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)³²⁴ and training centers. These are called school-based SCCs. SCCs connected to institutions such as hospitals, military camps and prisons.³²⁵ Specialized and professional groups³²⁶ (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:

³²³ Vincent Mwakhwawa in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 11 January, 2012.

³²⁴ Kilaini emphasizes that every Catholic Boarding School in Tanzania should have a plan of SCCs.

³²⁵ 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.

³²⁶ 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.

- Confirmation Communities: young people in small groups who are preparing themselves for the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- Small Catechumen Communities (as part of the RCIA Program):³²⁷ 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 SCC is started of newly baptized adults in the RCIA Program who want to remain together as a small community.^{328 329}

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), spouses of depressed people, parents with children who have disabilities, etc.

- 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], Communion and Liberation, Focolare, Grail Movement, International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), Jesus Caritas Fraternities (communities following the spirituality of St. Charles de Foucauld), Magis, Marianists, Neo-catechumenal Way, Opus Dei, Pioneers, Pontifical Missionary Union (PMU), Sant'Egidio, Taize, Third-Order Franciscans, Young Christian Students (YCS) and Young Christian Workers (YCW).

Depending on the part of the world, Small Communities on college campuses can be called (alphabetically): Campus Ministry Program, Campus Ministry Small Group, Movement in the Catholic Church, Program on College Campus, Small Apostolic Group,

³²⁷ 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.

³²⁸ 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.

³²⁹ 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.

Small Community on College Campus, Small Faith Group on College Campus, on College Campus and Voluntary Apostolic Group.

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 Taizé'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.³³⁰

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. The fastest growing type of SCCs. The most popular model is WhatsApp SCCs. A physical SCC can have a WhatsApp community. Also some WhatsApp SCCs only meet online.

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.

³³⁰ Taizé International Retreats, *Mji wa Furaha*, August, 2014, Religious Superiors' Conference of Kenya (RSCK) Email Message 1 July, 2014.

Are these specialized groups or Special Interest Communities 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 education³³¹ 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.³³² 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 groups³³³ focused on one priority only and small social groups with no outside involvement cannot be classified as 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

³³¹ 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.

³³² 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.

³³³ 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.

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*³³⁴ 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 and involving more the head than the heart.³³⁵ However Small Christian Communities involve its members in the variety of activities on a regular, even daily, and ongoing basis.³³⁶

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 Movements³³⁷ 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).³³⁸ Archbishop James Odongo, the retired

³³⁴ 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."

³³⁵ But this is the traditional interpretation. There are other methods. Amy Jackson writes: "Group *Bible* study truly is a blessing. Together we can understand and apply the Word in new ways. I'll never forget my first inductive *Bible* study of James. The Word came alive for me for the first time. I not only understood what I was reading, but also saw how to apply it to my life." *Small Groups Newsletter*, 22 June, 2016.

³³⁶ Summary of Belza Ramos' views in a Skype conversation with the author on 2 April, 2015.

³³⁷ 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 fourth model, the New Ecclesial Movements Model of Church.

³³⁸ 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.

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:

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*.³³⁹

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/church societies/ecclesial societies; parish commissions/committees/departments; special parish service/ministry groups) in a single parish.³⁴⁰ 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, Family Enrichment Club, 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, Sant'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, WhatsApp Support Groups (of many kinds), Widows, Young Christian Professionals, Young Christian Students (YCS), Young Christian Workers (YCW), Youth

³³⁹ Christopher Cieslikiewicz, "Urban Small Christian Communities," p. 97.

³⁴⁰ 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.

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, Healthcare,³⁴¹ Justice and Peace, Liturgy, Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), Pastoral, [Social] Communications,³⁴² Social, Spiritual and Youth.³⁴³
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) –

³⁴¹ Healthcare can be spelled as one or two words (health care). For consistency we use one word except when it is an official name such as Mombasa Catholic Community Based Health Care (CBHC) Services and Pandipieri Catholic Center Program of Home Based [Health] Care Workers (HBCWs). NOTE: The *Grammarist* states: **Healthcare** is on its way to becoming a one-word noun throughout the English-speaking world. The change is well underway in British publications, where *healthcare* already appears about three times as often as *health care* and is used as both a noun and an adjective. Many American and Canadian publications resist the change, meanwhile, and *health care* remains the more common form in North American news writing, as well as in government and scholarly texts. In many cases—such as on health-related U.S. government websites—*health care* is the noun (e.g., “your health care is important”) and *healthcare* is the adjective (e.g., “find a healthcare professional”), but this is not consistently borne out, and both forms are widely used both ways. Many publications and websites seem to have no policy on this at all. The *Grammarist* Website, retrieved 2 September, 2016, <http://grammarist.com/spelling/healthcare>

³⁴² 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.

³⁴³ 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.

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 Mwachwawa 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.³⁴⁴ Christians were taught that they first belong 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.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ 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 "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.

Concerning West Africa, research shows:

1. Retired Nigerian Cardinal John Onaiyekan of Abuja Archdiocese points out that the SCC Model of Church has never been a pastoral priority in Nigeria because Nigeria has a strong Small Apostolic 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 such as the Confraternity of Christian Mothers, St. Joseph Community for Men, and St. Theresa Sodality for Girls. Conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 21 August, 2012.
2. Theology students from Ghana in my SCCs classes in Nairobi from 2010-2019 have emphasized that in Ghana there is more focus on small devotional groups than on SCCs.

³⁴⁵ Vincent Mwachwawa in an email dated 8 May, 2012.

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.³⁴⁶

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.

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.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Nicholaus Segeja, “Small Christian Communities: A Vital Icon for New Evangelization,” *African Christian Studies*, 27: 4 (December, 2011): 11.

³⁴⁷ 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*, 3rd 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 a 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

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),³⁴⁸ 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.”³⁴⁹

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 extended family in the city that they left at home in the village.³⁵⁰

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.³⁵¹ 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.

³⁴⁸ See Footnote 64.

³⁴⁹ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, retrieved on 16 March, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Zanotelli

³⁵⁰ Method Kilaini, “Small Christian Communities,” p. 4.

³⁵¹ 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.

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.³⁵²

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).³⁵³ 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 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.

³⁵² Colin C. Davies, *Mission to the Maasai (1959-2003)*, Ngong: Privately Printed, 2006, p. 314.

³⁵³ 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.

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.³⁵⁴

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.”³⁵⁵

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.³⁵⁶

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

³⁵⁴ Stephen, Seed **CHECK**

³⁵⁵ 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>

³⁵⁶ Based on conversations with Kenyan diocesan priest (and Secretary General of AMECEA) Father Ferdinand Lugonzo and Tanzanian diocesan priest incardinated in Kakamega Diocese (and Vicar General of Kakamega Diocese) Father Bede Marangu in Kakamega on 19-22 February, 2015.

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.³⁵⁷

This local pastoral experience served him in good stead when as Chairman of AMECEA from 1973-1979 he oversaw the implementation of SCCs as a key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa.

Maryknoll missionary priest Father Mike Bassano, MM reports on an active SCC in the United Nations Camp for Internally Displaced People in Malakal, South Sudan. The camp has 33,000 IDPs. Every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. about 20-25 people (mainly women) meet in one of the homes to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday (the next day). In what is perhaps a unique example for Africa, the Gospel is read in four languages (alphabetically): Arabic, English, Nuer and Shilluk. This is followed by lively sharing and singing. This prayer experience builds unity among the different ethnic groups.³⁵⁸

Analyzing Joseph G Healey Private Facebook Page Likes: 5, 5, 28 (Maryknoll Society General Chapter), 10, 17 (Judith's Story), 5, 3, 14 (Restorative Justice), 2, 3, 3, 9.

³⁵⁷ 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, 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>

³⁵⁸ Mike Bassano, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 22 January, 2017.

3Qualitative 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.³⁵⁹

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.”³⁶⁰

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.”³⁶¹ SCCs are widespread and active in most of the

³⁵⁹ Pius Rutechura, “The Experience of the AMECEA Region with Small Christian Communities, Pastoral Priority since the 1970s,” Unpublished Paper at the 27th 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.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

dioceses in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania,³⁶² 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.³⁶³ 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,³⁶⁴ 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 Catholic Associations/Movements because SCCs have the whole program of the

³⁶² 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.

³⁶³ 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.

³⁶⁴ 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); Cardinal Protase Rugambwa, the Archbishop of Tabora, Tanzania: *Ministry and Collaboration in Small Christian Communities: Communities in Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania, a Case Study* (Lateran University).

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.³⁶⁵ 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.³⁶⁶ 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.”³⁶⁷ 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.”³⁶⁸

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”:³⁶⁹

- exaggerated/overstressed/imposed role of SCCs,
- poor leadership,
- lack of pastoral and spiritual ongoing formation, and

³⁶⁵ Summary of Rodrigo Mejia, *Church in the Neighborhood*, pp. 33-34.

³⁶⁶ Emmanuel Wamala, *AMECEA 50 Years of Evangelization in Solidarity: 1961 – 2011*, Nairobi: AMECEA Secretariat, 2011, p. x.

³⁶⁷ 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) 27th June - 6th July, 2011*, Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2011, p. 25.

³⁶⁸ “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>

³⁶⁹ 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).³⁷⁰

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.”³⁷¹ 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-criticism³⁷²

³⁷⁰ 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.

³⁷¹ 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.

³⁷² 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 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 of 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.³⁷³

Cameroon Sister Kenyuyfoon Gloria Wirba identifies the following shortcomings of SCCs in sub-Saharan 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.³⁷⁴

the light of the Gospel on itself. Here's what Tillich wrote: "If the church does not 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.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ 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 priests³⁷⁵ 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);
 SCCs have become only the extended arm of the parish priest;
 don't allow lay participation in *Jumuiya* Masses,
 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;
 feel threatened by the SCCs Model of Church;
 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;
 feel resistance to 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;
 turn SCCs into ATM cards;
 use SCCs as fund-raising organ;
 put fund-raising burdens on SCCs members;
 can be a "milking cow" when the pastor loses sight of the mission of the church.

³⁷⁵ 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.

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;³⁷⁶

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 afraid to start SCCs because successor may not continue them or may allow them to have a slow death;

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;

depend on SCCs in animating and coordinating 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;³⁷⁷

cannot animate and coordinate the parish without the help of SCCs;

³⁷⁶ 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 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.

³⁷⁷ 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.

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.³⁷⁸

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 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."³⁷⁹ 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.³⁸⁰

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."³⁸¹ 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"³⁸² 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.

³⁷⁸ 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.

³⁷⁹ Colin Davies, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop*, p. 112.

³⁸⁰ Joseph Ngala in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 15 August, 2014.

³⁸¹ 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>

³⁸² 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.

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."³⁸³ Thus all 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.³⁸⁴

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. The retired Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki of Nairobi Archdiocese said: “Our seminarians in Kenya must have courses and workshops on SCCs during their seminary training. It is too late if we wait until after they are ordained.”³⁸⁵

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.³⁸⁶

³⁸³ Pope Francis in Joshua J. McElwee, “Francis Tells Religious to 'Wake the World,' Outlines Modern Struggles for Church,” *National Catholic Reporter* (NCR), 13 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>

³⁸⁴ National Mirror Team, “One-One With the Bishop of Embu Rt. Rev. Paul Kariuki,” *National Mirror*, 10/14 (October, 2014), p. 11.

³⁸⁵ Raphael Ndingi in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya in 2007.

³⁸⁶ Donald Sybertz in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 23 April, 2013.

This evaluation has studied carefully the important role of youth in SCCs.³⁸⁷ 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 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,³⁸⁸ 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 (or YSCCs) 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 only rural areas of northwestern Tanzania 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 like PMC) 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, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Nairobi, Kenya and

³⁸⁷ 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).

³⁸⁸ 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.”

Mombasa, Kenya where adult SCC members serve as advisors or guardians of the Youth SCCs and Children SCCs. An adult man is the Patron and an adult woman is the Matron. Alphonse Omolo writes:

The idea of *Mama* or *Baba* SCCs in our experience in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya includes the "Fish Guardians". An adult is nominated by a specific Fish Youth Community to provide guardianship in the spiritual and the social perspectives. The Fish Guardians are trained during a workshop on how to provide such guardianship to the specific communities. This is worth exploring and building further contextualized understanding -- how such individuals can be understood in the YSCCs and the Adults SCCs.³⁸⁹

Theologically, this is within the context of communion ecclesiology. Beginning with the family as the Domestic Church, a SCC is a communion of families. The *Mama* SCC can include different branches such as the Adult SCC, the Youth SCC and the Children SCC. These small communities meet both together and separately depending on the local situation.

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, Mwanza, Tanzania, Lilongwe, Malawi, Lusaka, Zambia and Nairobi, Kenya and reinforced by interviews with young people in the USA revealed that their favorite discussion topics in their YSCCs meetings are:

- Topics clustered around boy-girl relationships, sex,³⁹⁰ dating, fashion, popular music, video games, social networks, information technology, sports and the use of leisure time. Kenyan layman Steven Juma says:

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

³⁸⁹ Alphonse Omolo in a email to the author, 28 April, 2017.

³⁹⁰ 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, "Let's say it openly. Youth want to talk about sex."

During research on university and college campuses in the USA, the topic "sex" was widened to include LGBTQ -- lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered, queer people.

talk has to start in our Small Christian Communities because we are not going to hear it at the 10.30 mass on Sunday.³⁹¹

Kenyan university student Alloys Nyakundi reports:

YSCCs are very important in the contemporary world where many things are happening to the youth without the knowledge of their parents and elders. If you want to catch a thief you set another thief. In our Meru Diocese SCCs Workshop the youth who attended told me that they are shy to openly talk about some important and crucial issues, for example sex, in front of their parents and elders since it's a taboo in the African traditions.³⁹²

- Whole area of searching for one's human and Christian identity and self-discovery in a Faith-sharing context. What are youth's aspirations and dreams?³⁹³ This includes vocational discernment (covering religious vocations and vocations in the secular world.) This touches career planning,³⁹⁴ job hunting and the challenges of employment/unemployment.

- 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.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ 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

³⁹² Alloys Nyakundi in a email to the author, 28 April, 2017.

³⁹³ At a workshop at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya on Saturday, 5 November, 2016 the title of my interactive presentation was: "Positive Use of the Social Media: Suggestions on How Students at Kenyatta University Can Use Their Leisure Time Better." I began by asking the students in buzz groups of two each to discuss the question: "What gets me up in the morning?" "Why do I get up in the morning?" Then we shared our answers in the whole group of about 70 students.

³⁹⁴ Research in USA indicate that university and college students and graduates want to talk about how to pay off their student loans.

³⁹⁵ Bernard Lee, "Young Adults Gathered & Sent or Sent & Gathered," in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, pp. 2-3.

- 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 (money). This included emphasis on long range goals and achievements and how to be financially successful in life.
- Generation gap – communications problems between themselves and their parents.
- Politics – always a fascinating topic especially connected to election time in African countries.
- Culture including African ethnic group identity and challenges and pop culture especially in cities.

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 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.³⁹⁶

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.

³⁹⁶ Charles Ddungu, *Towards Self-Ministering Small Christian Communities: the Case of Ndala Parish*, Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Brussels: Catholic University of Louvain, 2005.

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)³⁹⁷ 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* Reflection that connects the *Bible* to the real issues of our daily life and includes Faith-sharing. He called this "finding the African bait."³⁹⁸

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."³⁹⁹ 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."⁴⁰⁰ 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.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ 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.

³⁹⁸ 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.

³⁹⁹ Uzukwu, *A Listening Church, Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996, p.118.

⁴⁰⁰ Joseph Donders, *Non-Bourgeois Theology: An African Experience of Jesus*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 173.

⁴⁰¹ A. E. Orobator, *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in its Social Context*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000, pp. 145-146.

Fortunately, this situation is changing. One important reason for this positive shift is the use of an inductive, contextual Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR) Process/Method such as the "Pastoral Spiral"⁴⁰² 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 Cycle⁴⁰³) uses the four steps of:

1. Insertion (into concrete pastoral experience)
2. Social/Cultural Analysis
3. Theological Reflection
4. Action/Pastoral Planning

Another version is the five steps of:

1. Experience
2. Social/Cultural Analysis
3. Theological Reflection
4. Pastoral Planning
5. Evaluation.⁴⁰⁴

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"

⁴⁰² See the African examples in Frans Wijzen, 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.

⁴⁰³ See the video series *Pastoral Cycle Methodology for Social Transformation*. Nairobi: Institute of Social Ministry, Tangaza, 2015.

⁴⁰⁴ 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>

process/method⁴⁰⁵ ⁴⁰⁶ starting from concrete experience. Many SCCs begin with the step of brief reports on the members' lives during the past week (called a “touchdown period” or

⁴⁰⁵ American Maryknoll priest Rafael Davila, MM points out the history of “the Jocist -- a widely used term that comes from the French acronym JOC -- *Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* or Young Christian Workers [YCW] that was an international organization founded by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn in Belgium in 1924. The Jocist 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.

American Bishop Robert McElroy calls for an ever contemporary application:

Powerful pathway of past Catholic movements of “see, act, judge”: to see the situation clearly, to judge with principles that foster the integral development of people and to act in a way which implements these principles in the light of everyone’s unique situation. The simple but rich architecture constructed by these principles guided Catholic social actions in the past century in Europe and Latin America. But these words which carry with them such a powerful history of social transformation around the world in the service of the dignity of the human person must be renewed and re-examined in every age and seen against the background of those social, economic, and political forces in each historical moment. So let us see and judge and act. Let us disrupt and rebuild. And let us do God’s work.

Robert McElroy in Brian, Roewe, “In Powerful Speech San Diego Bishop Challenges Organizers To Disrupt, Rebuild, *NCR Website*, revived 20 February, 2017, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/powerful-speech-san-diego-bishop-challenges-organizers-disrupt-rebuild>

The unexamined life is not worth living (Ancient Greek: ὁ ... ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ) is a famous dictum apparently uttered by Socrates at his trial for impiety and corrupting youth. He was subsequently sentenced to death, as described in Plato's *Apology* (38a5-6). He felt knowing oneself is the key to life and came from the dialogic method: *Elenchus* (Ancient Greek: ἔλεγχος, translit. *elengkhos*, lit. “argument of disproof or refutation; cross-examining, testing, scrutiny esp. for purposes of refutation”) that is the central technique of the Socratic method. He choose death (drinking the poisoness hemlock) so he could continue *elenchus* in the afterlife rather than being forced into exile away from Athens where he could not practice well this method.

“catch up 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.⁴⁰⁷ Through their use of the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process,⁴⁰⁸ 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 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.⁴⁰⁹

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 647-649. 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

⁴⁰⁶Research 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.

⁴⁰⁷ 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.

⁴⁰⁸ This process operates at different levels. For example, a Diocesan Synod Report or Diocesan Pastoral Letter or Bishop’s Pastoral Letter can be a pastoral or theological lens through which the life and ministries of a diocese, such as the SCCs Pastoral Priority, can be viewed and evaluated.

⁴⁰⁹ Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 12.

"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 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."⁴¹⁰

Good Case Studies of the Pastoral Spiral are the theses and essays on the obstacle or challenge of the size of the SCC being too big -- in some cases 100-200 people/ 50 families. In 2016 at Tangaza University College in Nairobi one Master's Thesis in Pastoral Ministry (Meru Diocese, Kenya) and one long essay (Binga Diocese, DRC) addressed this issue. The **social and cultural analysis step** can dig deeper into the meaning and practice of African community life and extended families. The **theological reflection step** can pinpoint how a small community of Catholics in the neighborhood is an official ecclesial unit within the parish pastoral structure. The **action step** can divide the big community into manageable SCCs where 15-20 members participate in the weekly meetings.

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.⁴¹¹

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).⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ 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.

⁴¹¹ Peter Henriot, *Pastoral Circle Revisited*, p. 39.

⁴¹² 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

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 AND AIDS, violence, prostitution, etc. -- that is then analyzed in light of the *Bible* and of the 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.⁴¹³

Unfortunately, these excellent Lumko materials have not been updated to read and respond to the contemporary “Signs of the Time” with new stories, examples and references in newer church documents such as the First and Second African Synods and other key Vatican documents. Now we could add: the Apostolic Exhortations and Encyclicals of Pope Francis.

One concrete fruit of all the materials described above is to develop a spirituality of justice and peace in all our apostolic activities.⁴¹⁴ This had led to a new social consciousness

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.

⁴¹³ "The Amos Program: Prophetic Action in the World of Today," *Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) Newsletter*, Edition 4/2007.

⁴¹⁴ 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,

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," "Discern" 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.⁴¹⁵ 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.⁴¹⁶

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 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.

⁴¹⁵ In my SCC Course on "Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today" at Hekima University 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.

⁴¹⁶ This and similar examples was the subject of a Faculty Research Seminar at Hekima University 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

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.⁴¹⁷

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.⁴¹⁸

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.

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.

⁴¹⁷ Francis Njuguna, “Saint Kizito SCCs: An Example of What SCCs Can Do,” *National Mirror*, 24:3 (April, 2012), p. 16.

⁴¹⁸ Francis Njuguna, “SCC of Dandora Parish Worth to Be Emulated by Others” *National Mirror*, 24:4 (May, 2012), p. 20.

Inculturation in Africa is seen in the unique or specific names for SCC in the local African languages⁴¹⁹ that take on a life of their own such as (in alphabetical order):

Akagongo/Amahega (the Ankole, Uganda word for SCC);

Bete Tsellote (the Amharic, Djibouti, Eritrea and 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 for discussion) or *kidieny* (small part of the whole like a part or piece of an animal, small group of people) or *aluor* (small gathering once a month) or *abila* (small group) or *chokruok* (small gathering) (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).

Described at length in other parts of this book.

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);

Kabondo (the original Ganda, Uganda word for SCCs that literally means “the sack of a jigger” – representing a small community). *Akabondo* is “the SCC.” The plural is *Obubondo*. In writing the history Ugandan diocesan priest Father Ambrose J. Bwangatto says that Ugandan diocesan priest and writer Father Francis Tebbekosa invented the name and that Ugandan diocesan priest Joseph Obunga conceptualized it. This term is used positively to mean the source or fountain/the togetherness of the people for better benefit of all. This word is still used in Kampala Archdiocese, Lugazi Diocese and Kasana-Luweero Diocese for SCC.

Some Catholics disliked the secular meaning of the word so other more spiritual or religious names sprung up in Ganda. For example, Luganda speaking places such as Kiyinda Mityana Diocese uses *Ebibiina by'abasseekimu* that is derived from *John 17:21* and *Acts 2* and *4*. The name literally means “people bonded together by love” and signified the small communities united by faith and love.

Kabras or *Shikwenyi* (the Luhya, Kenya words for SCC similar to “small unit”);

Kamwaki (the Meru, Kenya word for SCC)

Katabi (one of the Ganda, Uganda words for SCCs meaning “end branch that bears fruit”). It is popular in Masaka Diocese.

Kibagenge (the Kipsigis, Kenya word for SCC meaning “coming together”)

Kokwet (the Kalenjin, Kenya word for SCC meaning “village neighborhood”);

Limana (the Chewa, Malawi and the Ngoni, Malawi and Tanzania word for SCC);

Mbongi (the Lari, a dialect of Kongo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo word for SCC meaning a “community meeting of the extended family”);

Mphakati (the Chewa, Malawi and the Nyanja, Zambia word for SCC);

Mugongo (the Runyoro, Uganda word for SCC),

⁴¹⁹ These African languages are listed by their root word without the prefixes like “the language of.”

Mwaki (the Gikuyu,⁴²⁰ Kenya word for SCC). Described at length in other parts of this book.

Mwangi (the Embu,⁴²¹ Kenya word for SCC). Means “fire.”

Omugongo (one of the Ganda, Uganda words for SCCs literally meaning “one hill”). It is the smallest cell of Ugandan traditional society, but the number of people can be too large for a single SCC.

Ondjango (the Umbundu, Angola word for SCC): Comes from a combination of two words that mean exactly “house of dialogue” and that refers to a typical circular structure in the local geographical area that is an excellent place for meeting and sharing;

Nguthu (the Kamba, Kenya word for SCC);

Umubano (the Rundi, Burundi word for SCC);

Umuryango-remezo/Imiryango-remezo (the Rwanda, Rwanda word for SCC). Literally a basic family, in other words the family of believers and the spirituality of the family are emphasized and enriched.

Uzengezgani (the Tumbuka, Malawi word for SCC)

and so on in other African countries.⁴²² 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.⁴²³

⁴²⁰ The original and authentic name is Gikuyu.

⁴²¹ The original and authentic name is Gikuyu.

⁴²² 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.

⁴²³ 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.

Mwaki literally means “fire” in Gikuyu.⁴²⁴ 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 *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*.⁴²⁵

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.”⁴²⁶

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 large anonymous crowds of parishioners. So to bring closer personal relationships and better family spirit he suggested that the Catholics meet in their homes to reflect on the Scriptures together. So *mwaki* was born. This was a significant turning point in the pastoral life of the Catholic Church in Kenya and symbolic of SCCs as a key pastoral priority in the AMECEA Region.

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

⁴²⁴ 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*.

⁴²⁵ Based on a conversation of Kenyan Bishop James Maria Wainaina of Murang’a Diocese, Kenya with the author in Nairobi, Kenya in June, 2011.

⁴²⁶ Charles Okure, “The Common Activities in Small Christian Communities in Africa Today,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2016.

life. There is a Malawi saying: *As long as there is a fire burning in the village so long God will give us life.*⁴²⁷ 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.

This symbolism can apply to SCC members' experience of Advent. In lighting the four Advent candles on the Advent Wreath, you can individually light the first candle, then the second, then the third and finally the fourth candle (from a match or lighter). Or you can use the first lighted candle to light the second, the second lighted candle to light the third and so on. Lighting the second candle does not take away the light, heat, intensity and power of the first candle. This the spirit and practice of mission and of passing on the good news of Jesus Christ. There is a saying, *let us always burn with the fire of mission* **REVISE**

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."⁴²⁸

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

⁴²⁷ See Joseph Healey, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Back Christian Values*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press, 1981, p. 115.

⁴²⁸ "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)

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 healthcare ministry: the *huduma ya afya* (Swahili for “the service of healthcare”), a volunteer community-based healthcare 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 “*Healthcare Ministry*” or “*Health Service Giving*” or “*Health Services*.” These gifted men and women are then commissioned to be *wahudumu wa afya* (“ministers” or “service givers”) who carry out the SCCs’ healthcare ministry. These volunteer healthcare 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.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁹ 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 Healthcare and AIDS Relief Program (EDARP).

Nairobi’s SCCs do not stand alone in developing a new form of healthcare 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 (HBCWs) – volunteers from the SCCs who work alongside paid nurses and social workers in the outreach to HIV and AIDS patients.

On the healthcare 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.

These volunteer Community Healthcare Workers (CHCs) or ministers focus on reaching out to people with HIV/AIDS and their families. The 20th Anniversary xxx The Booklet of Eastern Deanery Community-Based Healthcare 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.⁴³⁰

As of 30 September, 2014 a total of 2,680 CHWs have been trained in the past 21 years. 1,051 are presently active.

English writer Gillian Paterson stresses the importance of home-based care in the context of SCCs:

The Catholic Church joined the struggle against AIDS back in the early 1980s, when the epidemic first emerged from the shadows. Church mission hospitals and clinics, which already provided a substantial proportion of health care in sub-Saharan Africa, were at the forefront. When the hospitals proved incapable of meeting the needs of the growing numbers of sick, the churches, especially the Catholics and the Salvation Army, found that their existing methods of home-based care could be adapted to the new demands, providing realistic treatment and prevention in situations of poverty – a model widely followed by other organizations.

But by the mid-1990s, the number of sick and dying people had increased drastically. Now the churches are activating their worshipping communities to tackle the local needs of sufferers and their families, their carers, and the orphans. Here again, existing Catholic networks of Small Christian Communities within parishes have provided a framework. Johannes, dying of AIDS in a Tanzanian slum, told me: "The best thing in my life, I waited for until I was almost dead. It has been the Small Christian Community in this place, and the way we sing and pray together. I feel I am not alone."⁴³¹

Zambian Jesuit Father Leonard Chiti, SJ writes extensively about the

⁴³⁰ *History of Innovative Community Healthcare & TB/HIV Prevention, Care & Treatment*, Unpublished Booklet, Nairobi: Eastern Deanery AIDS Relief Program (EDARP), 2013. p. 14.

⁴³¹ Gillian Paterson, "Fighting AIDS in Africa," *Tablet*, 9 June, 2001. *Tablet* Website, retrieved on 4 November, 2016, <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/9th-june-2001/9/fighting-aids-in-africa>

home-based care (HBC) program or system for treating people living with HIV in Zambia as a complement to the mainstream healthcare delivery system for people living with HIV (PLWH):

Initially the home-based care (HBC) system emerged as a community/grassroots based initiative to deal with a very serious matter of the inadequate capacity of the state health delivery system to cope with the challenge of increasing numbers of patients testing positive for HIV... The Catholic Church's intervention through the establishment of home-based care (HBC) has had enormous success in the treatment and curative approach to the pandemic in addition to its pastoral interventions... In Zambia in the Catholic Church that accounts for a third of all people calling themselves Christian, the home-based care (HBC) system followed closely the pattern of Small Christian Communities.⁴³²

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.⁴³³

African forms of inculturation can be effectively used in the formation and empowerment⁴³⁴ of the laity and SCCs members. Healey and Sybertz write:

⁴³² Leonard Chiti, "Fighting AIDS from the Grassroots: History, Theology, Values and Challenges of Home-Based Care in Zambia" Jacquineau Azetsop, (ed.), *HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016, 378-380.

⁴³³ 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.

⁴³⁴ 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

"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."⁴³⁵

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 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

sense: the rich empowering the poor, the "haves" empowering the "have not's," the West empowering the Global South.

⁴³⁵ Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, pp. 301-302.

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-two 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 painting⁴³⁶ called *Jesus Teaches Along the Lake Shore*⁴³⁷ 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.⁴³⁸ He is sending out modern Tanzanian disciples two by

⁴³⁶ 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.

⁴³⁷ 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 2 July, 2022, [African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories – African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories \(tangaza.ac.ke\)](http://AfricanProverbs.SayingsandStories-AfricanProverbs.SayingsandStories(tangaza.ac.ke))

⁴³⁸ 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."

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 Burkina Faso proverb: *If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.* It is also an Agaw (Eritrea and Ethiopia) Proverb. It can be interpreted on different levels. Robert Moriarty states:

This slice of African proverbial wisdom captures an insight that is all the more meaningful when we reflect on it with the eyes of faith.

Journey is one of those fundamental themes that we have employed to speak of life across the centuries. It is a literary commonplace. It has been part and parcel of the story of deliverance of our forefathers/mothers who made their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. They travelled together.

Journey marks the gospel writers' description of the ministry of Jesus. But neither did he walk alone. Jesus drew to himself disciples who walked with him on his way. They followed him who tells us in John's gospel, "I am the way, the truth and the life." (*John 14:6*). The earliest description of Jesus' followers, even before they became known as "Christians," is that they were

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)

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>

followers of “the way.” We find this description repeatedly in the *Acts of the Apostles* (9:1; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22)

And today when we speak of the church gathering in synod, we are using a word whose Greek origins (*syn-hodos*) carries the meaning of together -- on the way. We gather in big church and small church to be nourished by word and sacrament on the way. We know in our bones and in our spirits that we do not walk alone. The love of God accompanies us.

The new universe story captures the eons as a journey, even as scripture itself has long ago declared to us that all creation is on the way to the reign of God. Pope Francis puts this thought beautifully when he says:

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. (*Laudato Si*, No. 92).

If not by sight, we walk by faith – together.⁴³⁹

South African theologian Nontando Hadebe states:

I have used this African proverb to bring together my reflections on the readings of this Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A. Proverbs are the prime ethical teaching tools for oral cultures because they are easy to remember and contain multiple meanings making these rich sources for reflection. This particular proverb is no different and can be interpreted in many ways but for the purposes of this reflection, I will be using the interpretation of partnership or working with others to build and sustain a long term goal rather than working alone. Working alone is easier and tasks are done much faster because one does not need to engage, negotiate and seek consensus or cooperation with others. Yet this proverb makes the claim that work that is long term and sustaining requires the participation of others in a shared vision.

So does this rule apply to God? Does God operate alone without engaging humanity in the work of salvation?

In the reading from Isaiah God is in conversation with king Ahaz and makes a promise for the future coming of Emmanuel – God with us. In the readings of the gospel the coming and mission of Emmanuel is revealed in conversation with Joseph and prior to that in conversation with Mary. Jesus is Emmanuel. It would have been easier for God to make Jesus appear as an adult and carry out his ministry. But God chooses to ‘go far’ to take the long route of working with others of being vulnerable, entering into conversation, involving strangers in God’s plan. The coming of Emmanuel caused a rift in the relationship between Mary and Joseph. God steps in through a dream to

⁴³⁹ Robert Moriarty, “Preface,” *Quest* (A Reflection Booklet for Small Christian Communities), Bloomfield, CT: 2017, p. iii.

enter a conversation with Joseph that explains the pregnancy of Mary and the destiny of Emmanuel as Jesus, the one who will save humanity from their sins. Emmanuel came as a baby not an adult and had to grow in a family which required the support and love of Mary and Joseph, family and community. Yeshua had to grow until he was an adult before he could proclaim the gospel of salvation. All this took time. A promise made centuries ago is fulfilled through participation of others and their sacrifice and willingness to be part of the plan of salvation.

In the letter to the Romans we read that the gospel of salvation had reached communities beyond the villages in Israel and was spreading throughout the world. The messengers were women and men who had experienced salvation through Jesus. The fruit of salvation is given in the psalms as pure hearts from whom ethical behavior flows to others. God could have easily done everything faster as God working alone without humanity – Jesus could have appeared as an adult, teaching healing, dying and rising again. In three years he could have done his mission and returned to God, but God chose the ways of involving a village of people to work together to bring about the salvation destined for all of humanity.

What does this say to us today as we seek to be bring Emmanuel into our lives and into the world that we live in. Salvation was born from a participatory process of working with others for the common good in changing the world. Similarly our mission in the world requires conversations, inclusion of all people who are involved in the issues that we seek to respond to. In a world where exclusion of the other and fear of the other is increasingly becoming the norm, we who follow Emmanuel are called to walk, live and talk in a different way of conversation, working with inclusion in the struggle for a world where our hearts don't create separation but bring us together as a human family called together to respond to God's salvation.⁴⁴⁰

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.⁴⁴¹ They help SCCs members to understand and live the Gospel in an African context. Mafa Christian communities wanted to have an African

⁴⁴⁰ Nontando Hadebe, Catholic Women Preach Website, retrieved 21 December, 2016, <http://catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/12182016>

⁴⁴¹ See the Life of Jesus Mafa Website at <http://www.jesusmafa.com/?lang=en>.

representation of the gospel. The most important New Testament scenes for liturgical and catechetical use were selected, adapted and acted out in tableaux by the village people. These simple tableaux were photographed. After a careful and detailed study they were painted by the artist Bénédite/Bénédicte 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 or Universal Prayer)⁴⁴² that are an important part of the weekly *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*, masses, 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. Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki of Nairobi Archdiocese encouraged 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.

Prayers are an important part of African oral literature. An example is an "African Prayer of Blessing":

Facing east: "For our ancestors of the distant past."

Facing west: "For our recent living dead."

Facing north: "For our living."

Facing south: "For our yet unborn."

This incorporates many African values of community, family/extended family, personal relationships and solidarity. This has been inculturated in the Catholic Mass during the "Prayer of the Faithful" ("General Intercessions").

One important “Prayer of the Faithful” is: “For all our private intentions...let us pray to the Lord.” Here we can gather all our many private, personal intentions.

Participating in various SCCs I hear other intentions that reflect the “signs of the times” in Kenya.⁴⁴³ SCC members always pray in blessing and thanksgiving before a cup of

⁴⁴² Also called the “Universal Prayer” and the “Bidding Prayers.”

⁴⁴³ 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.

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 secular⁴⁴⁴ and “a-

⁴⁴⁴ 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 religious or holy, and even against them, 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.”

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.

The French Jesuit scientist and theologian Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ said: “By virtue of Creation, and still more the Incarnation, nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see.”

Georges Bernanos’ *The Diary of a Country Priest* (pp. 297-298) has this poignant passage about a dying man:

The priest was still on his way, and finally I was bound to voice my deep regret that such delay threatened to deprive my comrade of the final consolations of our Church. He did not seem to hear me. But a few moments later he put his hand over mine, and his eyes entreated me to draw closer to him. He then uttered these words almost in my ear. And I am quite sure that I

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.⁴⁴⁵

When the retired Archbishop of Kumasi, Ghana Peter Sarpong was asked what is the core value of African society,⁴⁴⁶ he immediately answered in the single word "participation." Participation is at the heart of the life and activities of SCCs.⁴⁴⁷ 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.”

have recorded them accurately, for his voice, though halting, was strangely distinct.

“Does it matter? Grace is... everywhere.”

I think he died just then.

Ilio Delio’s comment: “Hence, Thomas Berry concludes, there are not two stories, religious and scientific, there is only one story, the Great Story. In a world of quantum reality, nothing is itself without everything else; there is no separation. The universe is a single, multiform reality.”

⁴⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁴⁶ To the question “What is the core value of SCCs?” SCCs members in Eastern Africa would answer “relationships.”

⁴⁴⁷ Most of our written and oral sources are adults. That is why it is refreshing to get Peter Hagerty, “Assembly’s Right and Duty to Participate”, Washington, DC: Georgetown University, unpublished paper, 2018. 9 pages. Peter is a 22-year-old college senior. In this article he interviewed a 70-year-old woman (Baby Boomer Generation); a 50-year-old woman (Generation X); and two Georgetown University students – one young woman and one young man (Generation Z).

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 University 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.

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 song⁴⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁴⁹

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”⁴⁵⁰ 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

⁴⁴⁸ 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”).

⁴⁴⁹ 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.”

⁴⁵⁰ 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.

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 50th Jubilee celebrations: “AMECEA Family of God Celebrating a Golden Jubilee 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 17th 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.⁴⁵¹

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.⁴⁵² 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.

⁴⁵¹ Pamela Adinda, email message to the author, 9 July, 2015.

⁴⁵² 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

A key document is the [Checklist of 16 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.⁴⁵³ The key characteristics of a weekly lectionary-based Faith-sharing⁴⁵⁴ meeting, following the charism of a Patron or Patroness saint and being a pastoral priority integrally connected to the parish structures, ministries and activities⁴⁵⁵ help maintain a strong and consistent SCC Catholic identity⁴⁵⁶ 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

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.

⁴⁵³ 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.

⁴⁵⁴ 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.

⁴⁵⁵ 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.

⁴⁵⁶ 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*).

emulating the virtues of particular Patron/Patroness saints at various levels of witnessing Christian faith by community members.⁴⁵⁷

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.⁴⁵⁸

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.⁴⁵⁹ So these SCCs need a renewal every ten years or so. One of the many new creative parish and academic institutions spiritual renewal

⁴⁵⁷ Pius Rutechura, “Pastoral Vision” in Krämer and Vellguth, *Small Christian Communities*, p. 274.

⁴⁵⁸ Nicholaus Segeja in “Small Christian Communities: A Vital Icon,” p. 23.

⁴⁵⁹ 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 and modules 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.

programs and retreats⁴⁶⁰ is used to revive, refresh or jumpstart them.⁴⁶¹ Or a parish offers an optional small Faith-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-sharing⁴⁶² 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.

⁴⁶⁰ Examples (alphabetically) in the USA include “ACTS (Adoration, Community, Theology, Service),” “Alpha,” “Amazing Parish,” “Antioch,” “Be My Witness” (RENEW International), “ChristLife,” “Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP),” “Cornerstone,” “Cursillo,” “Disciples in Mission,” “Evangelizing Catholic,” “Discovering Christ,” “Evangelical Catholic (EC),” “Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS),” “Holy Family,” “JustFaith,” “Marriage Encounter,” “RCIA,” “Rock,” “St. Paul’s Outreach (SPO),” “Walk to Emmaus,” 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 just as a strategy or plan of the parish, but as a way of life.

⁴⁶¹ 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 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>

⁴⁶² This is more than just reading, reflecting on and applying *Bible* readings. It is a way of life for the serious Christian. “Lectionary-based” includes integrating the spirit and practice of the church’s liturgical cycle including the different liturgical seasons, special masses, special devotions, the feasts and the lives of the saints, etc.

2. Weekly lectionary-based Faith-sharing in SCCs. Your comment that I have used in my free online Ebook remains a big challenge:

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.

My research indicates that sadly American Catholics still do not “get it.” Here are two examples:

1. My cousins in Concord, Massachusetts, USA were very involved in the successful 2008--2012 “ARISE: Together in Christ” Process (facilitated by RENEW International) in Boston Archdiocese. 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 that 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 to ARISE in Concord 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 46 years (1973-2019) 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 18th 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*⁴⁶³ in the lives and ministries of Catholics in Eastern Africa. Some of the important questions we asked are:

⁴⁶³ 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.

- 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,⁴⁶⁴ 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?
- 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)?⁴⁶⁵
- 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 important 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*.⁴⁶⁶ In workshops and seminars we use the saying that traditionally *a farmer does not go to the farm or garden*

⁴⁶⁴ 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.

⁴⁶⁵ 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.

⁴⁶⁶ 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

without a hoe. A contemporary saying is *people do not travel 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*. Yet many Catholics will carry their rosaries. This shows the strong devotional side of African Catholicism.

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.

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/animations/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 healthcare, visiting people with HIV and AIDS, visiting prisoners and self-help campaigns to fix up the neighborhood.

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?

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 Blessed Sacrament that has been solemnly reserved after the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper.⁴⁶⁷ On Good Friday SCCs take turns animating the different stations of the outdoor Way of the Cross.⁴⁶⁸ During

⁴⁶⁷ Supper has many meanings in English and in Western culture where family meals together are getting less and less frequent and less important. The Swahili translation of supper is *karamu* that means “feast” and more accurately describes the importance of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday – in both the Jewish (Passover Meal) and Christian (institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist/Mass) traditions.

⁴⁶⁸ If African SCCs are a new way of being church, they are challenged to use 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.

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 “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*⁴⁶⁹ or circle or club or kitty party or merry-go-round association or communal bank) where

⁴⁶⁹ 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.

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 that is the name of the sewing club of women in the SCC. 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 and other parts of Africa is to analyze the recent titles/topics/themes of the Doctorate Dissertations, Master's Theses, Diploma Essays and Long Essays on "Small Christian Communities" at the various colleges connected to CUEA and other educational institutions in Eastern Africa, other parts of Africa and specific universities abroad:⁴⁷⁰ Research has taken place in the following African (and other) countries: Angola, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. African students have done research in Philippines and other countries. An increasing number of these titles/topics/themes are comparative studies.

1. *An Analysis of Participative Structures in Selected Particular Churches in Eastern Africa in Light of the 1983 Code of Canon Law*
2. *Building a Participatory Church -- An Ecclesiological and Pastoral Analysis of the Small Christian Communities*
3. *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, Nairobi, Kenya.*
4. *Challenges Facing Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya: Case of Mary Mother of God, Rongai Parish.*
5. *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.*
6. *Consciousness-raising for the Active Participation of Small Christian Community Members as Agents of Social Transformation Through Evangelization in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya.*
7. *Critique of the Trinitarian Social Model of Leonardo Boff: Small Christian Communities of the Archdiocese of Tabora in Tanzania, a Case Study.*

⁴⁷⁰ 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.

8. *The Cultural Influence of Basic Christian Communities (BECs) For the Greater Unity of the Catholic Church in the Philippines (Casay Anini-y Antique).*
9. *Ecclesiology of Communion in the Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Dioceses of Mzuzu and Karonga in Malawi (1961-2016).*
10. *Effective Pastoral Leadership in the SCCs for Evangelization in Tigania Deanery, Meru Catholic Diocese, Kenya*
11. *Efficient Financial Management in the Parish as a Way to Achieve Self-Reliance: A Case Study of Tabora Deanery, Tanzania.*
12. *Enhancing the Spirit of Communion in Small Christian Communities: A Case Study in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya.*
13. *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.*
14. *Faith-Based Communities as Social Actors for the Transformation of Society: Case Study of the Small Christian Communities in Kawagware Division, Nairobi County, Kenya.*
15. *Forgiveness As An Intervention for the Radicalization of Youth to Violence in St. Theresa Catholic Church and Riyadh Mosque in Eastleigh Area, Nairobi County, Kenya.*
16. *"The Formation of Small Christian Communities as a Model for Evangelization in Shendam Diocese, Nigeria."*
17. *The Growth of Online Small Christians Community Gatherings in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya.*
18. *How Active Participation of Men in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Can Strengthen the Faith of the Family in Kenya Today: A Case Study of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya.*⁴⁷¹
19. *The Identity of the Christian Community in Africa: A Study of the Pastoral Methods in the Thoughts of Patrick A. Kalilombe.*
20. *Impact of Economic Status on Small Christian Communities in Nairobi, Kenya: A Case Study of St. Michael the Archangel Parish, Otiende, Nairobi.*
21. *Impact of Small Christian Communities on Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in St. Michael's Parish, Abidjan Archdiocese, Ivory Coast.*
22. *Impact of Small Christian Communities on Youth in Kenya.*

⁴⁷¹ 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 "Practicum." The student submitted a "Dossier on the Insertion Experience." Neighborhood, parish-based SCCs provide an ideal practical, pastoral context.

23. *Implementation of Small Christian Communities as a Pastoral Priority in the Church in Kenya: Opportunities and Challenges.*
24. *Improving Participation of the Laity in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Malawi.*
25. *Influence of Small Christian Communities on the Character Formation of Youth: A Case Study at Kenyatta University.*
26. *The Involvement/Participation of Women in Small Christian Communities -- St. Leopold Parish, Shangombo, Diocese of Livingstone, Zambia.*
27. *Julius K. Nyerere's Ujamaa Community Philosophy. Its Significance for the Building of Small Christian Communities.*
28. *The Liturgical Celebration of the Word of God is the Summit of the Manifestation of God.*
29. *Low Participation of Young People in Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs): A Case Study of St. Austin's Parish, Msongari, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.*
30. *Missionary Spirituality of the Laity in Small Christian Communities of Same, Tanzania.*
31. *The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Catholic Church: A Study on Rumuruti Consolata Parish of the Diocese of Nyahururu, Kenya.*
32. *A Pastoral Approach towards the Reawakening of Small Christian Communities in St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Parish, Lwangiri, Uganda.*
33. *Good Parish Management and Coordination: A Case Study of St. Francis Xavier Olosipa Parish, Catholic Archdiocese of Arusha, Tanzania.*
34. *Pastoral Response to Low Youth Participation in Small Christian Communities (SCCs): A Case Study of Holy Trinity Buruburu One Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese.*
35. *Pastoral Solutions to the Obstacles in the Growth of Small Christian Communities in St. Massimo Parish -- Meru Diocese, Kenya.*
36. *Pastoral Care of Small Christian Communities, the Means Towards Deep Evangelization.*
37. *Promotion of Small Christian Communities in Masvingo Diocese, Zimbabwe: An Icon For Pastoral and Missionary Renewal.*
38. *The Role of SCCs in Mission and Evangelization in Malindi Diocese, Kenya.*
39. *The Sacramental Ecclesiology of Avery Dulles and It's Possible Influence on the Church of Sierra Leone.*
40. *The Small Christian Communities Are Pastoral Priority of the Church In Tanzania*
41. *Small Christian Communities and Development in Cameroon.*

42. *Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Being Church: A Challenge to the Binja Parish Youth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.*
43. *Small Christian Communities as Agents of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation: A Case Study of Holy Mother of God Catholic Church – Githurai, Nairobi, Kenya.*
44. *Small Christian Communities as Agents of New Evangelization in Kenya.*
45. *Small Christian Communities as Agents of New Evangelization in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.*
46. *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.*
47. *Small Christian Communities as Privileged Places of Love, Service and Solidarity: A Case Study of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Ngong Diocese, Kenya.*
48. *Small Christian Communities as a Way of Deepening Christian Faith in Angola: A Case Study of Mbanza Kongo Diocese.*
49. *Small Christian Communities as a Way of Evangelization in Eastern Africa under AMECEA.*
50. *Social Differences in Small Christian Communities: A Pastoral Challenge for Deeper Evangelization in Nairobi-West Deanery, Kenya.*
51. *Towards Prophetic Involvement in Fostering God's Reign: An Interdisciplinary⁴⁷² Study on Basic Ecclesial Communities as a New Way of Being Church in India.*
52. *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 especially these Master's Theses and Long Essays on SCCs that I have been supervising/reading especially 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 Fifth Step (Pastoral Planning and Evaluation) in the Pastoral Spiral process/methodology.
2. The Third or "Act" Step in the "See," "Discern" 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

⁴⁷² Some of the interdisciplinary papers include comparisons to SCCs in Africa.

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 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.⁴⁷³

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.⁴⁷⁴

A recent 2013 evaluation states:

⁴⁷³ 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.

⁴⁷⁴ 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.

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 seed is well weeded and has enough water to assist it grow into a big tree just like the biblical mustard seed.”⁴⁷⁵

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.⁴⁷⁶

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”

⁴⁷⁵ Njuguna, Francis, “SCCs and the Future of Pastoral Mission,” *National Mirror*, 1:5 (May, 2013), 14.

⁴⁷⁶ Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 5.

goats or cattle.

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.⁴⁷⁷

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.⁴⁷⁸

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.”⁴⁷⁹

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.⁴⁸⁰

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.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁷ Hans Humer, “News: March -- April 2014 (Lent, Holy Week),” email message dated 19 April, 2014.

⁴⁷⁸ Tanzanian laywoman Irene Kessy in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 20 April, 2014.

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Rosemary Kigadye in Nairobi on 26 June, 2014. She is a member of St. Anne SCC in St. Gaspare del Bufalo Parish.

⁴⁸⁰ Joseph Ngala in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 20 January, 2015.

⁴⁸¹ Francis Ekissa in a conversation with the author in Ngong, Kenya, 13 February, 2015.

One can expect that factors such as urbanization and secularism/secularization⁴⁸² 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.”⁴⁸³ 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 Dr. Peter Kiarie and Mr. Francis Warui,⁴⁸⁴ 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. when the men who have jobs are available. 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

⁴⁸² Religion theorists call “secularization” the broad process by which religion gradually loses its social influence.

⁴⁸³ Erick Muganyizi, SCCs Facebook Page, retrieved on 4 June, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

⁴⁸⁴ Author’s conversation with Peter Kiarie and Francis Warui, Nairobi and Nakuru, Kenya, 9 March, 2015.

parishes should be reserved only for the meetings and activities of the SCCs. Dandora Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese is a good model.

Warui recalled an animated conversation with a new pastor in his parish in Nairobi who starting making changes immediately after arriving. Francis pointed out to the pastor that he was in the parish for a temporary period of time (three to six years) while the many lay Catholics were in the parish for life. There should be broad consultation before major changes are made.

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.”⁴⁸⁵

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, 2014.⁴⁸⁶ 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.

⁴⁸⁵ Caxton Peter Mayanja, “Involvements of Men in Weekly Small Christian Community Meetings in Bukalagi Parish, Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2015, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁶ Reports on this workshop can be found on the AMECEA Website (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.”

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 people carrying the *Bible* on the streets in Uganda we say “there go the Born Again Pentecostals.”⁴⁸⁷

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.⁴⁸⁸

- 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.”⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ 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.

⁴⁸⁸ 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.

⁴⁸⁹ 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.”

- 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: “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.⁴⁹⁰
- 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 teams and in the 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

⁴⁹⁰ 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 RESTRUCTURE the existing Small Christian Communities in Tororo Archdiocese.
- 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* (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.⁴⁹¹

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 AMECEA Small Christian Communities (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 Ouedraogo, 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 1st Century and the values of African culture in the 20th and 21st 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

⁴⁹¹ "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>

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 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 of the Apostles* 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."⁴⁹² Many of the local Catholics are in the traditional Pious Associations/Sodalities/Guilds/Devotional Groups or Societies or Clubs are the main Model of Church in the parish.⁴⁹³ They emphasize popular spiritual devotions, prayers, singing, often have a special identity like a uniform and 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.

At the end of the last session each participant gave a final comment, a "last word" in two minutes. I said my final comment would be just one word. I used my favorite word in Swahili *utekelezaji* that means "implementation." We had many nice discussions during the workshop, many good suggestions and recommendations, but the key now is a concrete strategy for the follow-up, the way forward, the practical action steps -- step by step. We have to build into our lives "quality time"/"priority time" for this to happen. Sometimes it is helpful and practical to use the journalists' mantra; Who, What, Where, When and How.

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

⁴⁹² Emmanuel Orobator, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 14 August, 2015.

⁴⁹³ 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.

including the United States (Father Michael Eivers⁴⁹⁴ 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.
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.”⁴⁹⁵

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.

⁴⁹⁴ 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>

⁴⁹⁵ 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>

Despite this situation, the delegates in their strategic resolutions and plans expressed their determination to use every situation to make the building of SCCs 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.
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 Archdioceses/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?⁴⁹⁶

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.

⁴⁹⁶ See Cynthia Kayla, SCCs Facebook Page, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org/posts_to_page

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:”

- 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.”⁴⁹⁷

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

⁴⁹⁷ 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.

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 *Matthew* can be rewritten in new contexts and situations today. Pope Francis says "For I was an immigrant and you welcomed me" to reaffirm his commitment to a "church of the peripheries"⁴⁹⁸

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.

⁴⁹⁸ In his over 15 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/sisters" 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 Loggia," retrieved on 19 February, 2016, <http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.co.ke/2015/11/how-can-i-not-denounce-injustices-you.html>

Francis explains that every night before going to sleep, his last prayer is: During the past day how did I live out/put into practice Jesus' challenge in *Matthew 25*: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

- 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

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 15th 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 Coordinator in Meru Diocese, Kenyan diocesan priest Father Moses Muriira and Father Joseph Healey – all three members 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.⁴⁹⁹

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 Small Christian Community (SCC) of his friend. But this was not really a SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass). The mass was **exactly the same mass** that the priest celebrates in the parish or outstation church. The priest preached and there was very little lay participation. In SCC classes, workshops, meetings and discussions this issue comes up again and again. There is a big difference between a SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass) celebrated in a home or in the neighborhood⁵⁰⁰ and a regular mass celebrated in a home or in the neighborhood.⁵⁰¹

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.⁵⁰²

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.⁵⁰³ SCCs Masses in the deaneries will begin in September, 2016 with Bishop Mugambi as the main celebrant.

⁴⁹⁹ For a Case Study of SCCs in Meru Diocese see “Small Christian Communities in Kenya as the Perfect Base for Charity, Prayer and Mercy” by Moses Murrira Muttai, Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 21 May, 2016, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/kenya/372-small-christian-communities-in-kenya-as-the-perfect-base-for-charity-prayer-and-mercy.html>

⁵⁰⁰ “Neighborhood” has several meanings. If the living room of the family hosting the SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass) is too small, then the mass takes place in the courtyard or in another nearby outside space/area in the neighborhood. If several SCCs jointly sponsor a SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass) an even larger outside space/area in the neighborhood is used.

⁵⁰¹ Evans Nyakundi, a SCC leader in Nairobi, gives another striking example. He explains that sometimes a priest says a mass in a home on the Feast Day of the Patron or Patroness Saint of the SCC. Taking over, the priest tried to narrate the history of the patron saint, when in fact, one of the lay SCCs leaders could have explained the history much better. Author's interview with Evans Nyakundi, Nairobi, Kenya, 8 February, 2017.

⁵⁰² Author's interview with Salesius Mugambi, Meru, Kenya, 14 April, 2016.

Then 120 SCCs members participated in a one-day SCCs Workshop in Nkubu Parish.



⁵⁰³ See the “Minutes of the Meru Diocese Small Christian Communities Deanery Chaplains Meeting on 21 April, 2016 in the Parlor.”



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."

Right now Meru Diocese has a lot of energy and creativity in developing its SCCs Pastoral Plan. One of the SCCs Classes at Tangaza University College in January, 2017 presented this "Case Study of the Meru Diocese SCCs Pastoral Plan:"

1. "Short History of Meru Diocese" by Mwanajumuiya Padri Father Moses Muriira.
2. "Role of the SCCs Coordinator in Meru Diocese" by Mwanajumuiya Padri Lawrence Murori.
3. "Involvement in SCCs from the Experience of a Pastor/Assistant Pastor" by Mwanajumuiya Padri Father Moses Muriira.

In the 1990s Meru Diocese had its own Lumko Course, but then there was a long dry period when many priests did not emphasize this SCC Model of Church. The main reason was that there was no diocesan coordination and animation. Also the local bishop did not emphasize the importance of SCCs and this attitude filtered down to the priests. 20 years later in 2014 a big change occurred when the new bishop appointed a Kenyan priest as the diocesan SCC coordinator. He is very active in organizing SCCs workshops and visiting parishes and encouraging the priests. Also during his canonical visitations the bishop showed interest in the SCCs and asked how they are doing in the parish. This interest filtered down to the priests.

One parish priest had not been sending lay delegates to the bi-annual SCCs Workshops. But see the new interest, he didn't want to be left behind so began sending delegates for formation and training.

In a wide ranging interview/conversation on 25 April 2016 French Little Brother of the Gospel Alain Ragueneau 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 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 sees 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 officially married in the Catholic Church. There seems to be a lack of trust between the partners and a concern over the side effects (“baggage”) of getting married.
- Training programs are necessary for better marriage preparation and accompanying newly married couples.

During a visit to the United States in Summer, 2016, I discovered a lot of interest in a wide variety of small groups of different kinds, and for different reasons. While not yet in the “mainstream” of Catholic life in the USA, Small Faith-sharing Groups are growing in importance. Four patterns:

1. Peer group Small Faith-sharing Groups. Committed Catholics want to share together with their own age group and with their own particular interests. This follows the principle of “like to like.” Some examples:
 - a. Teenagers.
 - b. College students.

Catholic college students tend to drift away from their Catholic faith during their college years when they are on their own. Some of these students say they have to find their own way, their own path in life. Just inheriting the Catholic faith from their parents and grandparents is not enough. They have to find their own faith and live their own values in their own social, cultural and religious context, for example, contemporary USA.

Some are nourished and strengthened by sharing their faith in a small,

compatible group of peers. These SCCs are increasingly important in college campus ministry programs. American Jesuit priest Thomas Rausch, SJ states:

It is extremely important to develop the various kinds of outreaches to connect with these Catholic young people [on colleges campuses], programs that orient them to their faith, Small Faith-sharing Groups where they have a chance to share their faith with others and really get in touch with, and process, some of those questions that are so important.⁵⁰⁴

A survey of campus ministry programs in many universities and colleges indicates that one campus minister on the staff is responsible for animating, promoting and coordinating small communities of different kinds.

- c. Young adults (after college graduation between 21 and 35).
2. A major challenge is the transition from college graduation to active participation in parishes and Catholic life including involvement in SCCs of young adult Catholics in many different forms, but are very elusive:⁵⁰⁵
- i. Young Adult SCC in a specific parish.
 - ii. Young Professionals (YPs) SCC in a specific parish.
 - iii. Alumni SCC of a particular college across parish lines.
 - iv. Young Professionals (YPs) SCC across parish lines.
 - v. Online Young Adult SCC (using special media such as Facebook, What'sApp, Skype)
- d. LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer). In some instances, heterosexual people join these groups to create a greater and richer diversity.
 - e. People following a particular charism. Third Order Carmelites.
 - f. Social justice and peace. Small groups connected to programs such as JustFaith are very committed.
 - h. Parish-based SCCs on many levels. There are many types of small groups in parishes in the USA, but relatively few SCCs as such.

⁵⁰⁴ Thomas Rausch, "Being Catholic in a Culture of Choice: Catholic Campus Ministry and Today's Student," *A Faith That is Known and Lived: A Conference on Catholic Campus Ministry and Its Future*, Washington, DC: FADICA, 2007, p. 11.

⁵⁰⁵ As an amusing aside, CARA at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA conducted research on how to invite young adults to participate in Small Faith Communities in the United States. One respondent said: "If I had this answer I would be the most famous person in the world."

At the same time, more research has indicated some of the various reasons why Catholics do not want to participate in small Faith-sharing communities or groups. American Sister Mary Joseph Schultz, SCC answered in one word “fear.”⁵⁰⁶ While parish-based SCCs are the ideal, many people do not want to share their personal lives, especially their weaknesses and vulnerability and their winding, up and down Christian journey with others – many whom they may not know well. They do not want to reveal themselves and their uncertainties and struggles. A *Bible* Study Group, yes. A Book Club, yes. But not a regular gathering/forum that includes sharing about one’s doubts, loneliness, divorce, sexuality, financial challenges, addictions of different kinds, etc.

American laywoman Pam Spellman emphasizes that parish-based Small Faith-sharing Groups need to grow and develop an identity, a bonding over a period of time. This needs a consistency in the membership and in the participation. Small groups that have new members and new sign-ups each semester or liturgical season have more trouble bonding and developing a rapport that gradually allows sharing on a deeper level. Some members even drop out if the sharing becomes too personal.⁵⁰⁷

Alphonse Omolo who has had wide experience animating SCCs in England, Germany, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and USA says that it takes a long time to develop successful small Faith-sharing communities. At the beginning members can have different expectations – a prayer group, *Bible* Study, a social club, group counseling, even therapeutic sessions. They have to slowly create a safe place for sharing and build up the trust level. He started a SCC in a parish in London, England and it was slow going. The participants did not want to share their personal lives and their struggles. They said, “my life is private.” Eventually they bonded.⁵⁰⁸

3. An important component of Parish Renewal Programs:

There are a number of Catholics who have renewal, conversion and transformation experiences in a wide variety of renewal programs in retreats, spiritual weekends, pilgrimages, etc. that integrate Small Faith-sharing Groups. Participants are enriched by sharing their spiritual journeys, experiences and questions. Then they want to continue in ongoing small groups as part of their spiritual life.

Peter Feuerherd writes:

For many years [RENEW International](#) has promoted a reliance on small groups to galvanize parish life. RENEW is based largely on Vatican II theology. It grew out of renewal movements popular with Catholics in the 1970s with the intent of bringing that energy into parish life via Small Faith-sharing Groups. The idea, popular in Latin America, is that by

⁵⁰⁶ Author’s conversation with Mary Joseph Schultz, New Vernon, New Jersey, 17 July, 2016.

⁵⁰⁷ Author’s conversation with Pam Spellman, New Vernon, New Jersey, 18 July, 2016.

⁵⁰⁸ Author’s conversation on Skype with Alphonse Omolo, 17 July, 2016 and in person, Nairobi, Kenya, 12 May, 2017.

bringing Catholics together in small groups to reflect upon the Scriptures, parishes will be transformed.⁵⁰⁹

4. Part of a reflection process in SCCs using modules of four to five weeks based on current themes and topics such as a recent encyclical such as *Laudato Si* and the 2016 Year of Mercy.

Specifically, we are preparing an “Encounter of College Students Involved in Small Christian Communities” to take place in late July--early August, 2017 at Manhattan College Riverdale, New York, USA. The 110 participants will include three three-member teams (delegations) from Africa: Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya; Lusaka, Zambia; and the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) – Pax Romana -- (Nairobi, Kenya; Benin; Paris, France). The “Background Note” to the meeting states:

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is the “umbrella” term/overall term used in this Encounter and is the most common expression for this new way of being or becoming church/new pastoral model of church in many parts of the world. Different terms are used in English in different places. BCC means “Basic Christian Community” and BEC means “Base [Basic] Ecclesial Community” and is sometimes written “Ecclesial Base [Basic] Community.” A variety of names are used in the USA. In some parishes and colleges/universities in the USA the specific name “Small Christian Communities” is not known or used, that is, it has very little “Name Recognition.” People would more immediately recognize “Small Groups” or “Small Prayer Groups” or “Small Church Communities” or “Small Faith Communities” or “Small Faith-sharing Communities” or “Small Bible Study Groups” or “Campus RENEW Groups” or “Christian Life Communities (CLCs).”

The challenge is to create a successful “branding”⁵¹⁰ of the name, identity and meaning of Small Christian Communities. “Communities” is deeper and more focused than the generic “groups” that can cover everything. “Christian” helps to give the SCC members a specific identity. In their weekly meetings SCC members emphasize both the values of Faith-sharing and *Bible* reflection. A combined version is lectionary-based Faith-sharing.

The SCCs courses at various theological institutions in Nairobi are revised and updated each year according to the local context and reading “the signs of the times.” This includes both the content of the courses and the teaching methods (websites, free online ebook, Powerpoint Presentation).

⁵⁰⁹ Peter Feuerherd, “Parish Renewal Groups Teach Lessons from Megachurches,” National Catholic Reporter (NCR), 7 July, 2016, NCR Website, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/parish-renewal-groups-teach-lessons-megachurches>

⁵¹⁰ Successful examples are the Oilers SCC in Denver, Colorado and Shekein SCC in South Bend, Indiana.



Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team Teaching in the SCCs Course at Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya.



Alphonse Omolo and Joe Healey of the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team Teaching in the SCCs Course at Tangaza College in Nairobi, Kenya.

Extensive research has identified these 13 common and reoccurring major obstacles/barriers/challenges (*vikwazo* in Swahili) in the growth of SCCs in Eastern Africa.

- Time Management: Two issues:
 1. Not coming on time to weekly SCC meetings and other activities.
 2. The facilitator not planning well the time for the various steps of the weekly SCCs meeting (one hour as the norm).
- Poor and inconsistent leadership.
- Poor and inconsistent attendance.
- Lack of men.
- Lack of youth.
- Members talk about money too much. This can turn the SCC into a fund raising group and people drop out of the SCC.
- Catholic Church leaders (priests and PPC members) do not emphasize the importance of SCCs.
- SCCs are too large (sometimes members of one SCC can be 100 or more) and there is a reluctance to divide them into smaller SCCs.

- Difficulty in understanding the difference between a SCC and a Small Apostolic Group/Traditional Parish Organization or Association in the parish.
- Tribalism and discrimination.
- During the *Bible* sharing/reflection some members tend to preach rather than share.
- Lack of a basic understanding of the meaning and purpose of SCCs.
- Few personal *Bibles* in individual homes.

Our ongoing research focuses on how many dioceses in Eastern Africa have SCCs Coordinators. Italian Consolata Bishop Pante Virgilio of Maralal Diocese reports that Kenyan layman Peter Kemuyieo Lenssuda is the SCCs Coordinator of Maralal, Kenya and that “his efforts has brought productivity and he has worked tirelessly to reach out far and beyond.”

Peter describes the SCCs Pastoral Priority in Maralal Diocese as follows:

1. Restructure the existing SCCs in our diocese.
2. Prioritize the establishment of Youth SCCs.
3. Introduce the Word of God and SCC Masses in our diocese.
4. Emphasize forgiveness in our SCCs because SCCs are the “Church in the Neighborhood.” Staying at peace with each other will curb out cattle rustling.
5. Implore the parish priests to participate in SCCs meetings so as to know and give guidance as necessary.

These SCCs pastoral priorities set a good example for all the dioceses in Kenya.

One ongoing discussion and research in the AMECEA Region is about the best structures to promote SCCs on the regional, national, diocesan, parish, sub-parish and outstation levels. Proposals that cover coordination, formation and training and networking include:

1. SCCs Offices.
2. SCCs Desks. The AMECEA Pastoral Department, “Phase One -- AMECEA Pastoral Department Action Plan 2015-2018” in “Implementation of AMECEA Strategic Pastoral Plan 2014-2024.” Goal 1: “Promote New and Deeper Evangelization” under “Strategies” states: “Create SCC Desks and Operation Structures at National Conference and Diocesan Levels.” One model is the Family Life Desk in the National Catholic Secretariat of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB). One challenge in Kenya is that parish-based SCCs are under the Pastoral Department while school-based SCCs like YSCCs are under the Education Department.
3. Mobile SCCs Training Teams. Described in other places in the Ebook.
4. Online SCCs Networking Teams including online activities such as *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection.

Crucial issues are personnel, transportation, network connectivity and finance.

From Thursday, 4 May, 2017 to Saturday, 6 May, 2017 we had a Workshop on “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Today” for priests and lay leaders in Kakamega Diocese, Kenya. The objective of the workshop was to revitalize and reenergize SCCs as a

means of evangelizing and pastoral development. It took place at the Bishop Stam Pastoral Center, Kakamega. We launched the 80-page booklet *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators* edited by Emmanuel Chimombo, Joseph G. Healey, Rita Ishengoma, Rose Musimba, Febian P. Mulenga and Alphonse C. L. Omolo, Nairobi: AMECEA Pastoral Department, 2017. This SCCs Workshop was facilitated by the AMECEA Team, specifically the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team.

It was mentioned that at the AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 2011, Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, pointed out that one of the drawbacks for the solidarity of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa is that many Catholics on the grassroots do not easily see the link between AMECEA (that comes across as a big organization of Catholic bishops at the top) and the 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 just an institution of the bishops.” *Seed 23: 8-9* (August-September 2011), p. 9. SCCs are a special concrete way on the local level for this to happen.

From Monday, 8 May, 2017 to Thursday, 11 May, 2017 we had a Workshop on “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Today” for priests in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya. It was part of a series of on-going formation programs for priests. There were 36 participants including Kenyan Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth, the Archbishop of Kisumu Archdiocese who officially opened the workshop. The objective of this workshop was to reenergize SCCs as a means of evangelizing and to bring back the communal vibrancy of our faith within the neighborhoods. It took place at the Ukweli Pastoral Center in Kisumu.

One talk at the workshop was on “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 or induction.

There are various leadership models, types and styles of lay ecclesial ministry. In the spirit of being a new way of being and becoming church, the emphasis is on service rather than authority, especially servant leadership. A lay ecclesial minister is a servant of the servants. A lay minister is not a boss. There are two distinct roles. Sometimes this lay ministry is to animate, facilitate and coordinate activities within the SCC. Sometimes this lay ministry represents the SCC at the outstation, sub-parish and parish levels.

Two major paradigm shifts have occurred in the Catholic Church. First, SCC members (the great majority are laymen and lay women) are now pastoral agents of evangelization and pastoral ministry (real “subjects” and not just the “objects” as in the past). We are emphasizing the official name “lay ecclesial ministry” for the leaders in the SCCs and at the higher levels. Second, SCCs in the neighborhoods are themselves the place (or *locus*) of evangelization and pastoral ministry.

So in Kisumu Archdiocese we are trying to introduce the official name of "lay ecclesial ministries" for the different offices or services or leadership roles in the SCCs and on the outstation, sub-parish, parish and archdiocesan levels.

St. Boniface Catholic Church, Aluor Parish, Gem in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya offers an interesting Case Study of one new way that the SCC is the actual physical "place" of evangelization and pastoral ministry. The parish priest Kenyan Father Anthony Futah explains how his pastoral visitation program involves using a "Mobile Office." The parish has 75 SCCs. Every week from Tuesday to Friday he visits one specific SCC for a whole day. He brings his office files and registers SCC members for baptism, confirmation, marriage, etc. He does pastoral counseling and discusses various pastoral cases in the SCC. There is time for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the day concludes with Mass.

During the SCCs Workshop in Kisumu, Kenya I presented a "critical incident" of what I call "'We haven't been told yet' lay Catholics." On Saturday, 25 February, 2017, the day of the National Launch of the 2017 Kenyan Lenten Campaign in Nairobi, Kenya, in Consolata Shrine parking lot in Westlands, Nairobi I met around 20 dedicated, committed lay Catholics (including catechists and SCC leaders) of Kisumu Archdiocese who had traveled overnight from Kisumu to Nairobi in two minivans. I asked them when the campaign would be launched in Kisumu. They answered: "We haven't been told yet," that is, the priests hadn't told them yet the timetable for the launch and the training program in Kisumu Archdiocese itself. Ideally this would have been several weeks before since the Lenten booklets arrived early in all the dioceses. This story makes me very sad. Here was the old model of church: Hierarchical, clerical, top down. The lay people waiting to be told, rather than taking the pastoral and social initiatives themselves.

I shared Pope Francis' challenging teaching that dramatic changes are occurring in the Catholic Church worldwide – a shift from the traditional pyramid model (with the popes, bishops and priests at the top and the lay people at the bottom) to the inverted pyramid model of church: *The Tablet* (7 January, 2017) states:

Pope Francis' reforms should not be seen as personal projects, but a continuation and revitalization of the reform movement that began with the Second Vatican Council. The Catholic Church, Francis explains, is an inverted pyramid, with the People of God at the top and its priests and bishops, including the pope, below: a church that sees leadership as service, that engages in a dialog with the world and offers it the medicine of mercy.

In closing the workshop Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth, the Archbishop of Kisumu Archdiocese, emphasized the importance of the pastoral plan of the archdiocese saying: "SCCs are a new way of life in Kisumu Archdiocese today. This means introducing new ways in our pastoral work." He particularly praised the SCCs for being a source of vocations to the priesthood and religious life and nurturing these vocations.

Our new book

Chimombo, Emmanuel, Joseph G. Healey, Rita Ishengoma, Rose Musimba, Febian P. Mulenga and Alphonse C. L. Omolo, (eds.), *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators*, Nairobi: AMECEA Pastoral Department and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2017.

was launched at the Meeting of the AMECEA Executive Board at the AMECEA Secretariat on Friday, 19 May 2017. Two key points:

1. There should be editions in other languages such as Swahili (East and Central Africa and Chewa (Malawi).
2. Within the Mother (or *Mama*) SCC there can be Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and Children Small Christian Communities (CSCCs) that are like PMC SCCs.



Alphonse C. L. Omolo and Joe Healey presented the *SCCs Facilitators Handbook* at the Meeting of the AMECEA Executive Board at the AMECEA Secretariat on Friday, 19 May 2017.

The need for facilitation can be seen in many ways especially in rural parishes. A dramatic example. With a Novena to prepare for the Feast of Pentecost on 4 June, 2017 the SCC members in Our Lady of Consolata Shrine Parish in Westlands, Nairobi were well aware of the importance of this feast and the coming of the Holy Spirit. But in a rural parish

in Kisii Diocese a loyal Catholic couple (a farmer and his wife) participated in their normal SCC meeting on the afternoon of Ascension “Sunday.” Following the plan of the SCC, the Gospel of the following Pentecost Sunday (*John 20:19-23*) was read, but with no introduction or explanation. So the couple knew nothing about the overall liturgical plan or that the following Sunday was the second most important day of the Catholic Church year (after Easter Sunday). It was just a regular Sunday.

In our ongoing research we find that for some Catholics “Daily Lectionary-based Faith-sharing” is becoming increasingly important, both individually and in small communities. The reading and shared reflections can be on both on the First Reading and the Gospel or on just the Gospel. It takes different platforms:

1. Daily scripture posts on Small Christian Communities Facebook Page and other related Facebook Pages thanks to Alloys Nyakundi.
2. Some SCCs have WhatsApp Small Communities (preferred to “groups”) where they share daily about the *Bible* and other activities of the SCCs both by audio and video chat and by text.
3. Some SCCs have Skype Small Communities where they share daily about the *Bible* and other activities of the SCCs both by audio and video chat and by text.
4. Email messages and websites like the “Daily Gospel,” “Laudate,”
5. Specific faith-based reflections like the daily “Gospel Reflection from Notre Dame.”
6. Reading and reflecting on the daily homilies of Pope Francis in St. Martha’s Hostel in Rome. He tries to connect the scripture readings to our daily lives.

A relatively new dynamic is Eastern Africans Catholics who move to the USA and then want to continue to participate in some kind of SCC Model of Church just as they experienced back in their home African countries. First, these people want to promote the African values of community, personal relationships and mutual support – in an American society focused on privacy and individualism. Second, Sunday Mass in a large anonymous parish is not enough. So African small communities of many different kinds are springing up in Boston, Massachusetts, Jersey City, New Jersey, Baltimore, Maryland, Dallas, Texas and other places. These include Swahili Masses on Sunday, social events and various forms of SCC networking.

Here is an interesting Case Study that is more than a random anecdote and is really a critical pastoral incident:

Kenyan Bishop Joseph Obanyi was born in the Kisii area of Kenya and later became the Bishop of Kakamega, Kenya. He has a cousin who was a fervent Catholic and a dedicated Small Christian Community (SCC) member in her Kisii Parish. When she moved to New Jersey, USA she seemed overwhelmed by American secularism. She did not receive a good welcome in her new Catholic parish, had no support group and seemed “lost in America.” When Obanyi met her in New Jersey, she had left the Catholic Church and joined an Evangelical Church that was very welcoming and stressed the personal relationships and community building that she was used to enjoy in the SCCs in Kenya. The bishop was shocked. What had happened to her?

The bishop and I agreed: If his cousin had found a Catholic SCC “support group” in New Jersey she would still be an active, practicing Catholic today. So the SCC Model of Church can help to reverse the tide of Catholic “losses” to other Christian denominations in USA? A variety of SCCs (physical and online) can provide welcome, hospitality and a “home” support community to Africans living in the USA. The SCC can provide immediate welcome and hospitality in the local neighborhood and not wait for some distant and more general Parish Hospitality Committee to take action.

As we read and respond to the signs of the times, this message on our SCC Facebook Page is significant:

Raphael Okusaga writes from Lagos, Nigeria: “There will be workshop for all parish SCC leaders and facilitators at Holy Cross Cathedral in Lagos, Nigeria on Saturday, 2 December 2017 beginning at 10 am. We will be discussing child abuses and the roles of SCCs in protecting children in the neighborhood. We want the awareness and reawakening to start from the SCC Centers. This is very important for the Catholic Church in Africa today.”

A person in Kenya replied: “This is an interesting area for discussion and action by the SCC's. We should think of a similar event locally in Kenya.”

Omolo comments:

I find this a very valuable plan by the Catholic Church in Lagos, Nigeria. Considering the fact that we work with many children in our churches in many activities, their protection against violence by the adults working closely with them and against violation from fellow children and a child protection policy should be a matter of priority in every parish and its grassroots structures. It is very encouraging to give valuable attention to the SCCs since there is great opportunity to spread this to all sections of our society. Child Protection is my professional practice so the idea of integrating child protection measures in the SCCs gives me great joy and encouragement. It is something we should have started decades ago. This is a major encouragement to the Catholic Church in Africa and I am hopeful that we all can implement measures to protect children in our churches and communities.⁵¹¹

The St. Charles Lwanga Swahili Community in St. Alphonsus Parish, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis⁵¹², Minnesota, USA offers an interesting Case Study of responding to the signs of the times. The community was started in 2010 by Kenyan Catholics who wanted to continue in the USA the SCCs experience of church that they enjoyed and appreciated growing up in Kenya. These African Catholics who had immigrated to the USA wanted to continue to live their community values (religious and social) from

⁵¹¹ Alphonse Omolo, email message to the author, 5 November, 2017.

⁵¹² Based on conversions with Geoffrey Korir, Loice Sigei, Margaret Nyoike and Stella Nduta in Minnesota from 23 to 29 May, 2018.

their African homelands. St. Alphonsus Parish has provided a home for these Swahili-speaking Kenyan Catholics to foster unity and community.

The community of perhaps 150 people of different ethnic groups in Kenya now has a monthly mass in Swahili in St. Alphonsus Parish sometimes followed by a meal and six geographical SCCs (Saints Francis of Assisi, Joseph the Worker, Kizito, Our Lady of Fatima, Teresa of Calcutta and Vincent) that meet monthly in their homes for prayer, Rosary and Gospel reflection (either the Gospel of the previous or following Sunday). One SCC animates the monthly community mass. Active WhatsApp groups (both the whole community and of each SCC) and an Email Mailing List connects all the members. The community provides support for children's education, baptisms, weddings, baby showers and funerals. The community has a Benevolent Fund with a Bank Account to provide financial support for members who have lost loved ones. There is a Coordinating Committee of the Chairperson, Secretary and the Leaders of the six SCCs. Presently By-laws are being written of the St. Charles Lwanga Swahili Community. There are seven men and three women on the Drafting Committee.

There is an active Women's SCC that meets one Saturday a month, the day before the Swahili Mass in the homes of members: for prayer, songs, the Rosary and *Bible* Sharing (one woman reads her favorite *Bible* Passage and reflects on its meaning in her life). The SCC has two retreats a year. The community has a Men's SCC that meets occasionally for social and fundraising activities.

Like all SCCs, St. Charles Lwanga Swahili Community has growing pains and continues to face new challenges as it creates the path by walking. The present leadership struggles to keep the focus on the basic meaning and practice of SCCs and not be hijacked by other priorities such as:

- Money, fund raising and self-help projects.
- Envisioning the SCC as a NGO.
- Social activities such as events connected to the marriages of SCCs members.
- Devotional practices that divert the SCC from focus on the *Bible*.

A SCC workshop took place on 27 May, 2018 on "Growing St. Charles Lwanga Swahili Community in St. Alphonsus Parish." The three facilitators responded to the answers of participants to the question: "Give a burning challenge for the growth of Small Christian Communities in St. Charles Lwanga Swahili Community?" A present challenge is handing over leadership. The general guideline worldwide is that the chairperson can have two terms of three years – a total of six years. Term limits should be observed the health and growth of the SCC. It was pointed out how the abuse of term limits has caused tensions in many African governments and the same problem has occurred in our SCC.

When the St. Charles Lwanga Swahili Community could not agree on new leadership the pastor put parish-wide activities on hold. One member wrote: "The interim leadership for our *Jumuiya* that was supposed to be selected this month in Minnesota was not done and instead our *Jumuiya* was put on suspension by Fr. Don until we sort our problems between ourselves first. The small *jumuiya* groups, prayer groups and women groups are still operational except we can't do any activities at the church."

There is a plan to have a future workshop on “The Basic Meaning and Practice of SCCs.”

In June, 2018 I visited a parish in Baltimore Archdiocese, Maryland, USA. I had a very nice conversation with a layman who was on the Parish Coordination Team –responsible for the church properties. He was a very committed Catholic. He explained that he grew up Jewish, but converted to the Catholic Faith when he married his Catholic wife. When I asked him my favorite question – Do you read the Gospel before going into church on Sunday morning? – he answered, “No, but it is a good idea.” He explained that the Parish Coordination Team does not read the scripture before having its regular meetings – a pastoral practice some parish committees follow. The parish has SCCs that meet weekly, but this layman is too busy to join one. He said that at the annual Staff Retreat in January, 2018, his resolution was to start reading the Gospel of the following Sunday, but now it was June, 2018 and he hadn’t started yet. Some many good Catholics are like this person: good intentions in reading the *Bible*, but not making it a priority and a regular commitment.

I visited the Los Angeles, California area in the first half of July, 2018. When I asked American Deacon Fred Rose of [American Martyrs Parish](#) in Manhattan Beach if there are Small Christian Communities, he commented, “nothing is small in California.”⁵¹³ But this parish and other parishes in Los Angeles have many active small groups.

One small group in the parish is called “Sunday Readings in Context” that meets every Wednesday from 7:30—9 p.m. Ideally the Sunday readings should be read and reflected on in the context of the lectionary cycle and the liturgical season. For example, the five 17th to 21st Sundays in Ordinary Time, Year B (29 July, 2018 to 26 August, 2018) use consecutive readings from John 6 about Jesus’ teaching on the Eucharist (the miracle of the loaves/the bread of life). They should be understood as a unit.

Context is a very important term in growing⁵¹⁴ SCCs. One of the five choices in the every two months Poll on the SCCs Website for July-August, 2018 is “Adapts to the local context.”

While the *Bible* is used in different small groups in these parishes, emphasis on being lectionary-based Catholics especially using the Gospel of the following Sunday is very rare. When I presented our research that 95% of American Catholics do not read the Gospel before going into church on Sunday morning, one Catholic layperson said, “That figure is low. It is more like 98%.”

A striking exception is [St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church](#) in Yorba Linda, Orange Diocese, California, USA that has 26 active SCCs led by well-trained facilitators. It is a very good example of “best practices” in parishes in the USA. The only feature missing is growing successful Young Adult Small Christian Communities (YASCCS). These specific small communities come and go based on the active Catholic young adults in the parish at a particular time. These YASCCS are hard to sustain on a permanent basis.

⁵¹³ Fred Rose, conversation with the author, Manhattan Beach, California, 1 July, 2018.

⁵¹⁴ The term “growing,” originally popularized by Evangelical Churches to describe their missionary expansion, is now common in Catholic circles to describe multiplying SCCs.

Over many years this parish tried different spiritual and pastoral renewal programs such as RENEW, Disciples in Mission and Generations of Faith that focus on the small groups model. But these programs were introduced from the outside, for example, from the Pastoral Center of Orange Diocese, and never fully owned by the local Catholic parishioners. So, the small groups slowly fizzled out after the renewal programs were over. In 2010 a committed SCCs core team within the parish designed and proposed a new Small Christian Communities ministry from the grassroots up to Catholics in the parish who want something more than just Sunday Mass and who are interested in growing deeper in their faith and community. The invitation on the parish website states:

This ministry is made up of over 300 parishioners, who have a desire to understand more about our faith, how it affects our daily life, and all aspects of Christian Community Life. We meet to break open the readings of the upcoming Sunday and prepare ourselves to embrace them at Mass. We meet in groups of 10 --12 people, in one's home, weekly or bi-weekly. Meetings, including social time, last about two hours. Friendships develop that last a lifetime. If our Lord is calling you to spread your wings and move closer to him, consider SCC your path to achieving this goal.⁵¹⁵

A key is flexibility. A parishioner in St. Martin de Porres can join a SCC in one of the seven geographical zones in the parish (very important because of the long driving time in California) or a special interest/shared interest small community such as (listed alphabetically): divorced/widows, empty nesters, moms-of-toddlers, newly married couples, young adults and seniors. "A SCC is intended to be a small church, providing not just Faith-sharing discussion, but a group of friends who support each other, pray together, study their faith and reach out to others in need. The important thing is that the group functions as a spiritual unit, much like a family."⁵¹⁶ Presently the SCCs use the commentary in the biblical resource *Insights*.

Mark Jablonski, one of the SCCs Core Team Facilitators, states:

In the eight years we have been in our SCC my wife Kris and I have come to experience a new source of strength and comfort in our lives. Our SCC has taught us how much we value our parish community and the support they provide us. We have come to appreciate our meetings as a time when we can slow down, breathe in God's spirit and share how the gospel applies to our lives. When we come together as "big church" each Sunday at mass, the experience is even more personal and intimate because of the time we have taken in reflecting on the readings. As one of our members has said, SCCs are "soup of the soul."⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ Small Christian Communities, [St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church Website](https://smdpyl.org/small-christian-communities), retrieved on 22 July, 2018, <https://smdpyl.org/small-christian-communities>

⁵¹⁶ "Overview" of the *Small Christian Communities Facilitator's Guide*, Yorba Linda, California: privately printed, 2017.

⁵¹⁷ Mark Jablonski, "Pulpit Appeal -- Talk on SCCs" at St. Martin de Porres Parish masses, 2018.

Altogether there are 62 ministries in the parish including (listed alphabetically): bereavement (Grief Support), Grace Women's Group, Men's Group and **WINGS (Women IN God's Spirit)**.

Our AMECEA SCCs Training Team visited Bishop Linus of Nebbi Diocese, Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu Archdiocese and Sister Lona Cypriani of Palorinyi Refugee Settlement of Arua Diocese, Uganda on Thursday, 9 August, and Friday, 10 August, 2018. Their overall comments on northern Uganda are as follows:

1. Many factors have negatively affected the growth of SCCs in northern Uganda: the long lasting war with Joseph Kony in northern Uganda and the subsequent fight over land; the war in South Sudan and the one and a half million South Sudanese refugees who have flooded into northern Uganda; and the rising influence of the evangelical churches. The SCCs have slowed down and lack trained leaders. The SCCs need to be reinvigorated and reenergized with leadership training the first priority.
2. Providing the Eucharist to the Catholics in the out-station is a challenge. A newer approach is for the catechist to carry the Eucharist to the "Sunday Service Without a Priest" on a motorcycle or a car. Ideally the transportation is provided by the wealthier Catholics in the outstations. Interestingly enough, the women catechists are more effective than the men catechists in various places.
3. Catholic boarding schools should automatically have YSCCs.

Saturday, 1 September, 2018

A "One-day Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Pastoral Solutions Workshop" took place at Immaculate Conception Parish, Mavurunza, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. It was facilitated by Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH and Father Joseph Healey, MM, members of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team. In examining the local reality some challenges in Dar es Salaam are:

Unemployed
HIV/AIDS
Fistula
Diabetes
Refugees
IDP

Visiting Dandora Parish in Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday, 16 September, 2018 12 members of the Missio-sponsored Network Small Christian Communities Africa Workshop came up with a new mantra: *We create new paths by walking based on the local context*. I interviewed three Kenyan members of the newly formed Young Adult Small Christian Community (YASCC): a 26-year-old male recent college graduate looking for a job; a 27-year-old female secondary school teacher; and a 29-year-old male baker. After some years in one of the six Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in the parish, they joined the Young Catholic Adult Community for the 25 to 35-year-old age group. Their needs and interests as young working people is different than for students and younger people. They are excited to grow their faith in a new way with their young adult peers. This reinforces the

principle that forming specific peer group Small Christian Communities for each age group is a priority in Africa today.

In light of so many young people leaving the Catholic Church in Africa and worldwide, I asked the young baker why he was at the Catholic Church on Sunday afternoon when he could have been watching a football match on TV or at a bar and or just hanging out with his friends. He said: “For my Catholic Faith I need to be here today.” He felt nourished and inspired by the weekly meeting (that included *Bible* Reflection on the Gospel of the following Sunday) and other activities of his YASCC. He personally has this felt need, while at the same time commenting that his younger brother sadly does not go to church anymore.

In various discussions Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo has pointed out the key distinction between the specific Young People (Youth and Young Adults) Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) and the wide variety of Youth Groups and Youth Organizations in the context of youth ministry and the lay apostolate. There are many parish youth groups that do not have an SCC component.

On Tuesday, 20 November, 2018 we facilitated a half-Day Workshop on “How CEBs/SCCs/BCCs/BECs Are a New Model of Church Today” at Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MLM) Orientation Program in Maryknoll, New York. There were 12 Lay Missioners, one Maryknoll Sister and one program coordinator. Each new workshop provides new discussions and new insights. Each participant reported on one chapter in the book *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* on the SCCs related to where he or she is going in mission – Bolivia, El Salvador, Kenya and Tanzania. It was pointed out that this book was published in 2005 with some research that goes back 20 years. So, we are challenged to look at the “new moment” in this year 2018. Specific examples were how the CEBs in Chile have gone down in the past 10 years and how fund raising (what we call the *Michango* (Swahili for collections) Church dominates many SCCs in Tanzania. Using Zoom technology we connected live with Maryknoll Lay Missioner Rick Dixon in San Salvador, El Salvador where he reported on the newly canonized St. Oscar Romero and his historical involvement in CEBs.

The Holy Family Minor Basilica in Nairobi, Kenya has an interesting “both...and” pastoral structure: 10 SCCs and 14 Solidarity Groups such as the [Catholic Women Association](#), [Young Adults](#), [Pontifical Missionary Childhood](#), [Couples For Christ](#), [Charismatic Renewal Group](#) and [Legion of Mary](#). The December, 2018 issue of the basilica magazine called *The Basilican* includes articles on:

1. “The Basilican Parish Pastoral Council:” includes representatives from
 - a. Ecclesial Movements.
 - b. Devotional Groups.
 - c. Small Christian Communities (total of 12).
2. “Story of St Dominic Small Christian Community.”
3. “St. Augustine Small Christian Community: Taking the Gospel to Prisons.”⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁸ Articles in *The Basilican: The Catholic Magazine*, Volume 1, Issue 8 (December, 2018).

ADD

The 6th Meeting of the “Network of Small Christian Communities in Africa” took place at the TEC Kurasini Conference and Training Center, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from 9 to 12 September, 2019. We reviewed the history of our network:

- 1st Meeting – Accra, Ghana, 2014
- 2nd Meeting – Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 2015
- 3rd Meeting – Nairobi, Kenya, 2016
- 4th Meeting – Kinshasa, DRC, 2017
- 5th Meeting -- Nairobi, Kenya, 2018
- 6th Meeting – Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 2019

On the opening day⁵¹⁹ Mwanajumuiya Bishop Method Kilaini had two interesting comments:

1. If SCCs in Africa have many challenges, this is a sign that they are alive and active.
2. There is a danger that SCCs become agents of fund raising rather than agents of evangelization.

Sister Joséé Ngalula presented an interesting report on SCCs/CEVBs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that used a very colorful and attractive silk cloth in French that explained the Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base (CEVB) in Kinshasa Archdiocese. The archdiocese is divided into 14 deaneries.

Center: A circle with a drawing of two hands holding three flames from three burning logs, an open *Bible* and 14 heads symbolizing the 14 deaneries with the words:

“Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base (CEVB)” – in English “Living Base Ecclesial Communities”
 “For One Church Family of God”

Around the circle: “Archdiocese of Kinshasa: Towards a New Evangelization”

⁵¹⁹ For a summary of the Opening Session see Sarah Pelaji, “TANZANIA: Pastoral Coordinator Calls AMECEA Counties to Promote Small Christian Communities,” *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 296, 13 September, 2019, <https://amecea.blogspot.com/2019/09/tanzania-pastoral-coordinator-calls.html#!/2019/09/tanzania-pastoral-coordinator-calls.html>

Around the sides of the square cloth: smaller circles representing the deaneries with the names of the parishes.

Many CEVB icons or logos spread across the cloth

Members participated in two different SCCs on 11 September in Chan'gombe Parish in Dar es Salaam. Altogether the parish has 39 SCCs. The Dar es Salaam Archdiocese has grown to 117 parishes. The active involvement of children and the spirit of SCCs as a way of life were highlights of both SCC gatherings. One team participated in St. Gertrude SCC whose members choose new leaders. They read from the First Letter of *Peter* "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."

During the meeting we asked for information on the meaning and practice of "Synodality." Here is a challenging article by Father Myron Pereira, SJ, a media consultant based in Mumbai, India:

"Synodality Means 'Walking Together': How Pope Francis is Shaping a New Conversation in the Church"

Today we have a pope who is willing to make changes when there is a pastoral need. This was seen five years ago, at the very first Synod on the Family (October 2014) which the pope held in Rome. The 2014 synod was like no other — for two important reasons. Firstly, the bishops took as their topic the Catholic family and its pressures in today's society, basing itself on surveys which had been circulated worldwide at least six months before. Earlier synods had been largely on doctrinal issues. These surveys brought up pastoral issues never spoken of in public in the Church: communion for divorced Catholics; artificial contraception and its use among Catholics; and homosexuality promoted as an alternate lifestyle. And in the context of South Asia, the growing place of interfaith marriages and solidarity with persecuted Catholic families, especially where these are Dalits and tribal people. The interim report prepared at this synod was circulated to all the dioceses in the Catholic Church and the pope asked that these results should be studied and discussed by everyone.

Which brings me to the next point: the way in which the discussions took place.

"Speak up!"

During earlier synods bishops and cardinals kept mum. It was the pope who spoke and handed over a prepared report. No one was allowed to discuss anything in public. This is how things used to be. No longer! Pope Francis insists that everyone — bishops, priests, laity — "speak up!" He wants a Catholic Church where everyone participates. This is so astonishingly new that it takes a long time getting used to. For as long as we can remember, no one was allowed to question anything which came from church authority, which might mean the pope or your local parish priest. The worst time in recent years was during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, who censured bishops and theologians for raising questions on church policy and doctrine. In other words, Catholic religious formation, which was known to rest upon free critical inquiry, receded to the level of indoctrination, as any formation does which represses freedom.

Long ago one of the ways in which Vatican II described the Catholic Church was "a pilgrim people" that captures the image of a large mass of pilgrims moving toward a common

goal. The word "synod" implies this meaning: people walking together. Yet another term is "accompaniment," as when different people share each other's joys and trials, and assist each other thereto. In the Indian tradition, the word is *samanvaya*. "Synodality"/"*samanvaya*" means being accustomed to different paces, to different partners, to different narratives. There are no heretics anymore where the narrative is one of dialogue. In this as well as in so many other ways, Pope Francis has shaped a new style of conversation in the Church.

A big question for our SCCs Network: What are the implications of "Synodality" for the development of SCCs in Africa?

We try hard to make this SCCs Facebook Page a place to share experiences and ideas -- a forum for discussion and reflection. We posted this message:

After a great deal of research and consultation we have determined that the five essential characteristics or criteria of the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa are:

1. Size: 15-20 members participate in the weekly physical gatherings. The total number of members may be much larger.
2. Weekly lectionary-based faith-sharing that connects the Gospel to daily life.
3. Structurally connected to the parish as a "community of communities" pastoral, ecclesial model of church.
4. Regular practical action and outreach.
5. Ongoing formation and training of SCC leaders and members.

All these essential characteristics are in the context that in Eastern Africa SCCs are a way of life, not just a program or project in the parish.

Please give your comments, feedback, criticisms, further suggestions.

The popular saying -- *When God closes a door, somewhere He opens a window*⁵²⁰ – provides a good metaphor for reading the signs of the times today. In Kenya in March, 2020 during the terrible coronavirus pandemic crisis a door closed, namely the Kenyan Government wisely ordered that our Catholic Churches be closed and that our weekly Small Christian Communities (SCCs) physical meetings be suspended. But then a new window opened, namely Online Small Christian Communities that are also called Virtual SCCs and Digital SCCs. SCC members in Kenya are using (alphabetically) Facebook, Facetime, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Microsoft Team, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom and other social media platforms to meet weekly on the internet. SCC members send text messages, audio clips and video clips to their weekly online meetings. Our motto: *Go digital or die*.

⁵²⁰ This saying has a long and interesting history. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s perhaps the best known Broadway Musical in Catholic circles in Eastern Africa was the *Sound of Music* (original play 1959). The movie version (1965) was shown and reshowed in Catholic convents, religious houses and seminaries everywhere. Julie Andrews was much loved. There is the famous scene when Maria is leaving the convent and says goodbye to the Mother Superior who says that Maria does not have a vocation to religious life but has a special call in the outside world. Then she gives the memorable line *When God closes a door, somewhere He opens a window*.

During this Covid-19 pandemic we have finished one month of weekly Online SCCs using various social media platforms that focus on reading and reflecting on the Gospel of the following Sunday. Now the SCCs are reaching out to the hungry and the needy in our local neighborhoods. What is new in this SCC Model of Church in the AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa is that the SCC members themselves choose the neediest people and families in their local

neighborhoods and then the SCC members themselves actually distribute the food packets on the ground.

In our research we have determined that the one of five essential characteristics of the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa is: "Weekly lectionary-based faith-sharing that connects the Gospel to daily life." But

- Some SCCs have faith sharing without lectionary-based Gospel Sharing/Reflection.
- Some SCCs have lectionary-based Gospel Sharing/Reflection without faith sharing.
- Some faith sharing is private, personal "Jesus and me" spirituality without connecting to daily life.
- Some Gospel Sharing is purely repeating the Gospel text.
- Some Gospel Sharing is only exegesis of the text -- not connecting to daily life here and now.

These are some challenges for SCC members.

As a sign of the times here is a new project:

Young people are the future of the world and of the church. But as we all know, church congregations today are made up primarily of elderly people. Covid-19 has opened a window to a new way of celebrating the liturgy and of breaking the bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus. Because young people already live in the digital world, this could be an opportunity to reach out to them.

Our project is international: an outreach to young people to join an Online Small Searching (Seekers) Small Christian Community with other young people from their community and/or around the world. We are working with Fr. Joe Healey who, because of this lockdown experience, has discovered a new ministry, namely, moving from building physical Small Christian Communities on the ground with both adults and young adults to bring young people together in Online Small Searching (Seekers) Communities. The outreach would not be openly "churchy" about religion or the *Bible* or faith sharing. But rather an outreach to invite them to join with other young people to share where they are, their lived experience, what they are searching for, what they feel they need, and find support in a communal experience.

It is important that we continue to evaluate our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa so we can make it better. Here is some recent research in 2020.

Evaluation of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Poll Itself:

Every two months on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>), there is a SCCs Poll on: "The best part of my Small Christian Community is ... " The First Round was April-May, 2009. The top months when there were 300 votes or more are:

769 votes: Fifty-Third Round (January – February, 2018). **NOTE:** The high number of votes was due to a hacker.

512 votes: Fifty-First Round (September – October, 2017)

455 votes: Fifty-Fourth Round (March – April, 2018)

443 votes: Sixty-Eighth Round (July -- August, 2020)

436 votes: Sixty-Seventh Round (May -- June, 2020)

431 votes: Sixty-Ninth Round (September -- October, 2020)

421 votes: Sixty-Third Round: September – October, 2019

410 votes: Forty-Eighth Round (March – April, 2017)

395 votes: Sixty-Fourth Round (November – December, 2019)

374 votes: Fifty-Ninth Round: January – February, 2019

362 votes: Sixty-Fifth Round: January – February, 2020

345 votes: Fifty-Second Round (November – December, 2017)

338 votes: Sixtieth Round (March – April, 2019)

336 votes: Forty-Seventh Round (January – February, 2017)

330 votes: Sixty-Sixth Round (March -- April, 2020):

315 votes: Fiftieth Round (July – August, 2017)

313 votes: Sixty-Second Round: (July-- August, 2019)

305 votes: Forty-First Round (January – February, 2016)

It is clear that the voting has increased in the past three years. The heavier voting in the first four months of the year coincides with the SCCs Courses in the theological institutes, seminaries and universities in Nairobi, Kenya.

Evaluation of the Choices in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Poll:

Based on research and feedback (surveys, questionnaires, interviews, personal conversations, visits to SCCs and meetings/conferences/workshops on SCCs), we have identified 1351 important characteristics or features of SCCs around the world mainly provided by Small Christian Community (SCCs) members themselves. Then we chose the most relevant choices for the polls. Every two months on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>), there is a SCCs Poll on “The best part of my Small Christian Community is...” with five choices. The top vote getters of 100 votes or more are:

Peer group small faith-sharing community. A 486 votes. **NOTE:** The high number of votes was due to a hacker.

Mass in the neighborhood. A 211

Special prayers for people with Covid-19. A 136

Helps deepen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A 136

Personal encounter with Jesus Christ through SCC. A 134

Sharing life experiences. A 133

Prayer, reflection and faith-sharing grounds me. A **Special Poll on first fifty rounds** 125

Tool for evangelization today. D 110

Safe place for people to share and grow. D 108
 Gospel-based faith-sharing. A 108
 Reaches out to the marginalized and those on the periphery of society. A 105
 Prayer, reflection and faith-sharing grounds me. A 105
 Way of life, not just a program or project in the parish. D 104
 Empowerment of women. D **Special Poll on first fifty rounds** 103
 Combines Bible Sharing and Faith Sharing. A 101
 Youth peer group small faith-sharing community. D **Special Poll on first fifty rounds** 100

A -- activities/content of SCCs.

D -- dynamics/process/principles/classifications of SCC

Of the 17 choices, 12 are activities and five are dynamics. One might have expected more choices related to the practical action/outreach of the SCCs. But due to low voting levels in the early years, important and popular choices got less votes:

Practical action and service (6th round): 52 votes.

Reaching out to others (1st round): 34 votes.

Visiting the sick (20th round): 23 votes.

Also the word “helps” is used frequently in the context of my personal life such as:

Helps me to live my Christian life (1st round): 50 votes.

rather than service to others such as:

Helps upkeep of parish (23rd round): 34 votes.

As we explore the SCCs Model of Church in today’s world, extensive research continues on the church (the People of God, not a physical building) in the *Acts of the Apostles* and other first and second century texts. The link between (a) leadership of the local community and (b) presidency at the Eucharistic meal (a linkage that would drive much later thinking on ministry and even today is a major source of Christian division) would not be forged until the third-century. Similarly, the notion that women, as such, can be excluded from ministry on the basis of some pragmatic historical appeal (e.g. "Jesus did not ordain women!" — assuming such a pre-critical view of "history" has any value), fails to take account of the fundamental role of baptism in all Christian existence and action, that is, by virtue of one’s baptism a lay Catholic can be a local leader.

Many people do understand the Fritz Lobinger Model of Church originally developed in South Africa and by inspired the LUMKO SCC vision and method. It is a Council of Elders or Team of Elders Leadership Model/Structure comprised of mature lay leaders (men and women) of that specific local Christian Community (outstation or village). It is not a threat to the seminary-trained, ordained, male, celibate, full time priests in the parish. The Presider or Celebrant or President of the Mass/Eucharist in this local community would be one of the local leaders on this council or team chosen by the local Catholic lay people themselves. He [or she] would not necessarily be the main leader of that local community. See St. Paul’s writings on the variety of gifts in the local community. He [or she] would be married and have local employment. That person would be part time, not need a lengthy training and would serve only that local community.

Following the principle of *go digital or die*, we are using internet more such as SCCs webinars:

Small Christian Communities in the Acts of the Apostles. Webinar on Zoom for the CCRI Strategy Team. Facilitated by Joseph G. Healey. A five-session interactive study, discussion and reflection experience using the See, Judge and Act process or methodology. 15 July, 2020 to 12 August, 2020.

Session 1: Our personal (individual) and communal experiences of *Acts of the Apostles*.

Session 2: Foundational texts of the first SCCs: *Acts of the Apostles* 2: 42-47, 4: 32-35 and 5: 1-31.

1. How can we concretely apply the first two texts to our lives, our communities and our ministries in our local contexts today?
2. *Acts of the Apostles* 15: 28: Council of Jerusalem. In today's divided Catholic Church can we have a Council of Jerusalem moment/experience?

Session 3: House Churches with lay leadership especially women. Each participant prepares one passage in *Acts of the Apostles* that describes/illustrates the House Church (also called a Small Domestic Church) with women in leadership positions. House Church were very important in the first three centuries especially when Christians were persecuted in the Roman Empire.

The Edict of Milan was a letter signed by the Roman emperors Constantine and Licinius, that proclaimed religious toleration in the Roman Empire. The letter was issued in February, 313 AD and stopped the persecution of Christians and made Christianity legal. Emperor Constantine's tolerance and acceptance of Christianity paved the way for its rapid spread throughout the Roman empire and Europe. As John Raymaker and Gerard Grudzen write in *Will Pope Francis or a Successor Call a Vatican III Council?*: "History is full of ironies: With the legitimization of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the important role of Home Churches was eroded."

To listen to the discussion, click on <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/-J0yHuvI5z1IAY38t0ePS6k8Hdvpaaa81yRKrqcFnQdtf2QBh48SMJFkDvrtqE0>. Password: 5?%2\$sMR.

Session 4: Importance of the Holy Spirit. Each participant prepares three short inputs:

1. A passage in *Acts* about the Holy Spirit that you like.
2. Example in your life when you felt the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Example in your life when you **did not feel** the power of the Holy Spirit.

Session 5: St. Paul's call to Hardship and Mission and what it means for us today.

The Second Revised Edition of this book was published on Amazon as an Ebook and and Print on Demand (POD) Paperback and announced on our SCCs Facebook Page as follows:

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 revised and updated from the 2012 print version, is available as a free, online Ebook containing 1,170 pages as of 19 September, 2020 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website:

https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Build_new.pdf

The First Revised Edition (Ebook and Paperback) – 16 May, 2018.

The Second Revised Edition:

a. Amazon as an Ebook (Kindle Edition and other digital formats) -- 1166 pages, 1488 footnotes, 11 August, 2020: \$6.99. <https://www.amazon.com/Joseph-G.-Healey/e/B001JO5VR8>

b. Amazon as a Print on Demand (POD) paperback in two volumes.

Volume One: 624 pages, 944 footnotes, 14 September, 2020, Paperback, \$19.99
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08HGNS5RW/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=By+Joseph+G+Healey+MM&qid=1599503618&sr=8-1

Volume Two, 560 pages, 581 footnotes, 14 September 2020), Paperback \$19.99
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08HGTT53P/ref_=pe_3052080_397514860

This Second Revised Edition includes over 100 new pages and two new chapters (“Online Small Christian Communities” and “Tracking the Growth of Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs)” from the First Revised Edition that was sold on Amazon in 2018. It documents the modern miracle of Digital Publishing.

The Feast of All Saints or All Saints Day on 1 November is an opportunity to remember and imitate the Patron and Patroness Saints of our SCCs. On our SCC Facebook Page we asked SCC members to list alphabetically by the saint’s name and location their SCCs over the years -- physical SCCs, online SCCs or both. Two examples.

Charles Lwanga (2 June) – Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Isidore of Seville (4 April) -- international

Jude Thaddeus (28 October) – Musoma, Tanzania

Kizito (2 June) – Nairobi, Kenya

Martin de Porres (3 November) – two different SCCs: Nairobi, Kenya and international

Nyabuliga (a section of the village of Nyabihanga, Tanzania – the geographical place name used before saints’ names become popular)

Nyagasense (a section of the village of Iramba, Tanzania – the geographical place name used before saints’ names become popular)

Thérèse (Theresa of the Child Jesus) (1 October) – Dar es Salam, Tanzania

Augustine Post Graduate Fellowship (28 August) -- Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya
 Augustine (28 August) -- Uhuru Camp, Don Bosco
 Francis of Assisi (4 October) – Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya
 John the Baptist (24 June and 29 August) -- Bungoma, Kenya
 Jude Thaddeus (28 October) -- Bwake Subparish
 Karoli Lwanga (2 June) – Tudor, Mombasa, Kenya

The death of Father John E. Conway, MM on 9 November, 2020 awakened many warm memories of our Gleason House Church in the Maryknoll Society Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya that was like a Small Christian Community. I valued especially the daily mass (concelebration of the Eucharist):

1. Dick Quinn would read the story of the “Saint of the Day” at the beginning.
2. The scripture readings were done in *Lectio Divina* style.
3. There was quality in the Shared Homily. We related the Gospel to our daily life in Nairobi and made connections to the world. **NOTE:** I would use these insights in my later writings and talks.
4. John Conway wrote out his “Prayers of the Faithful” by hand. They were always quality.
5. We used silence effectively.
6. Visitors like John Lange, Don Sybertz, Ken Thesing, Dick Smith, Alphonse Omolo and the Grudzens always made fine contributions.

We often hear the expression – the “See, Discern and Act” Reflection Process or Method. Here it is applied to our weekly SCC gathering.

"See:" Touchdown: Brief reports on the SCC members' lives during the past week. Here SCC members share their recent life experiences good and bad. It is called a "touchdown period" or “catch-up time” that can also serve as an “icebreaker” for the gathering. Some SCCs call it “God moments” when each member tells of a time he or she experienced God during the week. Includes a report on the SCC's actions/tasks (community response) carried out during the previous week.

" Discern:" Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Daily Life Connections. Connect, relate and apply the Bible (Gospel) to our daily lives and experience (on both personal and society-wide levels). This is lectionary-based faith-sharing/gospel-based faith-sharing. SCC members share their reflections sitting together in a circle and for a maximum of five minutes. This is the most important part of the weekly meeting of the SCC. Sometimes the SCC uses a Daily Life-Bible Connections method. Start with special themes and topics as well as our experiences and events of daily life and then go to the Bible. Use the “See,” “Judge”/”Discern” and “Act” process of the Pastoral Spiral/Circle/Cycle. Both ways are an experience of faith-sharing.

"Act:" Take away. Choose a concrete practical action/task (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 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, action of solidarity, etc. This can also be some kind of follow-up/follow-down like a learning or a lesson to take home from the gathering. It serves to answer the questions: What have I learned from this SCC gathering/Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection? What is my take away? What is a point or action to take home? What is my

follow-up/follow-down? Some SCCs include an opportunity for members to express some idea or insight or action that they have learned during the gathering that they will use as their take away or follow up/down in their ongoing actions.

In a report on a SCCs Workshop in Kisumu, Kenya in December, 2020 the facilitator Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo wrote: "As usual, there is no knowledge about AMECEA and even KCCB. So I had to introduce both as has been my usual tradition during these SCCs trainings."

Evaluation is painful, but necessary. Where have we failed? Why have we failed? The basic question in evaluation is: How can we do better in the future? These questions provoked many interesting comments and reflections:

1. Cardinal Polycarp Pengo quoted. At the AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 2011, Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, pointed out that one of the drawbacks for the solidarity of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa is that many Catholics on the grassroots do not easily see the link between AMECEA (that comes across as a big organization of Catholic bishops at the top) and the 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 just an institution of the bishops. *Seed 23: 8-9* (August-September 2011), p. 9. SCCs are a special, concrete way on the local level for this to happen.

Now nine years later this has not happened. Why?

2. Mwanajumuiya Francis Njuguna': "The biggest challenge for the Catholic Church in Africa today with particular attention to SCCs within the AMECEA region is how best to make the SCCs pastoral program fully workable in the pastoral mission of the church. Have the AMECEA bishops laid out specific guidelines as to how the church can ensure that the SCC program is going to be effectively implemented on regional, national and grassroots levels? How come, for example, are our AMECEA bishops not on the same level in terms of their commitment to this SCCs pastoral program?"

3. Christine Gikure: "Have ongoing formation on SCCs at the prayer house level. Ask Christians to say how they conduct their business in SCCs. Ask them also to do a SWOT. That may lead to an informed start."

4. Lourine Olouch: "AMECEA sounds like something foreign and 'up there'. Perhaps Christians have learned to mind their own business when something goes beyond their dioceses. They don't understand their role. Even the term AMECEA needs to be translated into the local languages so they understand. AMECEA recently came up with a policy on child protection. Such are the opportunities to teach and make the association relevant. Someone has to be responsible for the assignment."

5. Father Andrew Kaufa: "Probably the story may be slightly different in Malawi. In preparation for the 18th AMECEA Plenary, we made a powerful communication campaign to make sure that every Catholic in the country knows about AMECEA and plays a part in one way or the other for its success. Choirs composed songs about AMECEA; catechists explained to the faithful what it is all about; IEC materials were produced on the theme of the plenary, etc. It is my hope that Tanzania will do the same in 2022 or even do better. Whether

they connect the SCCs with AMECEA is another story but at least they understood that their bishops do not work in isolation."

6. Pamela Adinda: "In Malawi before, during and following the 2014 Plenary Assembly meeting held in Lilongwe, AMECEA was publicized so that it is now a household name. All it takes is good publicity."

7. Mwanajumuiya Joseph Healey: "Andrew Kaufa gives a very good example about the grassroots preparation for the 18th AMECEA Plenary in Malawi in 2014. I was in Malawi at the time and here is what I wrote in my online Ebook on "SCCs in Eastern Africa":

The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) prepared the AMECEA 18th 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 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. He said: "Our Christians were highly involved; they felt the ownership of the event and were willing to support it the best they can."

During a meeting of 31 SCCs leaders (18 women 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. This was a big success.

My question: If I went back to Kachebere Parish in Malawi today (seven years later) would these SCCs leaders know the names of:

1. Current Chairman of AMECEA.
2. Current Secretary General of AMECEA.
3. Current Chairman of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM).
4. Current Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM).

Could you check for us? This would be a good test case for our ongoing research on the involvement of SCCs.

8. Pamela Adinda: "It would be very interesting to know whether the grassroots (SCCs) in Malawi are aware of the current state of affairs at AMECEA."

9. Christine Gikure: "I quite agree. Last Sunday I was training church leaders in a parish in Nairobi. As usual I always begin with the genesis of SCC, thus AMECEA comes in. They couldn't say the whole name leave alone connect it to SCCs -- why they was formed and their characteristics. My greatest worry is that there had been a lot of emphasis on devotional groups rather than SCCs. I always advocate for devotional groups before census questions for the members like "Do you belong to a SCC?" How do I get planted in the big garden (parish) before I sprout in the nursery (SCC). I have been quite passionate about ongoing formation in SCC s because then can the Catholic Church can be strongly rooted in the neighborhood and in the individual self.

10. Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo: “Sooo true! I totally agree! Great work you are doing. Be blessed.”

11. PMS Kenya: “The African Church still depends on the role of the clergy. What they pronounce, it sticks in the minds of the faithful. If the clergy pronounce more often the guidelines we get from KCCB and AMECEA, they will be understood. Unfortunately, even the pastoral letters from KCCB are not known by the faithful and some clergy do not know that the bishops have proclaimed. This is the missing link making the faithful believe the bishops are not giving pastoral guidelines to social and developmental issues. If those guidelines could be rolled out and discussed at SCC level, we shall move great steps in our faith.”

12. Christine Gikure: “Could the Pastoral Department of AMECEA propose to the conferences to identify ways of enhancing/strengthening SCCs. Like each to have a SCC Office at the diocese level? Design training programs on ongoing formation of SCCs? Clergy, religious and catechists be trained on how to 'conduct business proper' during SCCs meetings? Any other approaches towards keeping the SCC vision stronger.”

13. Mwanajumuiya Joseph Healey: “A key is a SCC office at the diocesan level.”

14. From Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo: "As a lay person and in my experience of animation of SCCs at the grassroots, there was never any systematic attention to the structure of the Catholic Church after the parish. The mention about the diocese was/is pretty much focused on the person of the bishop that is fine with me, but I tend to think that it is important for the Christians to have a more practical understanding of the structure of the church, the general and specific roles. I was actually encouraged in one of the trainings in the recent weeks when one of the leaders shared as a "hope" for the training that they will get to understand the structure of the church.

My aspiration for the Catholic Church in Kenya and in the AMECEA Region is that ongoing formation would be made a component of the church's everyday life. That systematic, ongoing formation of the leaders (and Christians) at the grassroots and the other levels of the church becomes an aspect of annual planning and continuous follow up. Perhaps strategic funding organizations can be sought so that such trainings are assured even though a great deal of training could be funded by the Christians themselves at the grassroots level when organized well and in a timely manner. Well-inspired, well-informed and well-trained Christians are likely to be more successful in achieving evangelization at the level of their neighborhood as well as supporting the church to accomplish its calling."

15. Fredrick Nzwili: “But maybe grassroot link is weak. Is AMECEA not more of a bishops’ forum? We strengthen the grassroots link and make it more visible by participating in activities that empower the faithful at the grassroots and even partner with and support dioceses or parishes to undertake various activities.”

89-year-old Archbishop James Odongo, Archbishop Emeritus of the Catholic Archdiocese of Tororo, Uganda died on 4 December, 2020 at St. Francis Nsambya Hospital in Kampala, Uganda. The then Bishop Odongo was Chairperson of AMECEA from 1973-1979. The SCCs Model of Church was established as a key pastoral priority at the 1973 and 1976 AMECEA Plenaries. Odongo is considered one of the founding fathers of SCCs in the AMECEA countries and promoted the importance of SCCs everywhere.

SCCs members pray for the repose of the soul of Archbishop Tarcisius Ziyaye, the deceased Archbishop of Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi who died on 14 December, 2020. In building the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa, he made significant contributions to:

1. Lilongwe Archdiocese: During our SCCs Workshop in Lilongwe from 16 to 19 December, 2013, the archbishop described how he was part of the Lilongwe Diocesan Mini-Synod as a seminarian in 1973-1975 when the SCCs were established in Malawi. On a trip to Kachebere Seminary I visited the parish where the archbishop learned about SCCs during his Pastoral Year.
2. Malawi: Over the years the SCCs in Malawi have been a model for others.
3. AMECEA: Archbishop Ziyaye was a conscientious and hardworking Chairman of AMECEA. He signed our applications for funds for our SCCs Workshops.

One of the most important SCC leaders is the Liturgy or Liturgical Animator/Leader or Prayer Animator with specific responsibility for leading, facilitating and animating the weekly *Bible Service* and various prayers. Also called the “Prayer Leader,” “Minister of the Word” (*Mwalimu wa Neno* in Swahili), “Bible Animator,” Bible Leader” and the “Bible Coordinator. Many of these Liturgy or Liturgical Animator/Prayer Animators 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. These leaders need regular ongoing training and updating.

For example, these leaders need to encourage SCC members to study and reflect on the Catholic Church’s Liturgical Cycle for the three big feasts in the eight-day Christmas period. For December, 2020 see:

1. Feast of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) (Friday, 25 December): same readings for A, B and C Cycles.
2. Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Sunday, 27 December): different reading for A, B and C Cycles.
3. Feast of the Solemnity of Mary, The Mother of God. Also called the Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord and New Year’s Day (Friday, 1 January): same readings for A, B and C Cycles.

The choices in the SCCs Polls are our way of reading the contemporary signs of the times and getting deeper in the local contexts and situations around the world. Some choices in 2020 especially related to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to start online SCCs rather than physical SCCs (alphabetically) are:

- Adapts to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.
- Concern about the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Digital SCC.
- Helps the needy during Covid-19.
- Hybrid Small Christian Community.
- Online faith sharing.
- Online SCC.
- Responds creatively to the New Normal.
- Special prayers for people with Covid-19.
- Virtual SCC.
- WhatsApp SCC.

This has led the SCCs Model to Church to explore new ways of becoming church such as online livestreaming masses, Zoom Meetings, Zoom Webinars.

SCCs members can be enriched and nourished by Pope Francis's daily messages on Twitter:

@PONTIFEX:

“We are always on a journey in life. Let us choose the path of God! We will discover that there are no unexpected events, no uphill path, and no night that cannot be faced with Jesus.”

Certainly one uphill path for us in Eastern Africa is an up-to-date, working computer and smartphone and internet connectivity. Following the African Proverb -- *Many hands make light work* -- let us work together to overcome the Digital Divide. For many in Eastern Africa this uphill path is basically a financial challenge -- finding money to support our digital/online projects and activities. For example, the cost of internet connectivity for research, online SCCs gatherings, online webinars and the expenses of the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya*.

We are following closely the preparations for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to take place in Rome in the month of October, 2022 on the theme: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission”. We are now researching: “The Role of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Synodal Church.” We are eagerly awaiting for the *Lineamenta* to be published?

Prayer is very important in the life and activities of our SCCs. In our SCCs Poll some of the top-rated choices have been:

Special prayers for people with Covid-19.
Prayer, reflection and faith-sharing grounds me.
Prays together for the needs of others.
Deepens my faith and prayer life.

May our SCCs member pray hard for peaceful and fair National Elections in Uganda, East Africa on Thursday, 14 January, 2021.

Our free Ebook on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” called "Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" is constantly being added to, expanded, updated, etc. The offline version now has 1,193 pages. It is not available to the public. It is a “work in progress.” We post the updated copy to the internet twice a year. The online version (that can be accessed through our SCCs Website under the “Ebooks Page”) presently has 1,116 pages and is dated 11 August, 2020. This version is also sold on Amazon as an Ebook and as a paperback (POD).

The two latest chapters that we are updating right now are listed here in their offline version:

10. ONLINE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES
14. TRACKING THE GROWTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (YPSCCS)

We are exploring a new chapter (overall the 19th chapter) called THE ROLE OF SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN SYNODALITY/THE SYNODAL CHURCH.

Our research continues on the SCCs Model of Church both in Eastern Africa and in the USA. We had an online International Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Webinar (Web Conference) at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA in February, 2014. There were 40 participants from around the world. After the SCCs Continental Reports, the facilitator Father Bob Pelton invited the well-known religious sociologist Professor Scott Appleby to give a historical and social analysis of SCC leaders and activists. He looked at three generations of SCCs leaders after Vatican II and when they started in SCCs ministry:

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 Africa SCCs Training Team present, three are in their 70s, one in her 60s and one in his 40s. Appleby rightly challenged 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)?" This question has been a key learning and challenge for me.

In our present SCCs research I am gathering the names of SCC leaders and activists including writers on SCCs and teachers of SCCs Courses in three categories:

Younger Generation (20 to 39)
Middle Generation (40 to 59)
Older Generation (60 to 85)

Our research indicates that the Younger Generation (20 to 39) is:

1. Very mobile. They move from parish to parish for different reasons.
2. One key development: Young people today are very involved in what we variously call Online/Virtual/Digital SCCs.

On this Word of God Sunday (*Bible* Sunday) may our SCCs members listen to the Twitter message of Pope Francis:

@PONTIFEX

The [#Word of God](#) consoles and encourages us. At the same time it summons us to conversion, challenges us, frees us from the bondage of our selfishness. For His Word has the power to change our lives and to lead us out of darkness into the light.

The online course, the Public Life of Small Christian Communities (21S-LIM-G810-Y01) offered by the Loyola Institute for Ministry, Loyola University, New Orleans, USA started on 19 January 2021. This is the second module. The first module -- the Inner Life of SCCs Course -- was completed in 2020. The Inner Life of the SCCs prioritized the internal capacity of the SCCs: relationships in SCCs, prayer, leadership, theological significance, the ecclesiology of SCCs, diversities of SCCs and breaking the Word of God in SCCs. The Public Life of SCCs course, while grounded in the inner capability of the SCCs, attends to the larger social and cultural environment of the SCCs of which they are a part. This includes the

call to evangelize, pray and engage in the works of mercy and works of justice in the light of the Word of God.

The course, taught by Dr. Alphonse Omolo, attracted 22 students from, Ireland, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and the USA, The students include priests, sisters, laywomen, and laymen. One of the students is not a Catholic. The course will continue for the next 13 weeks and will see students engage each other on the online Canvas platform sharing experiences, ideas, and reflections on SCCs while exploring the extent to which the SCCs can respond to its call to mission. The course includes fortnightly Bible Sharing Meetings and a Spiritual Formation Program session.

Turning over the “Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website” to the AMECEA Pastoral Department in Nairobi, Kenya on 1 January, 2021 challenged us to dig deeper to trace the origin of our website. The plan for the “Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website” was hatched during the National Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Convocation in San Antonio, Texas, USA in August, 2002. It officially began as the “Small Christian Communities in North America Collaborative Website” by RENEW International in its office in Plainfield, New Jersey, USA in 2004 under the coordination of Michael Brough, the Director of RENEW International with the domain name www.smallchristiancommunities.org.

The website was handed over from Terry Rickard, the Director of RENEW International, to Joseph Healey, the present Moderator of the website in 2008. From a continental website it became an international website with the name “Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website.” The transfer of the files and domain name was complicated. First from RENEW International in Plainfield, New Jersey, USA to the Healey Development Office in Morristown New Jersey, USA. Then from the Morristown office to the Urban Ministries Serving God (UMSG) Office and the Society for the International Ministries (SIM) office in Nairobi, Kenya.

At that time the Webmaster Nicholas Adongo set up an independent website with a new name -- the “Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website.” “Global” means it is international and worldwide. “Collaborative” means a wide variety and rich diversity of people share and work together to promote a SCC Model of Church:

Men and women.

Old and young.

Different religious denominations including Anglican, Catholic, Mennonite, Pentecostal, and Southern Baptist.

People from different places in the world. This is seen in the “Welcome” Message:

Welcome! (English) **Bienvenue!** (French) **Bienvenido!** (Spanish) **Willkommen!** (German) **Karibuni!** (Swahili) **Namaste!** (Hindi) **Hwan-yōng-ham-ni-da!** (Korean) **Kia**

Ora! (Maori) Our eight language “Welcome” represents a variety of languages commonly spoken on each of the six continents. With a vision to establish a global collaborative networking website for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) worldwide, we share SCCs contact information, events, materials, and news from each of the six continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America and Oceania).

SCCs specialists and grassroots SCCs members.

Different languages, countries and cultures.

From the beginning the host was CNETGlobal Inc. directed by Sam Wanyoike. In the 2011-2012 period Charles Gikera joined Nicholas in the internet tasks. Charles took over completely as webmaster when Nicholas went to the USA for graduate studies. The website started in the Joomla Content Management System and transitioned to WordPress. Our sister website is the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website at <https://afriprov.org>.

The present Copyright at the bottom of the Home Page is:

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A very good explanation of the early history is found in Barbara Darling, “Small Christian Communities in North America Collaborative Website” (pages 182-184) in Joseph Healey, Chapter 26, “[Promoting SCCs Via the Internet](#),” in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 (Second Printing 2006, New Cover 2014); Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006 (1st Reprint 2011, 2nd Reprint 2012, 3rd Reprint 2017); and Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2006.

As I review our 17 year history of the website (2004 to 2021), I am struck by how many times we have bounced back from, and overcome, multiple technical failures, internet crashes, digital errors, security issues, difficulties in international communications, hacking, computer hardware challenges, lack of good internet connectivity, financial challenges, sickness and personal issues, challenges of handing over to new personnel, the Covid-19 pandemic and other changes/problems/obstacles.⁵²¹ As this international history also shows, changes in personnel and leadership amongst managers and contributors have sometimes slowed down the management, development, and growth of the collaborative website. It says a lot that despite all of these challenges, this important website continues to go strong.

Creativity and new ideas is a good sign of the growth of the SCCs. Our SCC members are actively participate in the Kenya Lenten Campaign 2021. The theme: “Rebuilding our Nation through Inclusive and Accountable Governance.”

Lenten 2021 English: [Lenten 2021 English Final final.indd \(kccb.or.ke\)](#) Final final.indd (kccb.or.ke)

Lenten 2021 Swahili: [Final-Lenten-Campaign-2021-Kiswahili.pd_.pdf \(kccb.or.ke\)](#)

In Week One on “Family” among the proposed actions are: 1. The SCC to identify a Mentor Family that journeys with families facing challenges. 2. Establish, promote and strengthen family life programs in the parish, prayer houses and SCCs. In our free, online Ebook the section on "Lay Ecclesial Ministries in Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" includes different kinds of mentoring. Having a Mentor Family is new and creative idea. This is very valuable during this Covid-19 pandemic.

⁵²¹ Perhaps our most dramatic moment happened when our sister website – the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website -- totally crashed and its two Mirror Websites in the USA also crashed. Nicholas Adongo, our webmaster in Nairobi, spent two days rebuilding the website from scratch.

Since Vatican II there have been many interpretations of what is the “New Wine” and what is “New Wineskin(s)” in the Catholic Church. Most progressive thinking has focused on “New Structures.” A parallel focus is a “New Process.” These two foci come together in the new understanding of the New Wineskins as: Synodal Path/Synodal Church/Joint and Open Collaboration. Faggioli states:

Ecclesial synodality and Catholic women need each other. There is no credible synodality without a new role for women in the Church. On the other hand, without a synodal process, it is impossible or at least very hard to imagine Local Churches accepting any decision that Pope Francis makes, included on women and ministry. Until synodality becomes a lived reality, all other ecclesial reforms have but a slim chance to be implemented. The muted reception of this recent decision of Francis on the possibility for women to be formally installed as lectors and acolytes is just one example of the current ecclesial impasse. Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/signs-of-the-times/the-popes-decision-on-women-lectors-and-acolytes-did-anything-really-happen/13816>

This has important implications for SCCs that are a new pastoral structure. If SCCs are “a new way of becoming church” and a “new pastoral structure,” synodality should be a lived reality of SCC members.

An analysis of the choices in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>) in the past one year and a half shows two major trends:

1. Influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on SCCs: starting in the May-June, 2021 Poll there has been at least one Covid-19 pandemic related choice in every poll.
2. Emergence of Online/Virtual/Digital SCCs: starting in the November-December, 2020 Poll there has been at least one Online/Virtual/Digital SCCs related choice in every poll.

Current research in Eastern Africa shows that SCC members themselves choose whether they want to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday or the previous Sunday in their weekly gatherings. Over 90% choose the Gospel of following Sunday that seems to encourage Lectionary-based Faith Sharing that connects the Gospel to our daily life better. This method also helps priests, deacons, Religious Brothers, Religious Sisters, catechists and lay leaders to prepare their homilies and talks with the local Christians in their weekly SCCs **before** their Sunday masses, “Sunday Services Without a Priest” and weekend religious education classes.

The less than 10% choose the Gospel of the previous Sunday for different reasons:

1. When they meet in mid-week some SCC members want to deepen their understanding of the previous Scripture readings especially the Gospel.
2. Calling themselves an Action-based SCC, when they meet in mid-week some SCC members evaluate Step 11 of their previous gathering:

11. Choose a concrete practical action/task (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 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, action of solidarity, etc.

This is called the take-away.” It can also be some kind of follow-up/follow-down like a learning or a lesson to take home from the gathering. It serves to answer the questions: What have I learned from this SCC gathering/*Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*? What is my take away? What is a point or action to take home? What is my follow-up/follow-down? Some SCCs include an opportunity for members to express some idea or insight or action that they have learned during the gathering that they will use as their take away or follow up/down in their ongoing actions.

Mwanajumuiya Lawrence Murori has this insight. “Formation of Action-Based SCCs with special names that embodies their practical spirituality can be a significant step. Such groups can be identified with various names like “Beatitudes SCCs”, “Emmaus SCCs”, etc.”

Being identified by specific "action" names like “Beatitudes SCCs”, “Emmaus SCCs,” etc. is a new idea. It is similar to choosing the Patron/Patroness Saint name of the SCC that reflects the charism/identity/apostolic works of the saint like St. Paul (Evangelist), St Vincent de Paul (Helper of the Needy), St. John Bosco (Youth Animator), etc. Let us continue to reflect on the meaning and activities of Action-Based SCCs. How can all SCCs have a "practical action" component? How can all SCCs reach out to the poor and the needy?

Our latest research: Catholic Dioceses in the USA with the best SCCs and best “SCCs

Model of Church” Plan are:

Dioceses:

Camden, New Jersey
Lansing, Michigan
San Bernardino, California
Youngstown, Ohio

Archdioceses:

Los Angeles, California
Newark, New Jersey

Bernard Mberere, the Administrator of our SCC Website and the AMECEA ICT Coordinator writes: “Internet penetration in Africa, and more so in Kenya, is moving at a great speed. Currently there is alternative of an optical fiber connection in the major towns and its suburbs: Wimax satellite connection and the mobile connectivity via the purchase of internet bundles. The fiber home option from Safaricom currently serve in a more stable way with unlimited monthly connection at Kenya Shillings 2,900/= (\$29).” This is important information since low cost internet bundles are crucial for the success of our Online SCCs. Mwanajumuiya Alex Wafula comments: “Very true. Since the outbreak of this deadly Covid 19, internet has been new way of passing information especially for SCC members including discussions with the parish priest. However we face some challenges.”

At the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, USA the format for the weekly SCC gathering includes:

“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.”

The same can be said at the end of the weekly session – wherever and whenever it is. Pause for three minutes and offer a prayer of gratitude. Reflect on the fruit of the gathering, for example, what is your take away or practical action during the next week -- before rushing to your next activity.

Sometimes humor can be the best teacher and help us to laugh at ourselves. This cartoon was published in the 20 March issue of *The Tablet* after the Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, England said that he wants to collaborate with lay people more.



In a recent online SCC session we learned more about the Practical Action Step (*tendo la wiki* in Swahili) in our weekly SCC gatherings. It involves service and social, pastoral and mission outreach. It can flow from the “Inner Life” of the SCC or from the “Public Life” of the SCC. It can be the practical action of an individual SCC member or a group action. Ideally it is connected to/flows from the Gospel text and is closely related to the pastoral priorities and activities of the parish or local community. Research shows that SCCs choose more actions connected to the “Inner Life” of the SCC than the “Public Life” of the

SCC. Members of Online/Virtual/Digital SCCs choose more individual practical actions than group practical actions.

Examples: deepening my relationship with Jesus Christ, praying more, reading the *Bible* more, spend more time in contemplative prayer, special Advent and Lenten spiritual practices, 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, action of solidarity, etc.

In our world today we need to think outside the box in preparing a "Select Annotated Bibliography of Books, Booklets, Articles, Reports, Papers, Printed Materials and Other Resources including Online Digital Resources on Small Christian Communities." Most recently, we have many Zoom Resources. If they are stored permanently on YouTube, they can be accessed anytime and often, especially after events such as important webinars, meetings, lectures, talks, panel discussions, masses and retreats.

The death of the famous Suisse theologian Hans Küng reminds me when I met him during the South African Missiological Conference in Pretoria, South Africa in January, 1986. He was the keynote speaker of the congress. I gave a lecture on "Basic Christian Communities: Church-Centered or World-Centered?" mainly from our pastoral experience of SCCs in Eastern Africa. After my talk I received a message that Hans Küng wanted to see him at the next coffee break. Küng 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. Küng 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)?

During the Shared Homily in today's Sunday, 11 April, 2021 live-streamed Healey Extended Family House Church Zoom Mass in New Vernon, New Jersey, USA, we connected the First Reading of the Second Sunday of Easter, Year B – *Acts of the Apostles* 4:32-35 -- to our daily lives. It was pointed out that in the first three centuries of Christianity the first Christians (described as "the community of believers") celebrated mass in their private homes (called "houses churches"). Mass in physical churches only began in the 4th Century. In 2020-2021 the "wheel has come full circle" (Shakespeare). During this Cov-19 pandemic we are back to celebrating mass in our private homes and live-steaming them on Zoom.

After our weekly online St. Isidore of Seville SCC gathering today I wrote: "Our Gospel Sharing today reminds me of our reflections over the years on Jesus and the 12 Disciples/Apostles as a Small Christian Community (SCC). We see this SCC as the life and ministry of the Itinerant Preacher and his followers during Jesus' Public Ministry and then the Risen Christ and the Apostles after the resurrection. At different times Jesus is a SCC Facilitator/Animator/Spiritual Guide/Teacher/Listener/Accompanier/Leader/Missionary. One of his key roles is seen in verse 45 of Sunday's Gospel from Luke 24: "Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." Again and again we see Jesus explaining and interpreting the Scriptures. A similar verse is *Luke* 24: 27 in the Easter story of the "Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus:" "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Christ interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures." A key example of Jesus explaining and interpreting the Scriptures is his reflection: "Ought not the Messiah/was it not necessary that the Christ suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

Our latest research on the success and failure of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) organizations, offices, programs, projects, structures and individual Small Communities themselves in the USA over the last 20 years (2000 to 2020) shows that those that have succeeded have the following characteristics:

1. Creatively adapted to the new internet technology including webinars, meetings and weekly Lectionary-based Faith Sharing on social media platforms such as Zoom.
2. Developed new online resources, including modules on current topics, some for sale.
2. Incorporated younger people as leaders and members.
3. Achieved sustainable fundraising.

A friend of mine – a French Little Brother of Charles de Foucauld --describes a good model for weekly Gospel Sharing in his SCC in Lyons, France:

1. Silence.
2. Reading of the Gospel.
3. First turn: How I was touched by the Word of God (no discussion).
4. Second turn: How I was touched by what was said by others (this helps the listening!).
5. Each one makes a short prayer.

It takes about one hour. There is a deep sharing and very personal. Especially Step 4 is a creative change from the normal Gospel Sharing.

A more personalised lived experience of one of the students, Father Kevin, Parish Priest St. Peter's Clever Lwak, Archdiocese of Kisumu, Kenya.

"I am glad to report that the course on "Public Life of the SCCs" has enabled me to make a very significant growth in the life of our parish St. Peter's Clever Lwak.

1. I chose facilitators of the SCCs which included catechists and those who were capable of reading and writing.
2. We held a three day training for the facilitators. Which was very successful and enjoyable. These facilitators went and spread the information in their sub parishes and their SCCs.
3. As a result of the training, I am very glad to report that I was able to increase the number of the SCCs in the parish from 25 to 51, something that was so impossible before. And now Christians in the SCCs are so closer to each other.
4. Am also happy to report for now am able successfully implement the steps of SCC meetings the majority of the SCCs are following. This has helped me to solve the question of time and absentees of members due to long time spent in SCC meetings before in other words the attendance of SCCs has tremendously increased, of which even Christians are happy about.
5. In the course we learned about youth in the SCC, at the moment, this is what I am seriously engaged in. I must report that I have succeeded in establishing a SCC for the children PMC, in the mother and seriously working on the other subparishes. The youth still have lots of challenges but will embark on them after I have finished with the children.
6. It's my pleasure also to report that I have scheduled the Leaders' Workshop this coming weekend on the new way of life of the Scc and parish life, (leaders here include parish council members, all subparish leaders, and executives of the SCCs.)
7. One more pleasing fruit that the course has bear in our parish is that the Christians have learned that SCCs are not just meant for members alone, it's for the public, the villagers included. Thus there are SCC members who have gone out of their way to look for fallen Christians within their area. They have realized that they too are evangelizers.

Lastly, I am more than grateful to the institution for giving me this opportunity which I highly appreciate."

From *Testify to the Light*, a Pastoral Letter of Bishop David J. Bonnar, Bishop of Youngstown, Ohio, USA (19 February, 2021). <https://doy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Pastoral-Letter-Bishop-Bonnar-2021.pdf>

Bishop Bonnar is clearly a Francis Bishop who understands the life and activities of the SCCs Model of Church.

The Value of Faith Sharing

As we anticipate the return of meetings and gatherings, I encourage us to listen more to each other through the sharing of our faith. I suggest, when possible, that all meetings begin with prayer centered in faith sharing. This would involve *Lectio Divina* with God's Word and time for faith sharing. This is precisely how faith grows. In groups, people prayed and shared their experience of Jesus Christ. They listened attentively and supported one another and as a result their faith flourished. The more comfortable we are sharing our faith, the more at ease we will become in preaching the Good News in our secular world. If we are to grow the Catholic Church and bring more sheep back to the flock, we cannot afford to be silent about our faith. Although there is a time and place for silence, we can never be silent about passing on the faith and sharing our relationship with Jesus.

The Sacredness of Parish Life

The parish is a key place where we live and grow in faith. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis writes, "The parish is the presence of the Catholic 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. 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 renew and review 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" (#28).

The Formation of Small Groups

It is my dream that parishes will form small groups for people to share their faith and support one another as they become disciples. These small groups can be tailored to accommodate people's schedules and be made up of men, women, married couples, and single individuals. By coming together in a small venue, individuals can share their faith and encounter Jesus through the Gospel and in other ways enabling them to go forth and proclaim the Gospel. Small groups are a powerful way to accompany one another as pilgrims on the journey. There is a difference between being a follower and a disciple. We need more disciples in the Catholic Church who like John the Baptist can boldly speak in the wilderness and be a witness to the light. Pope Francis says, "Missionary disciples accompany missionary disciples" (#173).

In Eastern Africa "support" usually refers to "financial support." In North America "support" is usually connected to "support groups" that can be psychological and focused on

one need/concern/even addiction. Bonnar uses the word “support” in a creative way. The SCC supports members to become missionary disciples and enables them to go forth and proclaim the Gospel.

Our SCCs are invited to use *Visio Divina* that is translated from Latin as “Divine Seeing.” It is related to the prayer form *Lectio Divina* (“Divine Reading”). Instead of written Scriptures, this form of prayer uses visual elements to help set your mind on prayer. It allows God to speak into your heart through images. Praying through art is a multi-sensory way to connect to God through prayer. *Visio Divina* is one form of prayer using images – works of religious art, stained glass windows, icons, even images in nature. Learn how to pray with *Visio Divina* can inspire SCC members to pray better.

This form of prayer has been used throughout the centuries and is more popular in Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communities where icons are often used in prayer. *Visio Divina* is growing in use across Protestant communities as well. Here are some concrete examples that can be used in the Shared Homilies, Masses, Sunday Services Without a Priest, Prayer Services and Reflections on the Gospel in Religious Education classes:

1. During the Easter Season use a painting or picture of the story of the “Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus” in the Gospel of *St. Luke*. The focus can be on Jesus and the two disciples walking on the road or the three at supper in Emmaus.

2. On the Feast of the Ascension use paintings of the miracle event in the Shared Homilies and Reflections -- including the depictions of the event by great artists such as Rembrandt.

3. Other great feasts and biblical events such as:

a. *New Testament*: Christmas, Annunciation, Pentecost, Easter (Resurrection), Last Supper, Adoration of the Magi, Crucifixion, Last Judgment.

b. *Old Testament*: Creation and Expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Moses and the Ten Commandments. David and Goliath.

There are many online resources. “Living with Christ” Africa readers can view and download the separate “Image and Verse” picture of the week. <https://www.livingwithchrist.africa/.../05/1620739736.jpg>

As our SCC members look for new and creative models of the “See, Judge and Act” Process or Methodology, here is a model from the Maryknoll missionaries:

Step 1: See our reality.

Step 2: Discern with our faith.

Step 3: Go forth and do justice.

The term “discern with our faith” is fresh way of looking at “Step Two – Judge.” We apply/connect elements of our faith such as the *Bible* and the Traditions of the Catholic Church to our experiences in Step 1. This is the great insight of St. Pope John Paul II in No. 89 in the Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa* under “Living (or Vital) Christian Communities” that states: “These small communities reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel.”

A Polite Teaching Moment

My “takeaway” from the last gathering of our online Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment (YAE) Small Community in the San Francisco/Bay Area was to drink Fairtrade Coffee at a nearby Starbucks. So to celebrate *Laudato Si’* Week, this morning, 19 May, 2021, I visited Starbucks in Chatham, New Jersey, USA. Politely I asked the person behind the counter if they brew coffee with the Fairtrade label. She said she had heard about Fairtrade coffee but didn’t know what it is. She said she wanted to learn. Leaving the counter she showed me the different brands of coffee on display and for sale. We had a nice chat. We couldn’t find any Fairtrade Coffee. I didn’t want to take her away from her work, so I said that I would look around some more. She was delighted when I found a packet of Starbucks Italian Dark Roast Whole Bean 100% Arabica Coffee. It was clearly labeled Fairtrade Certified with the special square logo. I bought one packet. Then from her supply of the same coffee she ground enough beans for one cup and brewed it for me. Very tasty. An altogether satisfying adventure.

May all the members of our 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa pray for, and participate in, the ongoing three-phase Synodal Process/Synodal Journey that has the theme: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” May the Holy Spirit guide and inspire our Synodal Process/Synodal Journey.

The synod will open in the Vatican and in every diocese throughout the Catholic world in October, 2021. It will first go through a “diocesan phase” (October, 2021 until April, 2022) and subsequently a “continental phase” (September, 2022 until March 2023) before concluding in “the universal church phase” at the Vatican with the Synod of Bishops in October, 2023. Cardinal Mario Grech, the General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, said: “The synod is not just an event, but also a process. Synodality refers to the very essence of the Catholic Church, her constitutive reality, and is thus oriented towards evangelization. It is an ecclesial way of being and a prophetic example for today’s world.” The General Secretariat will send the bishops a preparatory document, accompanied by a questionnaire and a “vademecum” (handbook or manual) with proposals for consultation in each Local Church.

Pope Francis to the Italian Episcopal Conference General Assembly on 24 May, 2021: With regard to the Synod, he recalled that it must stem from a “bottom-up” process that begins in small communities and in parishes. It is a process that will require patience and work, he said, allowing people to speak freely and giving space to “the wisdom of the people of God”. Thus the three year “Synodal Process” does not wait for instructions from the Vatican and the local bishop’s decrees from above, but starts from below.

Let us pray for the repose of the soul of American theologian Father Robert J. Schreiter, CPPS who died on 2 June, 2021. RIP. His books and articles have had a great influence on our theology and practice in Africa. One example is his Orbis Book *Constructing Local Theologies* (1985; Thirtieth Anniversary Edition 2015). Schreiter 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, gives 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.

Concerning “Synodality” and the “Synodal Process,” my greatest “learning” in the last six months has been that the “process” makes the difference in reaching good decisions leading to change. If it is only endless discussion or parliamentary debate on a sensitive issue/topic, a community/group can go around in circles without a resolution. But if is a “synodal process” (that is, discernment in the Holy Spirit and extensive, serene dialog that begins with deeper listening) or a version of the “See, Discern and Act Process,” concrete change can happen. So the right “process” is essential for change and growth to occur. Putting the emphasis on the process rather than the concrete outcome, but the October, 2023 Synod in Rome has to come up with concrete actions (changes) or it will be labelled “just another talk show.” Also we don’t want another endless “shell game” where the “action ball” is tossed back and forth from the universal church to the local level and back again.

How many SCC animators and facilitators can explain the meaning of Ordinary Time in the Catholic Church's Liturgical Calendar? It runs for five months from Sunday, 13 June, 2021 (the 11th Sunday) to 14 November, 2021 (the 33rd Sunday). How many SCC animators and facilitators know that we are in Year B (Gospel of St. Mark) for the Sunday Cycle and Cycle 1 (Year 1) for the Weekday Cycle?

Announcement of new article: “State of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) at St. Brigid Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas (USA), June, 2021”

By Belza Ramos, Lay Volunteer, SCC Coordinator

To my USA and Global SCCs Brothers and Sisters: “I am sharing the following report/evaluation that I made to my pastor in San Antonio, Texas with you, knowing that we all faced and are still facing the challenges that COVID-19 brought to our Small Christian Community lives, not only health-wise, but in fulfilling our mission.”

From Ronald Sunguti: "For us in Nakuru, Kenya, the Small Christian Communities immediately after the lockdown started our normal programs. It took some time to pick up, but some picked well although with average 60% attendance. Prayers were done in a common open place. Masses were done at the church. So all of the SCCs came during their specific day for mass at the church. In most places we still have prayers at a common open ground. The most encouraging thing is that people have a lot of positive energy towards evangelization. We pray that we overcome the powers of the pandemic."

We use the "See, Judge and Act" process in our reflection and discernment. Here is the local reality today (the "See") in St. Jude SCC, St. Michael Parish, Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya. The acute effect of the pandemic has propelled many youth not to engage in Jumuiya activities because many of them lost jobs, day to day lock downs and restricted activities in the Catholic Church in order to observe the Covid-19 safety measures. All these including other provisional ways of them trying to fend for their families and immediate family members has at some extent affected many programs like online meetings and physical appearance of some members when needed. The parish together with Small Christian Communities have spent so much all trying to mitigate the situation at hand. We are therefore deeply concerned and afraid of losing our own nurtured youths in the church, at the moment we want to initiate some developmental projects that will keep them in the church and create job opportunities to the jobless ones e.g. car wash, cyber cafe and water point areas for selling water. We've had several one on one meetings with concerned members to implement the project. Financial support will give us the necessary and required energy to start and at the same time job creation will have started.

Now we are challenged to go to the second step -- "Discern."

The AMECEA Coordinator for the Department of Promoting Integral Human Development (PIHD) Father Paul Mung'athia Igweta said the AMECEA document to develop *Laudato Si'* guidelines needs to be "known by Christians within the AMECEA region and the booklet be made available in simple language and understandable by people at all levels including the Small Christian Communities, Parishes, Schools, Universities and Bishops Conferences."

One of the answers to our SCCS Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>): is: "Responds to Pope Francis' emphasis on reaching out to those on the peripheries." How close this is to: "Go therefore, to the highways and byways and invite everyone you find" (Mt. 22:9).

World Refugee Day (Sunday, 20 June, 2021). This is the perfect time for SCC members to vote for "Responds to Pope Francis' emphasis on reaching out to those on the peripheries" in our SCCs Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>)

For many years in my teaching and preaching I have searched for different human analogs, that is, an example or analogy in daily life that parallels a "Bible" Passage. In our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC gathering today, we reflected on the verse in *Mark 6:4*: "And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.'" Judith, one of our SCC members, said: "This is like me. I come from a small village in Tanzania. I went off to get my Certificate in Teaching and my Government Teaching License After some years I returned to my small village. The local people said, "Judith can't be a trained teacher. Isn't she the little girl that grew up in our village."

As we look ahead to Sunday, 11 July, 2021 -- Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. My mantra is *Mark 6: 7*: "Calling the Twelve to him, Jesus began to send them out two by two." The meaning is the apostles journey as partners, as collaborators, as a team, helping each other. How does this apply to our SCCs Model of Church today? Two examples: Team teaching in our SCCs courses and workshops. SCC members visiting the sick and people who have stopped going to church in teams.

On the very rare days that I miss our every Tuesday online gathering of St. Isidore of Seville Online SCC, I share my Gospel reflections in the Skype Chat Box. For Sunday, 11 July, 2021 -- Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year B – I quoted from Sister Mary McGlone in her "Scripture for Life" series in *NCR*. She insightfully said: "We're not simply chosen; like the first disciples, we're empowered." She explains that the fact of our Baptism tell us who we are as God's chosen ones. Awareness of God's love gives us the authority of Jesus Christ to reach out to others. St. Paul says, "I can do all things through/in Christ who strengthens me" (*Philippians 4: 13*).

Case Study of Newark Archdiocese. Cardinal Tobin is in a key position. Newark Archdiocese can set an example for the whole of USA. See conversation with Newark Archdiocesan staff member who realizes that she and her co-workers have to be a synodal team and live the synodal process themselves before they share it with others. Then the team can promote living and doing synodality in our parishes and SCCs. Please note that in our current SCC Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>) on the topic **The best part of my Small Christian Community is...** one choice is: "Element or feature in the Synodal Church."

There is a new development in our St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC. In addition to our weekly Gospel Sharing every Tuesday, we are making use of our Chat Room. We post our Gospel Reflections and our Prayer Intentions in our Chat Room for members to read, reflect on and pray over during the whole week. Very helpful. Example of a synthesized Chat Room Reflection: the 12 disciples came back tired, even exhausted and got rest, food, relaxation and a new perspective. Most important, Jesus strengthened, energized and empowered them before sending the disciples out again.

The Jesus Caritas Spirituality uses the well known "Review of Life" (*Revue de Vie* in French) originated by St. (Brother) Charles de Foucauld and popular in youth reflection groups. This is an experience of deep sharing and discernment. The "Review of Life" can be described as praying in a synodal way where everyone is walking together and helping each other. One member describes the overall involvement and experience as:

One of my special SCCs is the Jesus Caritas Fraternity that is a group of priests who met regularly for prayer, Mass, adoration "Review of Life" and a meal in the tradition of Blessed (Brother) Charles de Foucauld. The ideal is a Desert Day once a month. The "Review of Life" is a prayer experience of deep sharing and discernment that combines several features of a weekly SCC gathering.

Pope Francis emphasizes the theme of synodality and the synodal process that is embodied in the SCCs. He has given impetus to the synodality that was introduced in Vatican II -- the entire Catholic Church walking, discerning and evangelizing together. This is an on-going process of listening, discussion, dialog, debate, discernment and proposed pastoral responses that builds on collegiality and subsidiarity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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." This process of synodality is a journeying together. There are many relevant metaphors. One is the process in the Story of "The Road to Emmaus" in *Luke 24*. Another is the famous African proverb: *If you want to walk fast walk alone. If you want to walk far walk together.* SCC members participate in this journeying together through the use of the "See," "Discern/Judge" and "Act" method or process and various forms of pastoral theological reflection and decision-making that start with our life experiences.

Reports that counties like USA and Ireland have Parish Pastoral Councils in 50% or less of their parishes is shocking. In Eastern Africa it is expected/assumed that every parish has some type of Parish Council of lay people, even if it is not working well. When asked how many parishes have Pastoral Councils in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya a local leader answered "all." The difference is that in a SCCs Model of Church, elections begins from below. First, the leaders of the SCCs are chosen. Then from these leaders come the leaders of the outstations, subparishes and parishes respectively.

In Viana Diocese, Angola, meetings have been underway for almost a month in parishes, groups, movements and Small Christian Communities to provide everyone with training and information on the diocesan synodal assembly that will be held in mid-October, 2021, a step towards the Synod of Bishops in 2023. The aim is listening to and gathering the contributions of each person. Each parish is creating its own synodal animation unit. In the diocese there is a great wealth of lay faithful but, due to a lack of formation and orientation, there is sometimes little participation.

Today, 22 July, 2021 is the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene (Mary of Magdala), the "apostle to the apostles." It is important to remember that the Jesus movement spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire because of the initiative of female prophets, evangelists, missionaries, heads of House Churches (SCCs) and widows, and financial support from Christian businesswomen such as Mary of Magdala and Joanna (Luke 8:1-3). Early House Churches were led by women of status such as Grapte, a second-century leader of communities of widows and orphans in Rome. Through the House Church, early Christians gained access to social networks that brought them into contact with people from diverse social classes.

SCC members are very good at the "Prayer of the Faithful"(note the singular) . Other names are the Prayers of Intercession, the Bidding Prayers, the Universal Prayer. One commentator writes: "The community that has come together to celebrate the Eucharist has needs, joys and pains, anxieties and successes. Is not that the ground for our Bidding Prayer? How are they to be formed? In some parishes, it is those in the pews who are invited to seek the prayer of the community for a particular need. For many, such spontaneous prayer is a challenge and there is not the confidence to take up the offer. That is understandable. But with gentle encouragement, it can be achieved. So instead we resort to a written form, usually led by the lector for the Sunday, with an introduction from the celebrant."

This reflection may be anecdotal and not research scientific, but still can be helpful. The Catholic Church in Ireland does not have parish-based Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as we know them in Eastern Africa. Most Catholics do not recognize the name "Small Christian Communities." Dublin Archdiocese uses the term "Cell" and "Small Cell" as equivalents. Some parishes have *Lectio Divina* groups, but they are not dynamic or

permanent. Other parishes have *Bible* Study groups that come and go. Various religious congregations and international movements have specialized SCCs following their charisms. But the importance of the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ -- is a common denominator between the parishes that I have visited and our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa.

Names of the pastoral activities in St. Peter the Apostle Parish, Parsippany, New Jersey, USA (alphabetically). This follows the Small Group Model of Church:

Club
Committee
Group
Ministry
Organization
Outreach
Program
Society

Our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church is different. In a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church many of these separate pastoral activities would be integrated in the life and activities of the SCCs. There is room for parishioners to gather for Adult (Men and women) *Bible* Sharing, *Bible* Discussion, *Bible* Study and Catholic Adult Male Faith Sharing.

There is an important new article on SCCs: Kevin Ahern, “Young people are leading a new approach to campus ministry,” *U.S. Catholic*, September, 2021. We can use the article to jumpstart a new promotion of our Orbis Book "God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond." Bill Vos will be pleased about the references to campus ministry at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. Kevin insightfully describes the challenges to campus ministry with practical examples. I liked in particular: the explanation of the Small Faith Communities (SFCs) Model of Church; how in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, student faith groups have demonstrated a dynamic sense of resiliency; and Pope Francis's call for synodal models in youth and young adult ministry (so relevant as the world wide Synodal Process begins in October, 2021). <https://uscatholic.org/articles/202108/young-people-are-leading-a-new-approach-to-campus-ministry/>

I hope the article can also point readers to another important book on campus ministry: Randy Young, "Catholic Campus Ministry: Fifteen Profiles in Achievement," New Jersey, 2020. Ebook and paperback, Amazon Website, retrieved on 21 August 2021. https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08HZFBNQ5/ref=pe_385040_118058080_TE_M1DP?fbclid=IwAR04qvj55aOy69abU1peGvqsyXXgBqnuvDpM7uZoLnguXpVIUGkz0o3OEME

Members of St Kizito SCC and other SCCs have been waiting for seven years for the new missal in Swahili. It is now being sold in East Africa: *Misale ya Kila Siku (Daily Missal)*. \$30 or 3,000/= Kenyan Shillings. 2048 pages. *Misale ya Kila Siku* comes with various new features pertaining to the Order of Mass, the daily readings, and the calendar of African saints, aspects that had been omitted in previous liturgical books in Kiswahili language. Some of the changes in the Daily Missal include the response to “The Lord be with you”, which is now “*Na awe rohani mwako*” (“And with your spirit”) and not the erroneous one, “*Awe pia nawe.*” In “heaven and earth are full of your glory”, the word “earth” has been

“dunia”. In the new Daily Missal, "earth" will be “*ulimwengu*”. Responsorial psalm will be “*zaburi ya kuitikizana*” and not “*wimbo wa katikati*”.

For many years the Catholic Church in Kenya and Tanzania relied on the *Misale ya Waumini* that only had Sunday readings. *Misale ya Kila Siku* has readings from Monday through Sunday. In the *Misale ya Kila Siku* the people of God in Kenya and Tanzania will celebrate 19 Saints and the Blessed people of African origin. missal is being sold by Paulines Publications of Africa (Daughters of St. Paul).

There is a tradition in the Catholic parishes in Ireland of celebrating "Stations Masses." These are home masses or house masses of 20-30 people that are very similar to our SCC Home Masses in Eastern Africa. However with the shortage of priests in Ireland these Station Masses are disappearing. A single priest in a big parish cannot get around these homes any more. Could these Station Masses turn into weekly meetings of neighborhood SCCs.

In this midst of lockdowns, social distancing and isolation, sharing faith and hope with one another becomes even more important. As always, we are pleased to provide you with your monthly batch of Faith Circles for the four weeks of September, 2021 spanning from the 23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B to the 26th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B. Many groups are temporarily meeting in their Faith Circles groups online. If you have not done this (or are unsure how) you might like to check out our Zoom Resource Guide. We have also created a new section on our diocesan website—"Nourishing Our Faith" that has links to many faith formation opportunities.

We have published a resource giving tips on how to start and run a Faith Circles small group in your community setting. Click here to download the resource.

[Faith Circles SMALL GROUP RESOURCE.pdf \(dow.org.au\)](#)

Small faith sharing communities provide a place where each person can grow in their faith journey. They are not support groups for dealing with problems, issues, addictions, etc. Faith sharing communities focus rather on the ways in which the Spirit is calling us to live more lovingly, actively, deeply, joyfully and fruitfully our relationship with God, our Church and our World.

An important article is “Small Christian Communities: ‘True Experience of Synodality’ for Church in Africa” by Magdalene Kahiu.



ACIAFRICA.ORG

Small Christian Communities “true experience of synodality” for Church in Africa: Priest

On our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website <https://www.smallchristiancommunities.org> we are used to the SCCs Poll asking: "The best part of my Small Christian Community is:..." "We could just as easily have asked: "The best part of our Small Christian Community is:..." Both questions can have different answers. Your comments please.

Using "we" and "us" expresses better the spirit and practice of the SCCs Model of Church. One example of the communal dimension of our SCCs is when the practical action is carried out by the community not just individuals.

Message from Phạm Minh Đức Edu in China: “Mwanajumuiya! Greetings from the Chinese world! The Small Christian Communities are alive also here in China.” It is nice to hear that SCCs are all over the world.

People ask how to find our Small Christian Communities Facebook Page. On the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website (<https://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>). Click on the F icon in the top right hand corner to go to the Facebook Page.

Or follow these the steps:

1. Click on the Facebook Page Website: <http://facebook.com>
2. Click on the magnifying glass to place “Small Christian Communities” in the Search Box (top left).
3. Hit enter.
4. Our Facebook Page is the first one listed. The exact title is:

Small Christian Communities
Society & Culture Website

5. Click to open.

Here is the latest "Introduction" to our SCCs Poll:

Welcome to a popular section of our website — SCC POLLS — that encourages participation and interaction. We have done careful research on, and analyzed feedback from, surveys, questionnaires, workshops, courses, interviews, personal conversations, articles, books, email messages, Facebook Pages, Zoom Faith Sharing and Gospel Sharing, visits to SCCs and conferences on SCCs. We have studied carefully the contemporary signs of the times such as the Covid-19 pandemic, synodality (the "synodal process") and pastoral changes in our parishes and dioceses. We have identified 1486 important characteristics or features of SCCs around the world mainly provided by Small Christian Community (SCCs) members themselves: 747 on the dynamics/process/ principles/classifications of SCCs and 739 on the activities/content/outreach of SCCs. The poll uses the statement — "The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." — followed by six choices that are taken from these 1486 important characteristics or features of SCCs. These six choices reflect

both the inner life and the public life of our SCC Model of Church. We change the poll every two months.

ANNOUNCEMENT: You are invited to vote in our new Poll:

Seventy-Fifth Round: The best part of my Small Christian Community is:..

- Experience of synodality.
- We share faith and hope with one another.
- Permanent influence in the worldwide Catholic Church.
- Gives us courage to overcome obstacles during Covid-19 pandemic.
- Support for our spiritual life.
- Gospel is our DNA.

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>

We thank our Administrator Mwanajumuiya Bernard Mberere (Kenya) for his hard work and expertise. These six choices/selections give us further insights into our SCC Model of Church in the context of our contemporary signs of the times. **NOTE:** Four years ago the words “Covid-19” and “synodality” were not even words in our vocabulary. We thank our African Tech Support Team – Peter Kyalo, Charles Gikera, Sam Wanyoike and Bernard Mberere – who have helped this internet project from the beginning.

From Mwanajumuiya Fidelis Wamalwa: "Very competitive choices this time round. I had to choose carefully among three choices. Like Peter I am following the SCCs Poll to see how many have similar experiences with the SCCs." It is very important that we have her perspective and experience – a young African Catholic lay woman committed to the SCCs Model of Church.

AFRICA/LIBERIA - Catechists in Africa: reference point for Christians in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs)

"In Africa I would never have been able to carry out my missionary service without the help and support of so many catechists", said Father Walter Maccalli in reference to the Motu Proprio *Antiquum Ministerium* of May 10, 2021, with which Pope Francis established the ministry of catechists. The priest, a missionary of the Society for African Missions (SMA), in the note sent to Fides, explained what the catechist does in the African Church. "They are the point of reference for Christians in the Small Christian Communities (SCCs), since they live in close contact with them and animate Sunday celebrations when the missionary priests are unable. The catechist is still today the formator of new SCC leaders, to whom he teaches liturgy and how to explain the *Bible*".

As we continue to encourage Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs), let us be inspired by Pope Francis' prayer intention for the month of September, 2021: "An Environmentally Sustainable Lifestyle." "We pray that we all will make courageous choices for a simple and environmentally sustainable lifestyle, rejoicing in our young people who are resolutely committed to this."

"The Word of God is a source of nourishment and spiritual growth. Its importance in our daily life obliges us to know it and to fully appreciate it. The Biblical Month, therefore, offers

Catholics the opportunity to continue to deepen their relationship with God by listening carefully to his word", affirm the Bishops of Malawi in their message for Biblical Month which is celebrated in September, 2021. The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), through the Pastoral Commission, therefore, encourages all Catholics to have a copy of the *Bible*, to read, meditate and put into practice the Word of God.

This year, the reflection on the Biblical Month comes as the Universal Church celebrates the year of Saint Joseph, one of the biblical figures who obeyed God's will in their lives. The Bishops therefore invite the whole Catholic family to meditate seriously on the life of this Saint: "The year of Saint Joseph should be fruitful for all of us, the obedient Father, who protected Mary and Jesus, and taught his Son to do the will of God. We must fully understand that the *Bible* is the Word of God qualified by Saint Gregory as the letter of God, source of all truths. The existence of the *Bible* is the greatest blessing humankind has ever experienced". The biblical coordinator of the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Father Henry Zulu said the Catholic Church has organized a series of activities to guide Christians in dioceses, parishes and Small Christian Communities (SCCs) throughout the month. Fr. Zulu invites "families to say the prayer for the family using the *Bible*; all Christians are encouraged to listen to *Bible* programs on Catholic radio stations; parishes, pastoral agents and SCC animators are asked to organize retreats for young people during the holidays".

The Church began celebrating the Biblical Month after the declaration of the Holy Father made in 2019, on the occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Biblical Apostolate, established to promote the Word of God among Catholics.

For SCC members who read and reflect on the Gospel every week before Sunday Mass this advice of Pope Francis is important: By spending time listening to/hearing the Gospel (the Good News of Jesus Christ) we will find the secret for our spiritual health, that is, the "medicine." Every day focus on some silence and listening -- fewer human words and more Word of God. The focus here is on silence -- both in our private prayer and in our weekly SCC gathering.

Mwanajumuiya Nancy Njehia has an interesting photo from St. Robert Bellarmine SCC in Kenol Parish in Murang'a Diocese, Kenya. The firewood on the floor in front of the SCC table symbolizes *mwaki*, the Gikuyu name commonly used for SCC. SCC members assemble the firewood during every meeting to remind members that their participation is key in keeping the SCC fire burning.



May our SCC members learn from Pope Francis's Wednesday catechesis. He says: "If I were to ask you today, "which of you knows the exact date of your baptism?" I do not think there would be too many hands raised.... Yet, it is the day on which we were saved, it is the day on which we became children of God. Now, those who do not know it should ask their godparents, their dad, their mom, an uncle, an aunt: "When was I baptized"? And that day should be remembered each year: it is the day on which we became children of God."

Special Prayer Intention for SCC members:

On 9-10 October, 2021 Pope Francis inaugurated a three-year preparation process for the 2023 synod, which will focus on reforming the synodal process. The preparation process and the 2023 synod, with the theme "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission," have the potential to revolutionize the way decisions are made in the Catholic Church and promote a more decentralized structure of authority.

The Vatican has published two documents:

One, "Preparatory Document for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 07.09.2021" <https://press.vatican.va/.../pubb.../2021/09/07/210907a.html>

Two, "Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality" -- Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches <http://www.synod.va/en/documents/vademecum.html>

Let us hope and pray that many SCC members read and reflect on these documents and put them into practice. In our parishes there is ongoing criticism of the homily, the congregation's participation in the singing, the lack of creativity, etc. One practical suggestion is to form a Liturgy Team in our parishes to coordinate our Sunday Liturgies. This team can use a "SCC process" in preparing the Sunday liturgy: the songs, the homily, the participation, the announcements, the parish bulletin, etc.

The Catholic organization Leadership Roundtable based in Washington DC, USA has prepared the excellent "Curated list of resources for healing and strengthening our Church." These resources and recommendations are for the upcoming September, 2021 Catholic Partnership Summit, but are also designed to be a resource for all who are supporters of its mission and work to help build a healthy, thriving Catholic Church in the U.S. The list includes the following:

1. Interview with the Author of "The Pope and the Pandemic: Lesson in Leadership in a Time of Crisis" Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, SJ summarizes leadership lessons from Pope Francis (on YouTube)
2. "Young People are Leading a New Approach to Campus Ministry," US Catholic, August, 2021 Kevin Ahern describes how the Church needs the leadership of young adults as "protagonists of change."

See also the following "Recommendation:'

Synodal Church • Launch a nationally coordinated synodal process in the United States using the Fifth Encuentro as a model, with gatherings at the small group, parish, diocesan, regional, national, and continental levels to respond to Pope Francis' call for journeying together.

NOTE: The use of the term "small group" opens the door to involve the wide variety of Small Faith-sharing Communities and Small Christian Communities in the United States.

This recommendation is a clear "Call to Action."

Webinar on Synodality: Paulines Communication Center-Nairobi, Kenya

Please find the information below:-

Event: Webinar on Synodality

Date: 18th September 2021.

Time: 11:00am – 1:00pm (East Africa Time)

By: Rt. Rev. Bishop Maurice Muhatia Makumba

Zoom Meeting ID: 270 304 1311

Passcode: dsp2020

link:

US02WEB.ZOOM.US

Join our Cloud HD Video Meeting

ACI Africa 14 September, 2021 interview:

Father Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, the President of Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) has lauded the Synod on Synodality, which Pope Francis announced earlier this year to solemnly open next month, on 9–10 October 2021 in Rome. Describing the synod as an inclusive process, he said that Pope Francis is calling the entire Catholic Church to engage in this as a process so that it is not just a one-off event. In a Synodal Church, every baptized Christian has a voice. The preparatory document also explores the need to include the people of God at the local level in the decision-making process of the Church. The JCAM President underscored the need to include the local people in the Catholic Church in decision making processes, all the way from the parishes.

Father Orobator observed that the structure of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is a gift to the Catholic Church especially in Eastern Africa where it is popular. He said that SCCs

give the church a platform and context in which to deepen this issue of Synodality, noting that it is in such basic church groups that people gather at the local level and express their opinions. Jesuits in Africa and Madagascar have announced plans to engage with members of the Clergy and Laity in the Church in JCAM's conversations on Synodality. "We want to bring together cross-sectional people in the church to have a conversation on how we can best support, animate, accompany and enhance this process especially in the preparatory phases."

From *La Croix International* (16 September, 2021): "What might Africa contribute to the Synod on synodality?" Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/.../what-might.../14891>

Of the three suggestions the term "Small Christian Communities" (SCCs) refers to the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) and Basic Christian Communities (BCC), often called "base communities". BECs are present in most African countries. They are subdivisions of parishes, bringing together several families in a smaller geographical area than that of a parish. A BEC organizes prayers, meetings and recreational or mutual aid activities that help maintain the bonds of solidarity and communion among Catholics. Father Simbine says BECs "are truly places of study, meditation and sharing of the Word of God. They seek ways to express the Christian faith in the typical setting of a traditional African community."

From Peter Cullinane, Emeritus Bishop of Palmerston North, New Zealand
Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/.../mission.../14894>

Yet another starting point for renewal can be found in the experience of Small Base Communities pioneered by the Catholic Church in some countries in South America and Asia. Of course, we cannot simply transfer other Local Churches' experience to our situation. But we, too, can establish smaller communities within our parishes, where leadership can be shared by teams and on a voluntary basis. Such gatherings would be lay-led and need no official authorization. They are happening already, and develop in home-spun ways. The Christian Base Communities in South American countries grew out of lay people coming together to pray and reflect on the scriptures and on their life situations, using the Catholic Action principle: "See, Judge, Act". Their aim was a more just society and more truly human life for everyone – "the route the Catholic Church must take". If this were happening in our own country of New Zealand, we could ask the kind of questions they asked: what are the causes of poverty in our country, and what can we do about those causes?

It is sad that an important bishop can write about the World Church without knowing what is going on in Eastern Africa with its Small Christian Community Model of Church. Where did our communications fail?

Welcome to a popular section of our website — SCC POLLS — that encourages participation and interaction. We have done careful research on, and analyzed feedback from, surveys, questionnaires, workshops, courses, interviews, personal conversations, articles, books, email messages, Facebook Pages, Zoom Faith Sharing and Gospel Sharing, visits to SCCs and conferences on SCCs. We have studied carefully the contemporary signs of the times such as the Covid-19 pandemic and pastoral changes in our parishes and dioceses. We have identified 1500 important characteristics or features of SCCs around the world mainly provided by Small Christian Community (SCCs) members themselves: 750 on the dynamics/process/principles/classifications of SCCs and 750 on the activities/content/outreach of SCCs. It is interesting and remarkable that the break-down is exactly 750 -- 750. The poll uses the statement — "The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." — followed by six choices that are taken

from these 1500 important characteristics or features of SCCs. These six choices reflect both the inner life and the public life of our SCCs Model of Church.

We change the poll every two months. The results of the Seventy Fourth round is listed on the SCC Poll/SCC Poll Archives pages. We are now in the Seventy-Fifth Round that covers September – October, 2021. You can vote as many times as you want, but not more than once in a 24 hour period. Welcome. Go to: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org>

Recent research confirms the saying *the local context is king and queen*. In Eastern Africa most of our SCCs use weekly lectionary-based faith sharing in reading and reflecting on the Gospel of the following Sunday and applying it to our daily lives. In the USA and Europe there are a wide variety of models. Some use faith sharing alone. Some use Bible Study alone. Some use academic study alone. Some choose a theme like a season of the year (Advent, Lent) or a topic/issue (faith, leisure, love, suffering, climate justice, social justice, inclusivity). Some are like a personal support group.

SCCs can meet weekly, twice monthly, monthly depending on the local situation and the decision of the SCC members. Some are mixed small communities of men and women. Some men only. Some women only. Some academic. Some pastoral. Some personal. Some prayer/reflection/ discussion only. Some with specific practical actions to be carried out by the small community members either individually or as a small community.

Yes, the local context is king and queen. Your comments please.

From an American SCCs animator: "I recall vividly my ecclesiology professor (Francis Sullivan, SJ) at the Gregorian in Rome telling us that "if Jesus happened to show up today, he'd likely feel more at home being with the Small Christian Communities of Africa or the Charismatic Prayer Groups in the US rather than the pomp down the street [St. Peter's]." Which has me thinking about the concept of SCCs in the US given that the current model of the Catholic Church in the USA doesn't seem to resonate with many young (and older) people. I know the Diocese of St. Petersburg, FL has SCC ministry."

For many pastoral and spiritual resources for campus ministry visit the Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA) Website <http://www.ccmnet.org>

Join an Affinity Group that is a fancy phrase for "group learning". Different from an online course or a support group, a mastermind meets virtually once a week via Zoom video conference calling. Groups are made up of 6-9 people and all are campus ministers. An Affinity Group provides accountability and encouragement and can often lead to breakthroughs in ministry, faith and in life. It provide campus ministers with:

- Weekly Zoom video conference
- Leadership study guide
- Guest speaker slide-decks
- Growing your professional network

One helpful module is: "The hybrid group coaching and leadership development program for Catholic campus ministers."

St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC three-part SCC Webinar -- the next three Tuesdays --28 September; 5 October; and 12 October on the theme: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." On these three consecutive Tuesdays we will add a

half hour to our weekly (every Tuesday) online gatherings and discern in order three topics: "SCCs and Communion;" "SCCs and Participation;" "SCCs and Mission." This will lead into the 16-17 October, 2021 weekend when all 5,000 dioceses of the world are invited to start the "Synodal Process" called by Pope Francis.

My answers:

1. What are your experiences (personal and communal) of "SCCs and Communion."

- a. First learning about SCCs at the 1973 AMECEA Plenary in Nairobi.
- b. Our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC (2012-2022).

2. What are your favorite Bible passages on "community."

- a. *Matthew* 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
- b.

1. What are your experiences (personal and communal) of "SCCs and Participation."

- a. Interview with Peter Sarpong. Woman at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish.
- b. Practical Action projects in St. Kizito SCC Members of St. Kizito SCC planting tree seedlings in the neighborhood.

2. What are your favorite Bible passages on "participation." *Acts of the Apostles*:

- a. Chapter 2:42-45.
- b. Chapter 4: 32-35.

1. What are your experiences (personal and communal) of "SCCs and Mission (practical action, *kazi ya kutenda*, reaching out to others)."

- a. Rita, Rose, Alphonse and I facilitating SCC Workshops based on the two key pillars: weekly lectionary based faith sharing and practical action.
- b. *A New Way of Living and Proclaiming the Church* (1985). Presents 12 Case 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.

SCC member Belza Ramos gave a perfect example of practical action: San Antonio, Texas is a hub for immigrants who cross into the USA at the Texas-Mexico border. The Spanish speaking SCC members of St. Brigid Parish in San Antonio Archdiocese visit buses loads of these immigrants and give them food, medicine and a map of their final destinations.

2. What are your favorite Bible passages on "mission."

a. Jesus and the 12 Disciples are one of the first SCCs. *Mark 6: 7*: "Calling the Twelve to him, Jesus began to send them out two by two." The meaning is the apostles journey as partners, as collaborators, as a team, helping each other. How does this apply to our SCCs Model of Church today? Two examples: Team teaching in our SCCs courses and workshops. SCC members visiting the sick and people who have stopped going to church in teams.

b. "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (*Mark 16:15*).

Meanwhile we are studying, evaluating and commenting on the following statement:

Just like a parish or a diocese or a National Catholic Bishops' Conference, a Small Christian Community (SCC) is challenged to be synodal, to use a synodal process. So how do SCC members respond to Pope Francis' call to invite/choose/welcome people from the "periphery," "from the margins." Who are these people? Here are two concrete examples:

1. People who are on the periphery and margins of our social and economic world: people with disabilities, homeless, jobless, migrant farmworkers and recent immigrants.

2. People who are on the periphery and margins of our Institutional Catholic Church world: millennials who have drifted away from the church, LGBTIQ people, women who feel they are second class, divorced and remarried Catholics who cannot receive communion, people of other faiths/religious denominations, atheists and agnostics.

Announcement: Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Online Course on "The Inner Life of SCCs" starting on 17 January, 2022. The online course is offered by the Loyola Institute of Ministries (LIM) at Loyola University located in New Orleans, Louisiana USA. For more information visit the Loyola University website:

As we pray for and with Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) around the world, we are reminded that the 36th World Youth Day takes place on Sunday, 21 November 2021 and will be celebrated in dioceses around the globe as the Catholic Church prepares for the 2023 WYD in Lisbon, Portugal. Pope Francis released his message for the 2021 Diocesan WYD on Monday, 28 September, 2021 under the theme: "Arise. I appoint you as a witness of what you have seen" (*Acts 26:16*).

In the message the pope pointed to the important role that young people have to play in the world, especially as they have faced enormous setbacks and difficulties due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many young people, said the pope, experienced a rise in family problems, unemployment, depression, loneliness, and addictive behavior. But, he added, the experience of the pandemic has also revealed the virtues of young people, including our "inclination to solidarity." "Whenever a young person falls, in some sense all humanity falls," he said. "Yet it is also true that when a young person rises, it is as if the whole world rises as well." With that in mind, Pope Francis urged young Christians to "arise" and help the world start afresh with their passion and enthusiasm.

My topics for discernment in the Synodal Process:

1. Small Christian Communities.
2. Parish Pastoral Councils.

3. Homilies by all the People of God including qualified lay men and laywomen..⁵²²

Our SCC members need pastoral and spiritual "tools" for their formation and growth. That is why it is good to see SCC members raise money to buy the new Swahili Missal -- *Misale ya Kila Siku*. It will be big help to our *jumuiyas* for our weekly lectionary based faith sharing.

Sister Donna Ciangio, OP has been named the Coordinator of the Synodal Process in Newark Archdiocese, New Jersey, USA. The Synodal Way will begin with Mass on Sunday, 17 October. Donna is a great supporter of the SCC Model of Church. When she animates Parish Pastoral Councils in the archdiocese, she encourages the meetings to start not just with a prayer but with Communal Faith Sharing.

As we continue to gather examples of Zoom Small Faith Communities, here is an interesting example from the "Scripture Reflection Series" of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (10 October, 2021)

by Mary Beth Buchner

Back in February, 2021 when the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in Washington DC invited me to write a Scripture reflection, I hesitated. I was scared but I felt honored to be asked so I really didn't want to turn down this opportunity. When it was finally time to write the reflection, I read the readings over a few times to myself and found my fear level rising. I still wasn't gaining clarity.

I sent an SOS email requesting help to my cousin, Noel, who is part of the Goshen Maryknoll Affiliates Group, which meets weekly to discuss Scripture readings over Zoom. I have been joining them since the beginning of the pandemic. I was relieved when they agreed to focus on the readings for this week, the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, even though it was out of sequence. The discussion was most fruitful and my anxiety lessened a little. Then I prayed to the Holy Spirit to enlighten me. Many thoughts surfaced and woke me up in the middle of the night...

For the rest of the homily (who remembers Paul Harvey?) go to:
<https://maryknollogc.org/resources/scripture-reflection>

As we begin this "Synodal Process" around the world from October, 2021 to October, 2023 Pope Francis has called for open discussion in the Catholic Church. He is not afraid of arguments and disagreements. "Open and fraternal debate makes theological and pastoral thought grow. That doesn't frighten me. What's more, I look for it," he said. He remembers attending synods where the bishops were told that certain topics were off the table. Rather, he told the Fall, 2015 Synod on the "Family," "Speak clearly. Let no one say, 'This can't be said, they will think this or that about me.' Everything we feel must be said with *parrhesia* [the

⁵²² Even though presently lay people (women and men) cannot officially preach at mass, the priest or deacon can take good examples from online homilies by lay people. Two good sources are "Catholic Women Preach" and the "Scripture Reflection Series" of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Greek for boldness]." He purposefully used this Greek word that describes the boldness with which St. Paul spoke to St. Peter at the Council of Jerusalem in arguing against making the Gentiles follow Jewish practices.

Our research continues on the reasons for the slow response to the SCCs Model of Church in the USA. One experienced, older pastor comments: "As our presbyterate evolves, from my generation of Vatican II priests (most now retiring or retired) to the John Paul II priests and to the Benedict priests, there is little interest in either the "base communities" model or "fraternal associations" like the Jesus Caritas Fraternities. These models are actually rather incompatible with their top-down, hierarchical and very clerical ecclesiology."

From an American diocesan priest involved in Jesus Caritas Fraternities (priests, laypeople, mixed) in the USA: "Through the years I have belonged to, and created, several lay fraternities, always trying to create small communities. I still believe the future of the Catholic Church anywhere is small communities, living an alternative to the 'big tent' church."

A good motto in internet ministry is *we create the path by walking*. During our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC Gathering today we had 9 online participants: 3 men. 6 women. Plus one woman in our Chat Room. Plus Sister Rita sending greetings. Total: 11 members. Our Moderator Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo experimented with the "Skype Together Mode" (panoramic view with us sitting in the first row of seats in a large airplane). He recorded our half hour Skype SCC Webinar on the "Synodal Process" topic of "participation." Go to: <https://join.skype.com/FefOEMaIHbhh> The webinar was 33 minutes and 57 seconds. The video recording will be available for 30 days in our Chat Room.

Food for reflection as we SCC members participate in the "Synodal Process:"

"What is the origin of synods? From the earliest days of the Catholic Church, people gathered to discern when they were faced with a crisis or at a turning point. The *Acts of the Apostles* tell that when the early Christian communities needed to resolve certain practical problems (appointing deacons to serve the widows and orphans) or pastoral questions (not imposing Jewish dietary laws on the Gentile Christians), they held an assembly of believers, called on the Holy Spirit and discussed with those in authority. The convocation of assemblies (= synods) is a very old and traditional practice in the Catholic Church. It has taken place with more or less intensity according to the periods of history."

Here is a challenging and insightful new article published on 13 October, 2021:

"Are Basic Christian Communities the Way to Achieving Synodality?"

By Charles Ayetan

The first Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) to be established by Catholics in the West African nation of Togo appeared in 1995... "Structuring into a Basic Christian Community (BCC) represents a form of decentralization within the Catholic Church and allows the pastor and his collaborators to better know their parish, the faithful and their realities," explained Father Gabriel Hozo, pastor of a parish in Kara Diocese, based 414 kilometers north of Lomé. The clergy "thus have a global view of their parish, which avoids slowness and blockages, favors pastoral work and in-depth evangelization,"

the priest said. "These communities represent a lever towards a more Synodal Church that takes into account the opinion and contributions of the faithful, just as Pope Francis wishes for the Synod of 2023," noted Father Hozo. At the community he oversees, delegates represent the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) in the Parish Pastoral Council and thus participate in decision-making. The BCCs have a fundamental role to play through the reflections and responses to be included in the preparatory documents of this synod," said Iréné Silété Tokanou, the coordinator of the BCCs in Lome Archdiocese. "But it is still necessary to continue to establish these communities where they do not yet exist, and above all to supervise and train the Christian faithful in order to avoid aberrations," he added.

After our weekly St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC Gathering today, we had a half hour SCCs Skype Webinar on "SCCs and Mission." Our first question was: What are your experiences (personal and communal) of "SCCs and Mission (practical action, *kazi ya kutenda*, reaching out to others)." SCC member Belza Ramos gave a perfect example of practical action: San Antonio, Texas is a hub for immigrants who cross into the USA at the Texas-Mexico border. The Spanish speaking SCC members of St. Brigid Parish in San Antonio Archdiocese visit bus loads of these immigrants and give them food, medicine, clothing and a map of their final destinations. We ended by discussing concrete ways that we can practice synodality in our St. Isidore of Seville Online International SCC. SCC member Belza Ramos suggested that part of our "Synodal Process" could focus on sharing our international character. Active members live in four countries: Germany, Kenya, Tanzania and USA. The webinar was recorded.

After our weekly St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC finished three half hour SCCs Skype Webinars on the three main topics of the Synod/Synodal Process, we are affirmed by this statement by Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles who is the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Question: "When you say people should get involved or be engaged by the Synod, how do you see that happening?"

Answer: "I think that a good way to think about it is the sub-header of the Synod: Community, participation and mission. This is a good way of understanding what the Synod is all about. And we need to remember that the Church is not just the priests or the bishops, but the People of God, so I think this Synod gives us an opportunity to share with each other, because we are all called to holiness. I think that historically some have had the impression that the Catholic Church are the bishops and the priests, but no, we all are the church. Everything starts with the baptism, and it's the same for everybody."

SCC member Belza Ramos asks: "How are we practicing synodality in our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC?" For me the starting point is to **LISTEN** to the 12-13 members who are presently silent/not joining our weekly gatherings especially the young adults. Why? Is it 1. Lack of money 2. Lack of internet connection. 3 Lack of a good computer/smartphone. 4. Conflict with work/study schedule. 5. Not a priority right now. 6. Health issues. 7. Over-extension/exhaustion. 8. Misfortunes such as theft of smartphones. 9. Young Adults' social media platform preferences (including not using much email). 10. Other. Mwanajumuiya Lawrence Murori asks: "Could we carry out a survey among the silent ones and especially the young adults as you pointed out? It might help to unearth the mental models within them." Mwanajumuiya Judith said: "The answer is Number 3. I don't have a smart phone or a computer. That's why I often use Sister Rita's phone. My two smart phones

were stolen when I was in a *Matatu/Daladala* (public transport). Now that I don't have a laptop, it makes it difficult for me to be on line.”

La Croix International is an Independent Online Catholic Daily News Service (<https://international.la-croix.com>) As the preparatory phase of the Synod of Bishops' assembly on synodality opens on Sunday, 17 October, 2021 in local dioceses around the world, *La Croix* is following three places including a Basic Christian Community on the outskirts of Sao Paulo (Brazil). <https://international.la-croix.com/.../a-parish-in.../15060>

Pope Francis' Twitter message today is a good guide for SCC members as we begin the "Synodal Process:" "The Word of God summons us to discernment and guides the [#Synod](#), so it may be filled with grace, a healing process guided by the Spirit, in which Jesus calls us to ask what God wants to say to us in this time, and the direction in which he wants to lead us. [#ListeningChurch](#)"

Zoom is offering new opportunities for SCCs. A Small Christian Community in Los Angeles California, USA met regularly in person. When Covid-19 came it began meeting online. Although one member moved to San Francisco and another member moved to the state of South Dakota, these two members could still participate through Zoom Meetings.

Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao, Philippines explained that this Synod is a journey, “a convocation guided by the Spirit for the challenge of mission”. As dioceses gather together in small circles in parishes, schools and Basic Ecclesial Communities in the coming months, he said, the Catholic Church will look within and also at how it is together with the entire human family. Hence, it will pray together and ask the Spirit to lend us His eyes, mind and heart. “We will look at two landscapes not with our eyes but with the eyes of the Lord.” Local communities will find out how this journeying together is happening today and what the Spirit is asking of them; how the life of worship gives way to the life of charity; and how faith is lived and shared. In its relationship with the human family, the CBCP president said that local communities will examine whether they are still the salt and light for the world; whether there is a dialogue of life, ready to listen to others with respect and humility despite differences.

As we SCC members begin the diocesan phrase of the "synodal process," Pope Francis' Twitter message can inspire and encourage us: "Dear brothers and sisters, have a good journey! May we be open to the Holy Spirit's surprises, the grace of encounter, reciprocal listening and discernment, joyfully convinced that, even as we seek the Lord, He always comes with His love to meet us first. [#Synod](#) [#ListeningChurch](#)"

How many SCC members know that Sunday, 24 October, 2021 is the celebration of World Mission Sunday (always the second to last Sunday in October). Research shows that:

- Many people do not know about the celebration.
- Others forget.
- Others don't care.
- Others mix up the dates. Again this year some calendars have it wrong. It seems that in our complex liturgical year the “second to last Sunday in October” (not necessarily the third Sunday of October) is just too hard to understand.

The theme Pope Francis has chosen for his 2021 World Mission Sunday message is: "We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard (Acts of the Apostles 4:20)." In the message he says: “Once we experience the power of God's love we cannot help but proclaim and share

what we have seen and heard. Jesus' relationship with His disciples and His humanity shows us the extent to which God loves our humanity and makes His own our joys and sufferings, our hopes and our concerns."

This speaks to SCC members. We speak of our SCC experiences. We share the SCC Model of church with others.

I am delighted that Paterson Diocese in New Jersey, USA, the diocese in which I am presently residing, has a Synodal Process. Bishop Kevin Sweeney writes:

I believe it may be providential that we had scheduled our annual World Mission Sunday Mass for 24 October, 2021 and it can be celebrated as our Opening Mass for the Synod. In so much of the literature and preparation for the Synodal Process, we are reminded of our call to be "missionary disciples," so I believe that it is very fitting that we can celebrate these two moments at this liturgy. All of our pastors and parishes have been asked to choose two representatives to attend the Opening Mass and we hope that those two parishioners will be involved in the parish effort to participate in the Synod Process. We have also invited some other "ecclesial communities" and groups, such as our religious orders, schools, communities, deacons, and retired priests to send representatives.

I can already see that one of the benefits of the Synod will be a greater awareness of all the ecclesial communities, movements, and groups who make up the Catholic Church of our diocese. If anyone is reading this and is not sure whether a particular group has been invited to send representatives to the Opening Mass, I would ask you to contact Father Paul Manning, our Vicar for Evangelization, who is heading the committee that is working on our plans for, and participation in, the Synod, especially over the next six months during this "First/Local Phase" in the process. Father Manning can be reached at: pmanning@patersondiocese.org.

It is interesting that in some parishes in Eastern Africa the annual SCCs Day is celebrated on World Mission Sunday.

As we SCC members begin the diocesan phrase of the "synodal process," Pope Francis' Twitter message can inspire and encourage us: "Dear brothers and sisters, have a good journey! May we be open to the Holy Spirit's surprises, the grace of encounter, reciprocal listening and discernment, joyfully convinced that, even as we seek the Lord, He always comes with His love to meet us first. #Synod #ListeningChurch"

As the Synodal Process has begun in all the dioceses of the USA, here is some SCC language being used:

Gary Diocese in Indiana will conduct discussions with people from young, elderly and intercultural populations, doing so in groups as small as seven people at a time to encourage candid discussion.

St. Augustine Diocese in Florida plans to designate people from different cultures to lead some of its Listening Groups so that all participants feel comfortable.

Many of the dioceses contacted by "America" Magazine reported no plan to reach beyond parishes, and Parish Discussion Groups will likely draw in only those who are already most

involved in the parish. While these voices are certainly important, the Vatican has stressed reaching out to those on the margins of the church or outside it.

All SCC members congratulate, and offer prayers for:

AFRICA/KENYA - Appointment of the Archbishop of Nairobi
Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The Holy Father Francis has appointed His Exc. Mgr. Philip A. Anyolo, currently Metropolitan Archbishop of Kisumu as Metropolitan Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Nairobi (Kenya). (SL) (Agenzia Fides, 28/10/2021)
Hongera. Pongezi.

Greetings from Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.

Happy World Mission Sunday.

On Saturday, 23 October, 2021 I had the privilege of presiding at a Memorial Eucharistic Liturgy for Father Bob Pelton, CSC here at the University of Notre Dame. Bob was born on 29 May, 1921 and died on 4 November, 2019. That means that this year he would have been 100 years old. In the homily I told three Bob Pelton stories. We all remember Bob as a wonderful friend, a zealous missionary, a capable coordinator of international conferences, a writer of many books and articles and a great promoter of Small Christian Communities (Basic Christian Communities).

After mass we went to the nearby cemetery of the Holy Cross Fathers and Brothers and prayed at Bob's grave and blessed his grave. May we harvest the rich memories of Bob Pelton and follow his shining example. RIP.

The listening process that is beginning is good news for the faithful of St. Paul the Apostle CEB. Here, as in most of the outlying areas of São Paulo, Brazil, where Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) are concentrated, the economic crisis, hunger and unemployment leave no respite for the inhabitants. When Pope Francis speaks of the "most vulnerable or marginalized" in the Vademecum (or handbook) of the Synod on synodality, it is they who come to mind. In spite of everything, energy is indeed there for these discussions, as well as for all the daily social struggles, which makes this BCC of the vast Catholic community of Belém a relevant group to follow in the coming months. Further on the periphery of São Paulo, the subprefecture of São Mateus is home to nearly 400,000 people.

A dozen lay people have recently gathered to begin reflecting on how they can best participate in the synodal process. These men and women are all involved in social movements and very active in the outskirts of the city. They meet online. Thanks to this first meeting, they were able to discover together the working documents for the synod and to discuss the challenges for their episcopal regions.

Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/.../giving-a.../15097>

May SCC members participate. The Vatican on Tuesday launched a website and smartphone app to help Catholics pray for the success of the two-year process culminating in the 2023 synod on synodality. At prayforthesynod.va, Catholics can find information in English, Spanish, and other languages about how to support the synod through prayer. "This website, together with the app Click To Pray, aims to accompany the synodal way for prayer."
prayforthesynod.va

"The Varieties of Religious Community Today" is published in the November, 2021 issue of *Commonweal*. It is a series of articles devoted to Catholic religious communities, in t

broadest sense of that term. The Catholic Church has, from its earliest centuries, found room for special intentional communities: religious orders, secular institutes, confraternities and sodalities, lay ecclesial movements, pious houses, and houses of hospitality.

I would have liked to see more specific mention of Intentional Eucharistic Communities such as Nova, Communitas and Francis House as well as examples of intentional Small Christian Communities/Basic Christian Communities as a Pastoral Model of Church. How these communities have adapted to our Zoom digital way of life is significant.

These are documented in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 (Second Printing 2006, New Cover 2014); Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006 (1st Reprint 2011, 2nd Reprint 2012, 3rd Reprint 2017); and Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2006. Available as an Ebook at Orbis Books and Amazon.

SCC members are reminded from time to time to check the "Calendar of Events" on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website:

1. Synodality in Africa Webinar – 18 November 2021 at 2PM (EAT)
2. Announcement: Online SCCs Course starting on 17 January, 2022

Always learning. As we research the expressions “Eucharistic Famine” and “Eucharistic Hunger” (used especially in Eastern and Southern Africa) for developing a SCCs Model of Church, we learn of the similar expression “Eucharistic Deprivation” used in Nigeria. There are different meanings of "Deprivation." First, the local Catholic community, especially in rural areas of Africa, can be deprived of participating in mass and receiving the Eucharist (Holy Communion). Second, the local Catholic community, especially in rural areas of Africa, can be deprived of receiving the Eucharist (Holy Communion) at "Sunday Services Without a Priest." Nigerian Jesuit priest Father Michael Oluwadare, SJ is writing his licentiate thesis in the area of concentration in Liturgy at Santa Clara University on "Eucharistic Deprivation in the Western Part of Nigeria."

When people ask: Who knows some good resources for student *Bible* study groups?, a good answer is: *The Catholic Lectionary: The Three Year Liturgical Cycle (A, B and C)* with many contemporary commentaries available. Lectionary based faith sharing is the heart of the SCCs Model of Church. As we come to the end of the Catholic Church's Liturgical Year (Year B), may SCC members be conscious of the plan of the Scripture Readings and the Lectionary Cycle.

There are an increasing number of webinars related to SCCs. Please note that to join/participate you have to click on "Register" and fill in your name and email address. Then you will be sent the link to join the webinar or you can simply click on the website prompt to join the webinar.

One of the choices in our present Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>) is: Seventy-Sixth Round: The best part of my Small Christian Community is...”Helps us learn from the Covid-19 pandemic.” In our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC today we discussed how we are part of a community. So there is a community response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Wearing a mask and getting vaccinated is not just an individual, private, personal action/response. It is also for the sake of other people, for the local community.

Two regional conferences -- the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) --

are collaborating on how the Church in Africa can successfully realize goals of the upcoming 2023 Synod of Bishops. JCAM's President Father Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator explained that the reflection axis calls on theologians to "explore essential themes emphasized in the synodal documents and by Pope Francis including synodality, listening, the Holy Spirit, discernment, participation/inclusion, methodology, Small Christian Communities, parishes and African models and practices." The Secretary General of AMECEA Father Anthony Makunde emphasized making good use of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a basis for the synodal journey "since it is a treasure in the region and has become part of us. Theologians should now help us come up with new ways of listening, new ways of thinking in the SCCs so this can be a unique contribution from the African continent to the Universal Church."

With the interest in the "Synodal Process" and deeper listening, we are asking our SCC members how we can make creative use of silence in our online Zoom gatherings (that are different from in person gatherings). Please give your experiences and suggestions. In both Sunday Mass and our weekly SCCs meetings the one minute of silence after the reading of the Gospel is important. What is God saying to us about the meaning of this Gospel text in the context of our daily life, of today's world? How do we apply the Gospel to our here and now? Silence brings deeper insight and understanding. Step 7 in the 13 Steps in the "Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Daily Life Connections Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa." "Silence. Listen to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us in the Gospel passage. This period of silence is not wasted time or empty time. It can be a time of deeper listening and deeper reflection."

In the Webinar on "Synodality in Africa" on 18 November 2021 Sister Josée Ngalula emphasized the importance of the "structure" of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) on the grassroots level in Africa. We have to use and consolidate this basic structure to help us listen to the People of God especially laymen and lay women. SCCs is an ecclesial model of the Catholic Church in Africa. The new language is spiritual conversation, mutual listening and prayerful discernment. SCCs represent the spirit of synodality and the synodal process. SCC members are invited to pray for the first Ecclesial Assembly that opened in Mexico City, Mexico on Sunday, 21 November, 2021 bringing together Caribbean and Latin American countries. The week-long meeting represents an outcome of the Synodal Path recently initiated by Pope Francis with more than one thousand participants gathered in Mexico City and online. This "Synodal Process" will take place with the aim of changing certain structures and giving new space and importance to the voice of all the baptized, something different from when it concerned a meeting of only bishops in Aparecida, Brazil in 2007. Members of CEBs in Latin America are participating.

In Nakuru Diocese, Kenya reports: "The bishop formed a team of seven members to address and to lead the synodal process. We have met on several occasions. We have prepared the guide or the syllabus which is assisting as for the inductions and sensitization, Nakuru being the first Diocese to spearhead among the dioceses in Kenya. We had a meeting at our Pastoral Center for other dioceses within the Metropolitan of Nairobi to benchmark from us ,that's was 17th-20th of October. After that we have visited all the 11 Deaneries of Nakuru Diocese. This has followed the formation of Deanery teams which later will lead us to parish,outstation, Small Christian community teams which will respond to guiding questions that will lead us to have a lineamenta that will be our guide. After qll the people participating in answering the questions we shall converge on 7th to 10th of February 2022 to collate the materials. Then after that the document will be forwarded to the next level. But for

us after getting where our Diocese is and issues affecting our Diocese, it will guide us to to have pastoral interventions through the Small Christian Communities.”

In a short video, Sister Donna Ciangio, OP, the Coordinator of the Synodal Process in Newark Archdiocese, New Jersey, USA has this insight when she says: "The purpose of this lengthy and deep Synodal Process in our archdiocese is not just to answer a questionnaire from the Vatican but to improve the quality of the Catholic life, practice and participation in our archdiocese. This can describe our SCCs involvement as well.

Happy Thanksgiving Day. In our SCCs Poll on our SCCs Website (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>) this month -- Seventy-Sixth Round :”The best part of my Small Christian Community is” -- one choice is: “Helps us learn from the Covid-19 pandemic.” One learning is found in the universal saying, *Gratitude is more contagious than any pandemic*. We can be thankful for the many ways that God has helped us during this pandemic. We can be thankful for the many wonderful people, blessings and events in our lives. Let us spread this gratitude, this thankfulness to everyone and to all situations.

Pope Francis's message in Cyprus in December, 2021 is an important heads up to SCC member during the changes happening in this Covid-19 pandemic. "The mission of proclaiming the salvation given by Christ becomes fruitful if it manifests the face of a "patient Church", which "does not allow itself to be upset and disturbed by changes, but serenely welcomes the new and discerns situations in the light of the Gospel".

During an Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) online Synodal Process gathering in November, 2021 after prayerful reflection we shared with each other the most important change that must occur in the Catholic Church if she is to survive. One answer: "Less emphasis on large parish gatherings and supporting the formation of more Small Christian Communities is a good first step."

"Reading the Sunday Scriptures with a Contemplative Spirit"

Contemplation, according to Walter Burghardt, SJ, means taking a long, loving look at the real. Utilizing the cultures out of which the "Bible" emerges, we will take a contemplative look at the Sunday scriptures to understand them, and to discern how we are called to live them. Join us each Friday from 11:30 am to noon. These sessions are held online, in the Center at Mariandale's Zoom meeting room. All are welcome! Mariandale Retreat and Conference Center, Ossining, New York, USA. This is one type of the emerging weekly online SCCs that are lectionary based faith sharing.

Happy New Year, SCC friends. The 24 Likes and the 12 Comments on our two Facebook Pages shows that we SCC friends have gotten the message about the 1st Sunday of Advent as a Happy New Year time. It is important that SCCs members follow the weekly flow of the Catholic Church's Liturgical Year.

Pope Francis's message in Cyprus is an important heads up to SCC member during the changes happening in this Covid-19 pandemic. "The mission of proclaiming the salvation given by Christ becomes fruitful if it manifests the face of a "patient Church", which "does not allow itself to be upset and disturbed by changes, but serenely welcomes the new and discerns situations in the light of the Gospel".

During an CCRI online Synodal Process gathering after prayerful reflection we shared with each other the most important change that must occur in the Catholic Church if she is to survive. One answer: "Less emphasis on large parish gatherings and supporting the formation of more Small Christian Communities is a good first step."

Let us share African Proverbs on the theme "Synodality/Walking Together:"

"If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together." Burkina Faso proverb

"A friend is someone you share the path with." Sudan Proverb

"The journey of many people does not make one get tired easily."

"The journey of one person is a problem. The journey of two persons together easily gets them to the top of the mountain."

"I am because we are." Zulu South Africa

The road by one person is taken because of nightfall- Kikuyu proverb

From our Skype SCC Gathering today: My takeaway is based on the Seventy-Sixth Round (<https://afriprov.org>) in our voting on "The best part of my Small Christian Community is:.." My answer is "Supportive faith sharing." I am supporting Rita and Belza (and our other SCC members) in their recovery from illness and their commitment to make Jesus Christ the center of their lives.

This material from Lansing Diocese in Michigan, USA on how to improve the quality of our homilies of both priests and deacons is very relevant as priests and deacons are meeting in deanery groups to discuss the 2021-2023 Synodal Process.

From the *2013 Pastoral Plan of Lansing Diocese*, Michigan, USA:

I [the bishop of Lansing] would like our Department of Formation to provide more opportunities for improving the quality of our homilies for both priests and deacons. In addition, I urge all priests and deacons to become part of some homily preparation session, perhaps with other clergy or with some parishioners, which would meet weekly, or at least regularly, to study, pray over and reflect upon the upcoming Sunday readings.

The *2016 Follow-up Report* stated:

There was a strong push to promote Small Discipleship Groups [similar to Small Christian Communities]. We really cannot be disciples alone. For many, the parish may seem too big, and that can create a sense of anonymity. We need the support, challenge and accountability that small groups can provide in order for us to follow Christ more closely. Thanks be to God, these groups have been sprouting up all across the diocese with reports of many lives changed!" See Lansing Diocese, Michigan, USA Website: DIOCESEOFLANSING.ORG

From our Skype SCC Gathering today: My takeaway is based on the Seventy-Sixth Round (<https://afriprov.org>) in our voting on "The best part of my Small Christian Community is:..." My answer is "Supportive faith sharing." I am supporting Rita and Belza (and our other SCC members) in their recovery from illness and their commitment to make Jesus Christ the center of their lives.

May our SCC members use the concrete symbols of Christmas to enter more deeply in the joy and hope of the season. As Pope Francis says: "[#Christmas](#) symbols, especially the creche and trimmed tree, bring us back to the certainty that fills the heart with peace, with joy for the Incarnation, to God who becomes familiar: He dwells with us, He fills our days with the rhythm of hope."

How can Young Adults participate in the 2021 Synodal Process? Often they are outside of the traditional parish structure and can get lost. One way is through Young Adult Small Christian Communities (YASCCs), but then their experience/insights/views need to be channeled to the right synod networks.

The SCC Model of Church is inductive, from the grassroots and starts with our human experience. So this reflection is important: "Gustavo Gutierrez, Gutiérrez, a Dominican priest now 93, wrote "A Theology of Liberation" after the Second Vatican Council, when much of Catholic theology was moving away from the deductive style of an earlier generation (like the Baltimore Catechism) to an inductive one that took human experience into account. However, there was still something missing. Although the council had done much to recognize people of other faiths and indeed of no faith at all, it only dimly realized the plight of "non-persons" [especially the economic poor] that today still make up the majority population of the planet. Liberation theology challenges all God-talk by placing their experiences [the preferential option of the poor] at the center of reflection."

At lunch today Sister Magdalena Chubwa, CDMT of the Daughters of Mary Religious Congregation from Kigoma, Tanzania said that we already have the Synodal Process in Africa through our African community values and our SCCs. It is easy. It is a "piece of cake."

Magdalena explains further:

In Eastern Africa we already have "Small Christian Communities" well established so it will be very easy during this synodal process when we are trying to collect some information through dialogue. We are already organized from the bottom of the Catholic Church (the family level). Meaning: evangelization in Eastern Africa has been via SCCs, from family to family, house to house and neighbor to neighbor. This I believe is the "Synodal Process" the Pope wants us to do now, that we already have in Eastern Africa. In Eastern Africa we journey together on a daily basis. In other words, we can be a model for this 2021 -- 2024 Synod.

For example, the themes of the Synod: Communion, Participation, and Mission, these three have been exercised for years. A strong unity/communion that is built from the family level to the Local Church will allow people to participate fully during this process of their dialogue where there will openly shared experiences about the mission of the Catholic Church in their ordinary life.

Their daily prayer through Small Christian Communities meetings will play a key role during the Synodal Process in allowing the Holy Spirit to be the center of their discussions. This, in my opinion, is a special opportunity which provides the freedom especially among the lay people communities to share their thoughts and not just those in authority as we are used to seeing.

Therefore, the teams that will lead these sessions on either the parish or diocese levels won't have a problem because people already know what needs to be done.

Pope Francis invites SCC members to practical action when he says: "Let's choose a concrete commitment, however small, that's adapted to our situation in life, and let's continue to do it to prepare ourselves for [#Christmas](#): call a person who is alone, visit that elderly or ill person, do something to serve a poor person, someone in need."

The African Synodality Initiative (a partnership between the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) provides resources that will enable the Local Churches in Africa (individuals and groups in dioceses, parishes and Small Christian Communities) to engage fruitfully and constructively in the ongoing Synodal Process. Here is the recording from the first webinar on "Synodality in Africa: Practical Suggestions for Facilitating and Conducting Discussion, Consultation and Dialogue in Local Churches". It is our hope that it will be a useful resource for individuals and groups in dioceses, parishes and Small Christian Communities.

The webinar video is in two parts: Part 1 - Discussion and Part 2 - Question and Answer session.

To watch Part 1 of the webinar video put this link into your browser

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQMextMffv8>

To watch Part 2 of the webinar video put this link into your browser

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPva4GkfZS0>

From a Major Seminarian in Segerea Senior Seminary, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: “I am happy to participate in the Synodal Process through our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) here in the seminary! It was the wonderful experience! In each small gathering of our SCCs, we start by the invocation of the Holy Spirit, then a short prayer, thereafter we start sharing by hearing from each individual member! The future priests really participated actively.”

From an article in *The Tablet* called "A Synod for the World."

Fundamental to becoming “communities of place” are core practices of prayer and discipleship. Many of us may be unfamiliar with what being in relationship with the Holy Spirit is like. The “cell” group [similar to a SCC] can be the key to this. It is often in small, faithful groups that the Spirit transforms, where people journey together, engage deeply with Scripture and talk honestly about what really matters.

Some commented: “Yes, the Holy Spirit transforms! And yes, it has been my experience that many wonderful learning and deepening experiences take place in small faithful groups.”

Happy New Year 2022 to all SCCs members. We wish you an active year ahead as we continue to journey together in the Synodal Process.

From the 15 January, 2022 issue of *The Tablet*:

Jenny Sinclair writes of “communities of place”, with resonances for me of the early post-Vatican II period. Here in Suffolk, England we had a Franciscan Friary where a series of talks under the title “The Council Comes to You” had been delivered. Not long afterwards we were holding local discussion groups [like SCCs] and having House Masses in different homes weekly. I had read about “Basic Ecclesial Communities” in South America and believed we might be on track for a similar experience. It was not to be, but we did raise our level of participation as church members by forming liturgy groups to choose Mass settings and hymns and by writing the bidding prayers for Sunday Mass. I will look forward to the outcomes that arise from the 2023 Synod.

The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (23 January, 2022) is Word of God Sunday (Bible Sunday). May our SCCs members listen to the Twitter message of Pope Francis:

@PONTIFEX

The [#Word](#) of God consoles and encourages us. At the same time it summons us to conversion, challenges us, frees us from the bondage of our selfishness. For His Word has the power to change our lives and to lead us out of darkness into the light.

In Gabriel Moran's last book *What Happened to the Roman Catholic Church? What Now?:* The meaning of Vatican II is explored here in a new way and the hope for our church

is, too. This book imagines the church as a community of small communities (described as between eight and 11 people in each).

May Pope Francis' Twitter Message -- "@PONTIFEX: Would that all of us in the Church were what we already are by virtue of baptism: prophets, witnesses, missionaries of the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the ends of the earth! <https://t.co/513Cd20jvR>" -- inspire all SCC members to reach out to others during this ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Summary of our Tuesday, 18 January, 2022 St. Isidore Online SCC Gathering as recorded in our Chat Room and posted in our online book on "SCCs in Eastern Africa."

Rita's Chat message: "Today is the Sunday of the WORD OF GOD. Let all of us bear in mind that we are duty bound to PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS TO EVERYONE AROUND US by our words and deeds. We are Life Witnesses (*Psalms* 119:105). "Your word is a lamp to GUIDE me a light for my path. SHALOM." Brenda's message on Chat was very supportive: "Thank you all for your continual strength through this online SCC prayer, reflection venue. Even though I am joining in just in this Chat I feel your presence and fellowship in faith. My prayers continue for those SCC members who are having difficulty in their health particularly Belza and Sr. Rita." "Yes, prayers for Belza, Rita and all the sick members of our SCC. As our SCC Poll reminds us we are a "Spiritual Support Community." And Phidelis' comment: "My apologies, my class is extending, I will not be able to join the SCC today. My mantra is *Luke* 4:18." "During our SCC Gathering yesterday we had a full two minutes of silence after the reading of the Gospel. This shows that we were listening to God, not to our selves." Joe's "Takeaway" this week is to encourage Catholics to read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday (23 January, 2022) ahead of time. This is a fitting way to celebrate and put into practice the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time as "Word of God Sunday" ("*Bible* Sunday"). Ideally let us read the Gospel before Sunday together: husband and wife, the whole family together, in your weekly SCC. Welcome. The family that reads the *Bible* together stays together." "We are very happy to hear Rita's "Takeway:" "To encourage each Catholic Family to have its own *Bible*-- and to read it. This is so important in our SCCs Model of Church." "Thank you for the rich sharing and the small community spirit today. Oyee."

"The online links are very helpful. God bless you mightily as you serve God's community. I use the online SCCs online Resources during the formation meetings. Let us share our Online SCCs Resources. They are very helpful but I wish our Christians and priests can use these resources for running the SCCs at the local level. For many the cost of internet connectivity is a challenge."

My "Takeaway" this week is to encourage Catholics to read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday (23 January, 2022) ahead of time. This is a fitting way to celebrate and put into practice the Third Sunday of Ordinary Time as "Word of God Sunday" ("*Bible* Sunday"). Ideally let us read the Gospel before Sunday together: husband and wife, the whole family together, in your weekly SCC. Welcome.

During the Angelus Pope Francis recalls this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from 18 to 25 January, 2022 and invites everyone to offer up their struggles and suffering in favor of Christian unity.

Silas Isenjia, "Align Small Christian Community Programs to the Word of God: Catholic Nun in Kenya," "ACI Africa Online Newsletter," 20 January, 2022, ACI Africa Website, retrieved on 20 January, 2022, Align Small Christian Community Programs to the Word of God: Catholic Nun in Kenya (aciafrica.org)

Go to: https://www.aciafrica.org/news/5123/align-small-christian-community-programs-to-the-word-of-god-catholic-nun-in-kenya?utm_campaign=ACI%20Africa&utm_medium=email&_hsmt=201525317&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8Q45iaohvo_gyvF_WfWbpo23JckFdMOGKjBhyshSy3QoDaV9MxQKNsfh-hq8w8rqsfqoAmPwANXgEA5h2EK1MmlVdZqg&utm_content=201525317&utm_source=hs_email



ACIAFRICA.ORG

Align Small Christian Community Programs to the Word of God: Catholic Nun in Kenya

Three statements from NOVA, an Intentional Eucharistic Community based in Virginia, USA:

1. "Walking together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word of God.
2. In a synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.
3. As Small Communities we actually have relevant experience in getting together in small groups to listen to one another that is the starting point for what the Vatican wants to call a "synodal process".

Pope Francis, for his part, has urged people to carry a small *Bible* or at least a copy of the *New Testament* in their purse or bag -- or download it on their smartphone. And, on occasion, he's had *Bibles* distributed to people who attend the Sunday Angelus. The Jesuit pope continuously encourages people to read at least one passage each day from the Sacred Scriptures. "The Word of God brings us close to God. Let us carry it with us always, in a place where we can remember to open it daily, so that amid all those words that ring in our ears, there may also be a few verses of the [#WordOfGod](#) that can touch our hearts.

Pope Francis message to SCC members and others is loud and clear:
@Pontifex

Let us ask the Lord for the strength to turn off the television and open the "Bible," to turn off our cell phone and open the Gospel. It will make us feel God's closeness to us and fill us with courage as we make our way through life. [#WordOfGod](#)

Two African archbishops' views:

1. Cardinal Antoine Kambanda of Rwanda's Kigali Archdiocese compares Pope Francis's request of listening and being obedient to the Spirit who will inspire the process to the experience during the special diocesan synod on the "ethnic conflict in Rwanda." "We had an experience of listening to the sufferings of the people, we had proposals for mutual understanding and sought solution for reconciliation and peace so that we could match together." Cardinal Kambanda continued, "In this we were guided by the Spirit in prayer and enlightened by the Word of God from the Small Christian Community up to the wider community of the Diocese."

2. The Local Ordinary of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania Archbishop Ruwa'ichi, disclosed that "the faithful are very enthusiastic about the synod and have received the message as a moment of Grace for the Catholic Church and are more than willing to participate in the synodal process which they see as an opportunity to enrich and re-activate the evangelizing power of the church." He underscores that the people of God are listening to the Holy Spirit "by reciting the Synodal prayer, as well as relating and discussing together about the synodal process and listening to the Holy Spirit who is the supreme mover of the synod." The archbishop has disclosed that the church can borrow a leaf on how to participate in the synodal process from the model of Small Christian Community (SCC) that was established by the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) region with emphasis on "personal relationships, togetherness, family bonds, solidarity, Christian belonging, sharing, working and celebrating together."

<http://communications.amecea.org/.../amecea-african.../>

On this Third Sunday of Ordinary Time that is celebrated as "Word of God Sunday" ("Bible" Sunday), SCC members have a special opportunity to use the maps in a *Bible* (either online maps or printed maps) to identify such towns in Galilee (North Palestine) such as Cana, Nazareth, Capernaum where the stories of Jesus Christ in the Sunday Readings take place. The present day Catholic "Synagogue Church" in Nazareth is built on the ruins of the original Jewish Synagogue where Jesus worshipped.

Folks have trouble accessing our Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website. Depending on which browser you use, enter the words "Small Christian Communities" into the Search Box. You will get different options. Click on the option – "Small Christian Communities"

This will take you directly to the "Home Page" of our website. The URL (Website address) is: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org>

Small Christian Communities – Small Christian Communities

During our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC Gathering today Tuesday, 25 January, 2022 here were some helpful evaluations/comments: "Some SCC members do not read the Gospel before they come to the weekly SCC Gathering. Some animators/facilitators of the weekly Gospel Sharing do not prepare ahead of time. Many Catholics do not read the Gospel before they come to the church in person (physically) on Sunday or before an Internet Zoom Mass on Sunday. If you do not belong to a weekly SCC it is more likely that you do not read the Gospel ahead of time. Various communities read the Gospel of the following Sunday in community on Saturday. It is easier to read a novel than the *Bible*."

Jonathan Hill, MM's reflections on the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C on the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns Website (Scripture Reflection | Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (maryknollogc.org) begins with a very interesting African story of a young man who opens a "duka" in his village in

Tanzania. Go to:(Scripture Reflection | Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (maryknollogc.org)).

Go to: <https://www.maryknollogc.org/resources/scripture-reflection/fourth-sunday-ordinary-time?fbclid=IwAR0eYY2HhNWx4yH6cm7WJvZHwYXabfnomncyl1D6IRHLbaLUBII8L2ekQ-I>

Announcement of a New Post:

“We Create the Path by Walking Together/Journeying Together: Developing the Synodal Process in Eastern Africa”

By Joseph G. Healey

There is a popular saying in Spanish — *We create the path by walking* – that encourages the growth of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in their local context in Africa from the grassroots up. A Sena (Mozambique) Proverb says: “*Go in that direction*” does not mean that you go. *To go means, “let’s go together!”* The spirit and practice of this saying and this African proverb help us to understand the development of the Synodal Process in the nine countries of AMECEA, namely Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/we-create-the-path.../>

Reports from Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya in East Africa indicate that the Synodal Process is working. The 12 questions in English in the Archdiocesan Questionnaire were first answered in the SCCs, then at the Outstation Level, then at the Parish Level. In February, 2022 the answers will be collated at the Deanery Level and then sent to the Nairobi Archdiocese Level for the Final Synthesis. This follows the principle of decentralization and from the local level/grassroots up.

How can our SCC Model of Church be part of the Synodal Process? One way is help the poorest in society have a voice and to use their voice to deepen or modify Catholic Church life and its expression of faith? Our experience has shown us that speaking out is often a major difficulty for the very poor for many reasons. They find it difficult to express themselves in public. We believe the best solution for freeing their speech is to set up Small Sharing Communities in which they are in the majority, accompanied by "allies" who know them and who are completely available for making it possible for them to express themselves.

“TANZANIA: TEC Secretary General Calls on Small Christian Communities to Become Centers of Christian Witness,” "AMECEA Online Newsletter," 28 January, 2022, retrieved on 29 January, 2022, <http://communications.amecea.org/.../tanzania-tec.../> Excellent article on the history of SCCs in Tanzania and the present regional SCC Workshops/Seminars taking place throughout Tanzania.

SCC members are invited to reflect on the next Sunday readings in a missionary way as a useful tool for ongoing formation and missionary animation. Every Thursday, the meditation on the "Bible" readings for the following Sunday is be posted online. Each Mass has in itself a missionary character, since it is the active community witness to the Christian faith of the participants. The link between the mass celebrated and the mission of the Church appears clearly with the final greeting which sounds in the original Latin "*Ite missa est*" (hence the term "mass" for the Eucharistic celebration). At the beginning of each meditation, therefore, the readings planned for the following Sunday are highlighted, together with a

missionary *Bible* commentary divided into three main points and, at the end, some useful ideas for living the Sunday Gospel in a missionary key in daily life.

<https://www.ppoomm.va/.../pum-meditazioni-missionarie.html>

A big challenge is to integrate the SCC Model of Church and African cultural and society values. Two questions have been posed regarding choosing leaders. First, some say that according to African Culture a leader in a SCC has to be married with a family -- a sign of maturity and responsibility in African society. Second, some say that an uncircumcised male member will not be accepted as a leader of a SCC by the other male members who have been circumcised (a sign of adulthood).

During our St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC Gathering today here are some helpful evaluations/comments: “Some SCC members do not read the Gospel before they come to the weekly SCC Gathering. Some animators/facilitators of the weekly Gospel Sharing do not prepare ahead of time. Many Catholics do not read the Gospel before they come to the church in person (physically) on Sunday or before an Internet Zoom Mass on Sunday. It is easier to read a novel than the *Bible*.”

SCC members can find a amazing variety of rich, searchable online resources for the 2021 -2023 Synod of Bishops at: <https://www.synodresources.org/resources/>

ANNOUNCEMENT:

BUILDING BRIDGES - A Synodal Encounter between Pope Francis and University Students, Thursday, 24 February 2022 (9:00PM Nairobi Time)

This historic encounter between the Pope and university students from North, Central, and South America will address salient challenges of our times. The Pope will dialogue with these university students who will share concrete educational projects that seek to justly transform environmental and economic realities.

To register click the Link:

<https://www.luc.edu/popefrancis/index.shtml>

SCC members can find a variety of online resources for the 2021 – 2023 Synod of Bishops at the AMECEA Website: <http://amecea.org>. Go to the horizontal Index Bar at the top of the Home Page or to More Links at the right side of the Home Page.

You are welcome to vote in the SCCs Poll on the Home Page of our SCCs Website at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/> You can vote every day, but not more than once in a 24 hour period. Some people vote often, but change their votes according to the local context and situation.

May the Synodal Process in Eastern Africa be shared with the universal Catholic Church.

Healey, Joseph, “We Create the Path by Walking Together/Journeying Together: Developing the Synodal Process in Eastern Africa,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 31 January, 2022,

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/we-create-the-path...> journeying-together-developing-the-synodal-process-in-eastern-africa

Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) Website, “Around the World,” retrieved on 31 January, 2022,

<https://catholicchurchreformintl.org>

AMECEA Online Newsletter, retrieved on 4 February, 2022,

[AMECEA: We Create the Path by Walking Together/Journeying Together: Developing the Synodal Process in Eastern Africa](#)

Some commentators have pointed out that Synodality/the Synodal Process is part of African culture and communal values and that Small Christian Communities have been an expression of synodality for some time in Africa.

In our weekly SCC gatherings we emphasize lectionary-based faith sharing. The ideal is not for each person to share her/his reflection independently following the Silo Syndrome dynamic, but rather to build on/add to what is shared before you. This could be called lectionary-based faith sharing in a synodal style. We move from the traditional small discussion group sharing to a small synodal group sharing.

Catholic Women Theologians, based in Johannesburg, South Africa, in collaboration with the Jesuit Institute is inviting all women who are interested to take part in a zoom meeting to share your experience as a woman in the Catholic Church and to listen to other women share theirs. We will divide into smaller groups for sharing (similar to SCCs) and themes which emerge from the groups will be included in a report on the issue of women in the church. This will be shared by the diocese as a report to the Synod which will meet in Rome in October, 2023.

If you are interested in taking part in this process please register for ONE of the following evenings.

February 16: 6pm-7.30pm

OR

February 24: 6pm-7.30pm

To register email Carol Teichler at c.teichler@jesuitinstitute.org.za.

Feedback: "Thank you for describing your work on preparing the facilitators for the small groups [similar to SCCs] of women. What important work you are doing. They will play such a critical role in creating a safe space (as much as possible) that is able to elicit and honor their experience in the Catholic Church-- what it means to them and where it is present in their lives. And what it needs from its church."

Open Our Hearts

New from RENEW for Lent 2022!

Lent is a time to take stock of where we are on our spiritual journey. It is a moment to check our spiritual bearings and take any action that will keep us moving in the right direction. Take time this Lent 2022 to engage with scripture and reflect on different aspects of your spiritual life with "Open Our Hearts." Look at how you live out your faith at home, in your parish, and in the world. Connect at a deeper level with the Sunday gospels and take time every day to reflect and pray. Each weekly small-group session includes scripture, prayer and reflections along with concrete ways to live out that faith. The book also provides a meditation and reflection question for each weekday of Lent.

\$9.95 Learn More and Buy Now!

<https://store.renewintl.org/.../products/open-our-hearts...>

SCC members can find a variety of online resources for the Synod of Bishops 2021 - 2023 at the AMECEA Website: <http://amecea.org> Go to the horizontal Index Bar at the top of the Home Page or to More Links at the right side of the Home Page.

Several new surveys in the USA refer to “Small Christian Communities.” I am delighted that the expression/term “Small Christian Communities” (or its equivalent in different languages) is becoming more normative in the USA – as it is in the rest of the world. “Small groups” just doesn’t do it for me.”

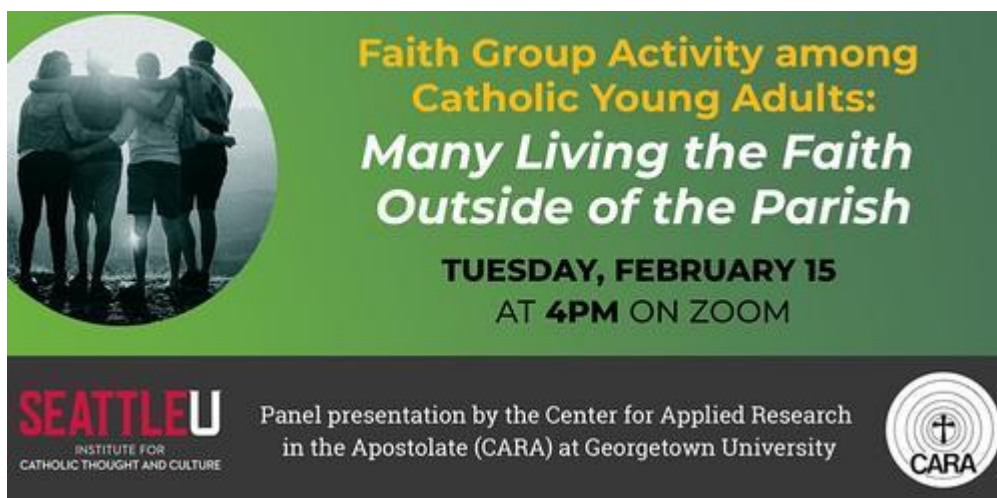
It is interesting compare the name/expression/term for “Small Christian Communities” in different languages and countries of the world. Most notable is the Latin American experience. The official name in Spanish is "Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs)." The English translation is “Base or Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).”

At a recent meeting of the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) (<https://nfcym.org>) in Los Angeles, California, USA, the popular terms were Small Faith Sharing Communities and Small Faith Communities on Campus. A key is the use of “community” rather than “group.”

Yes, children can read the Gospel at our weekly SCC gatherings. And they can read well. A Suisse lay woman named Bessi was recently installed by her bishop in the Ministry of Lector (Reader at Mass). She said: "When the pope opened up the ministries, it confirms what I've been doing for years. I have been reading at Mass since I was a child. Technically, it doesn't necessarily change much. But spiritually, it's a fundamental change in my relationship with God, It is above all a service, but it is also a long-term commitment to live by the Word of God and to live by the Eucharist."

I know one Lector in Joliet Diocese in USA who spends 20 minutes of silent reflection on the Scriptures before he reads at Mass. This helps him get into the deeper meaning of the Scripture Text that he is reading. One commentator states: “Yes, this is what we call MEDITATION. I SPEND 30 MINUTES IN SILENCE DAILY.” There are many values in regular silence, contemplation, meditation and reflection.

Listening to the voices of Catholic Young Adults in this Zoom Panel.



Faith Group Activity among Catholic Young Adults:
Many Living the Faith Outside of the Parish

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15
AT 4PM ON ZOOM

SEATTLE U
INSTITUTE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT AND CULTURE

Panel presentation by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University

CARA

[EVENTBRITE.COM](https://www.eventbrite.com)

Special Report: Faith Group Activity among Catholic Young Adults

A good music video to show in a SCC gathering.

The story of the Good Samaritan is constantly being retold and repeated in local settings. The short Scripture DVD music video “Who Is My Neighbor” (5:57 minutes in the “Parables Alive!” Series produced by Paulines Africa Books and Audiovisuals) 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.

Paulines Publishers Online Shop (paulinesafrica.org)

<https://e.paulinesafrica.org/index.php/book/bookDetails/428>

AFRICA/ANGOLA - The synodal journey of Small Christian Communities that are open and welcoming.

Speaking of the synodal journey of the Small Christian Communities of Caxitosays Diocese, Angola in which he is serving, Father Luigino Frattin, priest of the Society for African Missions (SMA) says: "In Small Communities Christians strive to walk together every day in co-responsibility and in the commitment to grow in faith and charity, not forgetting anyone. Now it is a question of expanding this synodal spirit, welcoming the newcomers, valuing their gifts, making them feel at ease in an open and welcoming community".

In a recent Zoom Webinar on “Catholic Young Adults and Faith Outside the Parish” there was a lot of discussion on Catholic Young Adults during this Covid-19 pandemic involved in (alphabetically):

"Bible" Study
 Faith groups outside the parish
 Immigrant groups meeting online
 Online faith sharing
 Reading and discussing the "Bible"
 Small Communities Church
 Zoom Faith Sharing Small Communities

but there were no fresh data/statistics on frequency and style of these gatherings.

Pope Francis' Twitter message -- "It is very important to bring together the wisdom of the [#elderly](#) and the enthusiasm of the young. The encounter between grandparents and grandchildren is key, especially in this moment of economic and social crisis that humanity is undergoing" -- is very important for our multi-generational SCCs and a concrete way to bridge the generational gap."

After a break of several weeks due to the long holidays, the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) of Sao Mateus, in the large eastern suburb of Sao Paulo (Brazil), has resumed its weekly online Wednesday evening discussions on the Synod. But the enthusiasm that was so evident when the process started some months ago, has given way to a certain gloom. Peterson Prates, a 25-year-old participant who is quite involved in the local parish, does not hide his disillusionment. "The first stage of the Synod did not fulfill its promise," he says. "According to the calendar, we should have already handed in our copy to Cardinal Odilo Scherer, our archbishop, in December, 2022. But the phase of listening to the faithful continues until July," the young man says, expressing frustration with the tight deadline. In order not to break its momentum, the small community from Sao Mateus has decided it will continue its discussions and submit the synthesis of its reflections directly to Rome in the summer. Some concrete proposals are trying to emerge within the community. First of all, the younger members are particularly concerned that women should be given more recognition and roles of responsibility in the Church. "The women's diaconate must be at the center of the debate, since we see that Pope Francis wanted to open this reflection," Prates says.

While preparing his Homily for Sunday Mass, a Permanent Deacon had this cryptic, but insight comment: "Always best to talk to Him [Jesus Christ] about them [the parish congregation] before I talk to them about Him." This is also good advice for the facilitator of the weekly SCCs gathering. Spiritually prepare ahead of time and ask Jesus Christ for inspiration and guidance.

From Anna Johnson: In our Young Adult Listening Session in Seattle, Washington, USA that we held last night, one young adult said, "My faith comes alive in small groups [like SCCs]. Whenever I get fed up with the Institutional Church, and want to leave, it's my experiences with small groups (like our Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment Community) and accompaniment that keeps me in it." As the session was ending, another young adult said, "This was the most holy gathering I've experienced lately."

Language is important. There are important distinctions in the Catholic Church worldwide. Popular in Latin America is the expression Base Communities (BCs) or *Comunidades de Base*

(CBs) in Spanish that are small neighborhood communities that meet weekly for prayer, Bible Reflection and action.

Sometimes written as:

In Spanish: *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs). Translated as Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs). Sometimes translated as Ecclesial Base Communities (EBCs).

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

In French: *Communautés Ecclésiales de Base* (CEBs) or simply Communautés de Base (CBs). Also *Petites Communautés Chrétiennes* (PCCs).

Worldwide there are literally over 5,000 names/terms/expressions. Now more and more the name Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is the umbrella term and the most common name worldwide. It is widely used in Africa.

In general the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs) in Latin America have a social action focus while the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa have a pastoral focus.

Today I joined the John Paul II Evangelization Team/John Paul II Evangelizers based in Nairobi, Kenya in their monthly online gathering. We used Google Meet that is similar to Zoom, but does not have a time limit. We used the Seven Steps in the Synodal Process. A key insight was that before Covid-19 the team used a variety of evangelization methods such as street preaching, one-on-one visits, public rallies and monthly evangelization meetings that sometimes using a SCC model. Now a whole new world has opened up – digital/online/virtual evangelization. Through social media platforms they can reach many more people, especially young people, in a new way.

This Zoom Webinar show that 60% of Catholic Young Adults' Faith Community Activities are outside the parish. This motivated me to revisit the book chapter: Joseph Healey, "What Catholic Young People Really Want to Talk About?" in Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond Maryknoll*, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. The chapter can be found online on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: http://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../what_catholic.pdf

Of the seven Case Studies of "Listening Sessions By and For Young People" the venues are: 2 - universities; 2 - high school; 1 - parish ; 1 - SCC; and 1 -- Young People Community Center. So six out of the seven venues are outside the parish property/grounds.

Surprise. On behalf of our AMECEA Small Christian Communities Training Team I sent some material to the Synod Office in Vatican City, and lo and behold they posted it as follows:

Under "Sharing Synod Resources" https://www.synodresources.org/resource_post/241020/ of the 2021-2023 Synodal Process on the Synod of Bishops Website at the Vatican:

The [Small Christian Communities] Website and the [Small Christian Communities] Facebook profile are two communication projects developed by AMECEA – Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa.

Under the coordination of the Pastoral Department, they are called Small Christian Communities because they are spaces where all the local communities of the member countries share their celebrations, events, experiences, ideas, and reflections, now with emphasis on the synodal process.

The website publishes occasional articles, local news, a calendar of events, a photo gallery, among other formation tools. The Facebook profile is based on the same principle of a forum to develop the synodal process in Africa.

AMECEA is a service organization for the National [Catholic] 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 page includes a photograph of African elephants together that uses the famous Burkina Faso proverb: *If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.*



SYNODRESOURCES.ORG

[Website: Small Christian communities united in a global collaborative website - Sharing synodal resources](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org)

It shows that someone in Rome went into our

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website

<https://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

and studied the specific features. Unfortunately the Synod Page did not include the hyperlinks. But as they say, *a half a loaf is better than none.*

SCC members can pray for, and act on, how we are all missionary disciples following the vision of Pope Francis who says, “Dream big! And dream together.”

Dear SCC friends,

SCC POLL ANNOUNCEMENT: It is important that we continue to evaluate our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa so we can make it better. Please vote in the current polls.

Seventy-Eighth Round: (March, 2022 – April, 2022):

The best part of my Small Christian Community is:

- a) Powerful way to accompany one another as pilgrims on the journey.
- b) In solidarity with Covid-19 sufferers and their caregivers.
- c) Helps other people.
- d) True experience of Synodality in Africa.
- e) Zoom Small Faith Community.
- f) Empowers the church in the neighborhood.

To vote at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>

Each of these six choices comes from SCC members themselves and provides an insight into our SCCs Model of Church today. What strikes me is they show the relevancy of SCCs for today's world: Covid-19; Synodality in Africa; and Zoom. A SCC member could make a prayerful meditation on each of these six choices.

From Bishop Richard Baawobr, MAfr, the Bishop of Wa Diocese, Ghana: I find papers like "New Learnings in Animating a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa Today" inspiring. Keep it up. I am trying my best in Wa Diocese to promote SCCs.

When Baawobr was asked what are the main obstacles to the growth of SCCs in Ghana, he gave this excellent analysis: "I think clericalism is one of the main obstacles. Some priests cannot see themselves not leading. The other thing might be the many associations that take up too much time and money of people. Also Church Leaders see the SCCs as another Society/Association instead of the way of Church." This is a very insightful analysis of SCCs not only in Ghana but also in Nigeria.

Paul Miapkwap of the Catholic Diocese of Shendam, Plateau State, Nigeria: "Professor Paul Steffen moderated my thesis in Rome on "The Formation of Small Christian Communities as a Model for Evangelization in Shendam Diocese, Nigeria." I came back to Nigeria and I am the Director of the Catechetical Training Institute in Shendam. I have introduced Small Christian Community in the school. Our students are divided into five Small Christian Communities and it is really yielding fruit.

We are using generous gifts of friends and benefactors to help the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Kenya to promote the two year 2021-2023 Synodal Process in Kenya – so dear to the heart of Pope Francis. In Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya a 12 question questionnaire on "Synodality" was sent to all the parishes. Individual SCCs that I am working with, like St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin's Parish, have already discerned and answered the questions and sent the answers to the parish that has compiled the answers and sent them on the Deanery Level. Next is the Archdiocesan Level. After further gatherings and discernment, the final synthesis will be sent to the Vatican. Meanwhile different Synodal Activities are taking place like Zoom Webinars and In-person gatherings using the Synodal Process. Helping the needy is a special outreach of this Lenten Season. So thanks be to God we are not just talking the talk, but we are walking the walk. May the Holy Spirit guide us.

Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo reports on SCC training in St. Monica Parish, Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya:

The training started at the sub-parish levels. St. Monica has 5 sub-parishes (St. Augustine - Renja, St. Charles Lwanga - Nyamasaria, St. Ambrose - Nyamasaria, St. Anthony - Ragumo, St. Stephen Ofunyu) located within the parish jurisdiction. The sub-parishes have between 6 and 12 SCCs each. As usual, some SCCs are active and others inactive. About 150 leaders were trained.

My key learning during this process is that the Christians know very little about what SCCs, what they should do in the SCCs and more especially the centrality of the Word of God in the SCCs. The idea that it is in the SCCs where the members bounce their FAITH experience and LIVED experience over each other sounded quite unique to them. And that they engage in interpreting faith and interpreting life experience and keeping them in conversation with each other. They later thought that the reason why some of their members are inactive is because they know very little about what should be done in a SCC.

So at the sub-parishes we went through What is SCC (I have improved the content and input based on our experience at Loyola Institute for Ministry) and Leadership Skills in SCCs. This is a 'crash' training which involves delivering contextualised content. It involves analysis of the local context through talk with the Parish Priest and a few PPC members.

I used my experience and analysis of the gaps during the sub-parishes training to develop the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) level training content. This worked perfectly well. The parish council level training included the strengthening of the critical aspects of the SCCs and the role of the PPC in the parish strategic direction. Members got an introduction to developing a parish strategic plan. The content included: Conversation as the root symbol of the SCCs (the role of language and handling challenges of ethnic dialects in SCC meetings); Two basic qualities of SCCs (that SCCs are Gathered/inner life and are Sent/public or social life); Questions SCCs face (what is the major focus of the SCCs, how are the behaviour of the members evaluated etc.); Understanding the parish (what is a parish?, etc.); Roles of leaders in a parish; Roles of PPC in leadership transition; Parish strategic planning; Roles of PPC in the parish strategic direction.

I left the sub-parish leaders' copies of printed slides that they may photocopy and distribute to the members. I also gave the participants who have email addresses the pdf copy of the training slides for onward use. They also got a copy of steps for conducting a "Bible" sharing in SCCs gathering.

I have received several feedback emails from the leaders at the sub-parishes and parish levels. Most of them have indicated that they have started implementing the outcome of the training and they are realising positive improvements amongst the members of the SCCs.

It has been such a great learning experience for me. I enjoyed developing the content for the parish level training after finalising the training at the sub-parishes.

The parish priest, Fr. Joseph (Augustinian) attended and actively participated in all the training at the sub-parishes and the parish level. One can see the commitment the leaders and the Parish Priest had placed in this training.

One type of SCC are the Maryknoll Affiliates Chapters around the world. Here is a reflection by one member:

Unlike many Affiliates and Catholics, I was received into the Church as an 18-year-old, while a student at a Catholic university. I was looking for meaning, a direction in life, as young people still do. The decision shaped and filled my life. Now I am an old man and I am finding that same meaning and feeling in Pope Francis' call for the current synod and vision of synodality. Reminiscent of my college days, when many Catholics were unaware of the social doctrines of the Church and its place in the world as described by Vatican II, many Catholics today in the US are unaware of the Synod. Have you heard about it?

The Vatican Office for the Synod, the USCCB, diocesan materials, and parish bulletins are using the Jesuit educational approach—begin with definitions (something I found useful as a college student). Here is one definition of Synodality:

syn = “together” hodos = “road”
synod = “on the road together”

Synodality is a style or mode of being Church, in which we journey together, both clergy and laity, each according to our roles and spiritual gifts.

The intention of this process is “to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.”

What do Affiliates have to do with the Synod? For me, it's as basic as the Affiliates being a voice in the Catholic Church. This is an opportunity to initiate doing Church differently, something clearly expressed at Vatican II—as the People of God and all people of goodwill. As Father Greg Boyle points out in his new book, *The Whole Language*, that goodness is present in every human being. Affiliates are called to expose that goodness and bring it forward to the world, as Maryknollers have always done. We will have opportunities to express the Affiliate experience and vision in this process, which hopefully will not end in 2023. It seems to me Maryknoll pillars of spirituality, community, global vision, and action are quite in sync with Pope Francis' call to communion, participation, and mission.

From our research a book club is certainly a type of small group, and it can be a type of SCC. Last night I participated in a virtual Orbis Book Club via Zoom. One hour. 12 participants. Four Break-out Groups. We reflected on and discussed the Preface and Chapter 1 of the Orbis Book *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* by Father Bryan N. Massingale, a Black Catholic priest who teaches at Fordham University. Good analysis of the racial situation and white privilege in the United States and in the Institutional Catholic Church. Implications of the Black Lives Matter Movement today. Personal faith sharing. Both in-person and virtual Book Clubs are popular these days.



Christ the Teacher Parish-Kenyatta University – Just another WordPress site
 The Catholic community at Kenyatta University – a public institution is privileged to have a Chaplain. The KU management has appointed chaplaincies to support the academic, moral and social formation of the students.

[kucatholic.or.ke](http://www.kucatholic.or.ke)

Congratulations to the Kenyatta University Catholic Chaplaincy web team for keeping the parish website very updated. Kudos! <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke/>

It is encouraging that the SCCs at Kenyatta University are doing well. The Alumni Zoom SCC has many members– from all over the world. The on-campus SCCs each have a representative/contact person on the web team.

In St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya during Lent the 5 pm liturgy of the “Way of the Cross” is led by the SCCs. This year the leaders are the members of St. Padri Pio SCC.

We are happy to announce that a revised, updated .pdf version of our free, online Ebook Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" is posted under “Ebooks” on our SCC website at: Microsoft Word - 11 March 2022 version of Building the Church as Family of God (smallchristiancommunities.org).

It is also available in Two Parts for those who have difficulty in internet connectivity. This “Fourth Edition” (19 chapters, 1,266 pages, 1,503 footnotes) will published as a Ebook and Print on Demand paperback in two volumes on the Amazon Website in May 2022. This edition includes Case Studies and experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic from March, 2020 to the present and during the 2021--2023 Synod of Bishops. Microsoft Word - 11 March 2022 version of Building the Church as Family of God (smallchristiancommunities.org)

Someone responded to this post by using the saying *Iende Mbele Injili* that means "Let the Word of God Go Forth" in Swahili. It is also the name of a Swahili clapping song that is used during our "Bible" Processions in Eastern Africa.

May our SCC members listen well to:

"African Theologians Advocate for Adoption of African Values in Synod on Synodality"

Participants in the ongoing Synod on Synodality symposium of Theologians that was organized by the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar (JCAM) in collaboration with the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) suggest that the Synodal Process be anchored in African values.

The team of theologians who were selected to represent various segments of the Church in Africa suggested that as the people of God journey together in the Synodal process, they need to readopt such African values as care for each other, care for the environment and other helpful values.

Africans always believed that they were each other's relatives and they lived in solidarity with each other, caring for the unborn, the living and the living dead. They also cared deeply about the environment. These are the values we need to think about.

There is a need to reclaim and share our Africa values of communitarian relationship, hospitality, respect for family and human life especially the young and old and relatedness with all of creation. We need reference to God and to our ancestors.

https://www.aciafrica.org/news/5422/african-theologians-advocate-for-adoption-of-african-values-in-synod-on-synodality?utm_campaign=ACI%20Africa&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=206495833&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8kipYtZeKokd0NvHjcg67juyJdbIAxrskBRlvA3zTJQuqw1WbxcqjvO_a6HK2FR26VdKSah0jHOZOIDoU1177SVLIyqA&utm_content=206495833&utm_source=hs_email

In evaluating various Synod Listening Sessions around the world the Institutional Catholic Church does not seem to offer "safe spaces" for LGBTQ young adults, the homeless and people who have left the church. Thus Pope Francis is encouraging those on the margins to lift their voices. We are encouraged to be creative in doing one-on-one Synod Listening Sessions -- meeting at a coffee shop, in a person's home, on the phone, in a ZOOM Chat or a walk in the park.

From "Agenda Development for Synodality." Which are the most important reform issues for you?

Question 17. OTHER Please outline any other issue that you feel should be the subject of synodal discussion.

Importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as an official pastoral and social action structure of the Catholic Church. NOTE: in your question you use the term "synodal discussion." This is inaccurate. It should be "synodal discernment." Thanks.

As we emphasize the importance of "Synodality" and the "Synodal Process" in the Catholic Church today, we go back to the the starting point in the AMECEA Region: 24 November, 1973 to 24 August, 1975 when Bishop Patrick Kalilombe held a Mini-Synod in Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi. In 1973 he wrote his first Pastoral Letter for Lilongwe Diocese entitled "Christ's Church in Lilongwe, Today and Tomorrow: Our Diocesan Pastoral Planning Project." He was the first bishop in Eastern Africa to start a diocesan pastoral plan of Small Christian Communities on the grassroots level.

This historical research is very enlightening. Its shows that already in the original 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. The AMECEA Bishops were known for being pastoral minded and interested in grassroots evangelization. So they had a pastoral sense and concrete pastoral priorities as they entered this meeting in 1973 to plan for the future.

The starting dates of SCCs:

1966: Tanzania

1969: Zambia
 1970: Kenya
 1972: Malawi
 1972: Uganda

Various Zoom gatherings on "Synodality" recommend to engage Young People through base communities. Go where the Young People are at:

1. Social Media Platforms.
2. Social action projects.
3. Causes such as racial justice and climate justice.

How to apply our SCC Model of Church to our 40 day Lenten Season: Practice and observe the Season of Lent as small community members journeying together:

African Proverb: "Go in that direction" does not mean that you go. To go means, "let's go together!" Sena (Mozambique) Proverb

Choice in SCCs Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>): "Powerful way to accompany one another as pilgrims on the [Lenten] journey."

There is a saying *the medium is the message*. The Editorial in the *Osservatore Romano* says that the priority of evangelization and the role of the laity are the primary ideas that connect the new *Apostolic Constitution* governing the Roman Curia with the Second Vatican Council. Yet at the Press Conference the three presenters were a Cardinal, a Bishop and a Priest. All clerics wearing clerical clothes. All men. What message does this communicate to lay people, to women, to SCCs members?

Some feedback:

- That's the naked truth.
- Hierarchy.
- Difficult to give up [power/control].
- Food for thought. Old habits die hard.
- Change, renewal and reform in the Catholic Church is hard, but necessary.
- A clear missed opportunity. The Vatican still does not get it.

The new apostolic constitution, *Praedicate Evangelium* ("Preach the Gospel" in Latin) that reforms the structure of the Roman Curia emphasizes the importance of popular piety/popular religiosity/devotional Catholicism around the world. We are reminded that St. Kizito SCC and other SCCs in St Austin's Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya are actively involved in devotions such as the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross that are prayed communally or in community (*kijumuiya* in Swahili).

Trend in reports from Synodal Sessions: "While some participants shared a very positive experience with their local parish, others instead find their primary faith community in self-organized small groups [communities] of people who are disenchanted with their local parishes and bishops."

The SCC Model is found in many Campus Ministry programs. The campus ministry team at the local university in Puno, Peru is organizing virtual listening sessions for the university students on the "Synodal Process." Questions include:

1. "How do you find the Catholic Church -- Campus Ministry, Parish, Diocese?"
2. "Do you have suggestions for changes?"
3. "If you had five minutes alone with Pope Francis what would you share with him/ask him?"

The results of these sessions will be sent to the Synod Office in Rome.

Faith Circles are faith sharing small groups [communities] aimed at bringing people together to share their lives and the ways in which Jesus is working in them through his Holy Spirit. Whether through participating in Alpha, Lenten or Advent groups, people have realised the joy and fruitfulness of journeying in faith with people they have come to know, love and trust. All the evidence shows that living and growing in our faith is best done as part of a small group [community]-- turning rows into circles! For more info go to:

<https://www.dow.org.au/media-resources/faith-circles/>

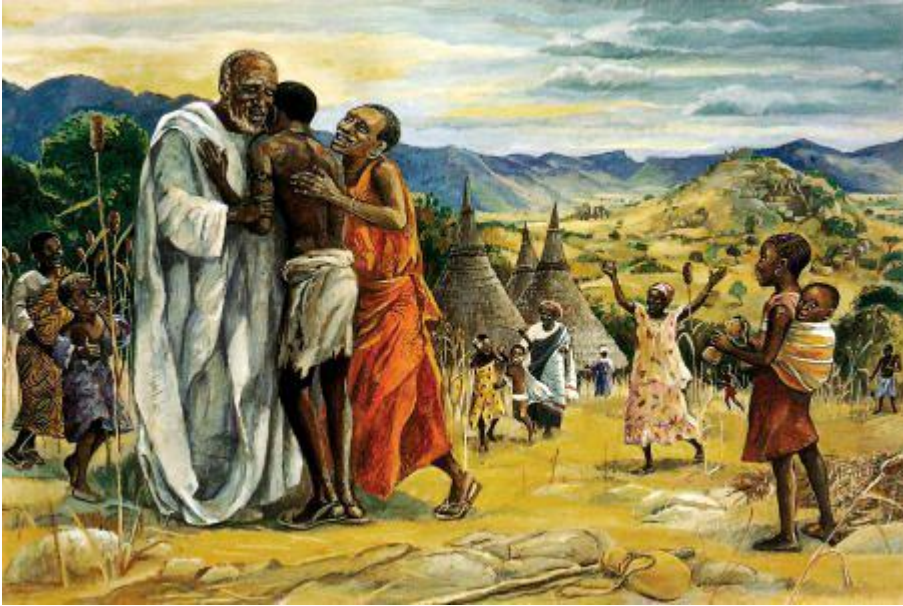
The University of Ave Maria in Florida, USA has 13 Faith Households (eight households for women and five households for men) that are officially recognized by the University. A Faith Household is a group of male or female students who mutually support each other by spending time together in prayer and recreation. These Christ-centered groups strive for balanced, healthy, interpersonal relationships while they support and challenge a member to develop spiritually, emotionally, academically, and physically.

St. Paul Outreach (SPO) based in Minnesota, USA has 45 Faith Households on college campuses nationwide. At the heart of SPO life and mission are staff and students living and evangelizing together.

In our SCC Gospel Sharing gatherings, in our homilies, sermons and talks and in our 2022 Lenten Spiritual Journey let us walk together as we learn from African Reading of the Gospel of St. Luke (4th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B) about the "Parable of the Prodigal Family" described as follows:

African religious/Biblical art is an important part of inculturation and symbolic theology. It is included in EResources and Archives on our website.

In the Biblical parable of the Prodigal Son, a son receives his inheritance and travels to a distant country, wastes all his money in wild extravagance, becomes desperately poor, returns to his father, and is received with open arms. Prodigal, here and elsewhere, means "rashly or wastefully extravagant". The word "prodigal" does not mean "wayward" but, according to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, "recklessly spendthrift." It means to spend until you have nothing left. This term is therefore as appropriate for describing the father and the whole family in the story as well as his younger son. Thus the Jesus Mafa painting from Cameroun portrays "The Prodigal Family."



Father Aarockia Dhas Rayappan, a priest of Delhi Archdiocese, India and a Ph.D. Student at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada is doing a Reading Research Seminar on the "History of the Small Christian Communities." These comparative studies are very significant and show key trends. It is important that the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa get better known. We grew and developed independent of Latin America and Asia. We have recently updated our Ebook on "Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" with a large chapter on the SCCs history. Some of our PDF resources on SCCs from our SCCs Website will be used in this research seminar.

One SCC Model of Church is the House Meeting. We help individual parishes to reach out to those voices on the margins in House Meetings that are small informal group settings in private homes. The House Meetings have become a way for people to engage others. They're oriented to be very relational. People are getting to know each other in a different way. You can prompt people and ask them who do they know, who they'd like to engage in a conversation like this and if they would be willing to bring people together. The House Meeting can be a tool to search for people, so it doesn't have to be a one-time effort.

May all SCC members' prayers join Pope Francis's heartfelt plea: "Every war worsens everyone's situation. Therefore, I renew my appeal: Enough. Stop it. Silence the weapons. Move seriously toward peace!" The 22 comments included:

1. Prayers for peace in Ukraine is an important part of the "Prayers of the Faithful" in every SCC gathering these days.
2. Praying.
3. In the mighty name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.
4. I love the Pope's prayers!

Every Mon night at 7:30, one dozen faith filled women meet in our chapel in a small faith-sharing group. We read the scripture for next Sunday, break open the word, hear a reflection and share how it connects to our daily lives. INSPIRATIONAL!!

This Facebook Page is a online forum/"virtual place" for exchanging SCC ideas and SCC experiences. With "Synodal Listening Sessions" going on around the world there is growing interest in active lay participation in the Catholic Church. Some small communities are being formed (in person, hybrid and online) that read the Gospel of the following Sunday and connect it to our daily lives. Some times the pastor/and/or his assistant participate to get ideas for their Sunday homilies. A good experience of synodality, walking on the synodal path. Examples are welcome.

SCCs Poll: The question -- "The best part of my Small Christian Community is... " followed by six choices: The total number of choices to draw from is 1581:

781: Dynamics

800: Activities

As an important footnote to AMECEA history the first historic synod in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi in 1972 was called in Chewa, the local Malawian language, "*Mpingo Ndife Tonse*." This is when Bishop Patrick Kalilombe was the first bishop in Eastern Africa to start a diocesan pastoral plan of Small Christian Communities on the grassroots level. The second diocesan synod was called "*Tiyende Limodzi*." Now Archbishop George Desmond Tambala has started a third synod in Lilongwe Archdiocese from March 2022 to August 2023. He states: "We want to take advantage of the Synod [on Synodality) that is happening globally so that we can as well isolate some issues that are very relevant for our Local Church and find possible solutions which will give a better direction to our archdiocese." In the spirit of the *Acts of the Apostles* he said: "It is only when we do things together that we can say we and the Holy Spirit have decided." Again we honor Marehemu (Deceased) Patrick Kalilombe for being ahead of time in 1972.

Mwirabi Sise's Report from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: "We have six SCCs and together have a formed a zone. My wife Sophia is the Zonal Chairperson for all 6 SCCs. We all meet regularly on the first Saturday of the month. In our regular SCC we meet every Saturday from 6.30 to 08.00 am and pray together and plan for the next SCC meeting. Normally this is where all those who want to baptize their kids, marriage, etc are discussed."

Happy Feast Day of St. Isidore of Seville -- 4 April, 2022. Doctor of the Church. Prolific writer. Initially a poor student, he gave the problem over to God and become of the most learned men of his time. He died in Seville, Spain on 4 April. 636. He became the leading candidate for Patron of Computer Users and the internet in 1999. It is suggested that we pray to St. Isidore before logging onto the internet. One prayer includes the line: "We beseech you that, through the intercession of Saint Isidore, bishop and doctor, during our journeys through the internet we will direct our hands and eyes only to that which is pleasing to you and treat with charity and patience all those souls whom we encounter."

The diocesan directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the Netherlands, together with Father Dinh Anh Nhue Nguyen OFM, Secretary General of the Pontifical Missionary Union, addressed the loneliness of Catholics and the difficulties encountered by younger generations in speaking the language of the Church. "There are no easy answers or solutions", said Father Anh Nhue Nguyen, "I dream of a new missionary movement in Europe, including the Netherlands, where we will start with small communities guided by the Holy Spirit". A mission, therefore, which restarts from its origins and which is as vital as breathing, which is the "essence of everyday life".

St. Paul Outreach (SPO) establishes Young Adult Communities in cities, connected to our college chapters:

- A community of young adults, many of whom are alumni of a nearby SPO college chapter, led by SPO staff, young adult volunteers, and couples.
- Living a common way of life together, similar to that of an SPO college formation community, growing together to maturity and launching into vocation.
- Engaging formal formation elements: worship, courses, small groups, and pastoral care.
- Bridging with and serving local college chapters, especially their formation programs.
- Varying degrees of organized outreach to other young adults.
- Young adult communities can develop into and/or partner with long-term communities such as covenant communities.

For further discernment:

In a webinar on “The Church in Africa on the Synodal Path: Living Synodality in Local Churches” on 30 March 2022, Cardinal Mario Grech was asked the question: “How can we increase the participation of lay people in the Synodal Process?” He answered that several Canon Lawyers attached to the Theological Commission of the “Synod on Synodality” Office in Rome are presently studying how to change Canon Law to make Parish Pastoral Councils “compulsory” (his word) or required/mandatory rather than just “recommended.” This has many implications for the membership, activities and powers of Parish Pastoral Councils around the world. In Eastern Africa Parish Pastoral Councils are formed from below – with representatives of the neighborhood Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and others.

Explanation of “Parish Pastoral Councils and SCCs” in my free, online Ebook on “Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa”:

Then came the historic Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are not specifically mentioned in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, but are clearly implied. The traditional geographical parish is considered the basic juridical unit of the Catholic Church so there is no mention of subparishes, outstations, chapels and SCCs, that is, nothing “smaller” or “lower” than the parish. The same applies to the revised "1983 Code of Canon Law." While SCCs are not specifically mentioned in the code, they 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.”

One of these structures is SCCs. In the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa (the nine AMECEA countries) the SCC is an official ecclesial structure in the parish. The SCCs officially participate in the parish leadership structures.

Each SCC (or a group of SCCs) has a representative on the Outstation, Subparish or 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.

Small Christian Communities developed as a result of putting the communion ecclesiology and teachings of Vatican II into practice. 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).

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.

American theologian Brad Hinze writes: "This is an excellent formulation of one of your most important findings from all of your field work. Both my 2006 book on *Practices of Dialogue in the Church* and my 2016 book, *Prophetic Obedience*, gave a great deal of attention to a range of communal processes of group discernment and decision making. I gave special attention to parish pastoral councils, synods of bishops, and the role of individuals from communities of women religious in teaching bishops and priests how to engage in communal processes of discernment. There is evidence, at least among the Jesuits, that the religious communities of men struggled with communal discernment since the council.

Christian Life Communities remained and remains important for me throughout my time of writing about these various synodal and communal processes, and I thanked my Small Christian Community in my introductions. But I never described them in my books and I never theologially theorized about them and their role in the church. This is what is important about your intervention. Massimo Faggioli's writings on new ecclesial movements did not sufficiently address the deeper intertwining relationship between various forms of SCC and ecclesial movements and structured forms of group discernment within church structures. You are drawing attention to that, especially as it is occurring in East Africa. Others in Latin America have done this before but it merits much more attention. However, what also invites scrutiny is the fact that for various reasons some find it spiritually and existentially difficult to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist -- for example, because of the lack of active and prophetic witnesses of women in the celebration of the Eucharist, the failure to welcome and reach out to marginalized communities, the failure to address social justice (poverty, racial injustice, neocolonialism, and ecological crises) issues as intimately connected to life issues. Some of these people who are frustrated with the limitations and failures of parishes and dioceses either leave the church entirely or participate in alternative Christian communities rather than join other Christian Churches. The failure to practice synodal forms of discernment in parishes and dioceses is driving some away to these SCCs. This need not be the case as you indicate, but it does merit more attention and honest discussion."

Walking together/journeying together is the DNA of SCCs: 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."

The famous Burkina Faso proverb says: *If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.*

The Swahili book *Kuimarisha Ukuaji wa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo Katika Afrika* (2022) is available from the Paulines Publications Africa and the AMECEA Office in Nairobi.

1. 134-page booklet to assist in SCCs training courses for SCCs facilitators and animators in Africa.

2 Preface by H. E. Souraphiel Cardinal Berhaneyesus, Archbishop of Addis Ababa Archdiocese, Ethiopia and former Chairman of AMECEA.

3. Recommends 15 topics and sessions for an effective training course on this key pastoral priority of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. They include: arrival of the participants, introduction of the participants, logistics, sharing of roles and responsibilities, participant's fears or concerns, training topics, expectations and training objectives.

4. Includes a rich bibliography that comprises references, additional reading materials, videos, DVDs as well as accompanying rich annexes. The new handbook recommends a checklist of 16 common activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa today for effective training of SCCs facilitators.

Pope Francis' Twitter message for Easter is a powerful challenge to all SCC members: "Jesus is alive! Today, too, he walks in our midst, changes us and sets us free. Thanks to him, evil has been robbed of its power; failure can no longer hold us back from starting anew; and death has become a passage to the stirrings of new life."

A typical response comes from a priest in Boston, Massachusetts, USA: "Last night I attended my local parish's discussion on "Synodality." Youth were totally absent." We have to break this reoccurring pattern. I still hope that inviting young adults to their own peer-group synodal sessions outside the parish compound (online, social media, in a bar, restaurant, community center, mall, park) can be one of the practical solutions.

Research on the effectiveness of the "Synodal Process" in recent SCC gatherings and Parish Pastoral Council gatherings in both the USA and Kenya indicates that Catholics continue to go back to/revert to the traditional small discussion group style rather than the small discernment community style (that involves deeper listening, even contemplation, and responding to/building on to what previous participants have shared).

From Father Mike Bassano, MM:

Every Thursday at 5 pm in our Catholic Church in the UN camp for people displaced by war in Malakal, South Sudan there is a meeting of our

Liturgy Committee that is a type of SCC. Members prepare for the Sunday liturgy by reflecting on the Scripture Readings and then sharing their thoughts about what the Word of God is saying to them. It is basically like a weekly Small Christian Community gathering to discover what the message of God is for each Sunday liturgy.

I usually start preparing my own homily on Sunday night. Throughout the week my thoughts are also on what the Word of God is saying to me for the following Sunday liturgy. On Thursday when participating in the Liturgy Committee gathering, our people give me more input from their personal and communal sharing that helps me to know what the homily theme will be about. It is always a wonderful experience to share the Word of God as we grow together as a Christian community.

Dear SCC friends,

SCC POLL ANNOUNCEMENT: It is important that we continue to evaluate our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa so we can make it better. Please vote in the current polls, May-June 2022.

Seventy-Ninth Round: (May, 2022 – June, 2022):

The best part of my Small Christian Community is:

- a) Focus on the Word of God (Bible).
- b) Thanksgiving for getting back to nearer normal.
- c) Praying together for peace in the world.
- d) Unique opportunity to use the Synodal Process.
- e) Online practice of our faith.
- f) Source of comfort to the lay faithful.

To vote at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>

I wonder if folks know that some of the best university student SCCs in the USA are found at St Thomas More: Catholic Chapel and Center at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, USA..

Small Church Communities

Small Church Communities (SCCs) are a part of a pastoral initiative found throughout the world. SCCs bring together small groups of students, faculty and community members weekly to pray, discuss scripture for the upcoming Sunday Mass and reflect on how it relates to our own lives. Why join an SCC? "For me, SCC is a welcoming setting in which we examine the intersection between faith and scripture on our daily lives each week." -- Graduate Student

Questions about SCCs, contact jenn.schaaf@yale.edu

May all SCC members pray for and with young people -- Pope Francis' special intention in May, 2022. @PONTIFEX

Let us [#PrayTogether](#) so that all young people, called to live life to the fullest, may discover in Mary's life the way to listen, the depth of discernment, the courage of faith, and dedication to service. [#PrayerIntention](#)

Sunday, 8 May, 2022 is World Vocation Sunday. Have you ever thought of joining and being active in a SCC as a vocation, a calling? Comments are welcome.

1. As mentioned many times, participation in an apostolic group in a parish is voluntary, but membership in a SCC is our DNA, is fundamental in our Catholic identity.
2. Indeed! Being in an SCC is a calling to "discipleship and apostleship" -- gathered and sent 🙏. This mirrors the two online SCC courses sponsored by LIM, Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA: "the Inner Life of Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" and "the Public Life of Small Christian Communities (SCCs)."
3. On my side and from my experience every Christian in my home parish has his or her own SCC! What remained is to insist on the active participation!

Recent discussions stress that SCCs are an entry point for new ideas, priorities and trends in Eastern Africa such as Child Safeguarding, going digital during the Covid 19 pandemic and using the Synodal Process.

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (5r).
"The CARA Report" (georgetown.edu)

The Volume 27, No. 4 (Spring 2022) issue of *The Cara Report* has an article on "National Survey on Small Christian Communities." It is encouraging that the term Small Christian Communities (all capitals) is used to describe a faith-related organization beyond parish liturgical activities covering faith communities, faith groups, faith sharing groups and Based Christian Communities among other names.

Our free, online Ebook "Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" is updated every month. The latest version of 1,2894 pages as of 26 May, 2022 has 19 chapters, an APPENDIX of 27 Online E-Resource Materials on the On-going Formation and Training of Small Christian Community (SCC) Members and 504 items in the "Select Annotated Bibliography." The Ebook can be found on the Tangaza University College Library Website under "Open Access List" under "E-Resources" ("Electronic Resources") at:

LIBRARY.TANGAZA.AC.KE

library.tangaza.ac.ke

<http://library.tangaza.ac.ke/.../Building-the-Church-as...>

It is available both **ADD** The March, 2022 Microsoft Word Version (a .doc File) is now available on the academia.edu and researchgate.net websites.

The latest chapter is "The Role of SCCs in the Synodal Church in Africa" (in progress).

28 May, 2022: "We shall be having tree planting and street cleaning at Nazarene University in Kenya with conjunction with Oreone Community. This is an excellent opportunity for SCC members to participate in *Laudato Si* Week."

Concerning one choice in the Seventy-Ninth Round of our SCCs Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>) -- The best part of my Small Christian Community is... "Praying together for peace in the world." One person quotes Jesus Christ: "Prayers move mountain." Let us continue to pray for peace in Ukraine. Yes, May God bring peace to that Country. Amen.

Everyone agrees, including the large number of Catholics "middle of the roaders," that many Young People are leaving/drifted away from the Institutional Catholic Church. Solutions vary. We have to find creative ways of attracting these people who are spiritual but not religious. We can reach them through social media. One solution is to encourage online peer group Young People Small Faith Sharing Communities. This is a type of SCC.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) under the Main Menu on the left hand side of the Home Page:

How to vote on "The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." on this website:

Steps:

- a) Go to the Home Page.
- b) Move to the Poll on the right hand sidebar.
- c) Under Poll select one option by clicking on the option button on left of the six listed choices, that is, put a black dot in the circle next to your choice.
- d) Click on the Vote button to submit your voting choice.

You can vote once in a 24 hour period.

With the canonization of St. Charles de Foucauld in Rome on Sunday 15 May, 2022, we are reminded that Jesus Caritas Fraternities are special type of SCC.

Facebook Memories on the internet allows us to remember and celebrate past events such as this report from Maryknoll seminarian Victor Mutobera in Nairobi, Kenya:

On Pentecost Sunday 12 June, 2019 the Maryknoll Family on Manyani Road hosted the KU postgraduate Small Christian Community of St. Augustine. We had mass together in the main hall and later a shared meal. In the afternoon from 2 pm we had the Feast Day of St. Kizito SCC from Waruku. The majority were young men and women. Mostly aged between 24 years to 35 years. It was so vibrant and we had Father Lance Nadeau and Father Mike Snyder in attendance. One thing that was most interesting was during the *jumuiya* gathering a young man proposed to his fiancée. It was a surprise indeed. It was the young lady's birthday. The engagement ring was right inside the birthday cake. As she cut the cake, not known to her, the ring that was in the small box inside the cake was removed and the young man went on his knees and proposed to her.

I can remember the reason that we young people go to *jumuiya* is to express ourselves and talk about our relationships. And everyone got so excited. People were shouting and clapping for joy. And Nick Mulei, one of our Maryknoll prospect candidates, shouted at the top of his voice. The two who are the engaged are Patience and Pascal.



Food for thought and discernment for SCC members:

Sister Marie Rose Dione of Senegal believes the Catholic Church should do more to explore the links between synodality and African cultures. This means deepening a theology of synodality on the notion of the Church as the Family of God. This year is a time of grace that the Holy Father gives us with the theme of synodality: communion, participation and mission. As the pope says, "it is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the church of the third millennium". In order to do this, it seems important to me to listen to all the components of the church, so that no one feels forgotten or excluded when it comes to giving his or her opinion on life, realities and current events of the church in this time of ours. In this great meeting of sharing, Africa has its say and should, for example, seek to explore the links between synodality and African cultures; deepen a theology of synodality articulated with the notion of the Church as the Family of God in Africa so that the synod is not only an event but a process and a life. Furthermore, I dare to believe that synodality is not a parenthesis opened on the life of the Church that will close with the closing of the synod. We believe that synodality is a path and a process that extends over time and leads to the involvement of everyone for a change in mentality. By encouraging openness and systems of trust, by changing the mentality of rigidity and by trying to promote a culture of listening that

is not afraid to welcome changes, suggestions and constructive criticism, the church will have taken giant steps and will be renewed from within for better service.

Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/.../synodality.../16110>



[INTERNATIONAL.LA-CROIX.COM](https://international.la-croix.com)

Synodality and its links to African culture

Religious leader in Senegal says Africa can help Catholics all over the world.

We are thankful for the success of the 2022 SCCs Course at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya:

Course Code: PTUC 408

Course Title: Small Christian Communities

Department: Pastoral

Semester/Academic Year: Semester II, 2021-2022

Credit hours: 2Hrs

Purpose of the Course:

This course examines how Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are a "New Way of Being Church" and a "New Model of Church" in Africa today. It explores the practical and pastoral implications of SCCs in Africa with especial interest in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) region. It also highlights the growing interest in Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in Africa. In 2022 this was a required (compulsory) course in the Fourth Year of Theology in the School of Theology that was mainly devoted to courses in Pastoral Theology. There were over 150 students (mainly seminarians) in three sections of 50 students each.

Parishes that thrive build belonging in small groups like Jesus did: "Come with me" (a type of SCC and ministry small group) is the lead actively, like Jesus. A staffer with "woo" from strength finders is the "chief welcoming officer" and builds a 12+1 ministry group of lay woos. They staff an info desk after mass, welcome new school families, find the visitors on Christmas and Easter and welcome them and invite them to a ministry group. Ministry groups then act like Jesus and his 12 disciples where they pray, serve, and socialize together monthly to build true Catholic belonging with each other. Each small group is the "parish within the parish." Most parishes have 50-60 of these groups.

<https://docs.google.com/.../10wOz.../mobilebasic>

A type of SCC:

Pauline Jaricot lived in a France marked by anticlericalism and the decline of religious fervor after the French Revolution. Confident in the effectiveness of the Rosary to revive faith, she imagines a very simple way to bring her contemporaries closer to this spirituality: the Living Rosary in prayer groups of 15 people". Today, each user can form a prayer group of 15 people. Everyone agrees to meditate on one of the mysteries of the Rosary by reciting about ten a day, in communion with the rest of the group. Thus, each day, the group meditates together on the 15 mysteries, that is to say the complete Rosary. "Why is it such a powerful means?" one wonders. Here is the answer: because it only takes 5 minutes to pray a decade. It is accessible to all and is the ideal way to "gently" discover the spirituality of the Rosary. Furthermore, the method emphasizes "the power of the group": being a link in a chain of prayer, being aware of the communion of prayer provides support and motivation. The "Rosario" App makes it possible to create groups, even of 5 people: "In a small prayer group of 5 people who know each other, explains the presentation, each member receives a mystery of the Rosary on which to meditate each day, with a short text to guide the meditation. Each day, each one recite a decade while meditating on the mystery entrusted to him. At the end of the day, if the five members have prayed, the Living Rosary is complete". "With this App, and above all thanks to the love for the Virgin and the desire to transmit it - concludes Hozana - there are hundreds, thousands, of testimonies of people whose lives have been changed by the Rosary. Hozana ("Hosanna", acclamation of praise to God) is an association of believers and a social prayer network that allows you to create or join online prayer communities around spiritual proposals, on the website www.Hozana.org and Hozana app. The mission is to bring the world together in prayer, through the Internet, in the certainty that "prayer will save the world", the motto of the association. (PA) (Agenzia Fides, 24/5/2022)

May our SCC members actively continue our Easter journey together during these last two weeks calling on the Holy Spirit to energize us to be witnesses of the Risen Christ. In the spirit of synodality let us walk together, let us journey together.

Father Nicholas Segeja, the Director of the AMECEA Pastoral Institute (API) in Eldoret, Kenya, reports that the institute has a compulsory SCC unit for those students doing courses in Catechesis and Pastoral Ministry. This message led to the following string:

1. Having completed the same at Loyola University in New Orleans, USA, I highly recommend this. I wish the Bishops in Eastern Africa could advocate for the inclusion of a unit on SCCs on the Major Seminary formation curriculum.

2. Excellent, Michael. How do we get this message to the bishops and Rectors of Major Seminaries.

3. The bishops voted for this SCC Unit in 2002!!!! AMECEA Study Conference on "Deeper Evangelization in the Third Millennium" in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2002." 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 of the Major Seminaries and houses of formation of both men and women."

4. Thanks for this information. I have shared with my Archbishop the value of this recommendation on SCCs by AMECEA. I just didn't know a resolution had been passed in 2002 about the same. I will request him to remind the others as they (UEC) sit for their Plenary soon.

5. Good communications.

On this last day of Laudato Si' Week, Pope Francis' message to our SCC members is loud and clear:

@PONTIFEX

Today I invite you to [#PrayTogether](#) for our religious communities: may they be prophetic servants in the care of our common home and for the least among us. [#LaudatoSi7](#)
[#LaudatoSiWeek](#)

How are our SCC members responding to Cardinal-elect Robert McEvoy's challenge in the latest issue of *America Magazine*: "The most penetrating and sustained sadness that men and women in countless synodal dialogues [in the Catholic Church] have pointed to is the reality that young people have drifted away from the church in a seemingly unstoppable way. And the greatest hope that emerges from these same dialogues is that the church will find a way to bring our young people home. This is a profound imperative of evangelization that cannot wait two more years to be addressed."

On this Feast of the Ugandan Martyrs let us pray in solidarity with SCC members whose Patron Saints are Charles Lwanga, Kizito, John Muzeyi, Matia Mulumba, Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe and others. May their blood that was shed bring peace in our country during this election period.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Three Testimonies from Members of the Maryknoll Small Communities, Sal y Luz (Salt and Light)

As we celebrate Pentecost Sunday on 5 June 2022 we invite you to meet Elvety, Iris, and Luz -- mission animators from Maryknoll's Small Christian Communities and learn how Pentecost continues in their lives and communities. Pentecost continues today! Since the pandemic began, the Discipulos Misioneros Maryknoll team has sought ways to continue building a community that accompanies the journey of Hispanic/Latino pastoral agents in the United States and Central America. Following the exhortation of Pope Francis, "let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of community!" and inspired by Section 92 of his document, *The Joy of the Gospel*, we developed the Maryknoll...
Read More.....<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../Three...>

How is the Holy Spirit important in your life and in the life and activities of your Small Christian Community? Please answer in a message below. Some replies:

1. Our most common prayer is "The Sign of the Cross" that we make many times every day. Are we aware/conscious that the Holy Spirit is part of this important prayer? Also the ending of the prayer "Glory be to the Father..."

2. Great Question. Today is the birthday of the Apostolic Church and we are the church and temples of the same Holy Spirit. He is the engine of our human life activities and worship. It's a mystery one can't explain unless you're inspired by the same Holy Spirit.

3. Reflect on 10 *Bible* texts on the Holy Spirit.

4. Emphasize laying hands on the sick and invoking the Holy Spirit for healing.

5. @PONTIFEX The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, fills us with love, makes us feel loved, and teaches us how to love. He is the “motor” of our spiritual lives. #Pentecost <https://t.co/KOpwtfL>

ANNOUNCEMENT NEW ARTICLE: A Case Study of Training SCC and Parish Leaders in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya
By Alphonse C. L. Omolo

Overview

In their declaration in the 1973 Plenary Assembly in Kenya, the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) Bishops said: “We are convinced that in these countries of Eastern Africa, it is time for the Church to become really ‘local’. We believe that in order to achieve this we have to insist on building Church life and work on the Small Communities”. (*AFER* 16/1-2, 1974, p. 4).

Indeed, in Eastern Africa people live, act, and associate on the level of smaller neighborhood communities i.e., rural villages, or urban estate communities. These integral community settings provide unlimited options for the Church in Eastern Africa to insert her life and work into the daily occurrences of the People of God.

Read More>><https://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../June-2022-Case...>

This Case Study of Training SCC and Parish Leaders in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya can be an example and model for SCCs Workshops in other dioceses in the AMECEA Region.

Our Sister Website -- African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website -- is now hosted by Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya. Technically it is a sub-domain of the Tangaza Server, but it is a totally separately website with its own address (URL): <https://afriprov.tangaza.ac.ke> We thank Brian Kiboma, the Systems Librarian at Tangaza University and all involved in the transfer. We hope the website will be user-friendly – serving the research and communications needs of the Tangaza community and all others in our digital world. Enjoy. The commitment to spread the importance and usefulness of proverbs and other African oral literature is expressed in the Ganda (Uganda) proverb: "One who sees something good must narrate it." This African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website leads to further research, new collections, and fresh applications as expressed in the Sukuma (Tanzania) proverb: "That which is good is never finished."

The new copyright is as follows:

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How well do we remember our founders of the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa? We are invited to imitate the life of the Trinity that is a life of sharing. Bishop Christopher Mwoleka of Tanzania was one of the first persons to see sharing in the Trinity as a model for sharing in SCCs. He said: "I think we have difficulties in understanding the Holy Trinity because we approach the mystery from the wrong side. 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."

The Book of *Revelation 2:7* says: "Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches." During this Pentecost Season and approaching the Feast of the Trinity what is the Holy Spirit saying to our SCCs. Listen to Pope Francis:

@Pontifex

"I encourage all of you to invoke the Holy Spirit often during the day. His good and creative strength allows us to go out of ourselves and to be a sign of comfort and hope for others."

In our SCCs Poll (Small Christian Communities): Seventy-Ninth Round : "The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." one choice is "source of comfort to the lay faithful."

As we continue to discern and put into action how SCCs can participate in the Synodal Process, it is important to point out that the Apostolic Constitution that went into effect on Sunday, 5 June, 2022 states that a Vatican organism that is not part of the Roman Curia until now called "General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, now becomes simply "General Secretariat of the Synod". This is an important change aimed at reducing the clerical and hierarchical face of synodality.

If you were to put a drawing or a photograph or a symbol of the Holy Spirit on the wall of your living room, what would it be? Please answer below:

1. Dove
2. Light
3. I love a photo of the Holy Spirit surrounded by light.
4. Art from Korea

Art & Theology



Jae-In Kim (Korean), *The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost, 1996*, Collage.
 Source: *Joy in the Lord: The Collage Art of Jae-In Kim*, vol. 1 (New Haven, Connecticut: OMSC Publications, 2009)

Different cultures have different images of the Holy Spirit. This is inculturation.

5. I'll put fire because just like the Holy Spirit that was sent by Jesus Christ to be a helper the fire also, helps us to have food on the table. Fire is symbolic in most homes and it rare to visit a home and find that their's is no fire.

6. SI would put a drawing of tongues of fire as in the story of the first Pentecost when the Holy pirit came down on the Apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem in the form of tongues of fire over each of their heads (see the beginning of Chapter Two in the book *Acts of the Apostles* in the *Bible*).

7. Drawing or photo of a smile.

On the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website the "Welcome" Message has been updated with new information and new hyperlinks. Read it at:

<http://afriprov.tangaza.ac.ke/>

An example of the African Forum on our Facebook Page is found in the following exachange of messages:

“How aware are we/how conscious are we that our SCCs are eucharistic communities?”

“They become more alive while the priest is around in celebrating the Eucharist.”

“Thank you. Agreed. What are your practical, pastoral solutions to the present worldwide eucharistic famine/eucharistic hunger?”

“Difficult one, but I think that a constant awareness of the Sacrament of Eucharist is essential in a small way not only when you train the candidates for receiving the Sacrament but contantly for understanding the importance of Eucharist.”

“In my homily today I am going to have an imaginary conversation with Pope Francis when I will respectfully ask him about the millions of African Catholics who go to a church today Sunday (often just a simple outstation chapel) but there is no mass and communion because there are not enough male celebrate priests.”

”Interesting. I also think that people themselves who hunger for Eucharist don't do much to promote vocations in their families. Thus why this hunger lives on.”

“Do you support the proposal of married priests to help solve this crisis?”

“I don't think that is the solution. Many people don't seem to be interested in religious matters any more. That commitment of serving the People of God for nothing is questionable. People are material oriented presently. I don't think that married priests is the solution. I am speaking in my context of South Africa.”

“Do you know the views of Bishop Fritz Lobinger, the retired bishop in South Africa?”

“Yes I know them. He was speaking from his perspective of his diocese. By the way he was our apostolic administrator sometime in our diocese before having Bishop Hirmer as our bishop in our diocese.”

“Lobinger proposed part-time married priests chosen from a Council of Elders or Team of Elders especially in rural areas in Africa who would continue with their normal salaried jobs.”

“A full discussion on this topic is found in our free online, ebook *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. 1,309 pages as of 19 June, 2022 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

<http://smallchristiancommunities.org/building-the-church-as-family-of-god-evaluation-of-small-christian-communities-in-eastern-africa-2/>

http://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Build_new.pdf”

“A good exchange of views.”

Today, 20 June 2022, is World Refugee Day in Africa. Father Joseph Healey MM uses the objective of SCC to build the Church as Family of God to the refugees. The results of SCCs focus on a change of heart, realization of convictions, and commitment among the adherents, if the work is appropriately done. There are Case Studies of SCCs in the Refugee Camps in Northern Uganda. We facilitated a "SCCs Training the Trainers Workshop For Those Serving in Refugees Ministry, Lodongo Spiritual Center, Arua Diocese, Uganda in August, 2018. There were 44 participants: 38 refugees living in four Refugee Settlements (Adjumani, Bidi Bidi and Palorinya in Arua Diocese and Palabek in Gulu Archdiocese) and six facilitators coordinated by the AMECEA Small Christian Communities Training Team.

Various reports being sent to the Synod Office in Rome on the results of the 2001-2023 Synodal Process mention Small Christian Communities. Here is a quotation from the FutureChurch Report in June, 2022: “I think the Spirit is moving in Small Christian

Communities, Intentional Eucharistic Communities, etc. Recall all of the ways that the pandemic created a new open space for online faith communities and worship.”

Searching on the internet produces these interesting and encouraging results:

For “Small Christian Community:”

1. Goggle Chrome: 1st Position Rank
(about 482,000,000 results -- 0.61 seconds)

2. Microsoft Bing: 1st Position Rank
62,500,000 Results

For “Small Christian Communities (plural):”

1. Goggle Chrome: 1st Position Rank
(about 136,000,000 results --0.57 seconds)

<https://www.google.com/search...>

2. Microsoft Bing: 1st Position Rank
3,210,000 Results
[small christian communities - Search \(bing.com\)](https://www.bing.com/search?smallchristiancommunities)

Today is the Feast of Sacred Heart of Jesus - Solemnity that is very important to the devotional spirituality of SCC members. Just look at the pictures on the walls of the St. Kizito SCC members in Waruku, Nairobi. This connects to one choice in the SCC Poll: "Source of comfort to the lay faithful."

An African inculturation depiction of the Gospel story of "Jesus Sends Out Seventy-two Disciples Two by Two (in Pairs)" (Luke 10: 1-9 -- 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 3 July, 2022) is found in African art. Tanzanian layman Charles Ndege is one of the leading religious artists in East Africa. In the Cathedral Parish of Musoma Diocese, Tanzania on one large wall Ndege created an inculturated oil painting called "Jesus Sends Out Seventy-two Tanzanian Disciples." 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 called Jesus "Teaches Along the Lake Shore" 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. He is sending out modern Tanzanian disciples two by 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 (in pair) represents

the strength and energy of the Small Christian Community Model of Church in Eastern Africa).

The communal interpretation (sent two by two/in pairs) of these two African paintings remind us of the importance of the SCC Model of Church ("*kijumuiya*" in Swahili) and the Synodal Church where we journey together and walk together. Another interpretation of being sent two by two/in pairs: "To be an apostle means to be sent out on a mission. Every Christian is an apostle since every Christian is tasked with bringing Christ's peace and healing to the world. But Jesus never sends anyone out alone; his apostles can only accomplish their mission side-by-side with the Holy Spirit."

New Book:

Stan Ilo (ed.), *Handbook of African Catholicism*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2022. An African Edition was published in two volumes by Limuru, Kenya: Kolbe Press, 2023. Available on Amazon as a paperback and as an Ebook. For these Facebook Pages the handbook is valuable for two special reasons: 1. The chapters include examples of African Narrative Theology that is also called Story Theology. South African theologian Peter Knox says: "Thanks for sharing this insight that African narratives are now coming into mainstream theology in Africa."

2. A chapter on "Small Christian Communities in Africa: Histories, Themes, Development and Challenges," by Joseph Healey that treats:

1. Historical Development of Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa.
2. Themes of Small Christian Communities in Africa.
 - a. Relationships and Community
 - b. Biblical
 - c. Ecclesiastical
 - d. Pastoral
 - e. Contextual
 - f. Synodality
 - g. Mission
3. Development of Small Christian Communities in Africa.
4. Challenges of Small Christian Communities in Africa.
5. Bibliography

That this topic or theme is included in this *Handbook of African Catholicism* shows that the SCC Model of Church is important and taken seriously in Africa. We welcome more specific SCC examples and Case Studies.

There is a growing phenomenon of "House Churches" in Morocco. Over the past 20 years, small evangelical communities have been established in Morocco through the settlement of sub-Saharan Africans. "I've been coming here for two years," says Didier Komol, 33, from Cameroon. "I chose it because it is a Church of the Awakening," he says in reference to this particular evangelical community. "I noticed that the Spirit of God was with us. I feel the Spirit's presence and, at the end of the service, I am at peace," he says with satisfaction. Elohim Church is one of dozens, if not hundreds, of evangelical "House Churches" that have sprung up in Morocco over the last 20 years. These house churches join the "historical" Churches, which have been present since the protectorate and are recognized

by the king: the Anglican Church, the Evangelical Church in Morocco (formerly composed mainly of reformed Protestants) and the Catholic Church. Read more at:



INTERNATIONAL.LA-CROIX.COM

The growing phenomenon of house churches in Morocco

Over the past 20 years, small evangelical communities have been established in Morocco through the settlement of sub-Saharan Africans

As we pray for the 20th Annual AMECEA Conference on "Environmental Impact on Integral Human Development," let us be thankful that the AMECEA Bishops have made the SCCs Model of Church a pastoral priority in Eastern Africa.

New Article Announcement: "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Gathered and Sent: A Case Study of Two Online SCCs Courses" By Alphonse C. L. Omolo

NOTE: These two courses are part of the Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) of Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

Overview

Perhaps, the best place to start this conversation on the experience gained from the Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) online course on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is to evoke the foresight of Lee and Cowan that SCCs are gathered and sent. In their visionary book, *Gathered and Sent: The Mission of Small Church Communities Today*, Lee and Cowan (2003) elucidate that: "Our conviction rooted in both theology and sociology, that a [Small Christian] Community is both gathered and sent. As gathered, it attends to the conversation of its inner life. As sent, it carries on a conversation with the larger world beyond its immediate constituency" (pg. 31). Read More..... <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../Case-study...>

Let us hope that Catholic dioceses, parishes and institutions in Africa take advantage of these Online SCCs Courses.

The "Synod Synthesis Report" from Trenton Diocese, New Jersey, USA echoes the experience of SCC members in Eastern Africa and around the world:

"Change of pastor has a big impact on a parish for good or not for good. Many comments about obstacles to participation were related to the change of a pastor – some dreaded a change; others were hoping for one. The stories shared mostly indicate

disappointment that the role of pastor carries such power and influence that a new pastor can radically change a parish. Some were asking if the voice or charism of the parish community over time/generation after generation means anything?

“Change of pastors changes everything.”

“I feel uncomfortable at my church. I feel it’s cliquish and I find Father intimidating and not often friendly. I went to [another] Catholic Church not long ago and I was shocked by the difference. People were so warm and friendly. And the priest made a point of saying hello to me and welcome. Soooo nice. When Father leaves maybe the church will change too if we get a warm and caring priest in.”

“A person spoke about “many silent departures” because of a change in pastor.”

“My many joys of being Catholic for over 50 years have now been turned into sadness as I see my lifelong vibrant parish (name given) slowly dying from the obstacles imposed by the harmful and ineffective ministry of the new pastor.”

“ Expressed frustration that parishioners have no input during pastor changes.

Evaluation of SCCs in Kenya: Presently there are 45,000 -- 50,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Kenya. We follow the Catholic Bishops’ pastoral priority of a SCCs Model of Church. Some SCCs are directly represented on their Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs). During the Synodal Process we are trying to make these councils more inclusive (for example, adding a Young Woman and a Young Man to represent the Young People) and more deliberative with more powers for direct decision making. The PPCs work closely with the Liturgical Committees in their parishes.

The "Synthesis of Synodality in the Irish Church" recommends:

"SMALLER MORE INTIMATE COMMUNITIES BASED ON THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH THAT ARE: Less centred in church buildings and more centred around the warmth of true hospitality as role-modelled by Jesus, e.g. house eucharists/people gathering in their homes to pray together/communion of all baptized sharing one table."

“AMECEA PLENARY: AMECEA Bishops Award Regional Pioneer Trainer of Social Communications.”

Bishops in the Association of Member Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) region have awarded a Maryknoll Missionary priest and veteran journalist Father Joseph Graham Healey for his contribution to the training of pastoral agents in modern social communication in the region and the promotion of the Small Christian Communities ecclesiology.

The Lifetime Achiever Award was announced at the ongoing 20th AMECEA Plenary being held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from 9 to 18 July, 2022. Father Healey, a member of the Maryknoll Fathers Society, was appointed to lead the training of pastoral agents in modern communication from 1968 to 1974. However, announcing the award, Bishop John Oballa Owa, the chairman of AMECEA Social Communications, said that since then Father Healey has always been part of the AMECEA’s history by promoting the use of modern means of social communications for evangelization and Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

Bishop Oballa of Kenya's Ngong Diocese, said Father Healey popularly known as *Mwanajumuia* (an SCC Member) who is founder of the AMECEA Social Communications Department, had continued fundraising for training and scholarship funds to support AMECEA Secretariat, bishops' conferences, and dioceses in training pastoral agents and lay people in charge of social communication apostolates.

He further said that Father Healey has supported the hosting and management [of AMECEA Website](#) since 1999. The native of the United States also supports the ICT capacity building in the region through the training of personnel in the creation and management of church websites. "He (Fr. Healey) has provided many study opportunities for scholarships at Masters and PhD levels in the region for pastoral agents and the laity including the publication of the Small Christian Community training handbook for facilitators in many languages. The priest also supported the hosting and management of the [AMECEA Small Christian Community Website](#)."

"AMECEA PLENARY: I am Grateful for the Award, Says Fr. Healey AMECEA Life Long Achiever"

The 2022 AMECEA Lifetime Achiever Award recipient Father Joseph Healey, MM, has expressed gratitude for the award and pledges to continue being one of AMECEA's roving ambassadors.

This is contained in a letter he wrote to the AMECEA bishops.

"Many, many thanks for the Lifetime Achiever Award that was announced during 20th AMECEA Plenary being held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from 9th to 18th July, 2022. I am deeply grateful."

Father Healey suggested that the award also be dedicated to AMECEA first generation pioneer Bishop Founders for their vision and planning. He said: "Recall Bishop Method Kilaini's excellent summary of the history of AMECEA in his talk this week. The AMECEA Bishops recognized the importance of Social Communications and made me the second full time priest staff member in the AMECEA Office in Nairobi after the Secretary General Father Killian Flynn, OFM Cap.

The Bishops during the AMECEA Plenary of 1967 said: 'We want to start an office for social communications connected to the general secretariat of AMECEA in Nairobi. The best journalism schools in the world are in the USA, so let's ask an American Missionary Society to provide a person. At the plenary the bishops turned to the then Maryknoll Society Regional Superior Father Joseph Glynn, MM who offered a trained Maryknoll priest-journalist ("hyphenated priest" in those days) to the AMECEA Office. That was me.

"My ministry was to coordinate Social Communications activities between the then five member countries in the areas of training, research, production and collaboration with similar organizations in electronic and traditional media. The first priority was to train local Africans. At the time Bishop Jean Jobidon, MAfr represented Malawi on the AMECEA Board and became the Chairperson of the newly formed Social Communications Department of AMECEA. He was also a full member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in the Vatican. Bishop Jobidon inspired me to think big in developing

social communications in the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. Bishop Vincent McCauley, CSC, the Chairperson of AMECEA, had many good ideas for the office.”

Father Healey also recalled the two AMECEA Plenaries of 1973 and 1976 that stated that “systematic formation of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) should be the key pastoral priority in the years to come in Eastern Africa.”

He said: “This is the single most important statement made about SCCs and laid the foundation for the development of the SCCs Model of Church. Clearly the AMECEA countries were ahead of their time. In fact the very beginning of SCCs in the whole of English-speaking Africa can be traced back to the joint pastoral and missionary efforts of the American Maryknoll missionaries in the Luo-speaking Deanery (Nyarombo, Ingri and Kowak Parishes) in North Mara in Musoma Diocese in northwestern Tanzania in 1966.

The two main founders and visionaries who created the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Key Pastoral Priority were Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr, the Bishop of Lilongwe Diocese in Malawi who died in 2012 (especially through his Mini-Synod in 1972) and Bishop Christopher Mwoleka, the Bishop of Rulenge Diocese in Tanzania who died in 2002 (who said that in his diocese ‘the entire pastoral work will be carried out by means of Small Christian Communities’).

In both these priorities of social communications and SCCs we continue to build on the shoulders of these first AMECEA Bishops. This includes moving into the digital world. The AMECEA General Website was started in 1999 and the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website was started in 2004. These websites grow from strength to strength. Now we focus on online training and coordination through workshops and seminars.”

One of the veteran Catholic journalists, Francis Njuguna of Kenya, had this “both... and” insight. Writing in Swahili he said that the AMECEA Bishops gave birth to the SCCs (*kuzaa*) and Joe Healey helped to raise them (*kulea*).

But Africa is also best served when her scholars and leaders are working not only among themselves but with other scholars and leaders in every part of the world. This is the wisdom of the spider’s web, an ancient wisdom on solidarity, patience, and teamwork left for us by our African ancestors—*When spider webs unite, they can tie a lion.*

End of the "General Introduction" in *Handbook of African Catholicism* (p. 52). Orbis Books. Kindle Edition.

There is a rich variety of names for SCCs. The List of “Acronyms” in the *Handbook of African Catholicism* has ten names in English and French. Of the 53 contributors to this handbook 12 are women and 41 are men.

Evaluation is necessary even if critical. A chapter in the handbook states:

"Yet the successes of SCCs cannot mask their shortcomings, including the clericalist control often imposed on them, their patriarchal leadership even when the majority of members are women, and the near-total absence of youth participation."

Handbook of African Catholicism (p. 1536). Orbis Books. Kindle Edition.

II Pan-African Congress on Theology, Society and Pastoral Life
 (Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network)
 Catholic University in Eastern Africa (CUEA)
 Nairobi, Kenya
 Tuesday, 19 July 2022

Pope Francis prays that the Holy Spirit might inspire the Pan-African Catholic Theological & Pastoral Network, meeting in Nairobi, Kenya and calls this week's gathering of theologians, religious men and woman, laypeople and bishops in Nairobi to "discern what God is telling us today" a "sign of hope." The wisdom of the African ancestors, he stated, "reminds us of this important call that mountains never meet, but people do. NOTE: This is a famous African proverb well known in Swahili and in European languages such as Gaelic/Irish.

The discussion from 10:10 am to 11:10 am will be a Plenary Session on "Palaver/Dialogue/Synodality." Let us see if the SCCs Model of Church is brought up. At our African Theology Congress in Nairobi, Kenya we are discerning the connection/linkage between SCCs, African Theological Method (Palaver Theology or Conversation Theology) and the Synodal Process. Some comments:

- Thanks. This is yet another step up for the development and promotion pf our dear and noble SCCs.
- Wow! That must have been a perfect platform for SCC the promotion of the role and significance of SCCs in the life and wellbeing of the Church.
- Great move towards effective SCCs development.
- Hope you find a synthesis. What of synodality and it's actuality?
- Synodality is a slow and winding process.
- The future together.
- Without a secretariat that will implement the recommendations on any members resolution of Bishops that will include all Christians/ lay from all scc there would be no any impact otherwise the Bishops will always put their benchmark where they will dialogue themselves without touching the scc because the SCC are taken as receivers and directed and not involved.
- It much depends on participants interest area sometimes. The SCCs' strength is the fact that meaning of the subject matter has roots in scripture is very important. Theological soundness is good, its danger /temptation can be getting into intellectual battles and weighing scales. My humble submission is that here the brain more than the heart is at work. I do not deny that Gods spirit works in all our faculties, I only know experientially that that moment we allow to LISTEN with the heart to what God is saying from Scripture does MAGIC -- revealing the mind of God even through those with little theology. Listening with the heart to God then bringing it to lives experiences.

- It occurs to me that the synodal idea is also African. Think of the Palaver Method like the three year process conducted by Orobator on *The Church We Want!*

“Pope Francis hoped from this 2nd Pan-African Catholic Congress on Theology, Society and Pastoral Life, that proposes a theology of wisdom, could emerge paths that the Catholic Church needs, for example, to review the structures and styles of leadership in our dioceses, parishes, Basic Ecclesial Communities, religious congregations and homes that revitalize the Church.”

Chimombo, Emmanuel, “AMECEA: Pastoral Coordinator Assures Theologians That Small Christian Communities Domesticates Theology at Grassroots,” Talk at the Second Biannual Pan-African Catholic Congress on Theology, Society, and Pastoral Life, Nairobi, Kenya, "AMECEA Online Newsletter," Issue 441 (29 July, 2022), AMECEA Website, retrieved on 30 July, 2022,

<http://communications.amecea.org/index.php/2022/07/29/amecea-pastoral-coordinator-assures-theologians-that-small-christian-communities-domesticate-theology-at-grassroots/?fbclid=IwAR1ZOiaKXyDLO7NiARGac7pL6x - MAbP8z5cNFhEwVyLkpDfWMYJIDjv7EI>

Many good insights on the SCC Model of Church on the grassroots level.

Newly ordained Maryknoll priest Mwanajumuiya Padri John Siyumbu, MM has been involved in SCCs for many years:

1. At Kenyatta University in Nairobi he was an active member of the *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo ya Mtakatifu Michael*.
2. He is a member of ST. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE INTERNATIONAL. ONLINE SCC.
3. He is an Honorary Member of St. Kizito SCC in Waruku in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese where he will celebrate his first SCC Mass at 2 pm on Sunday, 24 July, 2022.

Mwanajumuiya Padri John Siyumbu, MM ni padri wa kwanza wa Kiafrika katika Shirika la Maryknoll. Oyee! A new chapter in the history of the Maryknoll Society of Priests and Brothers.

Let us pray for the SECAM 19th Plenary Assembly with the theme: “Ownership of SECAM, Security and Migration in Africa and the Islands.” From Monday, 25th July to Monday, 1st August 2022 in Accra, Ghana. May the meeting discern a concrete plan for the Synodal Process on the African Continental level in 2022 and 2023.

Archbishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of Bamenda in Cameroon told delegates of the 19th Plenary Assembly of SECAM that Pope Francis was inspired when he decided that the Synod on Synodality “should not be like the others, but should be celebrated at all levels.” The approach of the Synod on Synodality, he said, enables the Synod's theme to be contextualized at all levels, beginning from the Families, to the Small Christian Communities (SCCs), to the Mission Stations, to Parishes, to Deaneries, to Dioceses, to Ecclesiastical Provinces, to National Churches, to Continental Churches and to the Universal Church. **NOTE:** The term "Mission Stations" in West Africa is similar to our "Outstations" and "Sub-parishes" in Eastern Africa.

From the Message (Communiqué) of the Members of the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) at the end of their 19th Plenary Assembly in Ghana:

Reflecting on the Church in synodality, Catholic Bishops in Africa renewed their commitment “to promoting inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism”. This process of synodality has already begun at the level of Basic Christian Communities, parishes, dioceses, nations and regions,” SECAM Bishops said, and continued, “We are now entering the Continental Phase whose assembly will be celebrated in the month of March, 2023.”

They invited all the people of God in Africa “to support this synodal dynamism and to make it theirs through prayer and lifestyle.” In fostering the spirit of synodality, Catholic Bishops in Africa urged the people of God on the continent “to listen to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth by caring for the environment, fighting against climate change and promoting social justice for the needy and the poor.”

Congratulations to Ghanaian Cardinal-designate, Bishop Richard Kuuia Baawobr on his election as the President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). He is a strong supporter of SCCs in his diocese of Wa, Ghana. May SCCs members around the world prayer for and with him.



CJPD

PRAYER FOR PEACEFUL & CREDIBLE ELECTION

Lord God, we thank you for our great nation Kenya. As we approach our general elections, grant us peaceful, transparent, accountable and credible electoral process.

May we seek to better understand the issues and concerns that confront us as a nation and how the Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens in our community.

We ask you, to give us eyes that are free from blindness so that we might see each other as brothers and sisters, one and equal in dignity especially those who are victims of abuse, violence, deceit and poverty.

Grant us ears that heed to the cries of the vulnerable and minds that discern what is right and wrong. Enable us to choose leaders who abide by your word, live your love and keep in the ways of your truth as they follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and guide us to your kingdom of Justice and Peace.

*We make our prayer through Christ
our Lord, AMEN*

*Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be
to the Father.....*



May our SCCs pray this prayer.

The Gospel compels us to respond as faithful citizens in our community. Thanks for sharing this wonderful prayer. It's time to pray for peaceful elections.

Report of the July, 2022 Synod Synthesis from Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya. From the whole archdiocese a total of 41,577 Synod Questionnaires were completed and processed giving a 76.3 % response rate. The Synod Questionnaire were distributed through an estimated 3,336 Small Christian Communities in 114 parishes.

From the Communique during the closing Mass held at Msimbazi Centre in Dar es Salaam Archdiocese, Tanzania the AMECEA chairperson Rt. Rev Bishop Charles Kasonde of Zambia read: The Bishops have also reiterated the calls for aggressive environmental sensitization campaign at the basic community level in order to raise awareness. “We reiterate the calls for aggressive sensitization campaign at the basic community level in order to raise awareness and improve our communication with the people on care for environment at all levels including at the Small Christian Communities and family level,” they said.

In a webinar on the Synod Process, Father Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, SJ said that we need an African Continental Ecclesial Assembly, not an African Continental Episcopal Assembly. May a wide variety of people participate in this assembly including Catholics familiar with the SCCs Model of Church. This African Continental Event will take place from 1-6 March, 2023.

There is a big difference between “Christian Communities” and “Small Christian Communities”. French is a very important language in Africa. In our free, online Ebook on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” we use the following words in French (depending on the part of Africa):

Communautés de Base (CBs)
 Communautés Ecclésiales de Base (CEBs)
 Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes (CEVs)
 Communautés Ecclésiales Vivantes de Base (CEVBs)
 Petites Communautés Chrétiennes (PCCs)

From CCRI's "Reflections from Our Global Synodal Gatherings: Essential Reforms Needed in our Church Today:"

Having realized that many young people are drifting away from the Church, CCRI feels the importance of reaching out to young people. We are committed to hosting Online Small Communities of Young Adult Seekers to offer them a safe place to share their concerns and find support for the life issues they face. As an international and diverse group meeting regularly on Zoom, these groups are committed to growing together seeking to find their rightful place within the Catholic community.

Using the “see, discern, and act” method, CCRI members are committed to embracing community life each in our local regions of the world. When we see social injustice issues both within and outside of the institutional church, we will stand in solidarity with those being violated thereby living the Gospel values of Jesus Christ.

Recognizing in our synodal gathering that we have different viewpoints within our communities, we are committed to bridging the gap among these traditionalists, middle of the road Catholics, and progressives. In Eastern Africa, Small Christian Communities provide equal airtime for everyone during the regular meetings. The key to this working is having the proper training for Small Christian Community members where they learn how to disagree with respect and not demean other people's views (disagreeing with love). Facilitators also learn their needed skills through the continuous training that is conducted by the Eastern Africa Small Christian Communities Training Team.

The Synod Process in Lilongwe, Malawi:

As a footnote to AMECEA history this first historic synod in Lilongwe, Malawi was called in Chewa, the local Malawian language, "Mpingo Ndife Tonse" ("the need for active participation of the laity") The second diocesan synod was called "Tiyende Limodzi" ("the importance of collaborative ministry and unity"). Archbishop George Desmond Tambala started a third Archdiocesan Mini Synod in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi from 30 July 2022 to August 2023 on the theme "Discerning with the Holy Spirit." He states: "We want to take advantage of the Synod [on Synodality] that is happening globally so that we can as well isolate some issues that are very relevant for our Local Church and find possible solutions which will give a better direction to our archdiocese." In the spirit of the *Acts of the Apostles* he said: "It is only when we do things together that we can say we and the Holy Spirit have decided."

Eightieth Round of SCCs Poll: The best part of my Small Christian Community is... One choice is: "Flexibility in digital communications and connections." We are discovering that if people cannot participate in Zoom Calls live and online, they can send messages/ answers via:

- Email.
- Chat Room.
- Text Messaging.
- WhatsApp.

Using the Chat Room during an online gathering is very helpful for the young adults who have problems with their sound or their video.

One of the creative examples of a Small Community is the Online Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter that is an interfaith group of 26 individuals comprising Catholic laity and priests and Muslims from four continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. It is coordinated by Marita and Gerald Grudzen of Global Ministries University. This Chapter belongs to the Maryknoll, a Catholic non-profit mission movement now comprised of four organizations, which has been the heart and hands of the U.S. Catholic Church's overseas mission work for more than 100 years. The four organizations (also called expressions or entities) are: the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (also called the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America), the Maryknoll Sisters (a congregation of women religious), the Maryknoll Lay Missioners; and the Maryknoll Affiliates. There is a total of 45 Maryknoll Affiliate Chapters around the world that are a type of a Small Human Community (SHC). Of these chapters, three are online: Kenya that meets on Zoom once a month. A USA based chapter with eight members who meets monthly. A contemplative online chapter with 6 members who also meet monthly. Kenya is the only chapter that includes Muslims.

The "Select Annotated Bibliography of Books, Booklets, Articles, Reports, Papers and Printed Materials and Other Resources including Online Digital Resources" is up to 520 entries in our free, online Ebook at:

http://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf.

Many of these entries are annotated -- a suggestion that originally came from Tanzanian theologian Laurenti Magesa.

Father. Laurenti Magesa (1946-2022) – a Giant of African Theology Roman Catholic priest, theologian and teacher, Laurenti Magesa, died in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on Thursday, 11 August, 2022, the day after he turned 76. To many who knew him, Magesa was a father (Baba) and grandfather (Babu); a friend and a mentor; a brother and a teacher. Magesa boldly states: "Ecclesiologically they (SCCs) are the best thing that has happened since the New Testament." He is mentioned 92 times in our free online Ebook. RIP. Laurenti was always supportive of the Local Community as theologizer -- theology from the grassroots, from below.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Communities As Part Of The 2021-2023 Synodal Process

PART I -- INTRODUCTION

My name is Alloys Nyakundi, a graduate from Loyola University New Orleans, LA, USA where I got a Masters in Pastoral Studies with a focus on Small Christian Communities from the perspective of young adults because of my passion for leading and promoting Young Adults Small Christian Communities in nine countries of Eastern Africa under the AMECEA Pastoral Department. While doing my undergraduate studies at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya, I gained insight into the needs of Young Adults through the Small Christian Communities for Young Adults that I facilitated at the Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University.

Breaking News on the Synod from *The Tablet*:

In September, 2022 a 24-strong "Working Group" drawn from all continents (mostly laypeople, but also bishops, clergy and religious) will meet for 10 days in a retreat center outside Rome, Italy to reflect on the syntheses from 115 bishops' conferences and other networks: religious congregations, Roman dicasteries, etc. The "Working Group" will draw up what is being called the "Document for the Continental Stage." Each of the seven continents will then reflect on that document in their continental "ecclesial assembly" made up of laypeople, clergy, religious and bishops. Europe's Ecclesial Assembly is planned for February, 2023 in Prague. The continental reports will then be synthesized for the final synod assembly in Rome in October, 2023 where the bishops will gather with and under the Pope, to make decisions in the light of what has seemed "to the Spirit and to us."

SYNTHESIS OF THE HYBRID MARYKNOLL KENYAN AFFILIATE CHAPTER'S RESPONSE TO POPE FRANCIS' CALL TO THE SYNODAL PROCESS 2021-2023

NOTE: As a hybrid group from four continents we do not fit into the synod reports of the National Syntheses. Therefore, we are sending this separate synthesis.

The hybrid Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter is an interfaith and intercultural group of 26 individuals comprised of Christians (different denominations) and Muslims from

four continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. It is coordinated by Marita and Gerald Grudzen of Global Ministries University. This Chapter is affiliated with Maryknoll, a Catholic non-profit mission movement now comprised of four organizations, which has been the heart and hands of the U.S. Catholic Church's overseas mission work for more than 100 years. The four organizations (also called expressions or entities) are: the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (also called the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America), the Maryknoll Sisters (a congregation of women religious), the Maryknoll Lay Missioners; and the Maryknoll Affiliates. There is a total of 45 affiliate chapters around the world. Kenya currently meets on Zoom once a month. Kenya is the only chapter that has Muslim members and is the first to be established from its beginning as an interfaith chapter of the Maryknoll Affiliates.

Our Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter can be described/classified as a Small Human Community (SHC) and a Small Mission Community (SMC) in the theology and practice of the Small Christian Communities Model of Church. Small Human Community (SHC) is the name popular especially in Asian countries where Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus and other religion adherents are members of the Small Communities.

How can our SCCs be Eucharistic Communities? Please follow, and add to, the discussion and discernment triggered by this *NCR* article:

"South African bishop supports ordaining married men to priesthood to increase access to sacraments" | National Catholic Reporter ([ncronline.org](https://www.ncronline.org))

<https://www.ncronline.org/.../south-african-bishop...>

15 August, 2022

This is an important interview that I hope will get rightful attention and discussion at the Africa Continental Synodal Gathering (SECAM) from 1- 6 March, 2023. We pray that the participants discern in the Spirit.

From time to time the AMECEA Bishops have asked me to use my Institutional Memory to recall events of many years ago. In a quiet way I starting working with the Synod Office in Rome since 1995. From the AMECEA Office in Nairobi I brought documentation to Msgr. John Abreezze (since retired) in the Synod Office in Rome on how the First Africa Synod was being implemented in Africa in 1995. This was later published by the Synod Office.

Concerning Bishop Sipuka's interview I have documented some of this history carefully in my free, online Ebook on *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa* that is on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website that is under the AMECEA Pastoral Department in Nairobi, Kenya.

Rather than the Heading "Ordaining Married Men to Priesthood in Africa" I have used the Heading "Pastoral Solutions to the Eucharistic Famine/Eucharistic Hunger/Eucharistic Drought in Africa". But the topic is the same: how can millions of African Catholics can receive the Eucharist on a regular basis. Research show that due to the lack of male, celibate priests, on any given Sunday most Catholics in Africa (up to 60% in some surveys) participate in a "Sunday Service Without a Priest" especially in rural areas where there is usually no Holy Communion rather than participate in a regular mass. Pope Francis has spoken about this challenge several times.

Here is a quick summary of our research. We welcome clarifications and additional information.

1. The first reference to the term “Eucharistic Famine” that we can find was Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki, the archbishop of Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya (who died in 2020)’s intervention at the First African Synod in 1994.
2. The many writings of Malawian theologian Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, MAfr, the Bishop of Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi (who died in 2012).
3. The many writings of Bishop Colin Davies, MHM, the bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya (who died in 2017).
4. The many writings of retired German Fidei Donum Bishop Fritz Lobinger (formerly of Aliwal Diocese, South Africa).

For me the bottom line is that if “the Eucharist is the source (*fons*) and summit (*culmen*) of the Christian life” (Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 10 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*). No. 1324), then we have a moral and a pastoral obligation to find practical solutions to African Catholics receiving the Eucharist on a regular basis.

Two other related topics on which the African bishops are divided and need discernment in the Spirit:

1. Should catechists distribute the Eucharist.
2. Should well built, secure out-station chapels have a tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament.

Prayers please.

Follow-up from Bishop Sipuka: "It is good to make these deep theological insights as the tendency sometimes is to posture and théorisé. I am grateful for the information about the Eucharistic Starvation in Africa. Without wanting to shout aloud and make this matter a theoretical or ideological issue, I support the view to quietly engage with this topic because there is a pastoral need for it. it should be picked up for further consideration by SECAM leadership."

One insight: "Bishop Sipuka is really carrying on the legacy of his predecessor Bishop Hirmer and of course, Bishop Fritz Lobinger. His views are driven by pastoral necessity, and not an ideological position."

Some history: “In 2019, delegates at the Vatican’s Synod on the Amazon also requested that Pope Francis allow for the priestly ordination of married men on a regional basis, specifically for needy parts of Latin America, though the pope has not moved the issue forward.” It is clear that this issue or challenge varies from continent to continent. There is *no one size fits all solution*.

From Stan Ilo at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, USA: "Thanks so much, Bishop Sipuka, for your prophetic utterance and thanks Joe for always helping us to understand the historical context in our continent of some of these important discussions. The early Church was quite bold in paying attention to the Holy Spirit, and in interpreting and understanding their context and birthing appropriate pastoral tools and structures to respond adequately to the pastoral and spiritual needs of God’s people.

In our times, we seemed to have settled for echo chambers, talking and talking over the same topic without any boldness to creatively imagine a new reality, sensitive to our history and context and in humble attention to the God of surprises.

We have today a pope who is interested in supporting African Catholics to enact specific African responses to reform and renewal of the church in Africa including issues like clerical celibacy, liturgical inculturation, religious life and formation, marriage and family life, the role and place of women, a church that takes care of the poor and those at the peripheries of life, episcopal succession and accountability, and Catholic education among others.

The synodal process so far in the continent has been more like an assignment, that is, complete the questions, send your diocesan answers, and then wait for the results. What are the specific questions facing us in Africa? What are the internal structures, institutions and systems in our churches that hamper missionary conversation? How do we deal with the demons of rivalry, internal squabbles and animosity in our religious congregations, among priests and bishops all tainted with ethnicity, ego-trips, and pursuit of vain glory?

How accountable and responsive is the church in our continent to God's people in Africa, especially to the poor amidst the lingering crisis of the nation-state in Africa, failed leadership that all work against social transformation and the coming reign of God? These questions are not simply matters that can be honestly and seriously addressed through the kind of question-and-answer method in this current synodal process. They require some serious ground work and courageous engagement.

I personally believe that the issue of celibacy (keeping it, reforming it, making it optional, etc.) in Africa needs to be honestly confronted beyond being a response to the shortage of priests. There are fundamental issues that need to be theologically explored including the theological justification for compulsory or optional celibacy; the anthropological questions about the status of the celibate in Africa, the moral status of celibates who are sexually active and, in some cases, have multiple or single sex partners, and in some cases are in quasi-marriage with a woman and children; and the sexual abuse crises in our continent that have barely been touched. It also has to deal with the integrity of life of celibates and the credibility of the Church. We must also think of women religious who are also living single lives and how we include them in this kind of conversation because talks about celibacy always defaults to an all-male priesthood and the concerns of the men as if our female religious have been taken care of.... These conversations should be ongoing among us beyond this ongoing synod on Synodality."

Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin, Ireland said that what was needed in the Catholic Church today included "functioning structures" — parish [and diocesan] councils and committees which work and which are empowered to work, and are allowed to work; more active involvement by all". SCCs are one of these functioning structures. as part of a new way of becoming church from below, from the grassroots.

After reviewing many Synod Documents I feel that our priority in making changes, even reforms is to "find an African pastoral solution in the local context." Key principal in making changes and reforms is: *One size does not fit all*. Thus the focus on Contextualization and Localization. Example of polygamy.

“EPILOGUE: DREAMING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA”
by Marehemu Laurenti Magesa in the *Handbook of African Catholicism*. Orbis Books. Kindle Edition.

1. “The theological importance of the local Christian community in its basic, parish, or diocesan forms, must not be allowed to continue to play second fiddle to that of the church’s leadership, specifically the clergy. The principle of subsidiarity must be upheld. The constitution of the church needs to reemphasize the ecclesiological validity of the Basic Christian Communities, what the *New Testament* characterizes as “household” churches.

2. For African peoples the human wholeness produced by authentic community and communion, harmony, cooperation, sharing, and participation is not merely something sociological; it is a deep spiritual need. Structures of the future church in Africa must take the need for this wholeness into account more earnestly than before. The ecclesiastical institution of Small or Basic Christian Communities that is emerging all across the continent is trying to address this need. It would seem that church communities that facilitate mutual contact and personal knowledge among the faithful of a given locality are the promise of a desirable African future church.”

This theological language is different from what we are used to. Let us hope that some African theologians write about SCCs. Small Christian Communities are here to stay. The relevance of the concept of the Small Christian Communities will always ring the bell in Africa due to its relevance to the human life on the continent. The concept of the Small Christian Communities will always continue.

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

Views: 2,213

NOTE: This is the SCCs Website Online 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 as of 15 August, 2022. The complete book is found on the Ebooks page or by clicking here. The book is also available as Part 1 and Part 2 for those with poor internet connection or challenges in downloading the full version. Part 1 can be downloaded by clicking here while Part 2 can be downloaded by clicking here. To order the printed paperback book click here

Part 1 of *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*

Part 2 of *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*

Full Version of *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*

http://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf

Nicholas Obiero CP, who coordinates the SCCs Course at Tangaza writes: "Thank you very much for everything. This is going to be of great help to our students."

The responses in the Synod Reports from SCCs can be found under the categories of "parishes, associations and movements." The summaries sent to Rome from bishops' conferences "are the fruit of discernment from the syntheses received from the dioceses," Hollerich said, while the syntheses of the dioceses come from the "listening sessions" and surveys of parishes, associations, movements, religious congregations, Catholic schools and Catholic universities.

There are many African Proverbs and Sayings on this theme of unity:

Pope Francis on rebuilding after an earthquake: "We cannot go very far if we walk alone. Unity alone can allow us to make truly difficult changes. We must leave behind all those things which divide us and hold up instead everything which unites us."

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ on the Synodal Process: "I am not afraid of the diversity. I think that's normal. But we have a unity which is much bigger than the diversity we experience now. And I'm looking forward to the whole process and to continue the process and to go into the next continental phase of it."

You are invited to vote in our SCCs Poll in the Eightieth Round : "The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/> The six choices reflect the especially interests and priorities of Young People.

May our SCC members pray especially for the African Continental Assembly.

Then, from January to March 2023, the discernment will continue through Continental Assemblies involving bishops, priests, deacons, and religious and lay Catholics. The European Continental Assembly will take place in the Czech Republic on 5-12 February 2023, while the African Continental Assembly will occur in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 1-7 March 2023. The Central and Latin American Church is planning five different events in El Salvador (13-17 February 2023), the Dominican Republic (20-24 February 2023), Ecuador (27 February - 3 March 2023) and Brazil (6-10 March 2023).

These assemblies are a chance to deepen the listening and discernment of the synod process and demonstrate that the synod is designed as an ongoing process rather than a one-off occurrence. May our SCC members enter into this Synodal Process at the grassroots in the spirit and practice of walking together/journeying together with the whole leadership of the Catholic Church. In the Synodal Process may the richness of the pastoral experience of the Catholic Church in Africa be shared with the rest of the world.

The responses in the Synod Reports from SCCs can be found under the categories of "parishes, associations and movements." The summaries sent to Rome from bishops' conferences "are the fruit of discernment from the syntheses received from the dioceses," Hollerich said, while the syntheses of the dioceses come from the "listening sessions" and surveys of parishes, associations, movements, religious congregations, Catholic schools, and Catholic universities.

In the structures of the Catholic Church the next official larger group/grouping or level is

...

Family (basic unit): nuclear and extended
SCC

Outstation
 Sub-parish
 Parish
 Deanery
 Diocese
 Archdiocese
 Metropolitan
 Region (USA)
 National Bishops Conference
 Regional Bishops Conference
 Continental Bishops Conference
 Universal/Global Catholic Church

“Today many young adults are searching for meaning in life. One college student told me she was a devout Catholic who went to a Catholic High School on the East Coast of the United States. Every Sunday she went to Mass with her parents. In her freshman year at Michigan State University she dutifully participated in Sunday Mass on the campus. Then she began to “drift” and didn’t find mass that interesting. She joined an Evangelical Church on campus that had lively singing, a band and entertaining sermons. But after a few months she felt something was missing. She had an unfulfilled yearning, desire, hunger for something more. Finally, she discovered that she really missed the Eucharist at the Catholic Mass. So she returned to the Catholic Church on campus and now feels very nourished by receiving Jesus Christ every Sunday in the sacrament of the Eucharist.”

Pope Francis’ September, 2022 prayer intention: "For abolition of the death penalty."

In his prayer intention for September, Pope Francis calls on all people of good will “to mobilize for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world.” “Each day, there is a growing ‘NO’ to the death penalty around the world,” says Pope Francis in the video released on Wednesday announcing his prayer intention for September. “For the Church, this is a sign of hope.”

In “The Pope Video,” produced by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, the Holy Father maintains that the death penalty is not necessary “from a legal point of view.” He argues that “society can effectively repress crime without definitively depriving offenders of the possibility of redeeming themselves.” He adds that there must be “a window of hope” in every legal sentence. Capital punishment, he says, “offers no justice to victims, but rather encourages revenge. And it prevents any possibility of undoing a possible miscarriage of justice.”

It is always possible to repent. Pope Francis goes on to say that the death penalty is “morally inadmissible” because it destroys life, and insists that “up to the very last moment, a person can convert and change.” The pope argues further that “in the light of the Gospel, the death penalty is unacceptable, because the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ refers to both the innocent and the guilty.”

Pope Francis concludes his message with an appeal for all people of goodwill to mobilize for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world.” “Let us pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country.”

From Francis Njuguna: “Thanks, *Mwanajumuiya*. Thanks to the Holy Father for this sharing. Our pope is a man to watch when it comes to speaking and defending human dignity. I salute him on this ground.”

One choice in our SCCs Poll is: "Communal listening to the Word of God." <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/> This describes exactly the value of the "Shared Homily" during Mass or the "Shared Gospel Reflections" during a weekly gathering of a SCC. A key is applying the Gospel to our daily life. This has to do with the "process" or "style" of the sharing, not just the content. Individual SCC members build on/add to what has been shared, not just every individual independently giving his or her scripture view or input.

Congrats to Maryknoll Seminarian Yohana Maswizilo who took his First Oath to the Maryknoll Missionary Society in Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday, 4 September 2022. This is an Historic Moment for Shinyanga Diocese in Tanzania. We praise Yohana for his commitment to the Small Christian Community Model of Church and to research and write about Sukuma Culture especially proverbs and stories. Prayers and blessings.

This Facebook Page can be a forum for discussion, exchange of views and discernment. A South African bishop supports ordaining married men to the priesthood to increase access to the sacraments. A Catholic lay leader in South Africa asks the views of other people as we discern the future of the Catholic Church in Africa. Please respond here.

This brought many comments and suggestions:

- “This challenging topic has been discussed and discerned frequently on our SCC Website under the theme of the "Eucharistic Famine" or the "Eucharistic Hunger." Go to: http://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf”
- “Don’t know much about the Catholic Church in Africa, but I dig the idea of married priests.”
- “I cannot fathom a married Catholic priest.”
- “Fine. If you do not support the pastoral solution of married Catholic priests, please suggest other concrete pastoral options that will bring the Eucharist to millions of African Catholics who only have ‘Sunday Services Without a Priest’ (and often no Communion) in their outstations.”
- “How about facilitating, intensifying and empowering catechists and other lay people to step in the gap where there is a shortage of clergy? How about the formation of the religious men and women? Can they be empowered to fill that gap? How about the catechists, men and women who, as it is already happening, are extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. Of course there is great opposition to this vision by those people whom I call ‘Catholic Fundamentalists.’ A section of Catholics who are beholden to the dictates of the Vatican I dispensation.
- “Agree. What about the many bishops who refuse to give the catechists permission to give out Communion especially in rural outstations? Who suffers? The lay people.”

- “True. Shouldn't they be encouraged to soften their stance when there is such a challenge? If the bishops are hardline, they should be challenged to offer practical solutions.”
- You try!!!!!!

One choice in our SCCs Poll is: “Helps to grow the spirituality of young adults.” 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 small communities/small groups that allow them to engage with Christ through scripture, prayer, support, learning and action.”

This brought various comments:

- “Very good idea. Who will implement that?” “You. Me. Everyone. In other words we all have a responsibility to encourage Young Adults.” “Amen.”
- “Here is where ONLINE YOUNG ADULT SEEKERS SCCs come in.”

Recent scientific social research in the USA finds that for most young people, especially those going to non-Catholic universities, they are not drawn to liturgy--as least the way it is done in most places--but rather to Small Sharing Groups [like SCCs] that also have a service element.

SCC members should be very interested in the major themes that emerged in the synthesis document for the synod on synodality released by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference at the end of August, 2022. The conference represents the Catholic bishops of South Africa, Botswana and Eswatini: “Widen the preaching circle to women and other laypeople, change the leadership style from autocratic and bureaucratic, move away from clericalism, and build more inclusive and welcoming communities, say Southern African Catholics.” “This synodal process has been invaluable in helping reflection on the implementation of the Pastoral Plan,” the report said. It encourages the Local Church to enter a phase of studying the diocesan reports so that, where possible, they can implement practical ideas and suggestions. “This will give people the confidence that there is action.” The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference's Report seems quite different from the reports of the Bishops' Conferences of Eastern Africa -- more open to reading the signs of times and practically responding to them.

Please note that Facebook has changed its format and guidelines. In each of your browsers you have to click on the blue box marked “Switch Now” -- “Switch into Small Christian Communities' Page to start managing it” -- into order to open a “Post Box” that says: “What's on your mind?” Then you enter your message.

From a French lay theologian: “Certainly, it is important to have Small Fraternal Communities of Faith (SFCFs). But participation in Sunday Mass, with an assembly made up of people who are sometimes completely different from oneself, reminds us that we are part of the same body of Christ.”

Ongoing formation and training of SCC leaders is very important in the Synodal Church. Here is an example of Synodality Formation from an archdiocese in England:

Invitation to laity to attend Synodality Formation from the Pastoral Development Department: As part of establishing Deanery Synodal Councils (DSCs), the Pastoral Development Team are going 'on the road' to meet you half-way, as it were, with a new synodal formation session. This will be repeated in six venues across the archdiocese, and we wanted to open this opportunity up to include also all priests, deacons and religious so that we can support one another in establishing good practice.

You are invited to book your attendance at one of these venues to join with the members of local DSCs. This formation offers a chance to deepen our understanding of synodal ways and of operating as synodal bodies across our parishes and deaneries. We will be looking at practical aspects of synodality and provide some guidance, while modelling listening to one another throughout the session. In fact, by coming together for this training in such a variety, we will already model to one another how to be more synodal by our willingness to come together and listen to one another.

To complete this rich variety of people we seek to gather, if you know of any lay people who may benefit from (and benefit your parishes, groups or deaneries after) this training, do send on this information so they can register as well. If you can't make the session closest to you, you are free to register for any of the sessions.

We are blessed. In our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa ongoing adult faith formation and training is our top priority. Much of this formation takes place in the SCCs themselves, for example, the weekly *Bible* Reflection when we read the Gospel of the following Sunday and apply it our daily lives. A serious evaluation can determine how effective this formation is.

Report on the African Continental Synodal Gathering in March, 2023

The African Continental Ecclesial Assembly (Synodal Gathering) will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from Wednesday, 1 March to Tuesday, 7 March 2023. This assembly will involve 150 delegates -- bishops, priests, deacons, religious and lay Catholics. The delegates will be chosen by the SECAM Office in Accra, Ghana in consultation with others. The Working Document is the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) that will be published by the Synod Office in Rome in late October, 2022. This assembly is a chance to deepen the listening and discernment of the synod process and demonstrate that the synod is designed as an ongoing process rather than a one-off occurrence.

The Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) is a compilation of the National Syntheses worldwide including over 30 countries in Africa. Just one example: The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference released its synthesis document for the synod on synodality at the end of August, 2022. The conference represents the Catholic bishops of three countries -- South Africa, Botswana and Eswatini: The report recommended: "Widen the preaching circle to women and other laypeople, change the leadership style from autocratic and bureaucratic, move away from clericalism, and build more inclusive and welcoming communities. This synodal process has been invaluable in helping reflection on the implementation of our Pastoral Plans. It encourages the Local Church to enter a phase of studying the diocesan reports so that, where possible, they can implement practical ideas and suggestions. This will give people the confidence that there is action." The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference's Report seems quite different from the reports of the Bishops' Conferences of Eastern Africa -- more open to reading the signs of times and practically responding to them.

The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) in their National Synthesis

<file:///C:/Users/Father%20Joe/Downloads/SACBC-Synod-Synthesis-FINAL-REPORT.doc.pdf>

of the synodal process in the country emphasized that the process can only be successful through the quality of listening, dialogue and a desire to relate in new ways. The bishops said there was a need for a change in the style of formation at all levels for new ways to emerge, postulating the formation and training of adults, catechists, liturgy groups, parish pastoral and finance committees as well as Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

NAFSCC Membership Meeting

Description: "Join in an animated discussion of Small Christian Communities and their future and place in the local parish during the post Church Synod era."

Time

September 28, 2022 03:00 PM in Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Please click this URL to join.

US02WEB.ZOOM.US

Join our Cloud HD Video Meeting

In discerning the identity of our Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community, we realized that it needs an Inner Life (spirituality, prayer, *Bible* Reflection, etc.) and a Public Life (reaching out in projects and activities connected to climate justice (climate change, global warming, ecology and the environment), gender justice, immigration, service to others, etc.).

A valuable addition is this quote from "Canada's National Synod Synthesis:" "No. 23. With respect to carrying out the Catholic Church's mission, many pointed to the primacy of charity and service in the life of the church. This presents a fundamental challenge for the rebirth of faith communities, since evangelization will only be credible when it is closely and clearly united to the preferential option for the poor and excluded and a strong proclamation of the dignity of the human person."

How many SCC members know that World Mission Sunday is on Sunday, 23 October, 2022? Always the second to last Sunday of October. "You shall be my witnesses" is the theme this year. How will you celebrate in your SCC?

From Newark Archdiocese, New Jersey, USA Synod Synthesis:

Small Christian Communities

Giving examples, the synthesis noted that "parishioners can be invited to come together for Small Christian Communities, Bible study, books, journal studies, etc., on parish or deanery levels." Interesting that clicking on the blue link above takes you to the SCCs Website.

Today in New Jersey in the USA I celebrated a Zoom Mass for our extended family. I realized that a Zoom Mass is 40 minutes (internet time limit) -- so unlike the two to three hour masses in Africa.

Alloys Nyakundi writes from Kisii, Kenya: "It's through my interaction with many Christians in my ministry of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) that I came to learn that lay people like homilies given by the catechists more than the ones given by the priests. This is because their homilies are centered on the real issues affecting the people in the local areas. Catechists spend most of their time interacting with people in their local areas throughout the week and then they prepare their homilies based on those experiences. This is unlike the priests who live in the parish (sometime far away) that gives them limited interaction with the Christians."

Experts from five continents -- with various competencies and perspectives -- are meeting until 2 October, 2022 in the Italian city of Frascati, near Rome, to produce the *Document for the Continental Stage (DCS)* in the Synodal Process 2021-2023 and thus continue the process of discernment, dialogue and listening. Prayers, please.

May our SCC members join Pope Francis in praying:

@PONTIFEX

Today is World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Let us renew our commitment to building a future that puts migrants, refugees, displaced persons and victims of human trafficking at the center. The Kingdom of God is built together with them. [#WDMR2022](#)
@M_RSection Many insights and challenges in this Twitter Message from Pope Francis.

We hear a lot about inter-religious dialog and inter-faith dialog in Kenya today. But we do not talk about, discuss and discern enough "the elephant in the room," namely inter-ethnic dialog. **NOTE:** We use the word "ethnic group" rather than "tribe" today. We know that tribalism is a disease that is harming our government, our churches and other religious institutions and our whole society. The basic question is how the 70 plus ethnic groups in Kenya can share with each other, talk with each other, work with each other and in the Synodal Process Language "walk with each other"/"journey with each other."

From the "National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Diocesan Phase of the 2021-2023 Synod:"

"Many who conducted listening sessions described being transformed by the process of listening to others' stories and hearing about their faith journey. Those who shared their stories, especially those who participated in small group [like Small Christian Communities] sessions, stated that they felt listened to by the Catholic Church for the first time." (From Region XI Synthesis).

"Participants of every age and demographic group spoke of the need for lifelong formation. They would like to see more opportunities for "Bible study," in-person and online courses, lectures, small group [like Small Christian Communities] discussions, and convocations among other offerings" (From Region VI Synthesis).

May all our SCC members pray for:

Three theologians from Africa – a laywoman Mrs. Philomena Mwaura from Kenya, a religious Sister Anne Beatrice Faye, CIC from Senegal and a priest Father Paul Bere, SJ from Burkina Faso – are part of Synod Drafting Team who are in Frascati, Italy until 2 October, 2022 to produce the "Document for the Continental Stage (DCS)" of the Synod on Synodality 2021-2023. All three contributed chapters to our latest Orbis Book – *Handbook of African Catholicism*.

Appointments of new consultors: Pope Francis, 29 September, appointed 10 new consultors to the Dicastery for Communications.

The Dicastery's new consultors are Fr. George Plattoham, secretary of the Office of Social Communication of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC); Oscar Elizade Prada, coordinator of the Department of Communication of CELAM; Helen Osman, president of SIGNIS; Fr. Fabio Pasqualetti, dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the Pontifical Salesian University; Sr. Veronica Donatello, head of the National Service for the Pastoral Care of Persons with Disabilities of the Italian Bishops' Conference, Sister Adelaide Felicitas Ndilu, national executive secretary of the Commission for Social Communications of the Kenyan Bishops' Conference and director of Radio Waumini; Father Andrew Kaufa, coordinator of the Office of Communications of the AMECEA Regional Conference of Bishops; Tomas Insua, executive director of the Laudato Si movement; Professor Antonio Cisternino, president of the University of Pisa's Ateneo Information System (CIO); and John E. Corcoran, founder of Trinity Life Sciences.

Have you read the Gospel for next Sunday's Mass? It is easier if we read it ahead of time, and reflect on it, in a weekly SCC. Let us all SCC members be Lectionary-based Catholics.

Let us explore the relationship between SCCs and the Synodal Process. Let us hope that SCCs are mentioned in Synod Continental Document.

Africa is under-represented in the Catholic world media. Let's keep trying in getting the word out. You may be interested in this Podcast.

"The Church in Africa Will Never Walk Alone." By Joseph G. Healey. Radio Podcast in the "African Catholic Voices" series sponsored by the Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network (PACTPAN), 28:26 minutes. retrieved 27 September, 2022, Part 1 (buzzsprout.com). Video Podcast in the "African Catholic Voices" series, 29:04 minutes, retrieved 1 October, 2022, YouTube Website The Church in Africa will never walk alone : Fr Joseph G. Healey (Part I) - YouTube

Maryknoll missionary, theologian, professor, and communication expert, Fr. Joseph G. Healey speaks on the renewal and reform of the Catholic Church in Africa. His favorite song is "You'll Never Walk Alone" from the 1945 American Broadway Musical "Carousel." At 84 and after 56 years as a priest, Joseph G. Healey exudes a freshness of perspectives, a depth of knowledge, and an arresting humility that are both compelling and inspirational. After more than 50 years of pastoral work in Africa, he carries the institutional memory of the post-Vatican II Church, and theology in Africa. He is considered one of the fathers of Small Christian Communities in Africa and is one of the pioneers of African Narrative Theology. In this first part of our dialogue with "Mwanajumuiya" ("Member of a Small

Christian Community”) as he likes to be called, he shares with us his love for Africa, his enduring passion and commitment for the renewal and reform of the Church and for grassroots evangelization in inclusive African communities of faith. Fr. Healey is very proud of AMECEA's Social Communications Department that he pioneered in the early days of his priesthood and looks back in time in this episode. He leaves us with a very hopeful message that Africa and the world will never walk alone because the God of our ancestors is always with us. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhX9VE0ZveM> This title is closely related to the Agaw (Eritrea and Ethiopia) Proverb and Burkina Faso Proverb: *If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.*



[YOUTUBE.COM](https://www.youtube.com)

[The Church in Africa will never walk alone : Fr Joseph G. Healey \(Part I\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhX9VE0ZveM)

[At 84 and after 56 years as a priest, American Maryknoll priest, missionary, theologian](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhX9VE0ZveM)

Many of the reports on the Synodal Process indicate we Catholics have not done well in involving people on the margins and the peripheries of society in our Synodal Gathering/Sessions. Thus it is important that the 29 September, 2022 gathering of the Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community asked this question: "What has been your experience with people on the margins in your local community (Outer Life or Public Life of Small Christian Communities)?" This Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community's major issues include LGBTQ, women's rights, climate change and youth empowerment.

Prayer for the Synod during October, 2022 Mission Month.

EN



Father, we want to be missionaries of the encounter,
like your Son, Jesus Christ.
Since, only by meeting each other from the heart
we will be able to make of this Synodal Path
a space of fraternity and true listening.
Help us not to take refuge in formality or pretense.
Move us to remove our masks
And to have the courage to open our hearts
to look others in the eye and listen to what they have to say.
Let us be sensitive to the questions of our brothers and sisters,
so that we can create a fruitful change in the Church that You dream.
May Your Holy Spirit inspire us to work in diversity
accepting our differences and being nurtured by them.
Touch our hearts so that the encounter with each other
moves us from our old habits
and leads us through new ways of authenticity,
in which we can reveal the good news of Love.
Amen.



Pope Francis's October, 2022 prayer intention:

"A Church That Walks Together"

Pope Francis releases his prayer intention for the month of October, 2022 in which he asks that the church be one of synodality, which means walking together, along the same road. As is customary at the beginning of every month, Pope Francis has released his prayer intention for the month of October: "A Church that is open to everyone". In "The Pope Video," produced by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, the Holy Father begins by asking "What does it mean 'to synod'?", before answering himself, that it means walking together: syn-od. He explains that in Greek, the word synod means to walk together, and to walk on the same road. This, continued the Pope, "is what God expects of the church of the third millennium – that it regain its awareness of being a people on the road and of having to travel together".

He adds that a church with this synodal style is one that listens, aware that listening is more than just hearing. "It means listening to each other in our diversity and opening doors to those outside the church. It's not about gathering opinions, nor holding a parliament. The synod isn't a survey; it's about listening to the protagonist, the Holy Spirit. It's about praying. Without prayer, there will be no Synod", says the Pope.

His two-minute-long video, which shows images of people walking, praying and attending classes together, ends with the Holy Father asking that we "take advantage of this opportunity to be a Church of closeness, which is God's style –closeness", as well as asking that we "give thanks to all the people of God who, with their attentive listening, are walking the synodal way".

Finally, the Pope says, "let us pray that the Church, ever faithful to the Gospel and courageous in preaching it, may live in an increasing atmosphere of synodality and be a community of solidarity, fraternity, and welcome".

VATICANNEWS.VA

Pope's October prayer intention: "A Church that walks together" - Vatican News

https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-10/pope-francis-prayer-intention-october-church-open-to-everyone.html?fbclid=IwAR2QOEgcp3xM-PKE5eW2psDM2noLsM2y1MT9THvjRB_eAVPYa3RF5cnkXss

Please share your stories in different SCC forums.

Bishop Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport Connecticut, USA says: "My sense is, if I read those synodal documents correctly, the pope wants to hear people's personal stories of faith. So where has the church been an aid in your spiritual journey? Where has it been a challenge or obstacle if you are not active in your life of faith, in the church? Where do you draw your spiritual sustenance? Where do you find your consolation? Where do you find your joy in life? So it's more of an existential sort of question. If young people are leaving the church, which they are, where are they going and what are they doing with their basic desire to have a relationship with something far greater and more meaningful?" This is a perfect opportunity for SCCs like Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community to share their stories.

October, 2022 is "Mission Month," with World Mission Sunday falling on 23 October, 2022 under the theme "You Shall Be My Witnesses." In the Synodal Process Pope Francis reminds us that through Baptism we are ALL missionary disciples. How are you and your SCC witnessing this year? Please give examples. I am concelebrating Mass on World Mission Sunday in the Cathedral of Paterson Diocese, USA. I will explain the activities of SCCs in Eastern Africa to anyone who is interested.

Remember the Ugandan proverb: *One hand washes the other*. Traveling now in the USA I am discovering that our Eastern African SCC experiences can enrich the USA experience. In our weekly Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa we find that reading different versions of the same Scripture text is creative and can lead to deeper interpretation and application. For example our method is:

1. Read the Scripture text for the first time:

James 2:14-17 (New International Version)

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

2. Two minutes of silence when we ask: What is God saying to us in this Scripture passage? (not what is my interpretation).

3. Read the same Scripture text for the second time:

James 2:14-17 (New Revised Standard Version)

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? 17 So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Different translations use "action," "works" and "deeds."

A popular saying in Eastern Africa is: *A woman cannot be half pregnant*. It is used to challenge journalists and writers to be accurate in their spelling, in their facts and in their titles.

Take this example:

AMECEA Website: Rev. Fr. Andrew Kaufa Coordinator Social Communications Department (CORRECT)

Vatican Website: Fr. Andrew Kaufa, S.M.M. coordinator of the Office of Social Communications of the AMECEA Regional Conference of Bishops (INCORRECT)

Founded in 1968 the AMECEA Social Communications Department based in Nairobi, Kenya presently has a three-member staff:

- Andrew Kaufa, Coordinator
- Jecinter Antoinette Okoth, Assistant Producer of AMECEA Online News/Administrative Secretary
- Bernard Mberere, AMECEA ICT Co-ordination Office/ICT Officer

During October, 2022 as “Mission Month”/“Missionary Month” may our SCC Members be inspired by Pope Francis’ Twitter prayer: “During this month of October and [#prayer](#) for the Mission of the Catholic Church, let us learn to cultivate moments of silence and of contact with the Lord so that he might inspire us with the ways and means to be always faithful to our vocation as missionary disciples.”

October, 2022 is “Mission Month,” with World Mission Sunday falling on 23 October, 2022 under the theme “You Shall Be My Witnesses.” In the Synodal Process Pope Francis reminds us that through Baptism we are ALL missionary disciples. How are you and your SCC witnessing this year? Please give examples.

We are celebrating the 10th Anniversary of our weekly St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC Gathering on Monday, 17 October, 2022. The historical note in our free, online Ebook states:

Using Skype Video Conferencing we started on Wednesday, 17 October, 2012 with one person from Kenya, one person from Germany, 13 people from the Maryknoll Lay Missioners Orientation Program at Bethany, New York, USA and four others including several Maryknoll Sisters who served in Tanzania. Some of us were participating in a SCC Workshop at the Maryknoll Sisters Center at Maryknoll, New York, USA. The Maryknoll Society Tech person connected us with Alphonse Omolo who was studying in Germany and Rose Musimba who lives in Nairobi, Kenya through the internet.

Who is going to bake our Virtual Cake???

Congratulations to one and to all. Let us harvest the memories.

From Alphonse Omolo: “It has been 10 years of great inspiration 🙏 Perhaps, there should be a real cake 🍰 Any of our members in the same location in next week? Happy 10th Founding 🎉🎊”

As we celebrate the 10th Anniversary of our St. Isidore of Seville SCC on Monday, 17 October, 2022, we have analyzed the unique identity of our St. Isidore of Seville Weekly Lectionary-based International Online Small Christian Community (SCC) Gathering as follows:

St. Isidore of Seville: patron of the internet.

Weekly: every Tuesday 52 weeks of the year come rain or shine.

Lectionary-based: we read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday in the Catholic Church’s Liturgical Cycle and apply it to our daily lives.

International: presently we have members from Germany, Kenya, Tanzania and the USA.

Online: virtual or digital using the Skype social media platform.

Small Christian Community (SCC): Following the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa (AMECEA).

Gathering: we prefer this word to “meeting.”

Comments are welcome.

Congratulations to St. Isidore SCCs members for helping me understand how to relate the Gospels to my daily life. My faith has really grown because of the rich experiences we share during our weekly gatherings. *Mwanajumuiya* Joe Healey thanks so very much for inviting me to be part of this online community.

For our SCCs Forum: "What are the pros and cons of having all women SCCs, all men SCCs and Mixed SCCs in parishes and on college/university campuses? Please reply here.

1. Key factors are the local context and the local priorities.

2. Support communities/groups can have different priorities: personal spiritual growth; pastoral effectiveness; theological reflection; specific Bible reflection; missionary reflection. A new type is a Zoom Community/Group.

3. One observer states: " It depends on the types of SCCs and their priorities. Let us start with college/university campuses: 1. Social: mixed is preferred. 2. Faith sharing: both/and is preferred. 3. *Bible* sharing: mixed is preferred.. 4. Support communities/groups: single sex is preferred.

In Eastern Africa the key priority is for the mother and father (husband and wife) to "model" participating in the weekly SCC together. If the father does not go the children will say: "Dad doesn't go. Why do we have to go?"

Recent college graduate: "One size doesn't fit all. Depends on one background/experience and the local context. All Women SCC allows young women and share particular issues related to them. Mixed Group broadens one's experience.

Part II of the Podcast and YouTube Video in the "African Catholic Voices" series is now online. Despite the provocative title, I am not the originator of these pastoral and theological ideas and views. I am the communicator/networker of African theologians like Laurenti Magesa, Bishop Sipuka and Bishop Lobinger.

"Fr Joe Healey Speaks on African Theology, Calls for Married Priests in Africa To Meet the Eucharistic Hunger in Africa, and a Welcoming African Church for Same-Sex Persons," Part II. By Joseph G. Healey. Radio Podcast in the "African Catholic Voices" series sponsored by the Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network (PACTPAN), 43:10 minutes. retrieved 15 October, 2022, [Fr Joe Healey speaks on African theology, calls for Married Priests in Africa to meet the Eucharistic hunger in Africa, and a welcoming African Church for Same-Sex Persons \(buzzsprout.com\)](#). Video Podcast in the "African Catholic Voices" series, 43:10 minutes, retrieved 15 October, 2022, YouTube Website [African Theology, Married Priesthood, Same-Sex Marriage and the Future of Africa Catholicism \(II\) - YouTube](#)

In this concluding discussion, Maryknoll priest, professor, communicator and Small Christian Community pioneer in Africa, Fr Joe Healey, celebrates the development and achievement of African theology. He calls for a more creative church in Africa and hopes for a day when the Catholic Church in Africa will begin to ordain married men as priests. He sees this as an important item to be discussed in the synodal encounter of the African continent in Addis Ababa. He also bemoans the plight of same-sex persons in Africa and calls on the Church in Africa to welcome them rather than deny their existence in Africa.

The Maryknoll Movement Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team includes Rick Dixon, MLM (covering Latin America), Sister Esther Walioba, MM (covering Asia) and Father Joe Healey, MM (covering Africa).

Young adults from different parts of the world are meeting in different forums to talk about issues affecting them. That's why we must keep encouraging young people to form their own Small Christian Communities through which they can share what they are doing so that other young people from different parts of the world can get to learn and know the kind of projects they are doing. The Online Young Adult Seekers meet twice a month on zoom to share their life experiences and how they can solve issues affecting people in their local

communities. I hope other young people from different parts of the world can take advantage of the online platforms to share their experiences about life, the church and other activities they are doing.

Two of our SCCs members (Alloys Nyakundi and Collins Ong'oma) had a consultative meeting with Ambrose who is the National Youth Chair of the Catholic Church in Kenya. Top on the agenda was how On Campus SCCs can network and work collaboratively instead of working in isolation. People will never know our stories unless we write them.

How many of us SCC members are celebrating World Mission Sunday on Sunday, 23 October 2022? How many of us SCC members even know that the feast exists?

For some of us -- Sister Rita, Father John Siyumbu and myself it is our DNA, our identity, the heart of our vocation -- -- mission. We are members of missionary societies/congregations.

Our good SCC friend of many years – Brother Bob Moriarty – says that World Mission Sunday “flies under the radar” in the USA for the following reasons:

- Many Catholics have never heard of the feast.
- Many Catholics mix up the date. It is always the next to last Sunday in October. Not always the third Sunday of October.
- It competes with other priorities of the Catholic Church in the USA in October – Month of the Rosary. Month of Respect Life (Pro-Life Movement).
- It is combined with other Mission Collection Feasts such as Operation Rice Bowl – and not necessarily in October.

How many church leaders know that the official Catholic Church *Ordo* states that the Mass for the Evangelization of Peoples can be used with special readings such as *Matthew 28:16-20*?

True, we have to read the signs of the times such as the influence of Covid, bankruptcy in some dioceses, etc. We have to research more the views of Young Adults, some of whom prefer the word "service" to "mission."

But the ideal is Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York Archdiocese, USA who says that if at all possible the Local Ordinary should celebrate World Mission Sunday in the cathedral. And Pope Francis is constantly reminding us that by virtue of our baptism we are all missionary disciples.

Who knows about these two chapters in our free, online Ebook on "SCCs in Eastern Africa:"

11. “Promoting the Missionary Outreach of SCCs in the AMECEA Region” (page 784 on)
12. “SCCs’ Involvement in the New Evangelization in Eastern Africa” (page 804 on).

I would have thought that Pope Francis' constant emphasis on mission and evangelization would make World Mission Sunday more prominent/noticeable/frontburner/in the headlines, but it hasn't happened.

The image shows a Zoom meeting interface with a 3x2 grid of video thumbnails. The participants are:

- Top-left: Gerard (muted, hand icon in top-left corner)
- Top-right: Phidelis Wamalwa
- Middle-left: Juma
- Middle-right: Alloys Nyakundi (highlighted with a yellow border)
- Bottom-left: staicy semben wandiema
- Bottom-right: Arslan Nazir Khokhar
- Bottom-right (smaller): Shaloon khokhar

The bottom control bar includes the following elements from left to right:

- Unmute (muted icon)
- Stop Video (video off icon)
- Participants (14 people icon)
- Chat (chat bubble icon)
- Share (partially visible)

St. Agatha Joy Women's Training and Tailoring Group is the name of the sewing club of the women in our St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi, Kenya. Among its self-help and self-reliant projects is to make Deacon Stoles and Priest Stoles for Albany Diocese, New York, USA. The Coordinator of the Project, Deacon Ed Solomon, reports that the stole project to date has made \$5,621.00 for the women. This is a great success story. Despite many complications and set backs, it can be done!

Our evaluation is that it is very hard to "brand" World Mission Sunday as long as it is a floating date (next to last Sunday in October). Better to give it a specific, fixed date like Third Sunday in October.

World Youth Day is around the corner and preparations are already underway. Registration has already commenced and young people from different parts of the world can start registering for this event. I hope many young people will get an opportunity to attend this memorable event. Here are the sites that can provide more information about the event. <https://www.jmjyouth.com/wyd-faqs.html>

Today here at Maryknoll, NY, USA at 3 pm I joined 14 other Maryknoll priests and Brothers in a type of SCC for Lectionary-based Faith Sharing. We read the three Bible texts for next Sunday (31st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, 30 October 2022) and applied them to our daily lives.

It is important to clarify the difference between:

Small Christian Communities

Basic Christian Communities

Base Christian Communities

Comments are welcome.

The word "base" indicates "from the grassroots" or in sociological terms the "base" of the society (the economically poor and marginalized). 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 in the context of Liberation Theology that so characterizes these communities. It has a different meaning than "basic." Many people wrongly equate "base" and "basic." Base communities is especially the name used in Latin America for small neighborhood groups in economically poor areas that meet weekly.

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/unit of the ecclesial structures. It is constituted of members as one cell of the greater community. In some Latin American countries and in 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).

"Enlarge the Space of Your Tent:" Working Document for the Continental Stage," Synod 2021-2024: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission," General

Secretariat of the Synod, retrieved from the Synod Website, 29 October, 2022, [Documento-Tappa-Continentale-EN.pdf \(synod.va\)](#)

How are our SCCs participating in the Synodal Process? Please give examples. Do our SCCs act synodally? Do we listen to each other? Do we listen to the Holy Spirit? Are we walking together? Vote for "Sure way of making the best out of Pope Francis' Synodal Process" in our SCC Poll.

We follow the mantra *think globally, act locally*. Our St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in Nairobi, Kenya promotes care of the earth and ecology/environment concerns especially during Lent. On Good Friday I take an empty waste paper basket and walk around the perimeter of the Maryknoll Society compound in Nairobi. I collected stray paper, bags and plastic bottles, often stuck in the hedges. I fill at least one basket of trash. I am reminded of the German proverb: *If everyone sweeps in front of his or her house, the whole world will be clean.*

As we come to the close of October, 2022 as "Mission Month" how are we SCC members being missionary disciples and spreading the Gospel?

Bernard Mberere and I spend a lot of time on selecting these six choices in each poll. We have done careful research on, and analyzed feedback from, surveys, questionnaires, workshops, courses, interviews, personal conversations, articles, books, email messages, Facebook Pages, Zoom Faith Sharing and Gospel Sharing, visits to SCCs and conferences on SCCs. We have studied carefully the contemporary signs of the times such as the Covid-19 pandemic and pastoral changes in our parishes and dioceses such as the 2021-2024 Synodal Process. We have identified 1622 important characteristics or features of SCCs around the world mainly provided by Small Christian Community (SCCs) members themselves: 801 on the dynamics/process/principles/classifications of SCCs and 821 on the activities/content/outreach/practical action of SCCs. The poll uses the statement — "The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." — followed by six choices that are taken from these 1622 important characteristics or features of SCCs. These six choices reflect both the inner life and the public life of our SCC Model of Church. We change the poll every two months.

One of the choices in our Eighty-Second Round (November -- December, 2022) Poll is: "Lectionary-based faith sharing in a synodal style." What does this mean? First, there is a long period of silence after the reading of the Gospel to ask the question: What is God saying to us in this Bible passage? Second, when we share our lectionary-based faith-sharing/gospel-based faith-sharing, we don't just share our interpretation/our exegesis, we build on/add to what others have shared. This includes deeper listening to others in our SCC, not just thinking of what I am going to say.

A new expression for our SCC members: "digital discipleship" that means using social media for ministry and mission.

Slowly, slowly we are trying to develop a synodal spirit/style/way/attitude in our SCCs.

The current interest in our Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community's twice monthly online gatherings and Facebook Page comes from the desire to find concrete ways of attracting Young Adults to the Catholic Church. A CARA Research Study shows that 60% of Catholic Young Adults' Faith Community Activities in the United States are

outside the parish. How many of these activities are on social media and in the digital world? Many. Some of the popular social media are Zoom, WhatsApp, Twitter, Skype and Instagram.

Online *Lectio Divina* at the Baltimore Carmel on Zoom

Saturdays at 2 pm (Eastern Time – USA)

There is a commentary by a theologian or scripture scholar followed by small group discussions on the Gospel text of the following Sunday. Please note that you need to register for each session separately. The small group discussions are an integral part of the *Lectio Divina*. While there is an option on the registration form for you to opt-out of the small discussion groups, we really encourage your participation.

Register at: <https://www.baltimorecarmel.org/current-events>

“Enlarge the Space of Your Tent:’ Working Document for the Continental Stage,” Synod 2021-2024: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission,” General Secretariat of the Synod, retrieved from the Synod Website, 29 October, 2022, [Documento-Tappa-Continentale-EN.pdf \(synod.va\)](#)

Challenging question: Is the tent the Catholic Church or the world/creation?

No. 94. A particular source of suffering are those situations in which access to the Eucharist and to the other Sacraments is hindered or prevented by a variety of causes: there is a strong demand to find solutions to these forms of sacramental deprivation. For example, communities living in very remote areas are cited, or the use of charging fees for access to celebrations, which discriminates against the poorest. Many summaries also give voice to the pain of not being able to access the Sacraments experienced by remarried divorcees and those who have entered into polygamous marriages. There is no unanimity on how to deal with these situations: “Access to Holy Communion is denied to the divorced and remarried, and they expressed hurt at this exclusion. Some expressed the view that the Catholic Church should be more flexible, but others felt this practice should be upheld” (EC Malaysia).

NOTE: The term "sacramental deprivation" is similar to "Eucharistic famine/hunger/starvation."

Reminder about the Online Young Adults Seekers SCCs Gathering coming up on Wednesday 9 November. To join click: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86345194432...> Passcode: seekers

Guest Facilitator: Prof. Rafael Luciani.

Topic: “Synodality”

Prof. Rafael Luciani is a Theologian, an Expert of the Theologian Commission of of the Theologian Commission of the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops, and a full Professor at Boston College.

My experience with Prof. Rafael Luciani was great. I really learned a lot about synod and synodality. How I wish I could meet him again for more knowledge.

In tracing the origin of SCCs in Eastern Africa a very important book is: Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *Basic Communities in the African Churches*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973. It was an early Orbis Book. While it did not have a big sale, it has had a lot of

influence. Laurenti Magesa writes about its influence on the thinking of African theologians on ecclesiology and lay leadership. Also there is Marie-France Perrin Jassy, *Forming Christian Communities*, Kampala: Gaba Pastoral Paper No. 12, 1970.

A lay leader from Australia writes: : "I think a focus on pastoral councils (whether parish or diocesan) as the locus for synodality in practice is a good one." This is excellent and hits the mark. The Synod Expert Rafael Luciani agrees with this. We have to challenge the resistance to these councils.

Helpful insight: "I also agree with the focus on pastoral councils. I was struck Rafael Luciani said Cardinal Grech is working with two canon lawyers to make two changes: make those councils both mandatory and deliberative (as distinct from merely consultative). One problem he hasn't mentioned though is the pretty crucial one concerning the "selection" of the council members. They need to be representative of the community they serve. As we all know, you can give all the power you want to such councils, but if membership selection remains in the hands of the clergy, then the dangers of them being mere echo chambers of whatever the priest/bishop want to hear remains.

Generally, "representation" is regarded as ensured primarily by means of free elections by all members of the community. So canon law needs three changes: on making those councils 1. mandatory, 2. deliberative, and 3. representative. As it happens, the church constitution we're proposing suggests a very similar model (see Articles 45-48 of the text here).

I suspect it is worth us insisting that councils be not just mandatory and deliberative but also representative, so as to minimize the risk that canon law is changed in such a way as to keep the possibility of the clergy abusing the system (as they've been doing by not making councils mandatory and deliberative). As a reminder, currently the membership of pastoral councils is determined by can. 512 and 536 of the CIC, which affirm 1. That it is up to the bishop to choose the "manner" in which members should be selected; and 2. That membership should "truly reflect the entire portion of the People of God".

"From the Synod on Synodality to the Synodalization of the Whole Church: Towards a New Ecclesial Reconfiguration in the Light of Synodality" by Rafael Luciani. Rafael Luciani (Synod-Synodality-Synodalization) *Iglesia Viva 2021 (ENG).pdf*

Luciani writes: "The experience of Base Ecclesial Communities has shown that communal discernment from below is an effective way to link the processes of decision making and decision taking because, while synodality occurs in the walking, the listening, and the meeting together, it is completed only by the discerning of decisions together."

Redemptah Mutie: "Rafael's insisted on the important role the SCCs are playing in this Synodal Process. In my current parish, that is KUCC, we did it so well. He insisted that people don't have to wait for the clergy to organize them but they can organize themselves. Although in my local Kenyan parish church the synodal thing was done poorly; very few people participated."

Alloys Nyakundi: "Rafael's insisted on the important role the SCCs/Base Ecclesial Communities are playing in this Synodal Process. He highlighted that people don't have to wait for bishops and priests to organize them but they can organize themselves through the Base Ecclesial Communities."

Gerhardt Gerard: “On Wednesday 9 November, I was lucky to be in attendance in our online meeting that was graced by Prof. Rafael, guest facilitator. In recent years, I've been coming across the 'synod' topic online on some random websites. But listening to Prof. Rafael explaining different definitions of synodality, the important role it plays in church at this age, et cetera, was such an enlightening experience. Actually, throughout the session I felt like he was just across the room sharing his wisdom. I was intrigued by his challenge to us that we shouldn't sit back and wait for invitation from our dioceses for us to be heard. Rather we should develop a document that airs our views on synodality, our concerns and contributions to the topic as Young Adult Seekers.”

The fact is that now it is no longer just the Catholic Church scrutinizing the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel. It is also the signs of the times — beginning with the voices of victims and survivors of abuse — scrutinizing the Catholic Church in the light of the Gospel. Food for thought. This is a challenging statement for our reflection and action.

The North American Forum for Small Christian Communities (NAFSCC) asks this challenging question: In light of the Synodal Process how do you see SCCs as a critical way to move the Catholic Church forward? Please give our answers here.

1. In Africa everyone talks about SCCs at the grassroots/on the grassroots, but it is uncertain how the views of SCC members are accepted and acted upon in what is still a conservative, clerical, hierarchical, patriarchal African Church.

The “Synodal Process” is described very well at the US Catholic Bishops’ Meeting going on in Baltimore, Maryland, USA this week. The bishops are recognizing that it’s also:

1. “about discernment,
2. about [small] group discussion,
3. about listening to one another,
4. about listening to the Holy Spirit.”

These are great photos from the St. Dominic SCC end-of-semester party and Father Joseph Healey's Farewell party at Kenyatta University in Nairobi. It was so wonderful to see young people with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. They have this event at the end of every semester to celebrate their achievements and say goodbye to one another. Thank you so very much Joe Healey for finding time to visit and give hope to the young people at Kenyatta University.











The energy and enthusiasm of the St. Dominic SCC members is an important sign of the future of the Catholic Church in Africa. That's indeed a true indicator of a brighter future in our church. May God bless and enable them keep the *Jumuiya* spirit alive. So exciting to

see young people living and practicing their faith through Small Christian Communities. First of all, active participation means that the mind and heart are awake, alert and engaged during such events. May God bless such young people. The young people are the future of humanity whether they belong to the church or are seekers of truth and justice for all. Let us make the world to be a conducive place for the future generation.

For those SCC members that do weekly Lectionary-based faith sharing, the Feast of Christ the King is the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year and important for reflection, review and planning. We can do a review of the past year and then start fresh in the Advent Season in a new Liturgical Year that is Year A -- Matthew.

What are our SCC members doing to prepare for the First Sunday of Advent (tomorrow, 27 November, 2022) and the new Liturgical Year A? How are we identifying, reading and responding to the contemporary signs of the times? Some answers:

1. Some of the ways to respond to the contemporary signs of the times may include: the use of technology and the internet to evangelize and form online faith communities; make donations to support those in need; and overall moving with the contemporary speed of change. For example, as Science ceaselessly seeks truth, Religion must ceaselessly seek the same truth by opening new paths such as more participation of laity in the church.
2. Good insights. We have to specify what this expression "more participation of laity in the church" really means. Otherwise some priests can turn it into a fund raising task/exercise in the SCC and in parish or a lot of busy service work of the laity. May synodality and the synodal process bring about more real participation of laity in the church especially in leadership and decision making.
3. One of the choices in our SCC Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>) is: "Spreads the Gospel." In this new Liturgical Year may our SCCs be missionary and reach out to others in love, compassion and service.
4. Hello Seekers. *1 Timothy 4:12*: As a young adult, this scripture has been my path finder. I feel it will inspire you to. Check it out. Be blessed 🙏 During this season of Advent may each Young Adult choose a scripture passage or a theme to reflect on and live by. This is very inspiring scripture. Let us continue finding the scripture that can accompany young people in their day-to-day struggles.

Bishop Charles Kasonde, Chairman of AMECEA, emphasized that in the process of synodality, the Holy Father designed a program starting with the religious members of the Catholic Church to the families, Small Christian Communities, outstations, the parishes, the deaneries, the dioceses, the nation, and now at a regional level there is a collection of synthesis which is yet to be engraved in the regional conferences.

“With sadness and pain we hereby inform you of the return to the heavenly Father of Cardinal Richard Baawobr which occurred on Sunday, 27 November 2022. Our confrere was taken by ambulance from the Missionaries of Africa Generalate in Rome to the Gemelli Hospital at 5.45 pm and we received the sad news at 6.25 pm. May Richard rest in the peace of his Lord whom he so generously served. On behalf of the bereaved Society our prayers and our thoughts go also to his family, to his diocese, his fellow bishops, to all his friends and acquaintances. Cardinal Richard Baawobr was a great supporter of SCCs and African culture. RIP.”

The results of the Synodal Process is still very Western: many words, documents, reports. The students at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya want to contribute singing and dancing from the African culture. Thus synodality is a way of life. This is why the Synodal Public Letter that Collins Ongoma is working on is very important. It mentions the singing and dancing culture at KU.

The term "Small Christian Community" is used differently in different local contexts. See this article on Religion in Qatar: Religion: November 23, 2022: "Qatar's Small Christian Community in the Shadow of the World Cup." The World Cup is now underway in Qatar, a conservative Muslim nation where the 200,000 Christian residents have limited freedom to practice their faith.

We had a wonderful session on SCCs today at Spiritan House in Nairobi with Mwanajumuiya [Joseph G. Healey](#). Through him I came to know about the Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community. This is a good example of sharing and collaboration in the SCC networking. Young adults, be they Spiritan seminarians or Kenyatta University students, have a lot to offer to the Catholic Church through SCCs. Oyee. I'm glad you had a wonderful session with one of our own *Mwanajumuiya* ("a youth from a long time ago"). Networking and collaboration are key in our SCCs and I hope you'll get time to attend our online gatherings. I always share information about our gatherings on this platform. Kindly share a photo of the SCCs session you had with *Mwanajumuiya*.

Certain publications take on new meaning and new importance with new situations and contexts. For example: *The Community Called Church*. Volume 5 of an Experimental Sourcebook for Religious Education, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, Spearhead No. 60, December, 1979. 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." The systematic theology teacher on the writing team, Father Brian Hearne, CSSp, is called one of the Theological Architects of SCCs in Eastern Africa.

AFRICA/NIGER - Basic Christian Communities, a simple tool for proclaiming the Gospel

Dosso (Agenzia Fides) - "I would like to tell you about our Basic Christian Communities which, it seems, normally operate in all the missions of the diocese except in Dosso", writes Father Rafael Casamayor from Niger. "We left last year with great commitment and determination. Every fortnight a group of Christians from a village meet in one of their homes to pray, read the Gospel and simply pray, commenting, exchanging ideas, experiences, talking about Christian life, supporting each other in a Muslim society that generally does not make it easy to express oneself" (see Fides, 7/1/2022).

"It is not an easy path, since we all have very different points of view - adds the priest of the Society for African Missions - but we are slowly managing to 'break the ice'. People seem happy to be able to exchange viewpoints, sharing and being in each other's communities" (BCC) as a method and instrument of evangelization and organization of parish life. "In Dosso there are five and they correspond to as many sectors of the city. The diocese has been doing this for a few years. An attempt was also made in Dosso but it seems that it did not give the expected result, now we are trying again," says Father Casamayor.

"This method and organization of Christian life comes to us from Latin America and has found its echo in several African countries with considerable success. I had the opportunity to use it when I was on mission in Banikani, Benin, to launch it in Gaya and now in Dosso." Our Christian community is quite heterogeneous, most are immigrants of different ethnicities

from Benin, Togo or Burkina, and although many of them were born here, they keep their ties and their spirit rooted in their origins. In Niger, explains the missionary, most workers, blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, mechanics, are Beninese and live on unimaginable sacrifices. The rest is secondary for them. However, by insisting, encouraging in a thousand ways and showing patience and humor whenever possible, they seem to "adapt", to make the sign of the cross... The other day, we spoke of the Gospel of the previous Sunday, of the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor...those who weep...those who hunger and thirst for justice"...and immediately we stopped at the persecuted. Father, Abel, a good blacksmith who presides over the community, told me, we are persecuted because we are Christians, because we don't pray, we don't fast, because we are pagans. That's what they say, it bothers them that we are not Muslims and they try to convert us at all costs by offering us work, business, promising us gold and anything that comes to mind". "It's true, adds another, but not all of them, there are those who respect us, those who understand our way of living the faith and some even call themselves hypocrites.

It is not easy to be a Christian in Niger, especially after the growing influence of jihadist movements or the burning of churches in January 2015. "We find the development of grassroots Christian communities very positive, where Christians find support, solidarity, encouragement and even joy when they meet with their families, different families, and share their faith." (RC/AP) (Agenzia Fides, 14/2/2023)

Good SCCs Resource:

"Ponder: Contemplative Bible Study" (2022) accompanies all hearers and preachers of the Word of God as they pray with and ponder the Sunday readings throughout the 2022 -- 2023 Liturgical Year in the Catholic Church. Everything needed for a rich experience of Lectio Divina and biblical exploration is provided: the full text of the Sunday readings, concise commentary, engaging reflections, and clear guidance on how to use this resource alone or with a group. This volume guides readers through the Year A Lectionary 2022 - 2023 (St. Matthew's Gospel).

Order from Liturgical Press:



Example of SCCs in a Campus Ministry Program at a private research university:

Spring 2023 Small Group Registration at Duke University

Start the Spring Semester, 2023 off right and find community!

We have a variety of small groups available for Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, USA undergraduates, graduates, and guests of the Duke Catholic Center (DCC). These small groups allow space for participants to explore the Gospel and grow in their faith. If offered, do you have a background/cultural or interest-based affinity small group you'd like to be a part of? **NOTE:** Lectionary-based faith sharing and *Lectio Divina* are choices.

For those who want to follow the 1 - 6 March, 2023 African Synodal Continental Gathering in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, this is an excellent website:

Africa 2023 Synodal Continental Assembly Website
[Africa - 2023 Synodal Continental Assembly | \(synod2023.org\)](https://synod2023.org)

Portal to Seven 2023 Synodal Continental Assemblies
 [\(synod2023.org\)](https://synod2023.org)

Announcement:

Join us on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 6pm ET for an inter-generational panel discussion on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) sponsored by the online journal "Today's American Catholic" (TAC). Panel participants will include Father Joe Healey, a CCRI member and Maryknoll priest with decades of experience working with Small Christian Communities; Kevin Ahern, an author, editor, and professor of religious studies at Manhattan College; and Paulina Halley, a recent graduate of Yale University and Small Christian Community participant. Panelists will discuss "God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond" (Orbis Books, 2018), edited by Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano and featuring a contribution from Father Joe Healey. Registration is required and is available here: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9121212121>

For additional information, please email: editor@todaysamericancatholic.org.

Witness of American Dominican Sister of Peace Annie E Killian (Yale University undergraduate '11, PhD '19):

“SCCs were a formative part of my experience at St. Thomas More (STM) both as an undergraduate (Yale College 2011) and graduate student (GSAS 2019) in New haven, Connecticut, USA. I joined an SCC in the spring semester of my first year in college and participated most semesters after that, in different groups. Through SCCs, I learned to read the Gospels to hear how God is speaking to me, right now, in the everyday circumstances of my life. It’s funny to me, looking back, that I had never before been taught that sacred reading draws us into a personal encounter with God and into intimate communion with one another as we share faith and life together. As an undergrad, fellow SCC members became my role models and friends with whom I remain close. As a graduate student, SCCs supported me through my mother’s death and my family’s mourning. The experience of communal prayer and study ignited within me a passion for breaking open the Word and sharing the fruits of my contemplation that ultimately led me to discern a vocation to religious life and enter the Dominican Sisters of Peace. I think the SCC model draws us into the “synodal” way of being church, journeying together in faith, that Pope Francis is calling us to embrace.”

Are you doing your homework on World Youth Day (WYD)? This year 2023 it takes place in Lisbon, Portugal. The first WYD took place in 1986 in Rome, and was later held in Buenos Aires (1987), Santiago de Compostela (1989), Czestochowa (1991), Denver (1993), Manila (1995), Paris (1997), Rome (2000), Toronto (2002), Cologne (2005), Sydney (2008), Madrid (2011), Rio de Janeiro (2013), Krakow (2016), and Panama (2019).

From the Synodality Resource Team (SRT) for Africa:

The Synodality Formation Module, after it is completed, will be used in various formation programs in schools, in seminaries, in Small Christian Communities (SCCs), and in all other communities inside, and even outside structures of the Catholic Church. Meanwhile, Bishop Willybard Lagho of Kenya's Malindi Diocese, has called for the rethinking of church structures, such as SCCs that he says have been presented as "exclusive clubs", locking out many Christians who do not feel like belonging to such communities. "Just how free are Catholics to attend, or not to attend SCCs? I believe that there are many good Catholics who, because they don't feel like joining these structures, end up leaving the church," he said. In SCCs, members who lose their loved ones are entitled to some contribution, the Kenyan Catholic Bishop shared, adding, "To me, this is not the true spirit of evangelization."

This SCCs Facebook Page is a forum for dialog and discernment. When SCCs started in Eastern Africa in the 1970s we discussed at length the danger of the "elitism" that the bishop talks about. This has to be challenged at its roots.

Please pray for and with our friend Mwanajumuiya Father John Siyumbu, MM who is a Kenyatta University graduate and a Maryknoll missionary priest. He is presently discerning a mission assignment to Guatemala, a country in Central America.

Let us pray that many Young Adults join our Online Panel Discussion on "Small Christian Communities on Campus and Beyond" sponsored by Today's American Catholic (TAC) on Tuesday, 21 March, 2023. Really looking forward to this panel discussion. I hope the discussion will have a good number of representation from Africa.

Suggestion from Tony Giuriceo in New Jersey, USA: Promote Alumni SCCs -- in person, online and hybrid. These can be coordinated with Alumni Societies of various colleges and universities. For more info see the book Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018).

From a Catholic Online News Service:

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are a big deal in the Catholic Church in Africa. In fact, it is considered the basic unit of the Church on the continent. Antoine Cardinal Kambanda, the 64-year-old native of Rwanda's Catholic Archdiocese of Kigali has devoted his work to growing SCCs.

Let our SCC members reflect on the difference between “active silence” and “passive silence.” When we originally created the SCC Poll on our SCCs Website we put the choices related to silence under “the dynamics/process/principles/classifications of SCCs.” But now we put them under “the activities/content/outreach/practical action of SCCs.” Silence can be an active process especially when it involves deeper listening to God such as in the silence after reading the *Gospel*. Step 7 in our weekly SCC gathering is: “Silence. Listen to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us in the *Gospel* passage. This period of silence is not wasted time or empty time. It can be a time of deeper listening and deeper reflection.”

May SCC members respond to Pope Francis’s call to reflect on the Gospel more during this Lenten Season 2023. Let us be creative and:

1. Read and reflect on the *Gospel* text.
2. Listen to and reflect on the *Gospel* on podcasts.
3. Look at and reflect on videos of the *Gospel* stories and teachings (such as *The Chosen*).

There are two models of Catholic Retreats or Recollection Days. Both are important and both are necessary. First is the traditional, “preached” retreat. The retreatants listen to a series of talks (“conferences”) on spiritual topics. Second, is the Small Christian Community/Synodal Style retreat that is more interactive and participatory. Retreatants reflect and share in small groups on the Bible and spiritual topics.

An example of the second model as a one-day Recollection Day can include the following: A Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR) Session based on the Gospel story in Mark 6: In verse 7 Jesus sends out the 12 apostles two by two to preach and to heal. Then in 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,” “Discern” and “Act” process or methodology starting with the apostles’ 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. After a period of rest and reflection the apostles start a new action. Online Ebook -- See page 1194 of our free Online Ebook: *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*

<http://smallchristiancommunities.org/building-the-church.../>

http://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf

smallchristiancommunities.org

smallchristiancommunities.org

We continue with our Forum on "How to Prepare a Sunday Homily." Welcome to your contribution.

- I wish every Deacon and Priest Homilist would meet with a group of lay people regularly each week to break open the scriptures. This is required in Lansing Diocese, Michigan, USA.
- I want to do this in our parish in Albany, New York, USA. A group of women meet regularly each week to break open the scriptures and they’ve invited me to sit with them. It is a wonderful way to get different perspectives, especially from women on these scriptures, so saturated by male understanding.

- In preparing my Easter Homily I consulted about 15 parishioners in our Christ the King Parish in New Jersey, USA. This is how we prepare homilies in Africa. It is a community effort especially through our weekly SCCs. Let's see what folks remember a week later.
- Be creative and challenging to the listening audience.
- The priest preparing together with the People of God in a synodal way/in a synodal style/in a synodal manner.
- Here are some examples from our free ebook on "SCCs in Eastern Africa:" 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, Kenya joined with lay members of the parish to use the Lumko "Group Response Method" of Gospel Sharing (pioneered by Lumko, South Africa) to prepare their Sunday homilies together. A deacon in Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish, South B in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya 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."

With all the discussion on Artificial Intelligence (AI) these days, I asked "What is a Small Christian Community?" in my OpenAI Account with ChatGPT and got this interesting answer:

"A Small Christian Community (SCC) is a group of Christians, usually ranging from 6 to 12 people, who gather regularly in homes or other community spaces to pray, study the *Bible*, and support each other in their faith journeys. SCCs are often seen as a way to build stronger relationships between members of a larger church community and to foster a deeper sense of community and belonging. The focus of SCCs is usually on sharing and reflecting on personal experiences of faith, rather than on doctrinal or theological debates. SCCs can be found in various Christian denominations, including Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox churches."

The main aspect missing is the social and mission outreach/the practical service to others.

Happy Feast Day of our Patron Saint of our SCC -- St. Isidore of Seville -- 4 April, 2022. Prolific writer. Initially a poor student, he gave the problem over to God and become of the most learned men of his time. He died in Seville, Spain on 4 April. 636. He became the leading candidate for Patron of Computer Users and the internet in 1999. It is suggested that we pray to St. Isidore before logging onto the internet. One prayer includes the line: "We beseech you that, through the intercession of Saint Isidore, bishop and doctor, during our journeys through the internet we will direct our hands and eyes only to that which is pleasing to you and treat with charity and patience all those souls whom we encounter."

NEW POST ANNOUNCEMENT: "Visit to the Campus Ministry Program at Ave Maria University in Florida, USA"

By Joseph G. Healey

Two Maryknoll priest friends of mine and I visited the Campus Ministry Program at Ave Maria University, a Catholic university in Ave Maria, Florida, USA on Friday, 24 March, 2023. The main purpose was to learn about a Model of Campus Ministry that has not been in our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Research so far – coming from the conservative, traditional, devotional side of the Catholic Church. This is part of “deeper listening” to other views and experiences in the “Synodal Process.” Read More.....

The *Bulletin* of St. John XXIII Church/Parish in Fort Myers, Florida, USA includes the reference to two SCCs: The “Men’s Gospel Forum” on Mondays and the “Opening the the Word” gathering called “Your Journey into the Sunday Readings” on Tuesdays. This SCC uses the Scripture readings of the next Sunday with a video and shared reflections. It is hybrid. Participants can view online *Bible* materials 24/7.

In Nairobi, Kenya my favorite part of Holy Week Liturgical Events was always the Outdoor Way of the Cross coordinated by the SCCs in St. Austin Parish. Today both the front pages of the *Wall Street Journal* and the Newark Star Ledger has a dramatic photo of 2,000 Catholics crossing the 1.3 mile Brooklyn Bridge yesterday on Good Friday as part of the outdoor “Way of the Cross.” This Lenten tradition had readings, reflections, and music from the Good Friday liturgy throughout the “Stations of the Cross.”

When a parishioner at our Christ the King Parish Mass in Paterson Diocese, New Jersey, USA wrote: “This morning the mass was wonderful. Your interpretations and involvement of us in the discussions were great.” I replied:

“I don’t deserve your positive comments. I try to encourage participation and involvement. This is “a way of life” in our Small Christian Community Model of Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. We call it a “Shared Homily” or a “Participatory Homily.” My one regret/failure is that folks remain scattered all over the church. When I ask them to come up front and form a ‘little community’ they don’t respond. I should joke: “Come up higher. Don’t worry. There is no collection today.”

During this Easter Season our Small Christian Community Website says it best: Eighty-Fourth Round: “The best part of my Small Christian Community is...: “Reignites our faith through reading and reflecting on the Gospel.”

Small Christian Communities – Small Christian Communities
<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>

Let us have the zeal, the relit faith and the excitement of the two disciples at Emmaus (Cleophas and his wife!!!) as they returned to Jerusalem in the dark on fire with the love and spirit of the Risen Christ.

Along a similar vein, see FaithND's comment on the 12 April, 2023 Gospel: "Despite having already walked seven miles to Emmaus, they turn right back around to make the journey back to Jerusalem. The disciples were transformed by their burning hearts, knowing Jesus' appearance was too great to keep to themselves. I can imagine the disciples' journey back to Jerusalem, walking purposefully, excitedly discussing what they had seen, and anticipating sharing the news. Jesus calls us into a deeper relationship with him in the Eucharist. How do we allow the Eucharist to transform our hearts and inform how we live our daily lives? May we have a renewed spirit to draw nearer to Jesus in the Eucharist this

Easter season, and may we keep our hearts open to receiving Jesus' love, allowing this love to spring us into action."

The American woman theologian Ilia Delio writes on the meaning of Easter: "The experience of Jesus raised from the dead ignited his disciples with a new fire of hope; the experience of Jesus, alive in a new way, set the world ablaze with an evocative love." In our SCCs Model of Church we sit in a circle during our weekly gatherings to read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday. This is significant as we read this report about the newly formed committee tasked with organizing the upcoming 2023 and 2024 synod meetings in Rome: "The committee will also be involved with other planning matters, like the retreat that will take place ahead of the synod, and even practical matters, like how the more than 300 participants will be seated during the synod. (There was hope that they might sit at round tables rather than in traditional stadium-style seating or lecture hall seating in the Vatican's synod hall.

From Ronald Sunguti: "The sitting around is very significant to us as one family equal before God. It should be encouraged because it empowers each member present to feel loved and considered. It gives each person chance to contribute equally without feeling that he/she is less important or less. It is a good model for the family of God."

Are you a Catholic who wants to do something more than just participate in Sunday mass every week? Are you interested in learning more about the Bible? One option is to participate in a weekly Lectionary-based Faith Sharing Small Christian Community that reads and reflects on the Gospel of the following Sunday and applies it to our daily lives. If you are interested in

- Joining an existing weekly SCC (in person, online or hybrid).
- or
- Starting your own weekly SCC.
- or
- Learning more about SCCs.

please go to

Mikroi -- Today's American Catholic (TAC) Initiative on Small Christian Communities Website

Mikroi - Today's American Catholic ([todaysamericancatholic.org](https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org))
<https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/mikroi/>

Mikroi: Our Today's American Catholic (TAC) SCC Initiative
<https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/mikroi/>

Mikroi (μικρός) is a key term in Matthew's gospel that means "little ones" or "the least of these." As we thought about the intentions of Small Christian Communities and our SCC initiative, the word seemed to embody our vision of the church of the future—one that, as Pope Francis has stated, "will become smaller, lose many privileges, be humbler and more authentic and find energy for what is essential."

We're pleased to debut the web page for "Mikroi," our SCC initiative.
<https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/mikroi/>

Here you'll find background information, news and articles, and additional resources, as well as information on how to join or form a small Christian community through TAC's online platform or in your own parish or location. We hope you'll be inspired to participate—Small Christian Communities serve as “training grounds” to inaugurate the next era of the of the church that will be, in Francis’s words, “more spiritual, poorer and less political; a Catholic Church of the little ones.”



todaysamericancatholic.org

[Mikroi - Today's American Catholic](#)

[Information about our small Christian community initiative.](#)

*North American Final Document for the Continental Stage of the 2021-2024 Synod:
For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission*

North-American-Final-Document_EN.pdf (synod.va)

https://www.synod.va/.../North-American-Final-Document_EN...

Using the Search Feature (ctrl + f) here are the number of references to specific words as follows:

12 – Jesus

30 -- Christ

3 -- Jesus Christ

Also Risen Christ, Risen Son.

22 – Holy Spirit

71 – Spirit

32 – communion

11 – participation

40 -- mission

2 – community

1 -- local community

14 – small

7 – small groups

12 – small group

124 – group

20 – discernment

- 12 -- dialogue
- 18 -- women
- 12 -- young people
- 3 – youth

www.synod.va

The general term "small group" is very common in North America and is used in different ways. We prefer the specific term "Small Christian Community" in Africa.

"Evaluation of National Small Christian Community (SCC) Organizations in the USA:"

1. What have the successful SCC organizations done right?

a. RENEW International, Plainfield, New Jersey has a successful working economic/business model. Sale of English and Spanish SCC materials/products printed and online. Offers SCC Workshops (in-person, online, hybrid) with facilitating staff for hire.
<http://www.renewintl.org>

b. Office of Evangelization and Adult Faith Formation in San Bernadino Diocese, California. <https://www.sbdiocese.org> Sale of English and Spanish SCC materials printed and online. For a Case Study go to page 41 of "Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment." **NOTE:** The Office of Small Faith Communities closed because of budget cuts and the ministry is now folded in under the Ministry Formation Institute.

2. Reasons for the failure/closing/dormancy of the other SCC organizations.

Lack of:

1. Money. Sources include: Donations/Contributions. Subsidy. Subscription Fee. Official Grants. Gala. Real Estate Rental. Sale of products printed and online. Online Fund Raising. Loans. Endowments. End of year appeals. Legacies. Wills. Inheritance. Direct Mail Appeal.

2. Younger Leaders/Personnel. Scott Appleby's insight on the lack of young SCC leaders.. Danger of a charismatic founder/leader dying or retiring.

3. Vision/Creativity. Community values are often not a priority in USA culture and in the Catholic Church. Americans protect their independence and privacy. Middle class white Americans do not like the vulnerability/openness of Small Faith Sharing Communities.

4. Specific Focus/Niche.

"Signs of the Times factors:" Sexual Abuse Payments. Effects of Covid. Digital World Changes.

For a list of National Small Christian Community (SCC) Organizations in the USA go to page 183 of *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*.

The Catholic Church in Brazil has always been an inspiration for its CEBs Model of Church. The solemn opening session of the 60th General Assembly of the National

Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) will be held on Wednesday, April 19 at the Congress Center of the National Shrine of Aparecida. The assembly will last until April 28 and will consist of 22 working sessions. One of the assembly's topics is "Basic Ecclesial Communities."

The President of the CNBB Archbishop Oliveira de Azevedo believes that one of the most important aspects for the Catholic Church around the world will be the commitment to synodality. The Brazilian Bishops' Conference, which already sees itself as an expression of synodality, since it brings together the many contributions of the Brazilian episcopate and counts on the participation of ordained evangelizers and lay Christians, "must continue to advance along this synodal path. This means continuously intensifying our services to the many small faith communities across the country and encourage wider participation, with particular attention to women's participation."

According to the Brazilian Bishops' Conference, the Catholic Church in Brazil currently has a total of 326 active bishops and 157 bishops emeritus. There are a total of 219 dioceses, 45 archdioceses and 7 prelatures. (SL) (Agenzia Fides, 18/4/2023)

North American Center for Marianist Studies

<https://www.nacms.org>

"The Best of Quest: Liturgical Year A"

See Third Sunday of Easter --Year A

https://www.nacms.org/.../files/Third_Sunday_of_Easter_A.pdf

The 2021 - 2024 Synodal Process is evaluating and updating guidelines for Parish Pastoral Councils. This is not news. Already in 2010 there were recommendations: "Recommendations for Parish Pastoral Councils (2010 CARA Report on "Best Practices for Catholic Pastoral and Finance Councils")"

1. Leadership should be shared.
2. Include prayer and Faith Sharing as part of the agenda at every meeting. Their importance to a Parish Pastoral Council cannot be overstated. When included at the beginning of the meeting, these activities set the tone for the entire meeting.

At the Press Conference in Rome on Friday, 20 April, 2023 Sister Nathalie presented the "Report of the Synodal Continental Task Force" and emphasized "that the strong experience of Small Christian Communities/Base Ecclesial Communities in Asia, Africa and Oceania is an experience of synodality."

One choice in our SCC Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>) is "Synodality is the true spirit of a SCC." At the big Synod Gathering in Rome in October, 2023 there will be 10 voting lay delegates from the African Continent -- half women and several Young People. Let us hope that they present the experiences of the SCCs Model of Church in Africa.

One choice in our SCCs Poll in the Eighty-Fourth Round is: "The best part of my Small Christian Community is... "Praying together for special intentions." Cardinal Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel CM Metropolitan Catholic Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia writes: "We are praying for peace and stability in our neighbor country Sudan."

To a friend: "Thank you for the first public donation of \$200 to my special Facebook Fundraiser: ""Let us join hands and help four Kenyan Catholic Young Adults (two young women

and two young men) with Travel Scholarships to go to World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal in August, 2023.” If you would like to donate to this cause please give to this Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/donate/617287020289859/617287026956525/>

May all SCC members pray for:

Synod of Bishops on “Synodality” on the theme “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission,” Vatican/Rome, Italy, 4-29 October, 2023.

Formally opened by Pope Francis in October 2021, the synod is a multi-stage process that began with a year of discernment/ consultation at the diocesan level, continued with a year of discernment/consultation at the continental level, and will culminate in two Rome-based gatherings in October, 2023 and October, 2024. This year’s Rome-based gathering will mark the first time that women, and laypeople generally, are official delegates and have the right to vote.

“Let us hope that some of these lay delegates are active members of their SCCs on the grassroot level”... “Finally gotten there! We pray for success and serious scrutiny into some of the challenges that laity and SCCs are facing in their journey of faith.”

My 85th Birthday Party at my brother's home in New Vernon, New Jersey, USA on Sunday, 30 April, 2023 was really an intergenerational/multigenerational SCC. 11 people from three generations from myself down to my 10-year-old grandniece Cara Healey. This same SCC has Sunday Zoom Masses with other members of our extended family. So we are active both as a social and a spiritual/religious SCC.

We invite members of this SCC to choose its specific name. It may be a Saint's name, an extended family name, a cultural name, a ministry name, a nickname, etc. The 12 members present (7 --1st Generation, 3 -- 2nd Generation, 2 -- 3rd Generation) choose the name of Healey--Hagerty Extended Family SCC.

ANNOUNCEMENT: It is important that we continue to evaluate our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa so we can make it better. Please vote in the current polls.

Eighty-Fifth Round: The best part of my Small Christian Community is:
(May, 2023 – June, 2023):

1. Value of listening to the Gospel in our current Synodal Process.
2. Silent periods in our gatherings.
3. Critical way to move the Catholic Church forward.
4. Daily prayer in our gatherings plays a key role during the Synodal Process.
5. Thanking God and celebrating our 50 Year SCCs Anniversary in Eastern Africa.
6. Privileged place to experience family spirit, Synodality and outreach to others.

Vote at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>

We made these six choices after a lot of discernment, discussion and reading the “signs of the times” in Eastern Africa today. Priorities of the SCC Model of Church are highlighted. Also we edited the wording of the six choices to make them more user friendly. Happy voting. Feedback is welcome.

I voted for: "2. Silent periods in our gatherings." Silence is very important after the reading of the Gospel at Mass, after Communion at Mass ("Eucharist" comes from the Greek word meaning "thanksgiving") and in the gatherings of the Synodal Process.

The Catholic Church of the future in Ireland will be composed of “little groups that come together to pray, to celebrate the Eucharist together, and to reach out to those in need”, according to homelessness campaigner Father Peter McVerry SJ. He made his comments after addressing the Association of Catholics in Ireland on the subject, “Where Have All the Young People Gone?”

This is so close to *Acts of the Apostles* Chapter 2: "42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

How do the resources on our SCC Website promote the "Synodal Process?" Here is a concrete example: In our online Ebook *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa* on Academia.edu someone did a Search for "Woman's Role in Leadership Positions in Church Africa."

Interesting conversation with an American Oratorian Priest (congregation of St. John Henry Newman) in Brooklyn, New York USA on Saturday, 6 May, 2023. In his ministry these days he is visiting Catholic High Schools in Brooklyn Diocese to meet with graduating seniors to discuss their key transition to College/University life in Fall, 2023. The priest is emphasizing the importance of connecting to Campus Ministry Activities and Programs at Newman Centers (secular, private and public colleges) and Catholic Centers (Catholic Colleges) to nourish the Young Person's ongoing Catholic faith life on campus including mass, *Bible Study*, Small Faith-Sharing Communities and service/outreach programs. He himself appreciated the Newman Center at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, USA where he went to college.

Clyde Christofferson and Joe Keyes from the NOVA COMMUNITY in Virginia, USA say: "These are early days in a long term effort to revitalize the Synodal Process. We should gird our loins for the long term, maintaining our focus on the Spirit. If we persist in the process of listening to the Spirit through one another – we are being church, we are being synodal, we are walking together. Each of us has roots in Small Communities on the periphery of the Institutional Catholic Church. These Small Communities are where the Spirit works."

Today's American Catholic (TAC) Website
<https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org>

is building an important webpage called:

Mikroi – TAC's Initiative on Small Christian Communities (SCCs)
<https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/mikroi/>

So far it has a growing, expanding section on the right hand side called “ADDITIONAL RESOURCES” that includes:

- Documents
- Organizations

- Colleges and Universities

Additions are welcome.

Prayers please for a Zoom Gathering to take place on Thursday, 11 May, 2023. It bring together people from the Loyola's Institute for Ministry (LIM) at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA and people from the AMECEA SCCs Network in Eastern Africa to discern issues such as the development of the SCCs Model of Church, SCCs networking, Young Adult Ministry and the 2021-2024 Synodal Process. One of the choices in our SCCs Poll is: "Daily prayer in our gatherings plays a key role during the Synodal Process." Vote at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org>

From Michael Brough: "Many blessings for a fruitful synodal dialogue. May the Holy Spirit strengthen the important bonds between LIM and AMECEA and may Small Christian Communities continue to flourish as a result."

I think we can learn more from, and appreciate more, our histories. Take Orbis Books as an example. The book -- Bernard Lee and Michael Cowan wrote *Conversation, Risk, and Conversion: The Inner & Public Life of Small Christian Communities* published by Orbis Books at Maryknoll, NY in 1997 -- has had a big influence on the development of SCCs worldwide. Even though it is out of print, it is still used as a textbook in two Online LIM Courses: the "Inner Life of Small Christian Communities" and the "Public Life of Small Christian Communities." It is one of the textbooks sent as an electronic copy to students throughout the world. Hopefully it can be reprinted.

Special Prayers please:

The Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod approved the "Working Document" for the first session of the Synod on Synodality to take place from 4-29 October, 2023, as well as the methodology of the assembly. The document, to be published in early June, 2023, will guide discernment at the first gathering of the General Assembly in October, 2023. The assembly will meet for the second part of its deliberations in October, 2024.

This Facebook Page serves as a Forum to reflect on and discern the Synodal Process and various Synodal Reports. Rene Reid says: "In several breakout sessions we recognized and promoted [Small Christian Communities](#) (SCCs) as an official part of the structure of the Catholic Church. While was brought up several times, it was not even mentioned in the North American Continental Synodal Synthesis Report."

During our conversations here at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA I have put together this List especially related to Young Adults:

New Synodal/Synodal Process Language/Vocabulary (alphabetically):

Deeper listening
Discern rather than Judge
Discernment, Dialogue and Consultation rather than Discussion
Gathering rather than Meeting
Global South rather than Developing Countries

Lectionary-based Faith Sharing
 Local Church rather than Particular Church
 Networking rather than Communications
 Sacred Listening
 Service/Outreach rather than Mission
 Small Community rather than Small Group. **NOTE:** A special discernment is needed over the term "cohort."
 Spiritual Conversation
 Synodal Church
 Synodal Way of Being Church/Synodal Way of Life
 Walking Together rather than Synodality (Young Adults have asked Pope Francis not to use churchy language)
 World centric/world-centered) rather than Church Centric/Church-centered and Ecclesial Centric/Ecclesial-centered.
 Working Document rather than (*Instrumentum Laboris* Young Adults have asked Pope Francis not to use Latin)

NOTE: Some of these words/terms can be controversial.

Comments are welcome. Additions are welcome.

Please share with anyone you think is interested.

Please congratulate and pray for Father Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator SJ (Bator) who has just been appointed to the position of Dean of the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in California, USA at the rank of full professor with tenure. One friend wrote: "I hope we will enjoy spreading Small Christian Communities with him and the student theologians."

Our whole SCC extended family congratulates Kenyan Loretto Sister Jane Frances Mulongo, IBVM on getting her Master's Degree of Pastoral Studies with an area of concentration in Small Christian Community Formation at the graduation at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA on 13 May, 2023. Hongera. Pongeza.

"New Post Announcement: Brief Timeline of the Long History Between LIM and AMECEA"

By Joseph G. Healey

NOTE: We are grateful for the 35-year close working relationship and friendship between LIM (Loyola's Institute for Ministry) and AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa). Praise be to God. Sadly most people do not know this history. Together I hope we can appreciate more, and learn more, from our long history. I hope we can get to know each other even better.

The facilitator of a weekly SCC gathering has to prepare well especially in understanding the Catholic Church's Liturgical Year. For example, on Sunday, 21 May 2023 we have a choice between two different masses with different readings:

1. Ascension Sunday.
2. Seventh Sunday of Easter.

The Moderator/Coordinator of our St. Isidore Online SCC could decide by himself or herself or better, as Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi has done, leave it to all our SCC members to decide. This means all of us studying the plan of the Catholic Church's Liturgical Year ahead of time (by the way we are in Year A in the Sunday Cycle) and reading the Gospels of the two choices ahead of time.

In our SCC Poll the Eighty-Fifth Round states: The best part of my Small Christian Community is... One choice is: "Value of listening to the Gospel/*Bible* in our current Synodal Process."

Mass on Sunday, 21 May, 2023 is the Mass of the Ascension. The readings are:

First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 1: 1-11 (my mantra: "until the day he was taken up")
Gospel: Matthew 28: 16-20 (my mantra: "I am with you always, even until the end of the world/the end of the age")

In our SCC Lectionary based Faith Sharing one creative way is as follows: During the silence after the reading of the Gospel draw a picture of the Ascension in your imagination and then share it during the Shared Reflection or the Shared Homily.

Feedback is welcome.

Using the "Synodal Process" we build on/follow up what the previous speaker has said, not just share our independent, pre-prepared view.

Anthony Makunde at a Catholic Care for Children (CCC) Conference in Nairobi, Kenya: "We (AMECEA region) are joining hands with the Universal Church being aware of the structures that the Catholic Church has put in place. The conferences in the region have developed policies for safeguarding children and there are also safeguarding officers in the conferences as the region carry out capacity building to pastoral agents. AMECEA has the advantage of having Small Christian Communities (SCCs) where the church in general can be rooted."

For those who want to pray earnestly and distribute widely this important prayer:

GOLDEN JUBILEE PRAYER FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY (1973 -- 2023) OF BUILDING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH THROUGH SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (SCCs) IN THE AMECEA REGION

Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for the gift of our faith. As we joyfully commemorate 50 years of fulfilling the experience of "Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" as "a new way of being church," we recall and give thanks to the founding bishops, who out of their love for Jesus, your Son and the Catholic Church, generously introduced this new pastoral model of the church.

God our Father, as AMECEA celebrates and looks to its future, we pray that the fruits of the Synod on Synodality (2021 -2024) find fulfilment through reinvigorated SCCs. Enkindle in us the spirit of listening, discernment and communion for active participation as we journey together in the mission of evangelization. Gracious God, strengthen us in our faith, hope, and charity so that the seeds of Christian discipleship experienced through functional SCCs may ever remain a gift to the church and the world.

We make this our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. AMEN.

Celebrating the 50 Year Anniversary of SCCs in Eastern Africa

To the founders and visionaries who created AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) 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.

I see a resurgence of interest in SCCs worldwide. Some reasons:

1. Influence of Synodality/Synodal Process. At the Press Conference in Rome on Friday, 20 April, 2023 Sister Nathalie presented the Report of the Synodal Continental Task Force and emphasized “that the strong experience of Small Christian Communities/Base Ecclesial Communities in Asia, Africa and Oceania is an experience of synodality.”
2. New Catholic Church Organizations like Today's American Catholic and its Mikroi initiative on Small Christian Communities.
3. Influence of the digital world including the internet and social media.

Today's American Catholic (TAC) is planning to publish a new edition of the book *Conversation, Risk, and Conversion: The Inner and Public Life of Small Christian Communities* (Orbis Books, 1997) as a part of its Mikroi Initiative on Small Christian Communities. Hopefully there will be an Ebook version too. Hopefully our ongoing 2021 -- 2024 Synodal Process will help to reinvigorate SCCs in the USA.

Thanks to our SCCs Website and Facebook Page Moderator Bernard Mberere, we are creatively experimenting to developing new ways of using the internet and social media. For example, he has "pinned" (the word in computer language) the "Prayer for the 50 Year Anniversary of SCCs in Eastern Africa" on the Home Page of the SCCs Facebook Page. It can be found under the word "Featured" immediately under the photos.

As we approach Pentecost Sunday and the Pentecost Season let us rely more on the Holy Spirit. We recall *Revelations 2:7*: “Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.” What is the Holy Spirit saying to:

1. Each of personally.
2. Our families, our SCCs, our parishes, our religious congregations, our missionary societies.
3. Our Local Churches.
4. The Universal Catholic Church.

Prayers.

While visiting Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA in May 2023, I met a lecturer who said she was a devoted member of a Christian Life Community (CLC) while an undergraduate. Then for some years she continued in an Alumni CLC. When I asked her why she and her friends stopped their small community she answered: "Babies."

We continue to develop a close relationship between AMECEA (an acronym for "Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa.") based in Nairobi, Kenya and LIM (Loyola Institute for Ministry) at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. This message is on the LIM Facebook Page: "LIM has a focus area in Small Christian Community Formation, and Small Christian Communities are a pastoral priority in the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. Beginning this July, 2023 AMECEA (the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) will celebrate the Golden Jubilee of this pastoral priority. Please join us in praying the "Golden Jubilee Prayer for SCCs"--for the success of the Golden Jubilee and for the ongoing vitality of this new way of being Catholic Church in Eastern Africa and around the world. This is a shareable link to the prayer."

50TH ANNIVERSARY (1973-2023) OF BUILDING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH THROUGH SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (SCCs) IN THE AMECEA REGION

Gracious and loving God, we give you thanks for the gift of our faith. As we joyfully commemorate 50 years of fulfilling the experience of "Small Christian Communities (SCCs)" as "a new way of being church," we recall and give thanks to the founding bishops, who out of their love for Jesus, your Son and the Catholic Church, generously introduced this new pastoral model of the church.

God our Father, as AMECEA celebrates and looks to its future, we pray that the fruits of the Synod on Synodality (2021-2024) find fulfillment through reinvigorated SCCs. Enkindle in us the spirit of listening, discernment and communion for active participation as we journey together in the mission of evangelization. Gracious God, strengthen us in our faith,

[DOCS.GOOGLE.COM](https://docs.google.com)

Golden Jubilee Prayer for SCCs in the AMECEA Region

GOLDEN JUBILEE PRAYER FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The North American Forum for Small Christian Communities (NAFSCC) Pentecost Faith Sharing asks these two Reflection Questions that can be discerned in all our SCCs:

1. What is your "favorite gift" that God has given you and how have you used it over many years to help others?
2. What gifts has the Holy Spirit given to the Catholic Church through the Synod on Synodality process thus far?

In January 2023, the Daughters of Charity (St. Louis Province, USA) began the Vincentian Encounter Program to encompass their young adult ministry efforts. Vincentian Encounter includes the Vincentian Small Faith Community Program, an exciting new pilot that supports young people who meet monthly to pray, learn about the Vincentian charism, and talk about how their faith connects to important current topics. Anti-racism and anti-oppression training is incorporated into the groups to help participants build desegregated, inclusive faith communities.

One of the few Small Christian Communities Offices on the diocesan level in the USA is the Office of Small Christian Communities in St. Petersburg Diocese, Florida, USA. The office:

- Promotes, develops, supports and trains Small Christian Communities and their leadership.

- Assists parishes and Catholic entities in building communities that regularly engage in connecting life and faith through reflection and relationship building in all activities.
- Contains links to many SCCs Resources.

Pope Francis says: “We need Christian communities in which space expands, where everyone can feel at home, where the structures and pastoral means favor not the creation of [inward looking] small groups, but the joy of being and feeling co-responsible.” The pope is not criticizing Small Christian Communities per se/as such. He is criticizing the exclusive, inward looking, self-reverential, self focused self help groups that are only concerned about themselves and their needs. The genuine SCCs are inclusive, outward looking, concerned about others and reaching out to others in practical pastoral and social ways.

From an active Catholic in the USA: "Yes, definitely for SCCs. In the US, that I've seen, or the middle and southern part of the US where I have lived, it seems easier for faith/spiritual groups in the Catholic Church to be spiritual and emotional support type groups and not really go on into action in the community, but they are not really liberation theology style SCCs. So glad you have kept this important and powerful tradition going and active more widely!"

Yes, our research confirms that these self help groups/support groups are the fastest growing in USA.

One type of SCC is the Root & Branch Do it Yourself (DIY) Small Group. For more information go to: <https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/diy>

A very helpful video is “Root & Branch DIY: Why We Stay - Sharing Signs of Hope” [Synod 2021 | Root & Branch Synod \(rootandbranchsynod.org\)](https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/synod-2021-root-and-branch-synod) 28.28 minutes

In this video, English Passionist priest Nicholas Postlethwaite, CP speaks encouragingly about starting Do It Yourself (DIY) groups and how this is the way forward for our church. Nicholas reminds us of Pope Francis' words that he felt Jesus was knocking on the church door to get out, not on the outside waiting to get in. We need to learn to combine two key essential human roles to move forward:

1. The role of undertaker (to know when something is coming to an end and how to lay it down respectfully and sensitively and gently but nonetheless not to try and prolong it beyond where it has come to).
2. The role of midwife (where is new life being born. How do we help that new life into its new birth and nurture it and sustain it.

More background info can be found on "Spirit Unbounded," a new platform for Catholic reform bringing together a global, lay-led Christian network of groups for transformational change. <https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/spirit-unbounded>

From Paschal Mahalagu, Sukuma seminarian from the Catholic Diocese of Shinyanga, Tanzania:

During my pastoral experience as a seminarian in 2022, one of my activities was the pastoral care for growing Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the outstations in a parish in Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania. One day I was teaching a group of 20 Christians on the role of every Christian in the Small Christian Community. An old man, the chairperson of the SCC, in commenting on what we had learned concluded with this Sukuma proverb: "ng'wanangwa

itashilaga" meaning "learning has no end." This Sukuma proverb is commonly used in various occasions mainly when receiving new knowledge about something like a new way of farming or keeping animals or any other new thing. It is used as the catalyst or a motivation for the attentiveness of the participant, so as to bring a positive result to a particular program. By using this proverb, my teaching on SCCs was well received. Before giving my talk on SCCs I used to say this Sukuma proverb as an introductory part.

For our Forum (exchange of ideas) you are invited to give an African Proverb related to Synodality/Synodal Process ("walking together" or "journeying together"). Here are some examples:

- *If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.*
- *A friend is someone you share the path with.*
- *"Go in that direction" does not mean that you go. To go means, "let's go together!"*
- *It takes a whole village to raise a child.*

What are your examples? People have added:

Many hands make light work.
A cooking pot always sits on three stones.
One hand washes the other hand.

Our SCC Poll says: "Eighty-Fifth Round: The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." One choice is: "Value of listening to the Gospel in our current Synodal Process."

Here is how our current Synodal Process can affect the steps of our weekly SCC gathering that reads the Gospel of the following Sunday and applies it to our daily lives. Taken from "13 Steps in the Weekly *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Daily Life Connections Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa:"

Step 7. Silence. Listen to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us in this Gospel passage. Open oneself to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is one reason why the Synodal Process is different and can be very creative. This period of silence is not wasted time or empty time. It is a time of deeper listening and deeper reflection.

Step 8. *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Daily Life Connections. Connect, relate and apply the *Bible* (Gospel) to our daily lives and experience (on both personal and society-wide levels). This is lectionary-based faith-sharing/Gospel-based faith-sharing. SCC members share their reflections sitting together in a circle. This is the most important part of the weekly gathering of the SCC. In the traditional way each SCC member would share his or her pre-prepared reflection one by one. In the synodal way we listen to the people who share first and build on/add to what they have said. The tone is communal discernment rather than discussion.

From Alloys Nyakundi: "Thanks so very much for sharing this message with us. Yes, indeed listening is very important during this Synodal Process and during our weekly Faith Sharing groups. Listening for others to speak is a key takeaway I took from this week's Tuesday St. Isidore SCCs. It helped to get an insight that sometimes the Holy Spirit speaks to us through listening to the sharing of other people."

On a recent Zoom Gathering Father Emmanuel Chimombo, Pastoral Coordinator at AMECEA, described activities during the Golden Jubilee Celebration of 50 Years of SCCs in Eastern Africa that will include the participation of laypeople to help evaluate the status of SCCs.

Chimombo said that SCCs can act as a counterbalance to the culture of “individualism” that has crept into the church. Feedback from laypeople is critical in “reawakening the spirituality” of SCCs to empower local leaders. SCC members are trained to identify the needs of their neighbors, not just their fellow Catholics, becoming in the process a “neighborhood church.”

AMECEA will gather data on member conferences and “document, publish, and disseminate theological and historical account[s] of SCCs as [a] Pastoral Priority in the region.” The end goals will be to reawaken and reanimate SCCs with programs for SCC facilitators, and to strengthen the network of those who have studied SCCs through LIM’s schedule of courses.

May our Small Christian Communities around the world to pray hard for the USA Bishops who are meeting in Orlando, Florida, USA in early June, 2023. May the Holy Spirit guide them to make important decisions about the October, 2023 Synod in Rome and the ongoing Synodal Process. See the online article by Michael Winters in *NCR*: "The US bishops are meeting in June. Synodality is not on the agenda."

New Article:

"Loyola Institute for Ministry and Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa Advance the Work of Synodality and Small Christian Communities" by Michael Centore. 1 June 2023. Today's American Catholic (TAC) Website



TODAYSAMERICANCATHOLIC.ORG

[Loyola Institute for Ministry and Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa Advance the Work of Synodality and Small Christian](#)

We continue to research the “After College, What? Syndrome.” A college student can have an excellent experience in prayer and faith formation in a campus ministry program, but then get lost after graduation especially in finding a User Friendly Parish for Young Adults and/or a Small Faith Community (in person, online or hybrid) in his or her new professional work placement. A graduate of Yale Law School (New Haven, Connecticut, USA) was posted to Providence, Rhode Island, USA. In searching for a new parish he said:

I'm quite excited to find my new community when I move to Providence in just a few days. I am taking any and all recommendations for new parishes to try. Ideally, I would like to be part of a community that welcomes many perspectives, backgrounds, identities and hard conversations. I would especially like to meet other young Catholics. That said, I have been spoiled by our amazing Small Faith Sharing Community that is part of St. Thomas More (STM) Chapel and Center at Yale. I feel like I am strong enough in my faith to pay it forward. In other words, with the right people around me, I would love to build other vibrant Catholic communities in and around Providence.

How we wish that other Catholic college graduates would have the same desire and commitment to prioritize their faith life. May this be our constant prayer.

Response: "This graduate certainly has his priorities right. Besides the job, he finds it important to find a faith community as well so that his faith life is supported. It is also very uplifting that he appreciates the growth in faith that his former Small Faith Community enabled in him and that he feels developed enough to want to enable others. That is practical Christianity, a gift of Pentecost. He wants to, chooses to, spearhead other SCCs voluntarily. This is noble. May he meet with equal willingness from those he will invite on this journey.

We pray for and with the African Maryknoll seminarians who are taking their Permanent, Renewal and Temporary Oaths today at the Maryknoll New York, USA. Some were members of SCCs at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya.

From a Kenyan Maryknoll missionary priest serving in Guatemala: "With time, by God's grace, I'll figure out how to continue/strengthen/rejuvenate the *Comunidades Ecclesiales de Base*."

All three of these verbs are important. Remember that in Eastern Africa we say in Swahili:

"*Kuunda*" (to start or set up SCCs).

"*Kuimarisha*" (to make the SCCs strong).

"*Kudumisha*" (to make the SCC permanent and ongoing)

I am hopeful that the worldwide 2021 – 2024 Synodal Process will give new life to our SCCs/CEBs. At the Press Conference in Rome on Friday, 20 April, 2023 Sister Nathalie presented the "Report of the Synodal Continental Task Force" and emphasized "that the strong experience of Small Christian Communities/Base Ecclesial Communities in Asia, Africa and Oceania is an experience of synodality." **NOTE:** She had not visited Latin American gatherings at that time.

As the Synodal Process continues SCC leaders are involved in discerning the challenges of "Welcome and Hospitality:" Some comments:

1. In addition to the ministry of "Usher," John XXIII Church/Parish in Fort Myers, Florida, USA has a designated ministry of "Greeter" (parishioners who are volunteers with official nametags who stand at the door of the church to welcome people). A creative idea.
2. From Bugoma, Kenya: "Interesting idea. I am suggesting this right away to my Subparish Church in the village to have Greeters at the church entrance and to involve young people of both genders in the Subparish Council leadership team."

3. From Nativity Parish in Baltimore, Maryland, USA: "Everyone has a name tag on for security purposes. Each name tag identifies the name of the person and their ministry. As an example, a name tag would say, " Karen Sheehan - Greeter". We also felt that "Host" was a little more welcoming and modern than "Usher" but they essentially mean the same thing as far as your reference goes. Greeters are typically outside opening doors to the church for guests and Hosts are in the Sanctuary."
4. From Newark Archdiocese, New Jersey, USA: "YES - we are pushing for a Greeters Ministry and training Greeters not Ushers."
5. A friend told me that years ago he and his wife were traveling in California. They stopped at a Catholic Church on Sunday. A young 10 year old girl met them at the door of the church and said: "Welcome. I am the Greeter."

It is interesting that 30 years ago the Vatican discouraged the use of the word minister/ministry for lay people. It was associated with the clerical state. The preferred name for lay people was services. Now ministry/ministries is used everywhere for everyone. We have developed new lay ecclesial ministries in our SCCs in Eastern Africa. One example is Healing Minister who prays over the sick. Go to: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org>

During our US Regional Assembly at Maryknoll, New York, USA today we will have a Session on "Synodality/Synodal Process." Rather than the usual Small Discussion Groups we will have Small Communal Discernment Groups: Small Breakout Groups that follow the Steps of the Synodal Process. Prayers please. In promoting Synodality/Synodal Process let us see the positive side (how the glass is half full) rather than the negative side (how the glass is half empty).

Some follow-up:

1. Some participants said they used the steps of the Synodal Process for the first time. Key were the periods of silence and the deeper listening to the views of others. We need to learn the difference between the usual Small Discussion Groups and the Synod-inspired Small Communal Discernment Groups.
2. We hope that the newer Orbis Books help Maryknollers get into both the themes and the process of our Synodal Journey.

We can learn from the SCC models that are part of Protestant campus ministry programs. The Overflow Services are a key part of the Methodist Wesley experience at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, USA. They offer a wide range of small discussion groups, including the popular "God's Office Hours," where students debate topics including abortion, LGBTQ. rights and religion's relationship to politics. Austin is an accepting place for a lot of different communities. College students crave connection. One student said: "It's just about being a community who supports others and loves others."

"AMECEA: Prepares to Launch Golden Jubilee For Small Christian Communities Ecclesial Model in Region"



COMMUNICATIONS.AMECEA.ORG

AMECEA: Prepares to Launch Golden Jubilee For Small Christian Communities Ecclesial Model in Region

Today on the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ (Holy Eucharist) our Healey Hagerty Extended Family Zoom Mass took place in New Vernon, New Jersey, USA. During our Shared Homily Charlotte Hagerty quoted the example of the college student at Michigan State University, Michigan, USA: “I was a devout Catholic who went to a Catholic High School on the East Coast. Every Sunday I went to mass with my parents. In my first year at Michigan State I dutifully participated in Sunday Mass on the campus. Then I began to “drift” and didn’t find mass that interesting. I joined an Evangelical Church on campus that had lively singing, a band and entertaining sermons. But after a few months I felt something was missing. I had an unfulfilled yearning, desire, hunger for something more. Finally, I discovered that I really missed the Eucharist at the Catholic Mass. So I returned to the Catholic Church on campus and now feel very nourished by receiving Jesus Christ every Sunday in the sacrament of the Eucharist.”

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to help develop this yearning, desire and hunger for something more in Catholic Young People today.

"Good Case Study of Synodality/the Synodal Process:"

The Jesuits report that when Christian Life Community (CLC) Young Adults gather throughout the world, they reflect on their joys and challenges in Small Local Communities (SLCs). Through two or three rounds of authentic sharing and deep listening the young CLCers share how they are traveling, reflect on their prayer and notice God's action in their daily experience. The community experience of God's goodness equips the young people to face life's tough times with hope.

CLC is a caring space to celebrate life. It is a familiar space free from judgment and discrimination, where God's presence may be named. It is a home for welcoming and including everyone, walking together as friends and sharing life with one another.

We are trying to develop our Sukuma Legacy Project in a synodal way, to be a Synodal Church. I am reminded of the African Proverb in the Poll on our African Proverbs Website: *One hand does not raise a child*. Sukuma (Tanzania) Proverb. Father Zakaria Kashinje, OSA, an Augustinian priest originally from Ndoleleji Parish, Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania is coordinating the project. He is trying to learn Word Press with the help of Father Dave Smith, MM. He is also trying to set up World Remit for online fund raising.

Go to:

Traditional Legacy Research Society
<https://sukumalegacy.org>

The Traditional Legacy Research Society promotes the history, culture, oral literature — Proverbs, Sayings, Riddles, Stories, Myths and Songs — and visual representations of the Sukuma People in Tanzania in East Africa. There are various examples of SCCs and community values. Includes a Blog (comments on the Sukuma Legacy Project).

Small Christian Community Members remain committed to the Synodal Process. It is important that the African delegates to the Synod in Rome in October, 2023 explain the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa. Concerning the selection of delegates Cardinal Robert McElroy of San Diego Diocese, USA says: “I too am hopeful that the lay members of the synod will include those outside the mainstream so as to bring all perspectives to the synodal discernment. And I will certainly try to advance that in conversations that I have on the selection of delegates.”

Kenyan's Preparations for World Youth Day in Portugal in “top gear”: National Chaplain

[Kenyan's Preparations for World Youth Day in Portugal in “top gear”: National Chaplain \(aciafrica.org\)](https://www.aciafrica.org/.../new-co-published-book-on...)

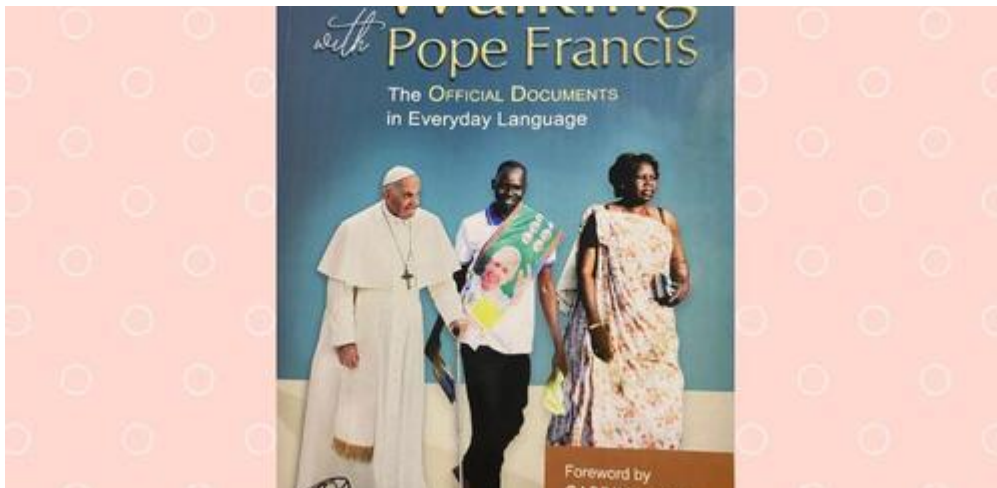
The 41 member delegation (25 female and 16 male) from Kenya that will participate in the August 1-6, 2023 event comprises 29 youth, two bishops, eight priests, and two women religious. Four of the youth (two young women who are studying at Kenyatta University) and two young men who graduated from Kenyatta University) are from our Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community. We congratulate Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi for being chosen to be the coordinator of the 29 youth and to carry the Kenyan Flag in the WYD Procession in Lisbon, Portugal.

For many years we have encouraged Small Christian Communities (SCCs) of young people. Kenyatta University has excellent SCCs as documented on our SCCs Website and Facebook Page.

Low cost books related to Pope Francis are important resources for SCC members. See the ACI Africa (Association for Catholic Information in Africa) Online News Service (a service of EWTN News) article on the Paulines Publications Africa Edition of *Walking with Pope Francis - The Official Documents in Everyday Language*. \$10. Nairobi, Kenya.

"New Co-published Book on Pope Francis “suitable for all categories of people”:
 Pauline Nun"
<https://www.aciafrica.org/.../new-co-published-book-on...>

I like the “walking together” cover. There are many good links to the pope's writings.



ACIAFRICA.ORG

New Co-published Book on Pope Francis “suitable for all categories of people”: Pauline Nun

As SCC members worldwide participate in Synodality/the Synodal Process, we are often asking what is a specific Catholic Church action/decision related to Synodality/the Synodal Process. Here is a good example from the US Catholic Bishops’ meeting in Orlando, Florida, USA.

Bishop Michael Olsen of Fort Worth, Texas, USA, a member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine, described revising the “Health Care Directives on Transgender Patients” as a "synodal" process that will require significant listening to show pastoral sensitivity and compassion to people while staying true to Catholic moral doctrine.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL or Working Document) of the Synod in Rome in October, 2023 will be available on Tuesday, 20 June, 2023.

Some key points:

1. While the IL is primarily a document for the participants of the October, 2023 assembly, it is also a valuable tool for individual groups at the diocesan and national levels to continue their journey of reflection and discernment on how we walk together as a Catholic Church; and to carry out ecclesial initiatives. NOTE: This applies to Small Christian Communities as well.

2. At the Press Conference in Rome to present the IL there will be brief testimonies on the preparation of members for the October Assembly and the possible use of the "Instrumentum Laboris" by local groups including by Father Rafael Simbine Junior, Secretary General of SECAM (remotely).

The USA Bishops’ new 10-year "2023-2033 National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry" contains 10 pastoral priorities: evangelization and mission, faith formation and catechesis, pastoral accompaniment of Hispanic/Latino families, youth and young adult ministries, immigration and advocacy, formation for ministry in a culturally diverse church, pastoral care for those in the periphery, liturgy and spirituality, promotion of vocations, and Catholic education.

Categories:

Specific People:

Families
 Youth
 Young Adults
 Those in the periphery

Specific Ministries:

Families
 Youth
 Young Adults
 Those in the periphery
 Specific Ministries:
 Advocacy
 Catechesis
 Catholic education
 Evangelization
 Faith formation
 Formation for ministry
 Immigration
 Liturgy
 Mission
 Spirituality
 Vocations

Compare this plan to the Eastern Africa (AMECEA) Pastoral Plan that has these differences in its priorities:

1. Formation of all agents of evangelization on all levels is the first priority.
2. Emphasis on Small Christian Communities is a key pastoral priority. NOTE: In relation to Synodality/the Synodal Process the SCC Model of Church with its weekly lectionary-based faith sharing is the preferred methodology, not just one option among many.
3. Committed to Holistic Evangelization and Integral Development.
4. Deeper evangelization, constant conversion and prayer, inculturation, ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue.
5. Empowering the laity and the religious men and women to play their active role in the Catholic Church and society.
6. Preferential option for the poor, oppressed and marginalized.
7. Networking, effective communication, and advocacy.
8. Poverty eradication, sustainable development.

May our SCC members read, reflect on and put into practice the

**XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS
 FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, MISSION**

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS For the First Session (October 2023)

SYNOD.VA
www.synod.va

Small Christian Communities are not specifically mentioned in the *Working Document*, but are referred to in other terms/wording: new communities, lay-led groups, lay associations, lay movements and ecclesial movements. This brought the following comments:

- A participant in a Zoom Gathering said: “There is no mention of Small Church Communities in the Working Document. I was surprised it wasn't included because it was in submissions from the different continents.”
- A participant in a Zoom Gathering said: "Members of Small Intentional Communities (SICs) in the Local Churches around the world are missionary disciples carrying out their evangelizing role."
- Email message to Rafael Luciandi: “Allow me to respectfully ask one more question that people have given to me: Why are the terms/names SCCs and CEBs/Base Communities absent in the Working Document?”

Some background:

At a Press Conference in Rome on Friday, 20 April, 2023 Sister Nathalie presented the “Report of the Synodal Continental Task Force” and emphasized “that the strong experience of Small Christian Communities/Base Ecclesial Communities in Asia, Africa and Oceania is an experience of synodality.”

In our webinar with the Catholic Young Adult Seekers based in Kenya you emphasized the important of CEBs (*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*) in Latin America. Even in the “Question and Answers” period in today’s webinar you referred to the importance of Base Communities.

Here is what we wrote on our SCCs Facebook Page:

“Small Christian Communities are not specifically mentioned in the *Working Document*, but are referred to in other terms/wording: new communities, lay-led groups, lay associations, lay movements and ecclesial movements.”

Are lay-led groups the equivalent of base communities? Please advise. Thanks.”

Thanks for sharing. Also, the use of "we" language instead of "I" language brings out the true spirit of journeying/walking together in the Small Christian Communities.

There is a disconnect here. In several meetings with Pope Francis young people from around the world have urged the pope not to use “churchy” language in his speeches and documents including not using Latin. This “insider language” turns young people off. Yet this 2023 Synod Document uses *Instrumentum Laboris* (the literal translation is “instrument of work”) rather than *Working Document*. The irony is that the document itself emphasizes the “Preferential Option for Young People” and No. B 1.5 e) states: “in the relationship between the Christian community and young people, many of whom feel excluded by the language adapted in [Catholic] Church contexts, which can seem incomprehensible to them.”

Latin is complicated. Here is an example that can confuse young people:

Alumnus: singular for male graduate

Alumni: plural for male graduates

Alumna: singular for female graduate⁵²³

Alumnae: plural for female graduates

Congratulations Alloys M. Nyakundi, MPS a Kenyan young person and alumnus of Kenyatta University, Kenya for being selected as the Kenyan flag bearer for the Kenyan delegation that will be attending the World Youth Day celebration in Lisbon, Portugal (July 26 - August 7). He is in charge of the Small Christian Communities for young people and a facilitator of Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community that creates a safe space for young people from different parts of the world to share their life challenges and support one another. Alloys will be joining other young people from different parts of the world to do rehearsals in preparation for welcoming the Pope while in Lisbon. Gratitude to the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops for bestowing faith to Alloys Nyakundi.

May Mwanajumuiya Alloys proudly carry the Kenyan flag.

An example of the change in wording in Catholic Church documents is “Local Church” gradually replacing “Particular Church.” Footnote 3 of the *Instrumentum Laboris* states: “The expression ‘Local Church’ here indicates what the “Code of Canon Law” calls the ‘Particular Church’”. The term Particular Church was enshrined in the documents of Vatican II and the new Code of Canon Law. But it has undergone new meanings in new contexts as explained by theologian Father 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.

Bishop Colin Davies says that “Particular Church” is part of the vocabulary of the structures of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and does not fit the African context.

A Ghana woman theologian added: “I love this! Wisdom from the Local Church that is essential for a Synodal Church!” Another comment: “Africa, both the People of God and

⁵²³ How mistakes multiply on the internet. In an article in the *ACIAfrica Online News Service* Alloys Nyakundi was mistakenly identified as a Kenyatta University Alumna (female). This was repeated by the *AMECEA Online News Service* and other social media. Careful proofreading is essential, not just blindly copying from an existing online source.

Gospel of St. *Matthew* 20 1-16a (“The Workers in the Vineyard”) one SCC member living in Morristown, New Jersey, USA said: “When I drove by the train station this morning, Hispanic workers were standing around waiting to be hired as day laborers/casual workers. When I returned around noon some were still standing there.” We were struck by the relevancy of the Gospel for today’s world.

Jesus uses this metaphor of hiring workers in the vineyard to explain God’s plan of salvation. The Jewish people, the Chosen Nation, received the invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven first. The Gentiles were invited later. But all are equal in the Kingdom. Pope Francis calls us to go the poor on the margins and peripheries of society and invite them. There is no favoritism, no discrimination. The present 2021 – 2024 Synodal Process encourages us to “enlarge the space of our tent” so everyone can fit into the Catholic Church including the homeless, LGBTQ people, persons with special needs and others. All are invited.

Comment from Alloys Nyakundi: "I just wanted to comment about the gospel and preaching so that preaching is more provocative, that is, people can relate the homily to their life experiences. For me, I think most of the priests or bishops are not in touch with the real experiences of people. When they're preparing their homilies, they prepare the homilies based on their own experiences, what they feel about life and what they feel is right for the people. But for example, when we are talking about Small Christian Communities, and this is where we have people gathering themselves in their houses somewhere and reading the Gospel and sharing their experiences. So if we had priests and bishops meeting people at this level, and listening to the people, they would use those experiences from the people in preparing their homilies. And so on Sunday, when they give their homilies they will be giving their homilies based on what they listened to in the experiences that people have shared in their SCC gatherings."

Clyde has done a big service for us after our CCRI Zoom Presentation. He says: “Here is a transcript generated by otter.ai., along with the audio file. I don’t have time to complete editing the raw transcript, so we’ll see how useful it is.”

Producing a written transcript generated by otter.ai came out fine. Here is a section that I have edited and posted on our SCCs Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>):

Joe Healey 56:15

Thank you, Paul, for your many insights, especially the historical trajectory. I'd like to build on what you said in referring to Paul VI in 1971 and then Karl Rahner. We have on this call five or six people from Africa. The African theologians say that the documents coming from Rome continue to be European--centered, or Eurocentric, you might call it. I want to give a specific example. We're very interested in what are called Small Christian Communities. They go by many names. These came out of the liberation theology that you refer to with Gutierrez -- the CEBs of Latin America. In all the documents of Vatican Two, and all of Canon Law, there's not one word about small community or subparish or outstation, nothing below the parish level. The African theologians are saying that we should look at the grassroots that you refer to, that we have to expand our documents. Canon Law should include these Local Church pastoral structures. Do you think our experiences in the Global Church are going to enter into new documents that come out of Rome? Thank you.

Paul Lakeland 57:54

Well, before I tried to offer my wise words on this, do any of our African brothers and sisters want to comment on that? Anyone want to add some things to support Joe's remark?

Irish priest who served in West Africa 58:13

Well, thank you for your insights. Paul, I am a Spiritan missionary priest. I lived for over 34 years in West Africa. I was ordained before Vatican Two. But when it came, we really, really took it to heart. And we tried to put it into practice. And since then we believe that the model of the church that is the most commonly used in the last 100 years is that of an organization or institution with stress on those structural elements, especially the hierarchy. We believe that this model does not express the theology of the Church of Vatican Two. And we believe that the idea of the People of God is best brought into reality by Small Christian Communities. This was our pastoral direction all the time I lived in West Africa. And I still try to practice it here. I'm living on a small island off the coast of Ireland.

Paul Lakeland 59:30

Yes. You know I'm not telling any of you anything new when I say that, of course, the work of the vision of Pope Francis is drawn from the Latin American experience. And Pope Francis I think is just as keen as you are in changing the church in a way in which Small Intentional Communities have the kind of role that they should have. I think he would agree with every word you've said. I think that you can see a sign of it. Francis has a horrible job -- trying to transform this ossified structure into something more, more alive in the Spirit. But it's bureaucratic in a way. But this is his job. One of the signs is the restructuring of the Roman Curia. And I don't want to go into the details, but there are two important things. One is he said, "Well, lay people cannot exercise governing roles in the Curia." That's very interesting. But the most important thing, he downgraded the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, and what does he put at the top, the Dicastery for Evangelization. So he's talking about the most important thing in the church is proclaiming the gospel. And that's done in local communities. It's not done by some bishop or power or theologian writing a book, it's done by people to people. So I do think that he wants this to happen. Whether this will happen or not seems to me to depend primarily on whether this adventure of Synodality actually works. And my guess is, it's going to work. And I'm talking about something I know nothing about now. So forgive me, my guess it is going to work much more likely in Africa and Asia and Latin America than it is in Europe and North America. And, of course, you know, the church in Europe and North America is in fairly desperate straits, I would say.

Today 29 June on this great Feast of St. Peter and Paul let us be energized by the witness of these two apostles to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Serge Gabriel Sindani, who is from the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, DRC said the duty of the popularization of the 3rd National Eucharistic Congress is to each participant. "At my own level, I'm already passing on the exhortations that I've received to my family and to my Base Community. I hope that parishes and other Base Communities will do the same."

July 2023 to September 2023 Poll: My favorite proverb of the month on "Togetherness" – Part II is...

<https://afriprov.tangaza.ac.ke/>

The six choices represent six African Proverbs that highlight the priorities and concerns of the 2021 –2024 Synod/Synodal Process that means the People of God in the Catholic Church walking together and journeying together.

The *AMECEA Online Newsletter* states: “Among the many countries that will be represented during the World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, we are blessed as a country to hoist the Kenyan flag,” the National Youth Chaplain for the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) Father Cosmas Mwova shared in an interview with *AMECEA Online* adding that it is a recognition for the country. According to the youth chaplain, Mr. Alloys Mogere Nyakundi will be the Kenyan flag bearer for the Kenyan delegation.

Mr. Nyakundi, an alumnus of Kenyatta University in Kenya is in charge of the Small Christian Communities (SCC’s) for young people and a facilitator of Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community that creates a safe space for young people from different parts of the world to share their life challenges and support one another.”

Language is tricky. "In charge of" is not the correct wording. In the SCC Model of Church no one person is in charge. That is the traditional top-down model of leadership, governance and authority. Better to use "coordinator" or "facilitator" or "animator."

This is an opportunity to share the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa with the young people of Europe and other parts of the world.

Alloys Mogere Nyakundi: “I’m so grateful and honored for this great opportunity to represent my country, Kenya in Lisbon, Portugal.”

Celebration of the Golden Jubilee (1973 -- 2023) of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa

Sunday, 20 August, 2023: Launch of the 50th Anniversary (1973 -- 2023 of SCCs, Dedza Diocese, Malawi.

Monday, 21 August, 2023 to Wednesday 23 August, 2023: SCCs Workshop, Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi

ANNOUNCEMENT: It is important that we continue to evaluate our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa so we can make it better. Please vote in the current polls.

Eighty-sixth Round (July, 2023 – August, 2023): The best part of my Small Christian Community is:

1. Lens through which we see the world.
2. Where the Holy Spirit works.
3. Backbone of the Catholic Church in Africa.
4. Reinvigorated SCCs as a fruit of Synodality.
5. Weekly lectionary-based faith sharing leading to practical action.
6. Most complete Synodal Process in the parish.

Vote at:



SMALLCHRISTIANCOMMUNITIES.ORG

Small Christian Communities – Small Christian Communities

Small Christian Communities

These six choices were proposed by our SCC members themselves. Each choice represents an important aspect of the SCCs Pastoral Model of Church – both the dynamics and the activities.

Celebration of the Golden Jubilee (1973 -- 2023) of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa

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Comments in the Forum:

- Dedza Diocese has been chosen as the venue of the launch for historical reasons. Mua Parish in this diocese is a very Catholic Parish where Bishop Patrick Kalilombe was born.
- Diane Friederich Kledzik: Congratulations on living out this pastoral priority! Grateful for the opportunity I had 5 years ago to visit Malawi with Catholic Relief Services.
- Thanks, Diane. Lilongwe Archdiocese in Malawi was the first diocese in Eastern Africa to start the AMECEA Pastoral Priority in 1973!
- Oya, love from Nigeria, congratulations.

Good question for our Thursday, 6 July 2023 Online Young Adult Seekers SCC gathering:

Look around and create images that you find reflect the synodal way of church/SCC way of church. Every person will get an opportunity to share her/his image/s. You can draw or get an image from your ministry place of work, friends or Local Church. The key here is to get images that can help us reflect deeply on how we can live Synodality/the Synodal Way and the Small Christian Community Way.

Some answers: see below:

How many Catholic Church *Parish Bulletins* (printed or online) have the lectionary-based scripture readings for daily mass in the following week and invite parishioners by saying: "We invite you to prayerfully reflect on the Readings for the week of ..." The best online parish bulletins have hyperlinks to the daily lectionary-based Scripture Readings. Again we ask: How many people read the Gospel of the following Sunday ahead of time -- before entering the church on Sunday? How many read it in a community?

The New Language of Synodality/the Synodal Process (evolving)NewOld

Accompanying

Leading

Bottom up

Top down

Deeper listening to others

Giving one's views/position

Dialogue

Exchange of opinions

Discern

Judge

Discernment

Discussion

Gathering

Meeting

Global South

Developing Countries

Horizontal

Vertical

Inclusive

Exclusive

LGBTQ+

objectively disordered

Local Church

Particular Church

People of God

Clerical

Spiritual conversation

Discussion

Walking together
Journeying together

Hierarchical

Additions and comments are welcome.

An active Kenyan Catholic lay woman in the Catholic Church shared this: "This Sunday I participated in the training of all leaders that were elected in our parish recently. All the facilitators who were Catholic priests never mentioned the Synod or Catholic social teaching. One taught us on what the *Bible* says about leadership. This sounded like a Protestant teaching. No mention of Catholicism and her teaching on the subject. Is there a Protestantization or Pentecostalization of the Catholic Church or a sabotage of Pope Francis among African Catholic Clergy?"

In the "Synodal Process" there should be lay people (women and men) involved in the teaching and training of new leaders in the parish.

Research indicates that in both Eastern Africa and the USA Catholic priests, especially younger priests, are behind in emphasizing Synodality and using the "Synodal Process."

Our Thursday, 6 July 2023 Online Young Adult Seekers SCC gathering consisted of 18 people from Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Tanzania and USA. Our topic was:

“Look around or create visual images that you find reflecting the synodal way of church/SCC way of church. Every person will get an opportunity to share her/his image/s. You can draw or get an image from your ministry place of work, friends or the Local Church. The key here is to get visual images that can help us reflect deeply on how we can live Synodality/the Synodal Way and the Small Christian Community Way.”

Participants shared the following 14 visual images:

- Official logo of the Synod 2021- 2024: drawing of a line of a wide variety of people walking in one direction
- Photo of a wide variety of people walking together hand in hand (meaning of Synod).
- Photo of Brown, Black, Red, White and Yellow hands intertwined/holding each others' wrists
- Drawing of a Chain of Discipleship: six young people standing and holding hands in front of a church
- Photo of a Small Christian Community (SCC) Gathering that meets every Saturday in the parish: 15 people sitting in a circle
- Photo of a Small Christian Community (SCC) gathering in Kenyatta University, Kenya with students from different ethnic backgrounds and from different parts of the country
- Photo of a Workshop on Synodality on where everyone is sitting together in a circle
- Photo of different people together in a gathering of the Parish Choir
- Photo of young people sitting in a circle praying the rosary
- Photo of children planting a tree seedling
- Picture of the Holy Family: Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus
- Photo of the Salesian family in the Catholic Church: priests, brothers and lay people together
- Photo of a parish where everyone is connected and communicating
- Photo of a mother goat, her two babies and a little dog together

Isenjia, Silas, “Malawi Bishops Call For ‘Reflective Moments’ Ahead of Small Christian Communities Jubilee,” *ACI Africa Online Newsletter*, 7 July, 2023, ACI Africa Website, retrieved on 7 July, 2023, [Malawi Bishops Call for “reflective moments” ahead of Small Christian Communities Jubilee \(aciafrica.org\)](https://www.aciafrica.org/malawi-bishops-call-for-reflective-moments-ahead-of-small-christian-communities-jubilee/)

The event to be launched on Sunday, 20 August, 2023 in all the Catholic Dioceses of Malawi and conclude in July, 2024. The SCCs Golden Jubilee celebrations, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) Secretary General says, aim to highlight four fundamental characteristics of this model of being church, which include *Bible*-centeredness, the communion of the people, having outreach to the people, and promoting the principle of subsidiarity. Includes an excellent photo of a meeting of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) region. Credit: Meru Diocese.



People ask: What does a SCCs Workshop look like? This photo describes it best. Participants gather in SCCs.

Most people don't think of the fundamental characteristic of "promoting the principle of subsidiarity." The SCCs Model of Church is the church from below, from the grassroots. Decision making is on the local level.

My favorite parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA is St. Joan of Arc. Years ago there was a SCCs Convocation in Minneapolis/St. Paul (at St. Thomas University). Our African delegation did not want to stay at a hotel or at the university but with a SCC-related family. We stayed with a family in Edina, Minnesota. A young couple with little children. Lots of fun. The husband was on the active Parish Pastoral Council of St. Joan of Arc representing “young couples with children.” Ahead of its time. We went to a picnic of their Intergenerational SCC when the grandparents came too.

Julia Oseka is a young adult delegate to the Synod in Rome in October, 2023. Julia is originally from Poland and now is a student (Class of 2025) at Saint Joseph's University (SJU) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Here are some of her views and suggestions:

1. "Synodality should have the spirit of coffee meet-ups. "We should meet not only with our peers, but also with our professors and the people who are leading the Catholic Church — with our parish priests, with our ministers, with our bishops and with our religious sisters."

2. Philadelphia Archbishop Nelson Perez took her up on the offer. They shared coffee together the following month and discussed the importance of the participation of women and young people in the Church, as well as the presence of underserved communities. Oseka's conversation with Perez led to her being selected as the delegate for the North American continental stage in February, 2023. She was the only college student from Philadelphia's Synodality in Catholic Higher Education group to represent the Philadelphia Archdiocese at the event. The experience was "absolutely breathtaking," Oseka says. "And I'm extremely grateful and honestly very happy that Archbishop Perez wanted young people to be involved in the continental stage." Oseka hopes that her participation on the continental stage will help create a more inclusive church for everyone like the community she has found at SJU. "What are my hopes?," Oseka asks, "That our smaller communities will continue to gather — not only gather and talk about the Catholic Church but also in different fields. The conversations on campus show that young people want to be involved, that people care about their spirituality."

Julia Oseka '25

For more info:

On Stage at the Global Synod



SJU.EDU
On Stage at the Global Synod

Congratulations to Cardinal-elect Protase Rugambwa, the Coadjutor Archbishop of Tabora, Tanzania on his nomination as cardinal. How many people know that he did his doctorate dissertation in Rome on SCCs? Here is the bibliographical reference:

Protase Rugambwa, "Ministry and Collaboration in Small Christian Communities: Communities in Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania, a Case Study," Rome: Lateran University, 1998.

As a graduate student in Rome I remember him visiting Rulenge Diocese in Tanzania to do research. Here is a good quote from him. "We need to always think of SCCs as relevant pastoral structures that foster the work of evangelization."

Announcement: As we continue to strengthen the SCCs in the AMECEA region, the *SCCs Training Handbook* has been reproduced in Malawi in two local languages, that is Tumbuka and Chichewa (as per the cover picture below of the two books respectively)

AMECEA

Association of Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa

Ŵalembi

Emmanuel Chimombo, Joseph G. Healey, Rita Ishengoma,
Fabian P. Mulenga, Rose Musimba, Alphonse C. L. Omolo

KUKHOZGA KAKULIRO KA MAUZENZEZGANI MU AFRICA



Buku La Kunjirikizgira
Ŵasambizgi

AMECEA

Association of Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa

Akonzi a Bukuli

Emmanuel Chimombo, Joseph G. Healey, Rita Ishengoma,
Fabian P. Mulenga, Rose Musimba, Alphonse C. L. Omolo

**Kulimbikitsa Miphakati/
Malimana mu Africa**



**Buku Lophunzitsira
ndi Kusulira**

It is great that the different countries of AMECEA are producing their own translations of the handbook. This shows the SCCs Model of Church on the grassroots level.

Kate McElwee of the Women's Ordination Conference: "In fact, the [working] document suggests considering what 'new ministries' could be created for women specifically. Just as it isn't difficult to envisage women as deacons, there is an abundance of evidence of women around the world embodying 'new ministries' that meet the needs of the people of God. I think of women-church and Base Community models that are not constrained by what is, and is not, supposedly permissible in the eyes of Rome."

The reform group FutureChurch sponsored a Zoom Webinar on the topic "Participation, Governance, and Authority," the third in the SynodWatch series covering the "Working Document" of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. 1 hour and 8:36 minutes. The 10:22 minute talk on "Synodality in the African Context" by Joseph G. Healey (in collaboration with African leaders) can be found on YouTube from the 30:58 minute mark to the 41:20 minute mark.



[YOUTUBE.COM](https://www.youtube.com)

[SynodWatch Session 3: Participation, Governance, and Authority](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

A total of 245 people watched the webinar live and many more are seeing it later on YouTube.

From our webinar it is clear that the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa is not known in USA. It is different from the SCCs in America that go by many names. So I added the following in my talk: "The Small Christian Community or base community is an official ecclesial, pastoral structure in many countries in Africa. In the nine countries of Eastern Africa there are 195,000 SCCs, yes, 195,000! A SCC is a small neighborhood, parish-based group in an urban or rural area that is a pastoral model of church that transforms the parish into a communion of communities and an instrument of evangelization. Ideally it has weekly lectionary based faith-sharing when SCC members reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday and connects it to our daily lives and regular practical action and social outreach.

Ideally the parish is a communion or network of SCCs. The Sunday Eucharist, the high point of the liturgical week, is the union/communion/gathering of all the SCCs.

To follow up our Zoom conversation on FutureChurch last night I have made some notes as follows:

One the most interesting questions in the Q & A period was about Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the American context. In various parts of the USA some Catholic parishes are closing, some Catholic parishes are clustering/amalgamating and new Catholic megaparishes are being built. Can SCCs be part of these megaparishes? I answered that we need to be creative in the Catholic Church and we can learn from the megachurches in the growing Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches in the USA. To expand I could have described our SCCs research on what I call the Rick Warren Model of Church based on his Saddleback Church in California as follows:

This represents a new trend 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?

We do not agree with Rich Warren’s top down style. His Saddleback Church is an Evangelical Baptist multi-site megachurch, based in Lake Forest, California. It is the largest church in California, and one of the largest in the United States of America. The church has several campuses in California and around the world. After his sermon on a particular theme or topic on Sunday that is broadcast simultaneously in the various campus/satellite churches of Saddleback Church in California, 1000s of small groups meet (in person or online) in the middle of the week to view a video based on the previous Sunday’s sermon. Then small group discussion follows. The initiative comes from Rick Warren and his team who produce the videos and choose the themes and topics.

Our Catholic SCCs Model is from the grassroots up. Ideally our SCCs are weekly lectionary based faith-sharing small communities that reflect on the Gospel of the Sunday and connect it to our daily lives and promote regular practical action and social outreach. The parish is a communion or network of SCCs.

Joseph Healey, "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 revised and updated from the 2012 print version, is available as a free, online Ebook containing 1,435 pages as of 3 August, 2023 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website:

https://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf

page 572.

Comments are welcome.

By the way the term “Small Christian Community” is not well known in the USA. More common are the terms Small Prayer Group, Small Faith Sharing Group and Small Bible Group. Small Self-help Group, Small Self-Interest Group and Small Support Group are a different model. Ideally the parish is a communion or network of SCCs.

SMALLCHRISTIANCOMMUNITIES.ORG

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>

From a participant: "I loved your phrase ‘communion ecclesiology’--it will be a guiding theme for me during my retreat. And the audience member's comments about the Salvadoran nuns ‘dancing the spirit out of the earth were quite moving. I look forward to sharing further reflections on the megachurch -- SCC relationship you outline. What attracts me to SCCs is their inherent humility--how to preserve this if/when SCCs amalgamate into larger parish structures is the key question.

Since the "Working Document" says there is likely to be a need after the 2023 synod session for theological reflections and for discussions about changes in *Canon Law*, I asked Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ, the Relator General of the Synod of Bishops, to give an example where he thinks there might be such a need. He cited the role of Parish and Diocesan Pastoral Councils which are currently optional under *Canon Law* but may be necessary in the future. “Today that’s a possibility in *Canon Law*, but I think it should be more than a possibility. Because how can you as a bishop be the pastor of the church if there is no way of knowing what people think and feel about the church? he asked.

Let us pray for and with our Young Adults in Kenya who are going the Portuguese Embassy in Nairobi for their visa interviews to go to World Youth Day in Lisbon in August, 2023.

Kenyan Catholics in the USA held their annual Kenyan Catholic Conference in the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA this past weekend. Kenyan parents in the USA are committed to their children growing up in local *Jumuiyas* (SCCs). Also Diocesan Twinning

- Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA with Kitui Diocese, Kenya
- St. Cloud Diocese, Minnesota, USA with Homa Bay Diocese, Kenya

is very important for the future development of the worldwide Synodal Catholic Church. One participant wrote: “I think Archbishop Hebda's interest is genuine [in SCCs] and could find expression in the implementation of our post-synodal pastoral plan that intends to reinvigorate the life of our parish communities. And, because of our archdiocesan partnership with the Kitui Diocese, Kenyans could very well be our teachers in this. I'm glad the Holy Spirit is helping to move your conversation along.”

Feedback and Forum:

- “The Kenyan Catholic Conference was filled with good energy with Kenyan Catholics coming from about 12 states across the country. Liz Mach, Mike Haasl and I also attended on Saturday festivities. Very well done and a clear sign of how the

SCCs are a very important part of Kenya faith life in America. Thanks and wonderful to see the email comments from Archbishop Hebda to you as well.”

- "A clear sign of how the SCCs are a very important part of Kenya faith life in America."
- "I have talked with many of these Kenyan immigrant families. They want their children here in the USA to have the same SCCs family formation experience that they had when growing up in Kenya. This crosses ethnic and financial lines."
- “Last weekend was wonderful seeing many Kenyans from several states gathered at St. Alphonsus Catholic Church Hall with the general theme: ‘Walking Together in Faith Amidst Challenges.’” It was a great success."
- “I am just overjoyed to hear that Kenyans in the US are planning to follow through with SCCs for their young ones similar to their upbringing back in Kenya. That is truly heartwarming. I wanted to encourage you to give them the support you can and in case formation/training is required, we can easily deliver this online since we have the tools already prepared. I am interested to know how this progresses and ready to give a hand.”
- “You have a good desire to develop SCCs in the diaspora, especially for the Kenyan communities around the USA using online platforms. I’m open to it and will let them know that, especially the SCCs leaders in Minnesota.”
- “For online SCC training with the age of technology distance is only a ZOOM, Skype, Google Meet, Teams or an MS Teams call away.”

Stimulated by various webinars and gatherings (in person and online) on Synodality and the Synodal Process we are following the Catholic Dioceses in the USA that have Post-Synodal Pastoral Plans. They are not waiting for more gatherings, documents and directives from Rome but following the approved Synodal Process, these dioceses are implementing their Listening Sessions (and their various recommendations) in their own dioceses in the past two years. Here are some leading questions:

1. How can Small Christian Communities (SCCs) reinvigorate the life of our parish communities.
2. How can SCCs be involved in new ministries such as Greeter.
3. How can SCCs be a significant part of the megaparishes being built in states such as Texas and Florida.
4. How can these Small Faith Communities especially among Hispanic Catholics be a new face of the Catholic Church?
5. How can these Small Faith Communities (hybrid meaning both in person and online) develop among graduates (*alumni* and *alumnae*) of both Catholic and secular universities.
6. How can Kenyan Catholics living in the USA who are familiar with the SCCs Model of Church help their parishes and parishioners with formation, education and training. We can take advantage of the many online programs for SCCs formation, education and training.

As we compare the SCCs Pastoral Model of Church to the evolving model of the Synodal Church a report from Rome is quite interesting. For the October, 2023 Synod the Pope Paul VI audience hall will be transformed into a venue for small group, roundtable discussions. The plan is based on a Latin American ecclesial gathering in Mexico in

November, 2021 that included more than 50 small groups for discussion and discernment. This was a communitarian experience that emerged from the grassroots with the People of God as the subject. The premise of the ongoing Synod Process is that the Catholic Church must now convert its authority and structures to create space and formation. opportunities for the People of God to participate, assemble and discern.

“Show me the facts” says a researcher. Ellie Hidalgo, co-director of Discerning Deacons says: “The Franciscan Catechists (congregation of religious sisters) have a vocation to be the presence of the Catholic Church in remote lands in Latin America where there are no priests. The Archdiocese of Porto Velho, Brazil spans 33,000 square miles and has 32 priests. By comparison, the USA state of Indiana is nearly 36,000 square miles and has 735 priests as of 2021. The diaconal charisms of Word, liturgy and service that God bestows on women is very much needed at the margins.”

This commitment to diaconal community service is often multigenerational. One older woman was a catechist and a key community leader who catalyzed numerous *comunidades eclesiales de base* (Base Communities or Small Christian Communities) in Porto Velho. She developed a Formation Center that prepared Catholics to lead and sustain a network of vibrant Base Communities in the absence of a priest.

Pope upholds Brazilian BECs' commitment to promote an outgoing Church

By Lisa Zengarini

Pope Francis sends a message of encouragement to a Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) meeting in Brazil, emphasizing that the Catholic Church must never remain “hidden”. Pope Francis has encouraged Brazilian Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) to continue working for an "outgoing" church, saying that a church that goes out to the world is stronger.

He gave this encouragement as the group opened their 15th Inter-ecclesial Meeting, which kicked off on 18 July, 2023 in Rondonópolis, in the Brazilian State of Mato Grosso, on the theme “Basic Ecclesial Communities: an outgoing Church pursuing the full life for all men and women”. This is 15th BECs Inter-ecclesial Meeting. Brazilian BECs held their first national inter-ecclesial meeting in 1975.

The event gathers about 1,500 participants from across Brazil to discuss the current social and economic challenges facing the country, including the negative impact on local communities and the environment of indiscriminate mining activities, and the ongoing commitment of Basic Ecclesial Communities to transform and update the church’s mission in rural areas, urban centers and peripheries.

Participants include representatives of the regional BECs, of indigenous peoples, and of Quilombo communities (descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves who escaped from slave plantations – ed.), leaders of social organizations linked to the Church, social activists, religious men and women, priests and 63 bishops, as well as guests from other Christian Churches.

Discussions, running until 22 July, 2023 are focused on five thematic areas including: Synodality and Power in the Church; the Political and Social Dimension; the Economy of Francesco; Integral Ecology and Education.

This focus on an "Outgoing Church" corresponds to the practical action/social outreach of the SCCs in Eastern Africa.

"Case Study of How We Started Prisca and Aquila Companions Online Small Christian Community," by Valerie Stroud, 13:47 minutes (from 42:12 minutes to 56:01 minutes) in "Towards Pentecost 2023 -- Signs of the Spirit with companions Kevin Gallagher, Nicholas Postlethwaite and Valerie Stroud," Scottish Laity Network Webinar, Towards Pentecost 2023 ~ Signs of the Spirit with companions Kevin Gallagher, Nicholas Postlethwaite - YouTube. Thursday 18 May, 2023, 1 hour and 28:23 minutes.
<https://youtu.be/LMgikow0AnQ>

For this Towards Pentecost 2023 program the three presenters again reflected on their Synodal Submission and, in the light of their recommendations, sought to discern where there are possible "Signs of the Spirit." This third session, Thursday 18 May, 2023 -- "Where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them" -- was an opportunity to explore how our discipleship can develop through coming together in Small Groups either face to face or online. Kevin, Nicholas and Valerie shared how the current development of Small Ecclesial Groups (SEGs) is located in the "change of era" as affirmed by Pope Francis. There is also a renewed appreciation of the dynamic of Small Group encounters in Scripture. During the conversation ways of setting up and facilitating Small Groups were shared but it was stressed that there is no one model and it depends on the composition of the group and how the Spirit guides and empowers it.

Valerie's Case Study's full title was: "Patrons: Prisca and Aquila Acts 18: A Small Community in Cyberspace in the Catholic Christian Tradition, but welcoming everyone." Her excellent powerpoint describes the creation of the SCC step by step. It meets weekly on Tuesdays on Zoom and communicates regularly through Google Group. 15 companions with 6- 8 each week on Zoom. Lectionary readings are the foundation. Exploring the readings on a Tuesday adds value to the following Sunday celebration of the Word and Eucharist.

Creative combination of Zoom and a Google Group.

I am reading about young people from different countries enjoying the first of two weeks in Portugal – living with host families and experiencing family life and parish life on the local level in different cities in Portugal. I remember when the Zambian Young People went to Brazil for two full weeks for the World Youth Day in 2013 and it worked perfectly. One week living with host families in Sao Paulo where they visited the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs) and then one week in Rio de Janeiro for the big events with Pope Francis.

From Alphonse Omolo: "I suppose the opportunity for the youth to have a local-level experience and learn about the occurrence of the SCC or the work of the Catholic Church in the local communities is the peak/foundation of this WYD gathering. This is where cultural exchange takes place with memorable lessons for the youth that they will cherish throughout their lives. Missing this will be saddening but we leave this in the hand of God and continue to pray for his intervention."

From Clif Bachmeier: "Yes, I did the same in Poland for WTD in 2016. Living with host families that first week was unforgettable."

Let us harvest the memories.

Nora, we are praying for you and all the African delegates going to the Synod in Rome in October, 2023. We are blessed to have a team of excellent African theologians -- women and men.

27 July, 2023

Diocese Of Paterson, New Jersey, USA

“Beyond The Beacon”

SEASON 1 EPISODE 17: “An interview with missionary priest Father Joseph Healey, M.M.”

Audio Podcast: 38:25 minutes

[17: An interview with missionary priest Father Joseph Healey, M.M. \(beaconnj.org\)](#)

YouTube Video: 37.27 minutes

[Beyond The Beacon - 17: An interview with missionary priest Father Joseph Healey, M.M. - YouTube](#)

This audio podcast/YouTube video covers missionary ministry in Africa, History of Maryknoll, Small Christian Communities, Young Adult Ministry, World Youth Day, Synodality/the Synodal Process, Internet Ministry, Fatima Apparitions, Prayer Solidarity and baseball. In his opening prayer Bishop Kevin Sweeney, the Bishop of Paterson Diocese, connects listening to each other and discerning in the Synodal Process with the 2023 World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal. Bishop Kevin’s Catechetical Session in Spanish in Lisbon on Wednesday, 2 August, 2023 is on the theme: “Environment.” First is the testimonies of young people, and then the bishop responds. This is the synodal process of listening to the views of young people.

It is encouraging that a "SCC language" is influencing our Catholic journalists. For example, Robert Michens writes:

"As for Pope Francis, he will likely use his five days in Portugal to hammer away at some of his greatest concerns for our world. This includes building greater friendship and fraternity (sorority, too) among people at every level -- in families, small communities, cities, nations and the world at large. It also entails caring for planet earth, which is God's creation and the "common home" of all of us who are fortunate enough to be alive. And, above all else, you can expect the pope to forcefully make the case for an end to all wars and armed conflicts around the world, most especially the one Russia has unleashed against Ukraine."

Prayers for and with Bishop Kevin Sweeney of Paterson Diocese, New Jersey, USA who will participate in a Catechetical Session in Spanish in Lisbon, Portugal on Wednesday, 2 August, 2023 on the theme “Environment” (linked to Pope Francis' emphasis on "care of creation"). First is the testimonies of young people, and then the bishop responds. This is synodal process of listening to the views of young people.

Eduardo Campos Lima, “With Pope's Support, Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil Show Signs of Revival,” *La Croix International*, 28 July, 2023, *La Croix International* Website, retrieved on 31 July, 2023, <https://international.la-croix.com/.../with-popes.../18212> Once a powerful force in the Brazilian Church (and in Latin America as a whole), the Basic Ecclesial Communities – known as CEBs in Portuguese and Spanish – saw a continuous

decline in the country since the 1990s. Now, with Pope Francis' support and a fresh interest from the younger generation, their members want to grow again. Some 1,000 Basic Ecclesial Communities leaders from all parts of Brazil gathered in July, 2023 to discuss the most pressing issues in the nation, including the need to bring more young Catholics to join them. At the peak of the CEBs' presence in the Brazilian Church, they numbered at least 50,000, Celso Carias said. Now he estimates there are around 20,000 of them. Bishop Luiz Fernando Lisboa of Cachoeiro do Itapemirim in Espírito Santo State, was one of the 50 members of the Brazilian episcopate who attended the gathering in Rondonópolis. He celebrated the fact that so many bishops and priests took part in the meeting, but emphasized that "there is a huge resistance among many in the Catholic Church to accept the CEBs model."



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With pope's support, basic ecclesial communities in Brazil show signs of revival

Well written, insightful critique of CEBs in Brazil.

May our SCC members reflect on: "Like the 2021--2024 Synod, World Youth Day(WYD) is not so much an event as a moment in an ongoing process of spiritual formation. The prognosis for a WYD contribution toward renewal of the Catholic Church depends on many factors including what happens when the young people return home to empty churches and lifeless parishes.

We believe in the Paschal Mystery. We know from Jesus that dying to certain ways of being the Catholic Church can give the strength to overcome denial and fatigue and help us rise up to witness to God's love and the transcendent in today's world.

Read more at:



INTERNATIONAL.LA-CROIX.COM

World Youth Day: participation, perils, promise and prognosis

The abuse of power, position, trust and conscience -- often denied and covered up

We are in solidarity with Bishop Kevin Sweeney and the 40 youth and young adults of Paterson Diocese, New Jersey, USA who are in Lisbon, Portugal for World Youth Day (WYD). I requested that the Paterson Diocese young people pilgrims pray for peace in Africa.

2023 Lisbon, Portugal is the 16th international edition of World Youth Day (WYD). Let us hope and pray that an African city and country is chosen for the 17th international edition in 2025 or 2026.

As we review many surveys and polls on Christian life in the USA, we see a lot of reports on Bible Study Groups (and the lack thereof) but little on Lectionary Based Faith Sharing Small Communities.

Prayer please.

During his pilgrimage to Portugal this week for World Youth Day (WYD) Pope Francis, in a synodal style of “walking together,” has been deeply listening to others. To the testimonies of the three young students of different religious confessions – an Evangelist, a Catholic and a Muslim. To 13 victims of clerical sexual abuse in Portugal. To a group of 15 pilgrims who had traveled to Portugal from Ukraine (when the pope kissed the Ukrainian flag). And to others.

Here are some of the Pope Francis’ responses especially to young people:

“God always brings some good out of chaos.
There is room in the Catholic Church for everyone! Everyone! Everyone!
Make some noise. Continue to stir things up.”
Never be afraid of getting your hands dirty.
Always be there for those in need.”

Training Young People for Leadership
Pastoral Program Newsletter

July 2023

Only two of the parishes in the Catholic Diocese of Yei in South Sudan are active due to the dire security situation in the region. Their bishop, Right Reverend Alex Lodiog Sakor, has long dreamed for the development of “Small Christian Communities” (SCCs), not merely as a response to the dire security situation, but even more for the health and vitality of the Catholic faith in the diocese. This five-day training, funded by Missio Munich, was conducted by the Solidarity Pastoral Service and Bishop Sakor gave the opening address for the assembly. The bishop spoke about the importance of SCCs, and further, took this opportunity to acknowledge the important ministries of Solidarity with South Sudan in his diocese and throughout the country. 76 people from parishes and chapels throughout the diocese benefited from this program which was held from 24-28 July 2023.

Where there is a shortage of active, male celebrate priests -- called the Eucharistic Famine or the Eucharistic Hunger. Compare the following pastoral solution with the ideas of Bishop Fritz Lobinger:

Priests all share in the priesthood of their bishop. The communities propose their leaders to the bishop, irrespective of gender or marital status. The bishop ordains them either temporarily or permanently after he is satisfied that they are suitable and that he/she is able to share his/her priesthood with them to administer the sacraments and preside at Mass. This is no Eucharist more radical than the early Christian Church. I hope and pray that the Synod would have the courage and faith to countenance such a proposal.

Mary Lilly Driciru, “UGANDA: AMECEA To Celebrate Small Christian Communities Golden Jubilee,” *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, 11 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 11 August, 2023, [UGANDA: AMECEA To Celebrate Small Christian Communities Golden Jubilee](#)

There is need to promote campaigns for mass recruitment of members into SCCs. Home visits are also recommended for promoting children, youth and men participation in SCCs. Father Kaganda noted that they will use the mass media to promote key characteristics of SCCs and strengthen training and formation of leadership of SCCs focusing on the true spirit and characteristics of SCCs.

In this jubilee year the region desires that vivid information about a true picture of the SCCs be established: their numbers; their level of participation; the number of times they meet to share the Word of God; whether they are represented in the administrative structure in the Parish/Diocese. He added: “We desire to see the successes of the SCCs in the Local Church. We need to know how the church in the neighborhood has profited from SCCs. We also need to know the concrete programs carried out by the SCCs in building the church.”

On Thursday 10 August, 2023 young people (2 from Indonesia, 3 from Kenya, 1 from Tanzania and Pakistan) from the Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community participated in an interview that was organized by the Spirit Unbounded organization to share how the Young Seekers Community has transformed their lives. Spirit Unbounded wants to use the interview in promoting the Young Seekers activities during the Upcoming People Synod in October, 2023. Thanks so very much for creating time for the interview.

Let us share the experience of the Young Seekers SCCs with the rest of the world in our ongoing Synodal Process.

In addition to the year 2023 celebrating the Golden Jubilee Year of Small Christian Communities (SCCs): 50 Years (1973 to 2023) from July, 2023 to July, 2024, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Pan African Episcopal Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS). Founded in 1973 by the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) for the Church in Africa, CEPACS was given the mandate of promoting the use of modern means of mass communications as tools of evangelization in the African Church. The celebration event will take place in Lagos, Nigeria from 18 – 21 November 2023.

Homily by Father Joseph Healey, MM
Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary Parish
Morristown, New Jersey, USA
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
19-20 August, 2023

Theme: “Welcome to an Inclusive Catholic Church”

In my homily I will mention Bishop Kevin and the Paterson Young People Delegation going to Portugal for World Youth Day (WYD) and the hope of keeping in communication with the Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Stella Zulu, “AMECEA To Celebrate 50 Years of Small Christian Communities,” "AMECEA Online Newsletter," 18 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 18 August, 2023,



[COMMUNICATIONS.AMECEA.ORG](https://communications.amecea.org)
[AMECEA To Celebrate 50 Years of Small Christian Communities](#)

It is interesting how popular sayings and proverbs enter into the mainstream and popular culture. For years we have been using the Spanish proverb that popular with the Base or Basic Christian Communities in Latin America: *We create the path by walking*. This is based on the Spanish poem:

Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.

wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking.

of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado (1875 – 1939).

Now there is a TV Ad for the scotch whiskey Johnnie Walker that uses the saying: *We make the path by walking.* Antonio Machado.

In the final section of our SCCs Workshop in Malawi on 21 August, 2023 on the “The Way Forward,” George facilitated very well writing “Recommendations” on the big screen.

Related to reaching out to Young People I liked in particular: "Ongoing formation and training of new student SCCs leaders in universities and colleges." A good example is Kenyatta University. After graduation are the new SCC student leaders formed and trained on a regular basis?

Related to parishes. When new SCC leaders are elected, are the new SCC leaders formed and trained on a regular basis?

In our SCCs workshops, seminars and weekly Bible reflection and sharing we want to continue to use "synodal language" and know the reason behind it. For example, using "gathering" rather than "meeting." The word "meeting" usually implies a business agenda.

May our SCC members pray for and with Pope Francis and his special intentions: peace in the Ukraine and the Holy Spirit's guidance at the Synod in October, 2023.

We try to use our Golden Jubilee Prayer during our weekly online SCC gatherings.

Report from Archbishop George Desmond Tambala, OCD of Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi:

"I really appreciate the very kind words you have shared with us regarding how our Archdiocese of Lilongwe has had three synods already since Vatican II. Last year we launched the third synod which has involved all the faithful, priests and religious as well as non Catholics. We are grateful to God for the very rich reflections that we have so far received from all corners of the Archdiocese. The 'praxis' of reflection for the whole synod is the SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. That is where most of the discussions are happening. We have had two phases and we are in the second phase focusing on Liturgy and participation in the Social Arena and in this phase we will be reflecting on what the Catholic Church is engaged in (education, health, social action and development and related witness). We will of course not forget to reflect on the environment and mission and of course on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. It is a very busy but extremely fruitful time. We cannot but thank Bishop Patrick Kalilombe who led this spirit incarnated in the Small Christian Communities. We will be concluding this synod in December this year 2023."

As we regularly pray our Golden Jubilee Prayer let us reflect on our logo especially the SCC members sitting in a circle with the *Bible* in the middle and the loving and caring yellow hand:



These are some of the pictures from the SCCs 50th Jubilee Anniversary and Workshop that took place in Dedza and Lilongwe, Malawi between 19 - 22 August 2023. The Workshop and Launch were organized by AMECEA with the leadership of Father Emmanuel Chimombo. Various topics were discussed by the facilitators including: The History of the SCC Model of Church and Three Synods in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi, Centrality of the Word of God, Facilitation Skills, What are SCCs, Models of SCCs, Role of the Laity and Steps of Bible Sharing. Our facilitators were: Alphonse Omolo, Kenya, Father Emmanuel Chimombo, Kenya, George Thuku, Kenya, Alloys Nyakundi, Kenya and Father Joe Healey, USA. The workshop brought together delegates from different AMECEA countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan). This was not the end of the celebration but a beginning of celebrations in different local dioceses.





Glad to see a photo of Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi and Archbishop George Desmond Tambala of Lilongwe Archdiocese.







Oyee. May this ongoing Golden Jubilee of SCCs in Eastern Africa be both a celebration and a learning experience -- through evaluation and grassroots experience how to make our SCC Model of Church better.

New article:

Agnes Aineah, "Church in AMECEA Seeking to Grow Small Christian Communities in Yearlong Celebrations," "ACI Africa Online News Service," 25 August, 2023, retrieved on the ACI Africa Website on 26 August, 2023,



[Church in AMECEA Seeking to Grow Small Christian Communities in Yearlong Celebrations \(aciafrica.org\)](https://www.aciafrica.org)

Excellent article with only one mistake: The training (workshop) was on two days: Sunday, 20 August, 2023 and Monday, 21 August 2023.

Francis Damaseke, "AMECEA: The Church has Everything for Every One: Archbishop Tambala to Christians," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 29 August, 2023,



communications.amecea.org

[AMECEA: The Church has Everything for Every One: Archbishop Tambala to Christians](https://communications.amecea.org)

We SCC members continue to pray for the Synod on Synodality to Rome in October, 2023. Here is what Pope Francis said yesterday:

"The upcoming Synod on Synodality may be 'of little interest to the general public,' but the synod is "truly important" for the Catholic Church. He appealed to journalists to help the Church "rediscover the word together." "In just over a month, bishops and lay people from all over the world will meet here in Rome for a Synod on synodality: listening together, discerning together, praying together," he explained, noting that the word 'together' is very important in a culture of exclusion.

Acknowledging that to speak of a "Synod on Synodality" may seem somewhat "abstruse, self-referential, excessively technical, of little interest to the general public," the Pope said that what is happening with the Church's synodal journey is something truly important for the Church. "Please, let us get used to listening to each other, to talking, not cutting our heads off for a word. To listen, to discuss in a mature way. This is a grace we all need to move forward. And it is something the Church today offers the world, a world so often so incapable of making decisions, even when our very survival is at stake. We are trying to learn a new way of living relationships, listening to one another to hear and follow the voice of the Spirit," he said.

Reiterating that synod participants want to contribute together to building a Church where everyone feels at home, where no one is excluded, Pope Francis reiterated his request “to the masters of journalism” for help to “tell this process for what it really is, leaving behind the logic of slogans and pre-packaged stories.”

We can learn a lot from the SCCs and the BECs in Asia. See Digal, Santosh, “Estella Padilla: My Experience with Filipino Basic Ecclesial Communities at the Synod,” PIME AsiaNews, retrieved on PIME AsiaNews Website on 27 August, 2023,



ASIANEWS.IT

[ECCLESIA IN ASIA Estela Padilla: 'My Experience with Filipino Basic Ecclesial Communities at the Synod'](#)

To initiate a Forum Exchange, Matt Rousso, Director of the Maryknoll Affiliate Gulf South Chapter in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA wrote. "Do you think SCCs could ever be used in the USA as a vital way to be church. I think the traditional parish is outmoded and ineffective?"

Please give your feedback/comments below.

I responded: "Thanks for your question. I have been thinking about this question for over 40 years!!! Way back is the 1980s, we thought the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church could be a good fit in the USA. We thought that the parish could be a “communion of neighborhood SCCs.” But the power and influence of secularism and the independent/privacy culture of America have been too strong. We still have a Small Group Model of Church in many American parishes, but this is different. We have written a lot about this in the “Forum” of our

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

This Facebook Page was formed to share Small Christian Communities (SCCs) information, events, materials, news, videos and photos for each of the six continents. It serves as a forum for an exchange of SCCs ideas and to promote dialog on SCC topics. The

page has sections for “Like,” “Comment” and “Share.” It is classified as a society and culture website. We welcome any and all feedback, contributions, SCCs materials, etc.

One example: At the heart/center of the SCCs Model of Church is weekly Lectionary based Faith Sharing when we read the Gospel of the following Sunday and apply it to our daily lives. Relatively few Catholics in the USA do this.

Perhaps the current Synod Process and the Digital World (online SCCs) will help us move in a new direction.

Some comments:

1. From Clif Bachmeier: “About ten years ago I visited a local Quaker Church out of curiosity. I quickly learned that they have Small Growth Groups that meet regularly to grow in their faith and build community. I was impressed by their groups because they were also working with another organization to welcome refugees to Sacramento. We got to set up their apartment, pick them up from the airport, and take them to Target so they can buy additional needed items. I think this is what church is supposed to be like.”

2. Thank you, Clif. In the SCCs Model of Church there are two main pillars: Weekly lectionary based faith sharing and regular practical action/social action outreach. The second pillar is similar to the Quaker Church Model.

3. In our free online Ebook we document the successes and failures of the SCCs Model of Church in the USA. There are a very few Catholic Dioceses and some scattered Catholic Parishes that follow this model. But the Busy Parish Plant Model with all kinds of small groups is more common. In middle class Catholic Parishes our research shows neighborhood SCCs do not succeed because the parishioners do not want to be vulnerable, that is, to share their lives in a small community.

4. In commenting on the Synodal Process Pope Francis refers to "the joy of seeing how from small parish groups, from small church groups [similar to SCCs], very beautiful reflections emerge and there is great ferment, it is a joy." I wish the pope would use the term “base community.”

5. Tom Ryan writes: "It was great to see your question to Fr. Joe Healey and to see Joe's response! The SCC website is a great resource. Also Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) at the University of Loyola in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA is very involved in synodality efforts and offers courses in SCC formation."

6. Glad that Tom has kept this SCCs string going. We are hopeful that the Synodal Process will give new energy and creativity to the SCCs Model of Church. In our SCCs Poll: Eighty-Seventh Round (September - October, 2023): “The best part of my Small Christian Community is...” One choice is: "Where the faithful experience and live Synodality as mission, participation and communion."

You can vote at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org>



Small Christian Communities

Okoth, Jecinter, “AMECEA Launches Golden Jubilee Year for SCCs, Prelate Emphasizes a Period of Reflection and Discernment,” "AMECEA Online News," Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 28 August, 2023, <https://communications.amecea.org/.../amecea-launches.../>

The region of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) in Dedza, Diocese, Malawi on Saturday, 19 August 2023, launched a year-long celebration of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) since its establishment, where Archbishop George Desmond Tambala of Malawi’s Lilongwe Archdiocese encouraged reflection and discernment moments as a way to understand deeply SCCs. “Small Christian Community is a great tool for the Church, actually we cannot think of the Catholic Church without the Small Christian Communities as we launch 50 years in the region.”



[COMMUNICATIONS.AMECEA.ORG](https://communications.amecea.org)

AMECEA Launches Golden Jubilee Year for SCCs, Prelate Emphasizes a Period of Reflection and Discernment

Francis Damaseke, “AMECEA: The Church has Everything for Every One: Archbishop Tambala to Christians,” *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 29 August, 2023,



communications.amecea.org

[AMECEA: The Church has Everything for Every One: Archbishop Tambala to Christians](#)

Okoth, Jecinter, “AMECEA: Goal of the SCCs Golden Jubilee is to Reawaken Spirituality, says AMECEA’s Chairman for Pastoral Department, “AMECEA Online News, Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 29 August, 2023, <https://communications.amecea.org/index.php/2023/08/25/amecea-goal-of-the-sccs-golden-jubilee-is-to-reawaken-spirituality-says-ameceas-chairman-for-pastoral-department/>

Okoth, Jecinter, “AMECEA: “Other Christian Churches and Continents Treasure Small Christian Communities in AMECEA AMECEA Online News, Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 29 August, 2023, [AMECEA: Other Christian Churches and Continents Treasure Small Christian Communities in AMECEA](#)



COMMUNICATIONS.AMECEA.ORG

[AMECEA: Other Christian Churches and Continents Treasure Small Christian Communities in AMECEA](#)

Mwenya Mukuka, "ZAMBIA: SCCs in Zambia's Livingstone Diocese, Transforming Lives through Faith and Fellowship," "AMECEA Online News," Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 29 August, 2023, <https://communications.amecea.org/.../zambia-sccs-in.../>

This article is an interesting Case Study of how 504 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Livingstone Diocese in Zambia are celebrating the Golden Jubilee (1973 to 2023) of SCCs in the AMECEA Region. Father John Rurangwa, the Pastoral Coordinator in Livingstone Diocese, reports that the celebration will be on Saturday, 2 December 2023. The occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebration will be being used to reflect upon the SCCs' journey, their impact on the community, and their ongoing mission of evangelization. Each SCC will celebrate its Patron Saint with a sense of unity and mirror the ongoing Synod of Bishops on Synodality to ensure that no one is left behind. Ongoing formation in leadership, biblical and liturgical understanding and enhanced participation of youth and children will all be central to the jubilee celebration.



[COMMUNICATIONS.AMECEA.ORG](https://communications.amecea.org)

ZAMBIA: SCCs in Zambia's Livingstone Diocese, Transforming Lives through Faith and Fellowship

What does the Pope's September, 2023 prayer intention -- "For people living on the margins" -- mean to SCCs members? Please respond below:

The pope invites everyone to:

- Pray for and assist people living on the margins of society.
- Pay attention to people who face marginalization, even if it results from poverty, addictions, mental illness or disability. Specific examples: homeless people, street children washing car windshields, people with various disabilities.
- Offer a culture of welcoming, of providing shelter, of giving a home, of offering love, of giving human warmth.
- Those living in subhuman living conditions.
- Welcoming is more than helping: it means putting the other person at our level.

Let us reach out with prayers, deep sympathy and financial support to our friend Ashiknaz Khokhar and all the terrible happenings going on in Pakistan.

As Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi points out, this social outreach and practical action is part of the Outer or Public Life of SCCs.

ANNOUNCEMENT: It is important that we continue to evaluate our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa so we can make it better. Please vote in the current polls Eighty-Seventh Round – “The best part of my Small Christian Community is:..” (September -- October, 2023):

1. Praying together for the Synod to take place in Rome in October, 2023.
2. Where the faithful experience and live Synodality as mission, participation and communion.
3. Center of evangelization to the family and youth.
4. Praying together for the Golden Jubilee of SCCs in Eastern Africa.
5. Weekly lectionary-based faith sharing is the preferred methodology.
6. Pray for and assist people living on the margins of society.

Vote at:



SMALLCHRISTIANCOMMUNITIES.ORG

Small Christian Communities – Small Christian Communities

Small Christian Communities

From Francis Njuguna, a long time Kenya writer on SCCs: "I have already voted. I like the line up. Long live the SCCs."

These are six important choices for our SCCs Model of Church -- praying for special intentions, focusing on lectionary-based faith sharing and reaching out to the needy such as people living on the margins. All show how SCCs are an expression of our evolving Synodal Catholic Church. Please encourage people to vote and then live out these choices.

NEW POST ANNOUNCEMENT:

Bishop Patrick Kalilombe and the Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi Mini Synod in 1973-75: One of the Foundations of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Pastoral Priority Leading Up to the Two “Synod on Synodality” Sessions in 2023 and 2024 - By Joseph G. Healey, MM

“Good morning. As I travel around the world I always introduce myself by saying: “I am Joe Healey. I am a member of the St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype Small Christian Communities. I am a student, a learner.” As we gather here in Malawi to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of SCCs, do we remember..... Read more >>Link Below
SMALLCHRISTIANCOMMUNITIES.ORG
smallchristiancommunities.org

I have included feedback from the participants and additional theological reflection and documentation. There are now 46 footnotes and 18 Hyperlinks. It is now posted on our SCCs Website at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/bishop-patrick...> Please circulate this Final Version to the workshop participants and anyone else who is interested. It will be published in the AMECEA Golden Jubilee Book in 2024.

Upon review I see this article as an interesting Case Study in the ongoing Synodal Process in Africa and throughout the world. The article documents the important role of SCCs in three Mini-Synods in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi:

1. 1973—1975.
2. 2004 -- 2006.
3. 2021—2023.



SMALLCHRISTIANCOMMUNITIES.ORG

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Mwenya Mukuka, “AMECEA: Fr. Joseph Healey, MM: A Guide in the Journey of Small Christian Communities,” *AMECEA Online News*, Special Issue 502, 1 September, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 2 September, 2023, [AMECEA: Fr. Joseph Healey, MM: A Guide in the Journey of Small Christian Communities](#)

As the sun sets over the vibrant city of Lilongwe, Malawi history, faith, and community converge in a remarkable celebration—the Golden Jubilee Year of Small Christian Communities (SCCs). This jubilee, held from July 2023 to July 2024, commemorates 50 years of SCCs’ existence, their growth, and their transformative impact on the Local and Universal Church. As the Universal Church gathers in Rome for the Synod on Synodality, the journey of SCCs finds resonance in the theme “Communion, Participation, and Mission.” This theme aligns seamlessly with the essence of SCCs that have demonstrated that a Catholic Church rooted in local communities can effectively foster communion, participation, and mission.

Henriette, Anne, “AMECEA: Lay Leadership Trained on New Innovative Approaches to SCCs,” AMECEA Online News, Special Issue 502, 1 September, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 3 September, 2023,



COMMUNICATIONS.AMECEA.ORG

AMECEA: Lay Leadership Trained on New Innovative Approaches to SCCs

Sr. Henriette Anne, FSSA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) provide a platform for believers to come together, share their faith journeys, and reflect on scriptures in a communal and prayerful manner. At the workshop of lay leadership in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Afr...

[AMECEA: Lay Leadership Trained on New Innovative Approaches to SCCs](#)

Okoth, Jecinter, “AMECEA: Small Christian Communities is Anchored on the Word of God: AMECEA’s Pastoral Coordinator,” “AMECEA Online News, Issue 500, 1 September, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 2 September, 2023,



COMMUNICATIONS.AMECEA.ORG

AMECEA: Small Christian Communities is Anchored on the Word of God:

AMECEA’s Pastoral Coordinator

Sr. Jecinter Antoinette Okoth, FSSA The Spiritual strengthening

[AMECEA: Small Christian Communities is Anchored on the Word of God: AMECEA’s Pastoral Coordinator](#)

Anne, Henriette, "AMECEA: SCCs Pastoral Agents Equipped with Skills after the 50 Years Launch," AMECEA Online News, Special Issue 502, 1 September, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 3 September, 2023,



COMMUNICATIONS.AMECEA.ORG

AMECEA: SCCs Pastoral Agents Equipped with Skills after the 50 Years Launch

The Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR) is focused on the following areas:

1. Governance

Any restoration of public trust in the church will be dependent on a commitment to contemporary ethical standards of good governance based on the principles of transparency, accountability and inclusivity. There can be no theological justification for poor governance, structures and practices. There needs to be a complete re-think, a renovation, of the concept of church so as to be more relevant in the 21st century. The construction of an Australian Council of the Laity will be a positive step in the right direction. A renewed view of service through the development of truly synodal faith communities, Small Christian Communities, is the desired end in this time of radical change, described by Pope Francis as a 'change of era'.

Today's American Catholic Website points out: "We see the SCC and synodal-church movements as closely interrelated. On our Mikroi Page, we've begun sharing reflections on the weekly readings as well as experiences of synodal and communal prayer that we hope to expand in the months to come." Go to:



TODAYSAMERICANCATHOLIC.ORG

Mikroi - Today's American Catholic

Information about our small Christian community initiative.

People ask how they can access my articles and books free online, that is, on the internet. Two sources are:

Academia.edu

<https://princeton.academia.edu/JosephHealey>

ResearchGate

<https://www.researchgate.net/home.Home.html>

My books and articles are accessible in the Tangaza Repository of Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya at this link:

<http://repository.tangaza.ac.ke/discover?scope=%2F&query=Healey%2C+Joseph&submit=>

There are 54 articles – some written by me, others where I have advised students on their research.

I try to keep in touch with my St. Kizito SCC in Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya. Recently wrote to the *wanajumuiya*: "Greet all the *Wanajumuiya* for me. Recently I gave an online talk (being sent by File Attachment) on Zoom. I wore the white shirt with red cuffs with the logo:

“St. Kizito SCC Waruku
One Heart One Mind”

that you made for me. This symbolizes our continuing bond. I regularly communicate with St. Kizito SCC’s What’sApp Small Community. Prayers for all your special intentions especially those living on the margins of society. Prayers as we celebrate 50 years of SCCs in Eastern Africa. See our SCC Poll at:



smallchristiancommunities.org

Kindly let us vote! Your vote, your voice.

Let celebrate the history of our SCCs.

Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer, a theology professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Argentina said: "In Pope Francis' decision to create a more open-ended *Working Document* for the synod in October, 2023, we see the influence of Latin American Ecclesial Base Communities [similar to SCCs], that have "a horizontal model of being church" and worship in small groups.

The Feast of St. Phoebe on 3 September, 2023 is a reminder of the House Churches or Household Churches – a type of SCC -- both in the First Century and in the Catholic Church today.

“[T]here are many local churches and basic communities of Christians who, in their liturgical celebrations and their criticism of society, which is not simply theoretical, but also practical, act as landmarks where the original story of God and Jesus can be recognized. They also act as magnets, attracting all kinds of people who have left the official churches and others who may not be Christians at all, but who encounter authentic community experience in these basic communities. They are usually ecumenical and consist of people of all kinds and all shades of opinion. But these people certainly form a genuine community and one that is fully in keeping with the gospel and even before they are properly aware of it, they are part of the living Judaeo-Christian tradition.”

– Edward Schillebeeckx, *God Is New Each Moment*

SCC members are invited to participate in the event:

“Together - Gathering of the People of God”

An Ecumenical Prayer Vigil will take place on Saturday, 30 September, 2023 in St. Peter's Square in Rome. Pope Francis and representatives of different Christian Churches will attend the vigil. The vigil is intended to unite people in praise, silence, and listening to the Word. It is called: “Together - Gathering of the People of God” during which the Catholic Church will entrust the work of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Everyone is invited to the prayer vigil. The official two hour vigil will be from 5 to 7 pm Rome time, that is 11 am to 1 pm New York time and 6 to 8 pm Nairobi time. The prayer vigil will be livestreamed through Vatican Media and other networks.

For more information go to this link:



TOGETHER2023.NET
Provisional programme

A Jesus Caritas Fraternity is a type of SCC and faith sharing small community. It can be only for priests, only for lay people or mixed. Here is a description from *America Magazine* about Kansas City, Kansas, USA:

"Father Scott is also in a faith-sharing group that belongs to the Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests in the United States. He meets with several area priests each month for prayer, a meal and conversation about life and ministry. His group has been meeting regularly for years. Similar faith sharing groups for priests are popular in Kansas City, Minneapolis, Denver and in other dioceses. I wondered: Could these priests live together? Each would then need to drive from their common residence to his parish. What if one was reassigned to a parish 60 minutes away? Some bishops encourage (or require) their seminarians and young priests to join these groups as a structure of fraternity and support."

For more background see the book: Victor Edwin, (ed.), *Brother To All: The Life and Witness of St. Charles de Foucauld* (11 Essays on Different Themes Around Charles de Foucauld) (Orbis Books, 2022). Available from Orbis Books at: <https://orbisbooks.com/>



ORBISBOOKS.COM
 Orbis Books

New Article Announcement: "Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community's View on Why a Small Christian Community Is Important and What Happens in Small Communities That Doesn't Happen in More Traditional Larger Church Gatherings." By Kristiana Aurel and Alloys Nyakundi
<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/online-young-adult.../>

Our “Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community” is a digital place for young people from all over the world to come and exchange ideas on why Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are so important for young people and what the difference is between gathering in a Small Christian Community and gathering in a traditional church. The Online Young Adult Seekers of Small Christian Communities met and exchanged ideas through Zoom on 17 August 2023. Here are some answers in a pdf File from five young men and three young women. Six are from Kenya, one from Tanzania and one from Indonesia. There are seven hyperlinks. The article is posted on our SCC Website under Africa (African Continent, Kenya and Tanzania) and Asia (Indonesia and Pakistan).

Exchanging ideas is one of the many ways SCCs members can listen to one another.

In our SCCs we use the SEE, DISCERN, AND ACT Pastoral Theological Reflection Process or Method. The word “discern” preferred over “judge” and is taken from Pope Francis’ writings.

Over the years the meaning of words change. “Judge” is now often connected to “judgmental.” This extends to many expressions that having a negative, judgmental, even pejorative tone and should be avoided: (alphabetically) cohabitating, fallen-away Catholic, inactive Catholic, lapsed Catholic, living in sin, prodigal child, wayward person. The word “discern” is connected to “discernment” in the ongoing Synodal Process.

In our weekly **Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community** Gathering today we responded to Agenda No. 3: "Outreach to other young people who are struggling and don't have a safe space like the one CCRI has created for the Young Seekers. Report on what each of us is doing." Reports were given by young people from Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Tanzania and USA. 14 people participated.

I spoke about praying for and with the Black American Young Men in Baltimore, Maryland, USA (my hometown). There is a lot of violence and unrest in downtown Baltimore, even regular killings. Prayers please.

Monthly Day of Prayer for the Synod – September, 2023

"Embracing life as it comes"

Jesus, we see you in the Gospels
welcoming everyone who was close to you,
like the man with evil spirits or the man with the withered hand.
We see You walking with the disciples of Emmaus
or giving comfort to the widow
who has lost her only child.
You taught us to embrace life as it comes,
to focus on people,
no matter who they are or what they have experienced.
Give us your grace and your light
to imprint “your style” in the Church,
to understand the others as they are
to understand them from the depths of their hearts
beyond their words and actions.
May we be an open-hearted Church,
a Church that is receptive and walks with others.

Amen.

The creation, already in 2021, in collaboration with the World Pope's Prayer Network and the UISG (International Union of Superiors General), of a site (www.prayforthesynod.va) that proposes a specific prayer time for the Synod every first Monday of the month. www.prayforthesynod.va

From Janet Hauter: "I am testing a hypothesis of engaging an SCC on Zoom soon, within the month with a different twist, i.e., beginning with a focus on the "Signs of the Times" instead of the traditional model."

I answered Janet: "In Eastern Africa we have been researching this topic for over 20 years!!! We follow the "both...and approach." If you go into our free, online Ebook" 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 revised and updated from the 2012 print version, is available as a free, online Ebook containing 1,462 pages as of 17 September 2023 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative website: https://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf

There is a section just on Janet's topic on pages 1071-1072 . We write:

8. Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Daily Life Connections. Connect, relate and apply the Bible (Gospel) to our daily lives and experience (on both personal and society-wide levels). This is lectionary-based faith-sharing/gospel-based faith-sharing. SCC members share their reflections sitting together in a circle and for a maximum of five minutes. This is the most important part of the weekly meeting of the SCC. Sometimes the SCC uses a Daily Life-Bible Connections Method. Start with special themes and topics as well as our experiences and events of daily life and then go to the Bible. Use the "See," "Discern" and "Act" process of the Pastoral Spiral/Circle/Cycle. Both ways are an experience of faith-sharing.

Our Daily Life-Bible Connections Method is exactly what Janet describes: "Begin with the "Signs of the Times." That is, go from daily life to the Bible.

"In an effort to enlighten the region of Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) on *Laudato Si'* guidelines document that was launched at the close of the 20th Plenary Assembly of AMECEA bishops last year in Dar es salaam, Tanzania, the department of Promoting Integral Human Development (PIHD) is set to create awareness to member conferences so as to own the document.

"There is a need to have an implementation strategy of *Laudato Si'* Guidelines to help member conferences familiarize themselves with the document so they can go beyond just having it in shelves but to act," AMECEA's Coordinator for the PIHD, Father Paul Mung'athia Igweta said in an interview Thursday, September 14, prior to the first workshop to be held in Kenya.

According to Igweta, the workshops on creating awareness on *Laudato Si'* implementation guidelines in the region, will help to strategize how the guidelines can be

spoken about and understood in dioceses, parishes, and various groups in the Catholic Church including Small Christian Communities (SCCs)."

It is encouraging that SCCs are part of this awareness project. This brings care of creation down to the grassroots level. This is very timely as we are in the middle of the annual "Care of Creation Month" that runs from 1 September to 4 October.

Important SCCs Documentation:

Join-Lambert, Arnaud, "Synodes Diocésains, 'Parasynodes' et Conciles Particuliers dans l'Église Catholique Depuis le Concile Vatican II: Liste, Bibliographie, Ressources," Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, 10e édition mise à jour (11 October, 2022). 113 pages. [Les synodes diocésains parasynodes et co \(2\).pdf](#)

The document presents a list of more than 1000 diocesan synods celebrated since 1965. Included are "parasynods" as a significant form of synodality. This term refers to alternative forms, forums or diocesan assemblies that are very similar to a diocesan synod from the phenomenological and ecclesiological point of view. Particular councils, both plenary and provincial, have also been added, as well as national processes with a similar dynamic. There are also active links to certain documents on the Internet. A bibliography is given at the national and diocesan levels. This is followed by a general bibliography on the whole question of diocesan synods.

There are many fine print and online liturgical resources that emphasize daily (especially Sunday) lectionary-based faith sharing that starts from experience and connects the Gospel to daily life. One of the best, if not the best, is:

FaithND Daily Reflection

<http://faith.nd.edu/s/1210/faith/interior.aspx?sid=1210...>

Under the heading "Gospel Reflection from Notre Dame," this resource is available in a daily free email from the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA and at FaithND – on outreach of Alumni Association -- on the Notre Dame website [FaithND - Home](#). The email is sent out at 4 a.m. ET every morning. The reflection has 101,000 subscribers and a 62% "open" rate -- very high according to professional standards. Each reflection is 300 words.

It is also in the ND Mobile App available on a smartphone. Many people read this reflection as the first activity that they do upon waking up each morning as a kind of Morning Prayer -- even setting their smartphone wake up time to begin the day with this reflection.

The authors/contributors are dedicated lay people connected to Notre Dame: alumni (men and women) from both undergraduate and graduate levels, current students, parents and friends. Over the years I have found the reflections of women particularly deep and meaningful. The reflections begin with a personal experience, a story a striking quotation, a striking statistic. Often the reflections gives a fresh perspective and insight on a Gospel passage. All the reflections are available on the FaithND Website Archives from 2013 to the present.

A specific example is the Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and evangelist on 21 September, 2023. It uses the Gospel of Matthew 9:9-13. After the text of the Gospel the

author -- Jane Feliz Rush Notre Dame, Class of 1994, ACE Cohort 1, Notre Dame Parent – writes:

Reflection - September 21, 2023

Repitite connigo: Todos, todos, todos [Portuguese]. (“Repeat with me: Everyone, everyone, everyone.”)

Pope Francis proclaimed this message to 1.5 million young people at World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal this past August, 2023. He later emphasized that the church is open to everyone, including “the sick, the elderly, the young, old, ugly, beautiful, good, and bad.”

In today’s gospel, Jesus calls Matthew, a toll collector for Rome, to follow him. The Pharisees there in Capernaum, publicly challenge Jesus’ honor by asking his disciples why he eats with tax collectors and sinners—scandalous behavior, in their opinion. Yet, Jesus maintains that “those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do.”

Then, quoting the Prophet Hosea, Jesus tells the Pharisees to learn what these words mean: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (*Hosea* 6:6). While the Pharisees upheld that the sacrifice of ritual purity and Sabbath observance was paramount in following the Torah, they seemed much less aware of the centrality of mercy.

Today, we easily separate our actions and inactions from the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, but I wonder. Have we learned the meaning of showing mercy instead of emphasizing sacrifice? Do we invite, ignore or even shun those in our communities who we assume are not worthy of stepping into our church, seeking healing, hope, and mercy from the God of love we profess?

I can’t help but reflect on the closeness and tenderness with which Jesus shared his very self with social outcasts. Can we do the same? Can we sit at the table where Jesus sat, sharing our lives and healing wounds? May we continue to contemplate profoundly and unfold meaningfully in our lives, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”



FAITH.ND.EDU

<https://faith.nd.edu/s/1210/faith/interior.aspx?sid=1210&gid=609&pgid=10751>

This daily resource is use-friendly with a link to the Scripture Reading of the Day, a relevant Prayer, a Prayer Intention, a link to the Biography of the Saint of the Day and an opportunity to give a comment on the reflection. The Comment Form States: “Submit your comments to the FaithND team. We will be sure to forward your heartfelt messages to the author and incorporate your suggestions into future FaithND content.” It has a [Facebook Page](#).

464 people will take part in the General Assembly of the Synod that will be held at the Vatican from 4-29 October, 2023 including 365 voting members, of whom 54 are women. This includes two Bishops from the People's Republic of China. In our SCCs Poll this month one choice is: "Praying together for the Synod to take place in Rome in October, 2023." To vote go to:



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Small Christian Communities – Small Christian Communities

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Most of the work will be done in 35 small groups, with 10 or 11 members in each group plus a facilitator, divided according to language and using the methodology of "conversation in the Spirit," characterized by "shared prayer with a view to communal discernment." There will also be plenary sessions, at which the small groups will report back to the assembly.

There will be five official language groups at the synod, but a pre-synod survey revealed that English will be the most-spoken language, followed by Italian. As a result of this, there will be 14 small groups in English, followed by eight in Italian, seven in Spanish, five in French and one in Portuguese. Documents will be produced in English and Italian.

ASIA/PHILIPPINES - The synodal path in the Philippines enhances the Basic Ecclesial Communities

Manila (Agenzia Fides) - "In the life of the Philippine Church, participation in the synodal process - with a view to the Synodal Assembly that will soon begin in the Vatican - has been wide-ranging and fruitful consultations have taken place at the grassroots level in all dioceses. One of the fundamental challenges, among those that have emerged, is the continuation and strengthening of the experience of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC)," said Archbishop Emeritus Antonio Ledesma, SJ, who headed the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro from 2006 to 2020, in an interview with Fides. In the BEC, widespread in the Philippine Dioceses, the faithful, live the faith and Christian life in their different life situations: "Men, women, priests, religious, young people, families, are part of it, they give their witness of faith. It is an ecclesiastical synodal style experience, characterized by an inclusive and participatory character of all the members of the People of God, who contribute to pastoral and mission in accordance with the charism they have received," explains Archbishop Ledesma. The first Small Communities were established in the Philippines in the late 1960s, immediately after the Second Vatican Council, by foreign missionaries who came to the vast area of Mindanao and surrounding islands. Among the themes addressed in the pre-synodal discussions, the archbishop highlights "the active presence of the laity in communities, helping to organize pastoral life, but also to provide solidarity and support to the poorest families of a dignified life for all", while "new challenges arise from the use of new technologies and new forms of communication, which particularly affect young people".

Furthermore, said the Jesuit, "synodality is lived by our communities in a very broad sense and includes openness to the ecumenical path and interreligious dialogue, being aware that the direction of this common path is human fraternity, as indicated by Pope Francis".

During the consultations in the Philippines, three main topics were discussed: listening, proclamation and celebration. "Moments and tools for listening, appreciated by the faithful, are the pastoral visits of bishops and priests, pastoral meetings, prayer meetings, catechism and home visits, but also social media, radio and ecclesial media, all of which intend to accompany people to listen to the voice of God". With regard to proclamation, "the faithful valued and desired spaces in the life of the Catholic Church that allow them to speak openly, such as the weekly meetings of the Basic Ecclesial Communities, moments of dialogue or discussion". The celebration of the sacraments is significant for the faithful in the Philippines, especially the Eucharist, "which spiritually enlightens and nourishes and gives strength to overcome the hardships of daily life." "The sacraments," said the bishop, "awaken humility and charity and strengthen the feeling of belonging to the family of God and the desire to keep families together in the Basic Christian Communities." "I see that in my diocese, but also in many others, religious practice and popular piety are strong, Sunday and weekday masses are well attended, a sign of a faith that is still deeply rooted," notes the archbishop. All in all, said Archbishop Ledesma, the synodal journey in the Philippines took place "in a missionary spirit and with joy." "We have just celebrated 500 years since the arrival of the Gospel in our country and have become aware of the great gift that we have received. It is now up to us to pass on the gospel of love and joy to the new generations", he concludes. (PA) (Agenzia Fides, 26/9/2023)

[Fides Service] Newsletter Fides del 26-09-2023

[ASIA/PHILIPPINES - The synodal path in the Philippines enhances the Basic Ecclesial Communities - Agenzia Fides](#)

Active Catholics in the USA, some of whom belong to SCCs, are increasingly using online prayer and liturgical resources that are connected to spiritual writers (such as Father Mike Schmitz, Bishop Robert Barrons and Father Richard Rohr) and to Catholic Institutions (such as FaithND at the University of Notre Dame).

May all our SCC members pray for and with Father Anthony Makunde and Father Andrew Kaufa who are traveling from the AMECEA Office in Nairobi, Kenya to Rome this week for the world-wide Synod gathering. May the voice of the Catholic Church in Africa sound loud and clear at the gathering. It is very important that we SCC members follow the livestreaming activities and the daily internet reports of the Synod in Rome from 30 September to 29 October, 2023.

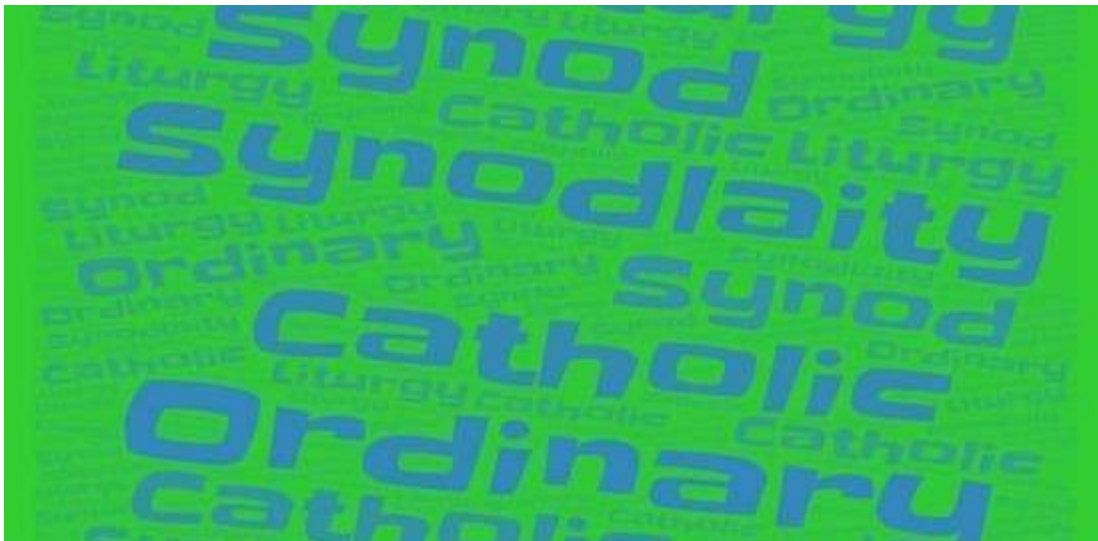
From Alloys Nyakundi: October closes the Season of Creation. It's the month of the Rosary, the month of Synod and the month of mission. Let's pray for the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

May all SCC members pray together for Pope Francis' October, 2023 prayer intention: "For the Synod." Pope Francis invites everyone to embrace listening and dialogue through the Synod. "Let us pray for the Catholic Church that she may adopt listening and dialogue as a style of life at every level, allowing herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit towards the world's peripheries." One level is SCCs.

We are challenged to grow our weekly SCC gatherings in a synodal style, in a synodal way as part of the evolving Synodal Church. This emphasizes deeper listening to each other, silence and asking what God is saying in the Scripture passages. Similarly a number of online articles suggest ways that we can celebrate mass in a more synodal (walking together) way. For example, “Synodality and Ordinary Catholics: If Synodality is about Renewal in the Holy Spirit, a Renewal of Liturgy is One of the Forms It Must Take” by Thomas O’Loughlin. 28 March, 2023. Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/.../synodality.../17519>

Key points:

1. Liturgy must engage people as individuals within a community.
2. Liturgy must, to be true to the fundamental insight of synodality, involve a deeper listening to the Word of God (Scripture Readings) and to one another.
3. Physical space is designed so the Word of God is shared among the gathering. The assembly is arranged so that it is a community event of listening. Solidarity can become a weekly experience. The congregation is not consuming a message being dispensed from the front of a lecture hall-style church. Putting the chairs in a rough circle allows people to feel they are a community and it helps focus people in their listening.
4. For the Eucharistic Prayer the congregation can stand around the altar. We are a celebrating community.



[INTERNATIONAL.LA-CROIX.COM](https://international.la-croix.com)

Synodality and ordinary Catholics

If synodality is about renewal in the Holy Spirit, a renewal of liturgy is one of the forms it must take.

During a pleasant lunch in New Jersey, USA Bishop Joseph Mlola, ALCP/OSS, Bishop of Kigoma Diocese in Tanzania, talked about the importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs):

1. Their numbers are listed by parish on the:
Catholic Diocese of Kigoma, Tanzania Website
<https://kigomadiocese.org>

2. In Eastern Africa a SCC is a communion of families that are the domestic church on the local grassroots level. They are an important pastoral, ecclesial, church structure in the ongoing Synodal Process and the Synodal Church.
3. Tanzania is in the middle of celebrating the Golden Jubilee (1973 -- 2023) of SCCs in the nine AMECEA countries.
4. The SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa is not well known in the USA. We are challenged to share books and websites on SCCs with the USA Church such as the: Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website
<https://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>



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My email message to Sarahi Unzueta:

Thanks, Sarahi.

I enjoyed your input and insights. Sharing our favorite foods was fun.

If you have read my chapter on Catholic Young Adults in the Orbis Book *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond*, you will notice that all our Young Adult Listening Sessions on college campuses in the USA start with food. A young woman at Georgetown University gave us the mantra: *Feed them and they will come*.

I hope some American Catholic Young Adults will be regular participants in our Online Young Adults Seekers Small Christian Community Gatherings and contribute to our

Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community (Kenyatta University) Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/875453985953421>

Great write up, Mwanajumuiya Mary. I hope you can connect your reflections to our Young Seekers Online SCC.

Our weekly SCC Gatherings should be horizontal rather than vertical. That is, we should sit around in a circle where everyone is equal. Priests and sisters do not have priority over lay people. SCCs are the People of God walking together. In a list we put the names in alphabetical order, not in clerical, hierarchical order. We don't use special titles.

Prayers for the Synodal Process that is horizontal rather than vertical.

So many intentions for SCC members to pray for during the month of October: World Mission Month. Month of the Rosary. Synod Gathering in Rome. Care of Creation/Ecology.

May all SCC members pray together for Pope Francis' October, 2023 prayer intention: "For the Synod." Pope Francis invites everyone to embrace listening and dialogue through the Synod. "Let us pray for the Catholic Church that she may adopt listening and

dialogue as a style of life at every level, allowing herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit towards the world's peripheries." One level is SCCs.

To a question about Intentional Eucharistic Communities (IECs), I wrote:

"I put "Intentional Eucharistic Community/ies" in the Search Engine of our free, online Ebook:

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. 1,469 pages as of 1 October, 2023 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

<http://smallchristiancommunities.org/building-the-church.../>

http://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf

On sale on Amazon (Kindle Edition and other digital formats), on Google as an Ebook and on Amazon as a Print on Demand (POD) paperback in two volumes.

and got 11 hits. We write about two main types that are outside the official Catholic Parish structure:

1. When "intentional" means living together and sharing daily life. Example: Francis House in Washington DC.
2. When "intentional" means a commitment to celebrating the Eucharist together on Sundays, to some socializing together and to regular social action outreach, but the members live separately. Examples: Communitas and Nova in the Washington DC/Virginia Area. NOTE: Communitas as a Case Study is written up in our Orbis Book *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*.

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smallchristiancommunities.org

Many new types of Small Christian Communities/Small Intentional Eucharistic Communities are emerging outside the Catholic parish structure around the world as they respond to the signs of the times. The Beloved Inclusive Catholic Community (BICC) is based in Urbana, Illinois, USA. A member writes: "This is a community of Roman Catholic believers dedicated to full inclusion of all who come seeking to belong, to worship, to serve and be fed. We are progressive in nature and strive to model a church that is void of the patriarchy and power dynamics that have contributed to scandal and abuse in the Roman Catholic Church. We remain firm in our baptismal rights that connect us to the larger Catholic community and strive to move the church forward in supporting the equality, dignity and worth of all God's children.

About 20 people regularly attend the Eucharistic Liturgy. Most are women -- female, white, in our 60s and 70s, well educated and post Vatican II Catholics -- who want to participate but our traditional parish has a 45 year priest trained in a conservative seminary who says mass like it was 1962 and every homily exhorts us to go to confession once a week

no matter what the scripture readings were. There is one trans woman who is in her 70s and a couple of queer women who are younger. There are very few men. Only two men attend regularly and they are in their 60s. There are no young people.

The BICC was involved in the Synodal Process. It's report was written and sent forth by our community. We want to thank everyone who participated in this event, from the planning, to the listening, speaking, and discerning, to the writing, and the receiving."

[\(Beloved ICC Home\)](#)

The key message of the Synod on Synodality is listening, a virtue that most leaders in Kenya lack, Muheria the Catholic Archbishop of the country's Nyeri Archdiocese has said. The Kenyan Archbishop delivered his message from Rome where he is participating in the ongoing October 4-29 Synod on Synodality conversations, with October 5 as the first full day of work.

He said that the meeting of the more than 400 delegates of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome is centered on how the Catholic Church can journey together in synodality "without leaving anyone behind", and ensuring that everyone is listened to.

The Kenyan member of Opus Dei acknowledged that the two years of the Synod on Synodality had allowed for conversations at various levels of the Church including the Small Christian Communities (SCCs), Parishes and Dioceses. With the synod on synodality, he said, the Catholic Church is finding ways to give everyone an opportunity to air their views on how to be witnesses. Archbishop Muheria expressed concern that individualism was taking the place of conversations especially in families where members are not listening to each other.

"Recently, I asked some men how many of them took more than two hours, when schools were closed for holidays, to listen to their children. Not to guide them, not to inform them, not to advise them, but to listen to them," he said, and added, "Sadly, we have forgotten the value of conversations in our homes." "Conversations in our families have been overtaken by mobile phones, TVs, and music; everything but listening. The man is no longer listening to his wife. The wife is no longer listening to her husband. Children don't listen to their parents and the parents no longer listen to their children," he lamented.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Muheria has appealed for prayers for those participating in the Synod on Synodality, saying, "Pray for us so that whatever comes out of our conversations may build the Church where everyone is a witness."

Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo reminds us that Tuesday, 17 October, 2023 the 11th birthday of St. Isidore SCC. Let us harvest our memories. One year ago we wrote on our SCC Facebook Page:

We are celebrating the 10th Anniversary of our weekly St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC Gathering on Monday, 17 October, 2022. The historical note in our free, online Ebook states: "Using Skype Video Conferencing we started on Wednesday, 17 October, 2012 with one person from Kenya, one person from Germany, 13 people from the Maryknoll Lay Missioners Orientation Program at Bethany, New York, USA and four others

including several Maryknoll Sisters who served in Tanzania. Some of us were participating in a SCC Workshop at the Maryknoll Sisters Center at Maryknoll, New York, USA. The Maryknoll Society Tech person connected us with Alphonse Omolo who was studying in Germany and Rose Musimba who was living in Nairobi, Kenya through the internet.

Is Mwanajumuiya Belza baking our virtual cake????? I hope Belza Ramos will 'bake' the virtual cake. I like it fresh with the rare recipe from San Antonio.

Some responses:

- Summary: Nine members participated in our online gathering: four laywomen, three laymen, one sister, one priest.

Old words: WWW (world wide web), cyberspace

New words: internet, hybrid, online/virtual/digital, Zoom, Facebook (including Audio and Visual features), remote connectivity, Chat Room.

- From Alloys Nyakundi: "Thanks for the update and I hope this gathering brings great memories of joy and appreciation to all those who have gone out of their way to support St. Isidore SCC."
- As Alphonse and Jessica said during our online gathering we have been pathfinders in moving into a Digital World and exploring new ways of being an online SCC Model of Church.

At the Synod briefing on Wednesday, 11 October, 2023 journalists heard from Ms. Grace Wrackia from Papua New Guinea. She was a witness to the Synod Process in Oceania and made heard the voice of the Small Communities (SCs). Grace Wrackia expressed gratitude to the Pope for inviting representatives from the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea to the Synod. "For so many years we have been listening and now we'd like to speak and we'd like you to listen to our experience. We have something to give to the world. What we give from our hearts is our way of living, living in communion, living together and building relationship."

I received an email message from a reporter for the *OSV News*. *Our Sunday Visitor* (*OSV*) is a National Catholic weekly newspaper in the USA. In July 2012, *Our Sunday Visitor* was selected by the Vatican as the exclusive distributor of the North American English edition of the official Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*. In July 2022, *OSV* acquired the operations of *Catholic News Service* (*CNS*) that closed its US office at the end of 2022. *Our Sunday Visitor* launched a new wire service/online news agency on 1 January, 2023 called *OSV News*.

The reporter has been asked to do a story on Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) because some people in the USA do not seem to know what they are, and they have been mentioned at the Synod that is presently going on in Rome. This is an opportunity to share the experience and importance of Basic Christian Communities/Small Christian Communities in the Global South (Africa, Asia and Latin America). In particular we can explain the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa (the nine AMECEA countries of Eritrea (1993), Ethiopia (1979), Kenya (1961), Malawi (1961), South Sudan (2011), Sudan (1973), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1961) and Zambia (1961).

This article was published as: Frazee, Barb, “Small Christian Communities, Prominent in Asia, Latin America, Seen As Model For Whole Church,” *OSV News*, 24 October, 2023, reprinted as follows:

The Record (Louisville Archdiocese)

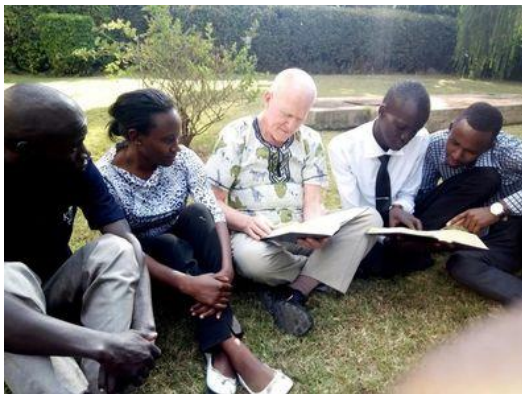
<https://www.oursundayvisitor.com/small-christian-communities-prominent-in-asia-latin-america-seen-as-model-for-whole-church/>

Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church - *The Record* Newspaper
Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church - *The Record* Newspaper

The article begins: "Throughout the various stages of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, several church leaders have referred to a new model of church that includes Basic Ecclesial Communities. But what exactly are those?"

The communities — often referred to as CEBs for their Spanish acronym (*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*, also referred to as BECs) or as BCCs for Basic Christian Communities — are prominent in Asia, Latin America [and Africa]. The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa [AMECEA] refers to them as Small Christian Communities and has made them part of the ecclesial structure of the [Catholic] Church [in Eastern Africa].

Some such communities also exist within at least four archdioceses in the United States, primarily within ministry to the Hispanic communities in Baltimore, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles..."



[Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church - The Record Newspaper](#)

General Congregation No. 4 of the Synod of Bishops
Testimony – 9 October 2023

How can we be more fully a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all humanity?

By P. Clarence DAVEDASSAN (Malaysia)

In the context that we live in, the Church in Asia cannot be self-referential and, therefore, seeks to engage in renewing the world. Our union with God spurs us to be the light and salt of the earth. One way has been to build Basic Ecclesial Communities, BECs (in some places known as Small Christian Communities or Basic Human Communities). They bring about not only spiritual transformation but also social transformation. They have been the beacons of hope for gospel witnessing in society. The BECs become a leaven of Christian life, care for the poor, and commit to transforming society through a lived gospel experience. These communities demonstrate a communion that radiates to Christians and non-Christians alike. They are our visible signs of a synodal church that is relevant and, at the same time, relational.

This is a powerful statement that reflects the Asian context where BECs demonstrate a communion that radiates to Christians and those who are not Christians alike.

Michael Centore, "A Leaven for Positive Change: Synod Report for October 12, 2023" *Today's American Catholic*, 12 October, 2023.

The importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs), also known as Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) or Basic Christian Communities (BCCs), to the life of the church has been a recurring theme of the synodal discussion this week.

[Leaven for Positive Change: Synod Report for October 12, 2023 - Today's American Catholic \(todayamericancatholic.org\)](https://todayamericancatholic.org/leaven-for-positive-change-synod-report-for-october-12-2023)

Press Conference at the Synod in Rome:

Archbishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of Bamenda, Cameroon said at an 12 October 2023 briefing that the Synod on Synodality is "a chance for the voice of Africa to be heard." "Synodality forms part of the African culture," Fuanya said, "because we always do things together as a family and when we do things together as a family, we always consult everyone in the family." He described different "levels" within the Catholic community. Before the parish level, which he said can often be quite large, there is a "mission station," while below that, the Basic Christian Communities are made up of families," where everyone is able to express themselves. "Our culture helps us to be synodal," said Fuanya, one of three African bishops on the synod's Ordinary Council.

This is similar to the pastoral structure in Eastern Africa (the nine AMECEA countries). From the bottom up: family, SCC, outstation, parish.

The Synod delegates meeting in Rome are sitting in mixed round tables of 12 persons each --laymen, laywomen, religious, priests, bishops and cardinals together. This is a type of SCC.

The term "Small Christian Community" has many meanings these days. See this story:

"The future looks dark for Christians in besieged Gaza."

The future looks dark for Christians in besieged Gaza. Their presence in the Hamas-ruled Palestinian enclave steadily weakened these past 20 years, the Small Christian Community in the Gaza Strip is praying for a swift end to the conflict. "We're in mortal danger, but we help anyone who asks," says Holy Rosary Sister Nabila, who is based at Holy Family Parish in Gaza City (the only Catholic parish in Gaza). She says the Israeli air strikes that have been pounding Gaza since 7 October, 2023 hours after Hamas carried out its surprise and brutal attack on Israel, have destroyed the homes of most of the 137 Latin-rite Catholics who belong to the parish. 200 displaced persons are huddled in the parish including some Muslims. All the people have been ordered to leave and move south.

Praying for and with these 137 Latin-rite Catholics who belong to the parish. Many will probably leave Gaza given the present unrest and uncertain future. The future of Gaza's Christian Communities seems more uncertain than ever. Strained by endemic poverty and insecurity, the Arab Catholics those who once numbered over 7,000 faithful just 15 years ago are now down to 1,000 and fear being totally decimated.

Read more at:



INTERNATIONAL.LA-CROIX.COM

The future looks dark for Christians in besieged Gaza

Their presence in the Hamas-ruled Palestinian enclave steadily weakened these past 20 years.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) based in Washington DC, USA invited me to write the Gospel Reflection for the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (15 October, 2023). Here it is. The reflection will go live on the MOGC Website on Monday, 9 October, 2023. It will be sent by email to the MOGC contacts, and the Maryknoll Magazine will publish it on their website and social media by Sunday, 8 October, 2023.

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Maryknoll Priest Joseph Healey, MM

Sunday, October 15, 2023

Is 25:6-10a | Phil 4:12-14, 19-20 | Mt 22:1-14

Are you following the Synod on Synodality that is taking place in Rome right now from 4 to 29 October, 2023? Some people say that it could be the most important event in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

There are many parallels between today's Gospel and the synod.

Matthew 21: 9 -10: “Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.”

The present 2021 – 2024 Synodal Process encourages us to “enlarge the space of our tent” (*Isaiah 54:2*) so everyone can fit into the Catholic Church including the refugees, homeless, LGBTQ people, people in polygamous marriages, people with special needs and others. All are invited. We are all walking together. We are inclusive.

Pope Francis’ September, 2023 prayer intention was “For people living on the margins.” The pope invited everyone to:

- Pray for and assist people living on the margins of society.
- Pay attention to people who face marginalization, even if it results from poverty, addictions, mental illness or disability. Specific examples: homeless people, street children washing car windshields, people with various disabilities.
- Offer a culture of welcoming, of providing shelter, of giving a home, of offering love, of giving human warmth.
- Help those living in subhuman living conditions.
- Welcoming is more than helping; it means putting the other person at our level.

Repite connigo: Todos, todos, todos [Portuguese]. “Repeat with me: Everyone, everyone, everyone.” Pope Francis proclaimed this message to 1.5 million young people at World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal this past August, 2023. He later emphasized that the Catholic Church is open to everyone including “the sick, the elderly, the young, old, ugly, beautiful, good and bad.”

More equality to women is one of the main topics being discerned at this October, 2023 Synod.

Listen to this story from Kenya called “We Women Are Equals and Have a Voice:”

Research indicates that 75% of the members of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Nairobi Archdiocese in Nairobi, Kenya are women. In interviews Catholic women have said: “In the hierarchical, clerical Catholic Church in Kenya we women feel at the bottom. We are second class. This is reinforced by our traditional African customs and traditions where we are also second class. But in our weekly SCCs when we sit around in a circle and share our reflections on the Gospel of the following Sunday we feel that we women are equals and have a voice.”

As a takeaway the next time you are in your parish or in a faith sharing group or at a community center search out a visitor or a stranger and say: “Welcome. Feel at home.” This person is Jesus in our midst.

Please share this Gospel Reflection with anyone who is interested.

We pray for the participants as the Synodal Assembly’s first session got underway in Rome this week, and for the wider People of God who continue to journey along this synodal path.

Some responses:

1. From Maryknoll missionary priest Dennis Moorman who uses parts of this English reflection about synodality in his weekend homilies in Portuguese in Brazil. He took a lot of material from Pope Francis and the synod and integrated some specific things from Brazil's reality.
2. From Maryknoll missionary priest Rafael Davila in Houston, Texas, USA: "I Google translated this homily into Spanish and hope to give it at two Sunday masses. **NOTE:** This shows the great use of internet technology. Gospel Reflections in English (in this case mainly borrowed from others especially Pope Francis) can be helpful in a Spanish Homily.
3. From Charlie Gibson: "Thank you for sharing your inspiring reflections on the inclusiveness of Jesus."
4. Mary Wahome: "Thanks for the sharing. Very, very insightful.
5. Mercy Kamau: "Thank you for the sharing. Very interested and insightful."
6. From Cardinal Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel CM in Rome: "I thank you for your reflections and for the SCCs whose fruits will be seen at the present Synod."
7. From Susan Nagele: "I am following the synod and it is a step forward. Kenyan women have a lot more patriarchy to deal with than we women in North America. Girls in Afghanistan can't go to school past 6th grade. So I consider myself very fortunate. But my local parish has gone back to pre-Vatican II practices and I am not going back there. Thanks for your reflection. There is a lot to chew on there and I look forward to doing that. Keep going!!!"
8. From a Carmelite Sister: "Nice reflection. Sunday, 15 October is also the feast of Teresa of Avila. Also it is the day in Rome when Pope Francis will announce his letter on St. Thérèse of Lisieux."
9. From Abel Nagaya: "Hello. Thanks for the updates."
10. From Leo Shea: "I read your homily on the MOGC website. Very nice reflection, Joe. Short and to the point with regard the hopes and at times promises of the Synod."
11. From Deacon Paul Bork who coordinates the Mission Appeals Program of the Maryknoll Society. He used material from the MOGC Gospel Reflection for the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A in his homily in Buffalo Diocese, New York, USA on 15 October, 2023.

From Rene Reid in Rome on 14 October, 2023: "Joan Chittister and I touched on many issues including what each of us can do to foster this synodal process – especially in places where there is resistance/denial from the bishops. Joan's suggestion was that each of us sit down with family members and/or a few friends and begin discussing what has come out of this Synod and what each of us can do to insist that synodality become part of our diocese, parish, or small communities. I intend to do this in my community when I return home and hope each of you will consider doing the same."

What can each of us do to insist/insure that synodality become part of our Small Christian Communities?

Kaufa, Andrew, "VATICAN SYNOD:: What is Unique to The Lay Out of Synod Hall?" AMECEA Online News, 6 October, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 15 October, 2023, <https://amecea.blogspot.com/.../vatican-synod-what-is...>

Speaking as an African from Eastern Africa, I can agree that this is a new grammar in so far as the synod is concerned. However, it is not a new grammar when it comes to being a church in the Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and Southern Africa (IMBISA) regions of the Church in Africa where the ecclesiology of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) has become the way of being a church. Coincidentally, the AMECEA region is also celebrating 50 years of the SCCs. The image of a Small Christian Community is that of a community of baptized men and women, youth including the religious men and women as the priests together sharing in a set of a circle, with the Bible as the center of their spiritual conversation about their life experiences and their mission to the world around them.

From the talks at the Synod in Rome during this month of October, 2023, it is clear that the Western world does not understand the pastoral, ecclesial structure of parishes in the Global South. The descending order is:

parish
sub-parish or center.
outstation or mission station
SCC
Family

All levels are part of a Communion Ecclesiology.

Today all of us SCCs members are invited to a Global Day of Prayer: a day of fasting, abstinence and prayer for peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land on Tuesday, 17 October 2023.

The connection between SCCs and World Mission Sunday (celebrated on 22 October, 2023) can be seen in two choices in our SCC Poll:

Eighty-Seventh Round (September - October, 2023): The best part of my Small Christian Community is...

- * Center of evangelization to the family and youth.
- * Where the faithful experience and live Synodality as mission, participation and communion.

The terms mission and evangelization are closely related.

At the same time we should connect SCCs and World Mission Sunday to the ongoing Synod Gathering going on in Rome until 29 October, 2023.



ST. DOMINIC

Invites you all to

**"YOUNG LIFE AFRICA CHILDREN'S HOME
(RUIRU) VISIT ON 28th Oct 2023."**

ACTIVITIES:

Cleaning,

Team building,

Mentorship & cooking.

DONATIONS:

Foodstuffs,

Stationaries & finances.

Moderator:

Treasurer:

0712363889-Mar

*James 2:15-16,
and daily in n
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nourished" and
are necessary*

From Alloys Nyakundi: “During the October 12 Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community and 17th October St. Isidore Skype SCC gatherings, our members from St. Dominic SCC, Kenyatta University invited us to attend and give some donations for the charity work that will take place as shown in the poster below. In the Synodal spirit, the Online Young Adult Seekers SCC has decided synodally to donate Ksh. 5,000 from the Young Seekers Fund in support of this important activity, reaching out to the marginalized in our communities. Prayers and best wishes.

From Faith Makori: ”Shalom brothers and sisters. Receive greetings from St. Dominic fraternity and Kenyatta University Catholic Community at large. We have just received your generous contribution as Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community towards the Charity event we are planning. Feel appreciated and may the Good Lord bless you all who contributed towards the contribution in one way or another. May we continue to grow together in the synodal spirit.”

From Joseph Healey: Thank you for this Synodal Spirit. One choice in our SCC Poll at <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/> is: "Pray for and assist people living on the margins of society." These children are living on the margins of society. It is wonderful that we can help them through prayer, financial assistance and foodstuffs/stationaries, etc. Plus the mentorship, cleaning, cooking and team building on the day itself.

From Mary Wahome: “We as students of KU, as members of St. Dominic SCC, we appreciate the heartfelt donation. May the good Lord continue blessing us as we are together in the spirit of synodality and as we continue sharing... Woow, we as students of KU, and members of St. Dominic SCC, we appreciate and may God continue blessing all of us as we are all together in the spirit of synodality and the spirit of sharing.”

From Valentine Mukokho: “We are really grateful for the support 🙏🙏🙏 May God bless you.”

From Alphonse Omolo: "This is great news indeed. We thank God for its continued blessings amidst the challenges. A great opportunity for the youth indeed. Hopefully, they can work with this to the benefit of the Youth SCCS. It is difficult but a well-learned lesson."

Alloys points out: "In the Outer Life of SCCs, members learn that both the Inner and Outer lives of SCCs are vital, for example, what St. Dominic SCC is doing through reaching out to the marginalized. This is one of the many practical ways of living the gospel of Jesus Christ.

St. Dominic SCC, oyee.

At the Press Conference at the synod in Rome on 19 October, 2023 Archbishop Dabula Mpako of the Archdiocese of Pretoria, South Africa emphasized that “many African countries have a fertile ground for synodality.” He cited the history of the Small Christian Community (SCC) movement in Africa as a forerunner to the synodal method. “We are building upon an experience we have already had,” he said. Asked about the relationship between synodality and the Catholic Church hierarchy, Archbishop Dabula

Mpako said that the synod is trying to discover “how the two can work in such a way that synodality can infuse the hierarchical structure.”

This is an important statement that highlights that the SCC Model of Church has existed in Africa for a long time and is an expression/manifestation of synodality. One clarification. We do not like to use the word "movement" to describe the experience of SCCs. The Brazilian theologian Father José Marins says that Basic Ecclesial Communities/Small Christian Communities “are not a Movement in the Catholic Church, but the Church on the Move.”

General Congregation 12 of the Synod in Rome on 18 October 2023

Testimony

“TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES”

THE ASIAN JOURNEY INTO SYNODAL LEADERSHIP

Estela P. Padilla,

FABC-OTC

“Walking barefoot together, the synodal journey – from Small Communities to the parish, diocesan, national and Continental levels in Asia -- was a participatory process of being a prophetic community. In our *Final Asian Synodal Report*, we proclaimed who we are as church: reading the signs of the times and heeding the call of God to be bridges of peace and become peace builders, to continue to dialogue with the poor, religions, and cultures, to entrust the young and women with important leadership roles, and to care especially for migrants and refugees, among other things.”

As we come to the end of October, 2023 you are invited to vote in our SCC Poll at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org> You can vote many times but not more than once in a 24 hour period. This September – October, 2023 Poll has received the most votes/hits since we began – 563 votes so far. The six choices really speak to our “contemporary signs of the times.” Welcome.

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>



SMALLCHRISTIANCOMMUNITIES.ORG

Small Christian Communities – Small Christian Communities

Small Christian Communities

The SCCs Poll is on the right side of the Home Page of the SCCs Website at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>

Joseph Healey: "Praying together for the Synod to take place in Rome in October, 2023." And "Praying together for the Golden Jubilee of SCCs in Eastern Africa."

Alloys Nyakundi: Yes, I encourage the young seekers to participate in this poll before the end of the month when it closes. I have been voting and still voting for: "Pray for and assist people living on the margins of society."

From *Today's American Catholic* Website: Sister Mary Theresa Barron, OLA, President of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) [Women]:

Picking up on a theme that was introduced yesterday by Archbishop Anton Dabula Mpako of South Africa, she spoke of how her experience with Small Christian Communities (SCCs) has informed her understanding of synodality. Barron's work as a missionary took her to Eastern Africa, which she called "my first introduction to a synodal church." She described a parish structure in a rural parish in Shinyanga Diocese in Tanzania that comprised 35 villages. It was half the size of Ireland. Each village had an "outstation" with a catechist. "There were only two priests to serve the entire parish," she explained. "It was such a synodal process," she said. "We listened to each other. The decisions were taken together. The outstation fed into the center, which fed into the parish, which then fed into the diocese."

Barron said that the Rome Synodal Assembly reminds her of the weekly meetings of these Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa, particularly the way that everyone is given a chance to contribute regardless of rank, position, or educational status.

"I think the experience of sitting around the tables in Paul VI Hall brings me back again to East Africa. The setting is extremely different. I imagine myself outside a mud hut where we met every Sunday for our Basic Christian Community meetings — a small gathering of people, maybe 10 families in the Christian community. We sat around and shared our faith rooted in the Gospel of that Sunday. But the key was that we had to decide how we wanted to live that faith as a community and take an action. What was beautiful for me: "We shared our faith from the depths of our hearts and we came to a decision together," she said. "Every voice was the same around that Small Christian Community."

This witness talk/testimony is a very good description of the SCCs Model of Church from the grassroots up. Communion Ecclesiology work hand in hand with synodality (walking together).

Barron is an Irish missionary sister. Her talk at the Vatican Press Conference: "A Coordination of Charisms: Synod Report for October 20, 2023. It can be found on the Vatican Website on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDv25cbXlgA>

Sister Barron is an Irish Sister of Our Lady of Africa (OLA) Congregation that is the companion congregation of the Society of the Missions in Africa (SMA) especially the priests of the Irish Province of the Society of the Missions in Africa (SMA) in Tanzania. She served as a Pastoral Worker in Mwamapalala Parish in Shinyanga Diocese from September, 1995 to April, 2001 (5 years, 8 months) and as a Project Manager in Bugisi Parish in Shinyanga Diocese from August, 2003 to August, 2004 (1 year, 1 month).

Sources of information and commentary on the Synod in Rome:

Press Conferences/Briefings
 Testimonies in Plenary Sessions
 Interventions in Plenary Sessions (Spoken and Written)
 Letters
 Interviews
 Blogs
 Reports
 Commentaries

Articles
 Stories
 Podcasts
 Video Clips
 Websites
 Facebook Pages
 Other Social Media

Happy World Mission Sunday.

During the meeting of the Executive Board members of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA held from 17-18 October, 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya the Chairman highlighted various issues of importance that the board looked at including; the Silver Jubilee celebration of Blessed Bakanja AMECEA College which is a regional seminary owned by AMECEA, the Golden Jubilee of the establishment of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the region, and the need to have policies for child safeguarding and for vulnerable adults: the elderly, the sick the poor who are at times not given a platform.

A good topic for discernment and decision-making in our SCCs. What are we going to do:

Tracey Horan, *NCR*: “As I have watched the unfolding Synod on Synodality in Rome, I keep thinking about the power of the collective. We, as followers of a God so often made manifest through collective liberation, don't have to wait for top-down change. In the words of Spanish poet Antonio Machado, "se hace camino al andar" [a Spanish proverb or saying]— "you make the path by walking it." This synodal process is a path that we are all making.

At the end of the Angelus Pope Francis reminded the faithful that next Friday, 27 October 2023 will be a day of prayer and fasting and there will be an hourlong prayer vigil held in St. Peter's Square to pray for peace in the world. The vigil will start at 6 p.m. Rome time. Let us pray for peace in all our SCC gatherings.

Tom Reese writes in *Religious News Service* (23 October, 2023).

As a result, no document will convey the result of the synod. It will not be enough to read any document that comes from the synod; Catholics must experience the synod, must do synod. The best place to do this is in your parish. Some of the African participants at the synod report that they are already doing it. They have Small Christian Communities that meet weekly to converse about the Sunday Scriptures. They pray together and share their reflections. This provides the groundwork for a Synodal Parish. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna, Austria acknowledged that the European Church is lagging behind on such practices. Every parish in America can have its own synodal experience by adapting the synodal process as described in “Methodology for the working groups,” published by the General Secretary of the synod.

“Pope Francis wants the synod in every parish. Here's how to bring it to yours.”
[Pope Francis wants the synod in every parish. Here's how to bring it to yours. | America Magazine](#)

This article is particularly good for imaging what the future parish may look like.

From the Today's American Catholic Website: Article on "The Synod on Synodality: Evolution or Revolution?" by Gene Ciarlo (October 23, 2023)

"Small Christian Communities are gathering as we speak. It is becoming increasingly common for like-minded Roman Catholic Christians and other Christians to come together on a regular basis to pray, break bread, and perhaps celebrate Eucharist. They may not all profess Roman Catholicism, but they confess Jesus, the Christ, as Lord, and are believers in his message, method, and style of life, love and compassion. They are an open and welcoming community, accepting among them anybody who believes in Jesus, acknowledging him as the Word and affirming his lifestyle as answering the needs of their own journey.

The aim of these Small Communities is to carry forward into their members' lives the unity, simplicity, compassion, and bonding of their gathering as church. The underlying theme of their coming together is how to grow to be able to reach out, to evangelize by word and deed in daily life. The community is never myopic and self-serving. It is intended to build *ekklesia*, "the gathering of those summoned."

Young Seekers: An Informal Conversation with an International Small Christian Community Based in Kenya led by Alloys Nyakundi from Kenya with Kristiana Aurel from Indonesia, James Mhangwa from Tanzania, Ashiknaz Khokhar from Pakistan, Collins Ongoma from Kenya, Alexandro Rolandi from Indonesia and Mary Wahome from Kenya. Spirit Unbounded Video Clip, Spirit Unbounded YouTube, 22:06 minutes (from 1:14:57 to 1:37:03). 3 3 Ways of Being Church - Different Rhythms - YouTube and https://youtu.be/T74SFrUo7PY?si=xklvTROqrM_67c45

In a conversation with Maggi Conway members of the Online Young Seekers Small Christian Community describe their online SCC. These are 20 young adults (women and men) from four countries (Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan and Tanzania) who meet online every two weeks. See Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community (Kenyatta University) Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/875453985953421>



Fraze, Barb, “Is the Priest Listening To You? Indian Diocese Surveys Families for Synod,” *Central Minnesota Catholic – Magazine of the Diocese of St. Cloud*, *OSV News Focus on Faith*, Synod 2021–2024, 17 March 2023, Central Minnesota Catholic Website. <https://thecentralminnesotacatholic.org/is-the-priest...>

ALAPPUZHA, India. An Indian diocese used its existing Small Christian Communities to train lay leaders to reach out to a wide variety of Catholics — including broken families — ensuring that everyone had a voice in the listening process for the upcoming Synod of Bishops on synodality. Some participants said they already have seen changes. Almost 70% of parishes completed the initial reflection within three days, said Msgr. Joy Puthenveetil, vicar general of the Diocese of Alleppey. “We have tried to let every family have the experience of the synod,” he told *OSV News* in early March. “The process of listening is what is important for the synodal church.” The Diocese of Alleppey has about 1,200 Small Christian Communities, and leaders of those communities trained about 70 members of the Diocesan Synod Team.



As a follow up to the Synod Gathering in Rome that ends on 29 October, 2023, we SCC members can ask: how can SCCs contribute to developing a Synodal Parish in a Synodal Diocese in a Synodal Church?

Onyalla, Don Bosco, "Synod: Church in Africa Called to "Theological, Pastoral Discernment on Polygamy Issue, "ACI Africa," 28 October 2023. (aciafrica.org)

Under "Matters for Consideration" under the topic "For a church that listens and accompanies", the synod delegates encourage the People of God across the globe to enhance Small Christian Communities (SCCs), a new way of being Church that the leadership of the Church in Africa has included in its evangelization structures. "Widespread in many parts of the world, grassroots or Small Christian Communities foster listening practices of and among the baptized," the synod delegates say in their 42-page document, adding, "We are called to enhance their potential, including exploring how they can be adapted to urban contexts."

In Eastern Africa the Catholic Church has fostered SCCs for five decades. In August, 2023 the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) launched the Golden Jubilee Year of SCCs to assess the status of this new way of being church in the region. "By December 2023, it will be 50 years since the Small Christian Communities were adopted by the AMECEA Region as a pastoral priority," Bishop Rogatus Kimaryo of Tanzania's Same Diocese and Chairman for AMECEA Pastoral Department said in his key address during the launch that was held in Malawi's Dedza Diocese. Bishop Kimaryo added that the Pastoral Departments of Bishops' Conferences in the AMECEA region will be spearheading the yearlong Golden Jubilee celebrations, "not as an event, but a process comprising of several strategic activities involving all AMECEA Member Conferences."

Under "Matters for Consideration" under the topic "Participating Bodies" the synod delegates also address the reality of SCCs. Referring to this new way of being church in Africa, the synod delegates say, "Synodality grows in the involvement of each member in processes of discernment and decision-making for the mission of the Church: in this sense we are edified and encouraged by many Small Christian Communities in emerging churches, which live a daily fraternal "body to body" around the Word and the Eucharist."

Still under the topic of "a church that listens and accompanies", the synod delegates pose the question of what needs to "change so that those who feel excluded can experience a more welcoming church" and go on to affirm, "Listening and accompaniment are not just individual initiatives, but a form of ecclesial action. This is why they must find a place within the ordinary

pastoral planning and operational structuring of Christian Communities at different levels, also valuing spiritual accompaniment.”

It is significant that this is the first international document in the 2021 -- 2024 Synodal Process that specifically refers to the term "Small Christian Communities" and praises their importance in the Global South.

Archbishop Andrew Fuanya Nkea of Bamenda Archdiocese in Cameroon told the *National Catholic Register* (the *Register*), ACI Africa’s partner agency, that the 4-29 October 2023 XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops “went very well, much better than I expected.” This is part of a 28 October 2023 interview with the *Register* in Rome:

“What do you think was the African Bishops’ general and most important contribution to the Synod?”

“One of the biggest contributions that Africa brought to this synod is the idea of Small Christian Communities. If we don’t go back to Small Christian Communities, all this about broad-based consultation, getting everybody involved, is a pipe dream. When you are looking at those Small Christian Communities, you’re looking at families and no one is left behind. That’s why Africa opted for the image of Church as a family, not a tent. I think this is something you see. At the end of this meeting, nobody talked about a tent anymore. We’re all about family. This is one of the big things that Africa brought on board, that is, the Church is the family of God.”

Since we began the SCCs Poll, the highest vote getters have been:

Peer group Small Faith-sharing Community. 486 (high number resulted from Chinese hacking)

Praying together for the Synod to take place in Rome in October, 2023. 174

Praying together for peace in the world. 170

Helps the needy during Covid-19 and Online faith sharing. 167.

Richness of small community Gospel reflection and faith sharing. 166

Communal listening to the Word of God. 157

Helps deepen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ and Special prayers for people with Covid-19. 153

Concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic and Sharing daily experiences. 153

Good insight into what people like. Shows the priorities of our SCC members.

The unofficial English translation of the 42 page text of the Summary Report of the First Session of the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is called "A Synodal Church in Mission" that was published in Italian on 28 October, 2023.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

It is important that we continue to evaluate our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa so we can make it better. Please vote in the current polls.

Eighty-eighth Round -- The best part of my Small Christian Community is.....:
(November -- December, 2023):

1. Praying together for peace in war-torn areas.
2. Mirror the ongoing Synodal Process to ensure that no one is left behind.
3. Christ-centered Small Community.
4. Synodal SCCs Model of Church on the local level.
5. Everyone is given a chance to contribute regardless of rank, position or educational status.
6. Small Christian Support Community in our daily lives.

Vote at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org>



Each choice comes from the grassroots experience of SCC members and their reading the contemporary "Signs of the Times." You can vote often, but not more than once in a 24 hour period.

I voted for: "Mirror the ongoing Synodal Process to ensure that no one is left behind."
Others voted for "Praying together for peace in war-torn areas" that leads with 42 votes.

"One Year after Meeting with Pope Francis, Young Africans Celebrate Growth"
by Agnes Aineah
Nairobi, 1 November, 2023, ACI Africa

Small Christian Communities: Youth meet in their Small Christian Communities (SCCs) to reflect on the word of God. SCCs (a new way of being Church have been embraced by) the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa where they have taken root. Today, our young people are making SCCs a continental initiative.



A SYNODAL CHURCH IN MISSION

SYNTHESIS REPORT OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE XVI GENERAL ORDINARY ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS



1. Synodality: Experience and Understanding
2. Gathered and Sent by the Trinity
3. Entering the Community of Faith: Christian Initiation
4. People in Poverty, Protagonists of the Church's Journey
5. A Church "Out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation"
6. The Eastern Christian Traditions and the Latin Tradition
7. On the Road Towards Christian Unity

THE FACE OF THE SYNODAL CHURCH



8. Church is Mission
9. Women in the Life and Mission of the Church
10. Consecrated Life and Lay Associations and Movements: a Charismatic Sign
11. Deacons and Priests in a Synodal Church
12. The Bishop in Ecclesial Communion
13. The Bishop of Rome in the College of Bishops

ALL DISCIPLES, ALL MISSIONARIES



14. A Synodal Approach to Formation
15. Ecclesial Discernment and Open Questions
16. Towards a Listening and Accompanying Church
17. Mission in the Digital Environment
18. Structures for Participation
19. Groupings of Churches within the Communion of the Whole Church
20. The Synod of Bishops and Ecclesial Assemblies

WEAVING BONDS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES



EACH CHAPTER

CONVERGENCES

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

PROPOSALS



The Universal Church expects a spiritual and missionary revival in all aspects, Archbishop Andrew Fuanya Nkea of Bamenda Archdiocese in Cameroon who participated in the October 4-29 XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome said.

In a Wednesday, November 1, 2023 interview with ACI Africa, Archbishop Nkea said the synod in Rome had been “a wonderful experience of faith and intimate communion with the universal Church.” Reflecting on Africa’s participation at the synod, Archbishop Nkea said delegates from the continent “made some remarkable contributions.”

He especially highlighted what he described as “the practical idea” of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and “the bottom-up approach” to decision making processes in the Church in Africa, saying, “In those SCCs, the Church is family and we refer to them as the Church in the neighborhood, everybody knows everybody and they work together.”

SCCs as "the Church in the neighborhood" makes the African SCCs different from SCCs in the West.

Pedro Pierre, “CEBs in the Synthesis Document,” unpublished document, Basic Ecclesial Communities, Guayaquil, Ecuador, November 2023.

The Synthesis Document of the recent Synodal Assembly meeting in the Vatican in October, 2023 makes us see that yes, the CEBs (*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* in Spanish) are “a seed” that has become “a big bush.” This article documents the references directly and indirectly to CEBs in the Synthesis Document. The CEBs that the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mexico in 2021 described as a "synodal Church experience" have a particular responsibility in this Synodal Process to set in motion another way of being church as we have begun to be. The article suggests reflections and questions to work on in our CEBs.

From the Washington DC Archdiocese, USA Website: "Small Groups (the name for SCCs in the USA) come in all shapes but in small sizes of around 5-10 people. Your group can be a Bible Study, Book Club, Running Group, etc. Every small group includes hospitality, prayer, and discussion to help all participants make friends, make disciples, and make a difference. Groups run on a semester schedule for around 5 to 10 gatherings."

New Article Announcement: “*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs) in the 2023 Synod Synthesis Document” (English Translation)

By Pedro Pierre

Basic Ecclesial Communities, Guayaquil, Ecuador. November 2023.

The Synthesis Document of the recent “Synodal Assembly” meeting in the Vatican in October, 2023 makes us see that yes, the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs) are “a seed” that has become “a big bush.” With us and many other like-minded groups, Synodality is here to stay.....Read More



**Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs) in the 2023 Synod Synthesis Document[1]
(English Translation) – Small Christian Communities**
Small Christian Communities

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/comunidades-elesiales-de-base-cebs-in-the-2023-synod-synthesis-document1-english-translation>

Under Latin America there are articles from eight countries:

Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Ecuador
El Salvador
Honduras
Peru
Venezuela

How do we connect the Gospel of next Sunday (12 November, 2023 – 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A: *Matthew 25:1-13*) to our daily life? A parish priest in Paterson Diocese, New Jersey, USA writes: “I just read the *Our Sunday Visitor* article on Small Christian Communities. What a joy and encouragement to see the African SCCs highlighted. This is the hope of the church. Engagement in SCCs is akin to the Wise Virgins being ready for the open doors to the banquet – the new banquet of the Synodal Catholic Church alive in Christ.”

Tom Reese writes in *RNS*: At the Synod on Synodality, the Western media focused on a limited number of hot-button issues — women’s ordination, married priests and blessing of gay couples. But hidden in the synod participants’ 40-page synthesis are some surprising gems that could lead to significant reform in the Catholic Church. The 15th Gem is: “The synod wants to promote Small Christian Communities who live the closeness of the day-to-day, around the Word of God and the Eucharist and by their nature foster a synodal style. “We are called to enhance their potential,” the synod’s members said.

SCCs come in many shapes and sizes. Patricia Gemmell writes from Australia that she is the coordinator of her parish *Laudato Si’* Action Platform Group that has been meeting monthly for two years now. “To to my surprise and delight we have become a Small Christian Community. With their support I may be able to expand awareness of synodality in my parish.” Applying specific criteria will determine if it is a SCC (strictly speaking or in a flexible way) or a Small Group.

After the First Session of the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops finished in Rome in October, 2023, we are now analyzing and commenting on the 42 page text of the “Summary Report” of the First Session is called “A Synodal Church in Mission.”

The specific term “Small Christian Communities” is mentioned twice in Part III: “Weaving Bonds, Building Community.”

No. 16 is “Towards a Listening and Accompanying Church.” Under “Matters for Consideration” m) states: “Widespread in many parts of the world, grassroots [base] or Small

Christian Communities foster listening practices of and among the baptized. We are called to enhance their potential, in particular by exploring how they can be adapted to urban contexts.”

No. 18 is "Structures for Participation." Under "Matters for Consideration" e) states: "We are encouraged by Small Christian Communities in the Emerging Churches who live the closeness of the day-to-day around the Word of God and the Eucharist.”

This is a beautiful statement but is it true regarding the reference to the Eucharist? It does not take into account what is called the Eucharistic Famine or the Eucharistic Hunger or the Eucharistic Drought especially in the Global South. Research show that due to the lack of male, celibate priests, on any given Sunday most Catholics in Africa (up to 60% in some surveys) participate in a “Sunday Service Without a Priest” where there is usually no Holy Communion especially in rural areas rather than participate in a regular mass. Bishop Patrick Kalilombe of Malawi talks about the importance of SCCs being Eucharistic Communities, but in fact they are not especially in rural areas in Africa. Research in the Amazon indicates that there are rural Catholic communities (what we call outstations or mission stations in Africa) that only get Mass once or twice a year. Pope Francis has spoken about this pastoral challenge several times.

Tom Reese points out 15 gems in the document including the one above and writes: “You will not find these gems written about in the media.” I think this is changing. I was interviewed by a reporter for *Our Sunday Visitor* about SCCs in Africa. I have seen the article reprinted in at least 10 diocesan newspapers in the USA.

Arnaud Join-Lambert writes from Belgium: "I also hope that the Synodal Process will contribute to the transformation of the Catholic Church to proclaim the Gospel in today's world."

An ongoing 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. 1,505 pages as of 21 November, 2023 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:
<http://smallchristiancommunities.org/building-the-church.../>
http://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf

On sale on Amazon (Kindle Edition and other digital formats) and Google as an Ebook and on Amazon as a Print on Demand (POD) paperback in two volumes.

1,500 pages in two printed volumes. Wow. This is quite a record of the amazing history of SCCs in Eastern Africa. Coincides with the Golden Jubilee (1973--2023) of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.

Patricia Gemmell describes her parish Laudato Si’ Action Platform Group in Australia: "I suppose that my group does not fit entirely into the African definition, but it might, one day! We are always evolving. The LSAP group numbers around 10, and largely overlaps with our Lenten group that has been meeting weekly in Lent for nine years now. It also largely overlaps with the group that met for months during Covid on Zoom (which my husband and I organized) and THAT was weekly Lectionary-based faith sharing.

Our monthly LSAP groups begin with silent reflection and faith sharing, usually on a "Laudato Si' text," and I try to make our meetings as synodal as possible. In the first year (2022) we worked through a parish audit and then discerned a modest plan of action. This year, 2023, we have been implementing some of the goals. It's interesting, you know, this year is the first year that we have done some practical action and outreach, and I think that this has bonded us much closer together. The actions are small -- one hour, monthly cleanups of the streets around a church, producing an electronic newsletter, screening a documentary on Pope Francis and *Laudato Si'*, weekly prayer sessions offered to the parish before an important referendum - but I have the feeling they have significantly changed us. I think this group has the potential to become a weekly faith sharing group, but not yet. That's because I and/or my husband would have to run it, and we are both too busy!! However, it is something that I do definitely aspire to.

As I read your report on overlapping small communities I think of the "both ... and" principle. The key for us now is to do everything in a synodal way as you are doing. I call this developing Synodal SCCs in a Synodal Parish in a Synodal Diocese in a Synodal Catholic Church. I feel that many SCCs of the future will be hybrid.

ZAMBIA: "Bishops Conference Launches Small Christian Communities Jubilee Celebrations"

By Father Winfield Kunda

The Catholic Church in Zambia has launched the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of Small Christian Communities of AMECEA. The celebration which was to start in July this year to July 2024 will now be celebrated in various forms marked with several activities in all the Catholic Dioceses in Zambia. Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops President Archbishop Ignatius Chama has thanked God, and the Founding Bishops for initiating the establishment Small Christian Communities as the new way of evangelisation. "We thank God for 50 years of fruitful experiences of Small Christian Communities as a way of being a Church, and the Founding Bishops who started the Small Christian Communities as a pastoral model that was going to bring the Good News to the people and more into the Catholic Church, the family of God. In other words, they prophetically prepared for a Synodal Church," Archbishop Chama said...

This article has three insights/challenges:

1. Use of the term Synodal Church.
2. Danger of reducing Small Christian Communities to social fundraising groups.
3. Absence of men.

Bishop Charles Kasonde writes: "Yes the launch is very important so that we allow ourselves to reflect on this important state of being the Local Church in the neighborhood." Yes, this distinguishes the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa from the models in Europe and North America where the SCCs are not a communion/network in the physical neighborhood but scattered around. African theologians such as Father Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator, SJ have written about "SCCs as the Church in the Neighborhood."

From *Today's American Catholic*: "A Need for Creativity: Synod Report for October 29, 2023:" "The report makes a reference to Small Christian Communities when it states that reflection is urged "on the phenomenon of 'non-denominational' communities and Christian-

inspired ‘revival’ movements, which are also joined in large numbers by faithful who were originally Catholic.”

It may be that these Small Communities offer the freedom necessary to experiment with new forms of liturgical language and ministry that can then be assimilated into the synodal church. The way that Small Christian Community participants share facilitation duties amongst themselves, for instance, is just one example of how these communities foster a sense of co-responsibility that is at the heart of the synodal mission."

Please pray for the meeting of: “Pan African Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS) at 50: Towards Promoting a Synodal Church in Africa through Social Communications.” Lagos, Nigeria, 18-21 November, 2023. CEPACS is African Region’s arm of the Catholic Church that handles all matters concerning the activities in the realm of media in Africa and Madagascar -- press, radio, television, video, traditional, social media, internet and a host of other new forms of media.

Young Seekers are very committed to addressing the social injustices and environmental injustices in their different communities. So far eight young seekers have identified the issues they'll want to start addressing going forward, for example:

1. Child neglect
2. Female genital mutilation
3. Water pollution
4. Hunting wild animals
5. Deforestation/Planting trees.
6. Gender discrimination
7. Improper disposal of plastics
8. Racial discrimination
9. LGBTQ discrimination
10. Ageism

The Young Seekers fund will be used to support some of these projects the young people want to undertake to create awareness and also try to find solutions to some of these challenges.

“Passion is the fuel that drives us forward. We aspire to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We are doing this to make the world a better place for everyone and all generations to come. That's the true spirit of Small Christian Communities.”

Small Christian Community members have to adapt to the changing meaning of words according to the local context. For almost 100 years we used "See, Judge and Act" as a Reflection Method or Process. Then "Judge" started taking on a negative, even pejorative meaning such as as making a judgement on a person or situation. Now we use "See, Discern and Act" where "Discern" has a deeper meaning.

“I am optimistic that the SCCs Golden Jubilee Celebrations in Eastern Africa and the ongoing Synodal Process will go from strength to strength in 2024.”

As we come to the end of the Liturgical Year A in the Catholic Church, we can evaluate and assess our Small Christian Communities. Are we developing and promoting Synodal SCCs in a Synodal Parish in a Synodal Diocese in a Synodal Catholic Church? Are we developing and promoting Synodal Young Adult SCCs in our Synodal Campus Ministry Centers on our college campuses?

We are delighted to announce that Father Vincent Fredrick Mwachwawa has been appointed the Auxiliary Bishop of Lilongwe Archdiocese in Malawi. Congratulations and prayers. He has long been a supporter and promoter of Small Christian Communities. In 2012 he wrote an important CUEA Master's Thesis called: "Improving Participation of the Laity in Small Christian Communities: a Pastoral Challenge in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Malawi." it can be found as free, online ebook on the SCCs Website at:



SMALLCHRISTIANCOMMUNITIES.ORG

Improving participation of the laity in Small Christian Communities: a pastoral challenge in the archdiocese of Lilongwe, Malawi.

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/improving-participation-of-the-laity-in-small-christian-communities-a-pastoral-challenge-in-the-archdiocese-of-lilongwe-malawi/>

How can we be Synodal SCCs? How can we act in a synodal way (walking together)? Here is an example. Part of the Synodal Process is deeper listening to other people and their views, not just pushing our own ideas and views. On our weekly St. Isidore of Seville International Online Skype SCC Zoom Call today 21 November, 2023 we reflected on the Gospel of St. Matthew 25: 31-46. This is the gospel for Christ the King Sunday, the end of the Liturgical Year A in the Catholic Church (26 November, 2023). Alloys Nyakundi reflected on his mantra: "Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me." Following him I changed my reflection and tried to apply the Gospel to the war in Gaza right now. Jesus says: "I was in prison and you visited me." The Israel hostages guarded by the Hamas terrorists in underground tunnels likely underneath hospitals in Gaza are like prisoners. Some of them are ill, hungry, thirsty, without sufficient clothes. We can be in solidarity with them and pray for their release.

From Alloys Nyakundi: "The Gospel is reminding us to think about the marginalized and those who are suffering because it's through that we serve God. It's not only about going to church on Sunday but the real church is in serving the marginated in society. I connect the gospel to the Africa proverb, *A home that welcomes strangers will never lack food.*" This African Proverb has a deep meaning and important application.

Here is part of a brilliant article on SCCs by a national syndicated Catholic writer in the USA:

Lucia Silecchia, "Welcome Home, World Youth Day Pilgrims," *The Beacon* (Paterson Diocese, New Jersey, USA), 10 August 2023. Also in *Jersey Catholic*, the official online news site of the [Archdiocese of Newark](#), NJ, 7 August, 2023, [Now that you are back, where will WTD take you? – Jersey Catholic](#)

This is an excerpt in an article in the form of an "Open Letter to Young People" returning to the USA from Portugal in August, 2023 after the World Youth Day.

“Remember and appreciate the importance of companionship on the journey of faith. Do all you can to **gather**, **grow** and **nourish** a Small Community of Faith (SCF)). Whether it is a:

- Campus Ministry Group
- Parish Youth Group
- Group of Catholic Young Adults (including Alumni SCCs)
- Rookie parents
 - Newlyweds
- Group of devoted friends and neighbors (similar to a Small Neighborhood Community called the Church in the Neighborhood or a Neighborhood Church)

Find a community who will support you, and who you will support, as you grow in faith.

This article describes very well the many types of Youth, Young People, Young Adults and Young Professional SCCs in Eastern Africa. It points to one of the choices in our SCCs Poll this month: "Small Christian Support Community in our daily lives."

Yesterday we had a two hour Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) online Synodal Process gathering. 75 participated. There were five people in our Small Breakout Group No. 8 (three women and two men; four continents represented – Africa, India, Philippines, USA). Highlight: The women from India and Philippines gave strong case studies of women speaking out in civil society about discrimination against women. I responded to a woman from St. Paul, Minnesota who emphasized that “group effort enlarges our voice” by describing our SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa. I told the story "We Women Are Equals and Have a Voice" <https://afriprov.tangaza.ac.ke/.../we-women-are-equals.../>

As part of my ongoing research in the USA, “Small Groups” remains the most popular term for what we call in Eastern Africa "Small Christian Communities." Other names mentioned in the online conversation or in the Chat Room were (alphabetically):

Little Groups
 Quest Groups
 Small Activist Groups
 Small Christian Communities
 Small Church Communities
 Small Communities
 Small Faith Communities
 Small Faith Sharing Groups
 Small Groups
 Small Groups of Loving People

Plus emphasis on Small Community Formation Programs.

I continue to do careful and depth research on the term “Small Christian Communities" in relation to the ongoing 2021--2024 Synodal Process. Why did it suddenly

appear twice in the 2023 "Synthesis Report?" Previously Synod documents only referred to "Small Groups" in more general terms. The term "Base Communities" has a longer history coming out of the Latin American experience. Most of the interventions at the October, 2023 Session I came from the Global South. How influential have been the Press Conferences and talks of Archbishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of Bamenda in Cameroon?

Suggestions from Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) --

<https://catholicchurchreformintl.org/> on "How to begin your own synodal gathering:"
<https://catholicchurchreformintl.org/start-a-synodal.../>

1. Reach out to a community of friends or members of your parish or in your local community. It can be a small community, as few as three or four, ideally no larger than 10 or 12 people.
2. You are encouraged to invite a broad spectrum of participants – active members in the church, people who have dropped out, even members of other religious affiliations. If your small community is larger than 10-12 persons, you might want to break into sub-groups/communities.
3. By way of preparation, we encourage you to read "What Is the Synod on Synodality?" – Catholic Church Reform International
<https://catholicchurchreformintl.org/> to learn what has already been completed.
4. Gather your community together for the purpose of (1) familiarizing yourselves with what the synod is and (2) preparing to submit your reflections on what you'd like to see included and/or further emphasized in Session Two of the Synod to be held in October, 2024. What reforms are needed to transform the Catholic Church into the kind of community in which you would want to be involved. You may choose to come together either in person, online via Zoom or hybrid.
5. Always open with a prayer and allow time for several minutes of silent reflection.
6. Ask someone to be the scribe to summarize in writing the stories and examples shared and the recommendations of how the situation could have been better handled by the church.
7. After introductions, you might invite them to share one facet of Catholicism so meaningful to them that they would want to preserve that, no matter what. Next, ask if they have ever been hurt in their life in the church. Allow time for silent reflection before responding.
8. As your gatherings continue, welcome anyone who wishes to share his/her own personal real-life experience of life in the church; listen to everyone with equal attentiveness.
9. Invite them to share their views of these experiences and, if they were not dealt with as Jesus would have done, offer solutions to how the situation could have been better handled. In this way, you're laying the groundwork for the church you'd like to see in the future.
10. Set up a regular meeting schedule for your small community.
11. At the appropriate time, you'll be invited to send a compilation of your responses and comments to:
info@CatholicChurchReform.com
 where we will gather all the responses and forward them to the Synod Office in Rome.
12. Feel free to continue your gatherings on into the future.

We invite you to join a CCRI online gathering. The very best experience is participating in a small gathering of your own. If you are unable to join or start a synod in your own region, we'll post a central calendar offering a series of ongoing online gatherings to accommodate the various time zones globally. You will be invited to register for the one that best fits your schedule.

Feel free to pass on this invitation to others and invite them to join us, to share their stories of life in the Catholic Church, and to become involved in preparing for Session Two of the Synod to be held in Rome in October 2024.



CATHOLICCHURCHREFORMINTL.ORG

Start a synodal gathering in your region - Catholic Church Reform International

There are many types of Listening Sessions in the Synodal Process. The two keys are fixed periods of silence to listen more deeply to the Holy Spirit and deeper listening and openness to the views of others. These steps have to be carefully followed in a synodal style. Otherwise the session becomes a typical Small Discussion Group.

The uniqueness of these steps is the statement: "You are encouraged to invite a broad spectrum of participants – active members in the church, people who have dropped out, even members of other religious affiliations." This is related to two choices in our SCCs Poll: "Everyone is given a chance to contribute regardless of rank, position or educational status." "Mirror the ongoing Synodal Process to ensure that no one is left behind."

Mwanajumuiya Cletus Majani broadcast a program on Radio Maria in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania:

"Celebrating the Golden Jubilee Year of Small Christian Communities (SCCs): 50 Years (1973 to 2023) from July, 2023 to July, 2024"

He emphasized that SCCs are not a program or a project in the parish, school or institution/organization, but a way of life. SCC members pray together, reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday together, support each other *kijumuiya* or *kisinodi* and reach out to the poor and needy together. We are promoting the growth of SCCs during this 2021-2024 Synodal Process especially during the next 10 months before the Second Assembly of the Synod in Rome in October, 2024.

As we reflect on Synodality meaning "Walking Together" I am reminded of the video made on me in 2004:

Walking [Together] with the Eastern African Church in Mission. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2004. A video of the life and missionary ministry of Maryknoll priest Father Joseph Healey.

When Ukweli Video in Nairobi, Kenya produced a DVD in 2004 on my missionary ministry in Eastern Africa from 1968 to 2004 called *Walking [Together] with the Eastern African Church in Mission*, I used the Gospel text – *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.’” that is very similar to *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.’” -- to trace a visual chronological line on a map of East Africa of my missionary journeys or travels to other towns and places in Kenya and Tanzania: Starting in Nairobi, Kenya and traveling to Rulenge, Tanzania to Iramba, Tanzania to Makoko, Tanzania to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

There is a section in the video on my ministry with Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

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 that are not geographical but situational. I used this passage in my homily at my 50th 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, Zoom, Skype, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. I mentioned that I meet and interact with Kenyan young people not outside the church after the Sunday Mass, but on the social media on the internet.

People ask about the different types or styles of homilies. There are three main types:

- Traditional Preached Homilies.
- Dialog homilies.
- Shared homilies. Also called Participatory Homilies. All the SCC members together in a circle or SCC members sit two by two and share their reflections with each other (in the style of buzz groups). Can use the Synodal Process.

Then there are the different settings/places:

- Regular permanent church.
- Small outstation chapel or mission station.
- Small Christian Community (usually in the home of members).

From Mary Wahome: “And I think the ones that are enjoyable are the shared homilies, at least everyone's opinions and views are heard. Under settings, the Small Christian Community gathering (usually in the home of members) at least is a change of environment away from the regular permanent church.”

From Collins Ongoma: “This is very informative, thanks.”

People keep asking how does the Synodal Process work. These steps can be used in many different situations: a weekly SCCs Bible Reflection gathering, a SCCs workshop or seminar; a SCC Retreat.

Seven Steps in a Synodal Process Gathering

One hour if there are ten participants. **NOTE:** If participants share for less than three minutes/two minutes each, the total time will be less.

1. Opening Prayer: “We stand before you, Holy Spirit.”
2. The facilitator gives some background to the Synodal Process. Then the facilitator invites participants during the gathering to speak about the theme/topic Share your personal response and a community response. What have you encountered in journeying together/walking together?
3. Participants reflect silently for three minutes preparing their input. Open oneself to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is one reason why the synodal process is different and can be very creative.
4. Each person speaks for a maximum of three minutes. There is no cross talk.
5. Three more minutes of silent reflection. Each person takes private notes.
6. After re-reading their notes, each person shares for a further two minutes whatever has enlightened or resonated with them from the sharing of the other members. The participants are invited to consider what the Holy Spirit seemed to be calling them to, what paths are being opened.
7. Free-form time for “discerning and elaborating the synthesis.”

Happy Birthday!!! Are we SCC members ready to begin a new Liturgical Year on the 1st Sunday of Advent on 3 December, 2023? Do we know that it is Year B and that we use the Sunday Gospel readings from St. Mark's Gospel (the second Gospel in the New Testament).

Our analysis and assessment of the voting in the SCCs Poll over the years 2009 to 2023 is as follows:

1. Key words marked: Bible/Good News/Gospel/lectionary/Scripture/Lectio Divina/Word of God in **BLACK** bold; faith sharing in **ORANGE** bold; Pray/Prays/Prayer in **BLUE** bold; Synodality in **GREEN** bold; Jesus Christ in **RED** bold; and Covid in **DARK BLUE** bold.

2. The number of overall choices is close (826 on D: the dynamics/process/principles/classifications of SCCs and 871 on A: activities/content/Outreach/practical action of SCCs). Of the top 20 choices, 18 are A and only 2 are D. This reveals a voting preference for activities, etc.

3. Bible-related, etc. is the most common word (28), faith sharing the second most common word (21) and Pray/Prays/Prayer the third most common word (13).

4. Big difference in the choices of those who vote in person (paper and pen) and those who vote online.

Thank you for signing up for our FutureChurch online liturgy and faith sharing. We hope you'll join us today, 3 December 2023, at 7pm Eastern/6pm CT/5pm Mountain/4pm Pacific USA time. If you need help converting to your time zone, you can do so here:

<https://dateful.com/time-zone-converter>

Readings: <https://futurechurch.org/lectio.../b/first-sunday-of-advent/>

Discussion Questions: There will be approximately 20-25 minutes for small group sharing. Please make sure that everyone has an opportunity to share.

- In what ways do you long for God to rend the heavens and to come down amidst our global and local challenges?
- How is God calling you to be watchful and active as you wait?

Zoom Link for the liturgy:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89893572532...>

Meeting ID: 898 9357 2532

Passcode: 006110

Commentators on the Second Vatican Council describe French Dominican Father Yves Congar, OP, as the most important theologian at the council. This is no small compliment, for it aligns him with Karl Rahner, SJ, Henri de Lubac, SJ, Joseph Ratzinger and John Courtney Murray, SJ, as well as other luminaries of that remarkable generation. On page 341 of *Lay People in the Church*, Congar 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.”

A Catholic priest and former pastor in Paterson Diocese, New Jersey, USA writes: “Keep plugging for that Synodal Church... mutual collaboration at every level... pastors partnering with people and people with one another... it works... it works for you and it worked for me at St. Joseph Parish in Mendham, New Jersey where we had a Synodal Parish. The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) had collaboration from both sides. For me the Synodal Process is mutual collaboration between the pastor/priest and the lay people as the People of God – with an emphasis on the “mutual.” We’re way ahead on the curve.”

There is a saying, "Go digital or die." Today, Saturday, 9 December, 2023, I joined live the members of St. Joachim SCC in Iramba Parish in Musoma Diocese (a rural diocese in northwestern Tanzania) for their weekly Gospel Reflection and Sharing. For the first time we used WhatsApp Video on the internet. It was 5 pm Tanzanian time and 9 am USA time (eight hours difference). Of the 20 members of the SCC, five participated: four women and one man. We read the Gospel of the Second Sunday of Advent, Year B in Swahili. We praised the example and teaching of John the Baptist. We said that SCCs are a sign of the Kingdom of God in our world today. We ended with a blessing in Swahili.

Request from Archbishop George Desmond Tambala, OCD, the Archbishop of Lilongwe Archdiocese in Malawi: "This week we in Lilongwe Archdiocese and as part of our diocesan synodal journey we have decided to do a thorough one year review and revisiting of the Small Christian Communities in our archdiocese. As you know with Bishop Patrick Kalilombe we were extremely blessed to have his vision and theology of the Small Christian Communities pioneered and implemented in our diocese. We feel that apart from the 'celebration' of the 50 years as guided by AMECEA we need to do a more prolonged review and reflection. The aim is to revitalise these SCCs in the light of the evolved times without losing the original spirit and aim. This will lead to the launch of a renewed concept and theology. Our challenge is to find someone or organization that can partner with us in terms of a research and revision exercise of the SCCs in our archdiocese. We will of course be

guided by the AMECEA framework but we want to do a more localized and more consulted process which will lead to the publication and implementation of this new life of the SCCs. We seek this technical assistance as well as funding from any organization you may know to assist us cover the costs of this exercise. Do you of any?"

Lilongwe Archdiocese in Malawi is an important example/model for all the dioceses in the AMECEA Region. The Golden Jubilee (2023-2024) of SCCs in Eastern Africa can be a "kairos" time for a local exercise to evaluate/assess/review/research/revisit/reflect on/revitalize our SCCs pastoral/ecclesial Model of Church.

From Francis Njuguna: "The Christmas celebrations are just about to come. Let us celebrate this grand feast faithfully. Our Father in Charge (Parish Priest) has this Sunday asked us to be mindful of the poor and hungry in our midst. He has asked the members of our SCCs (*jumuiyas*) to lead the way. This is Father James Marema of Our Church of Queen of the Holy Rosary, Komothai, Kiambu County, Kenya."

The facilitator of a weekly SCC gathering has a responsibility to prepare well himself/herself and to give a good introduction to the Gospel and the liturgical context.

Here is what I gave this week: "I call Advent "the both...and Liturgical Season." Both the Second Sunday of Advent that reminds us that it is a penitential season (thus the purple candle and purple vestments) and the figure of John the Baptist who emphasizes the "Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." And then we look forward to the spirit of joyful expectation and the wondrous time of waiting for the coming of Jesus at Christmas in the Third Sunday of Advent (thus the pink candle and rose vestments)."

Catholic Campus Ministry (CCM) of Elon University, Elon, North Carolina, USA.

The earliest Christian Communities met in Small Communities, inside of their homes and were nourished by the Word of God in order to fulfill their mission as disciples of Christ. In that light, the community of Elon Catholic Campus Ministry (CCM) strives for the same within our own Small Communities. We come together to share our struggles, our joys, and the meaning of the Word of God in order to be better prepared to live out our faith journey. CCM Small Communities meet regularly once a week. We discuss various things, including how to live out our faith on campus, Scriptures for the upcoming Sunday Mass, and books of the *Bible*. Most importantly, we are there to support each other in friendship and fellowship. To join any of our groups, please reach out to one of the group leaders! Our Small Communities are always open to anyone wanting to join. If you have any questions, you can also contact T Huynh-Duc for more information.

I continue to do research on Campus Ministry Programs in the USA especially the activities of Student Small Christian Communities/ Small Faith Communities. On Tuesday, 12 December, 2023 I visited the University Ministries Program at the University of San Diego in San Diego, California, USA. They have a rich variety of University Ministries Faith Communities including (alphabetically):

- Ignite
- Maher Small Group
- Men's Group
- Torero Athletic Fellowship
- Vistas Small Group

- Women's Group

Resident Hall Assistants supervise the Small Groups. Most groups read and reflect upon the Gospel of the following Sunday with these steps:

1. We Gather in Prayer.
2. Read Gospel.
3. Reflect.
4. Consider.
5. Let Us Pray.
6. A Reflective Moment of Silence.
7. Additional Activities/Discussion.

A printed handout includes Questions and Gospel Action.

One concrete example is the Vistas Small Faith Sharing Group that meets Thursday 8 to 9 pm in the Palomar Multi-Purpose Room on campus. The group provides students a space to prayerfully reflect on where God is moving in one's life, build authentic relationships and build a rich faith that engages the world with others living in the Vistas, a resident hall. The weekly gatherings include some group dynamics activities.

The university chaplain said that the staff tries to equip the students with good habits of prayer, reflection and faith sharing to carry into the rest of their lives. **NOTE:** On some college campuses other organizations such as the Alumni Association and post graduate organizations such as the Jesuit Volunteers focus on Alumni Small Christian Communities/Small Faith Communities.

This is the fourth university that I have visited in California. The others are Loyola Marymount, Santa Clara and Stanford.

From Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI):

"How to be a Synodal Church on Mission"

Guidelines for local communities to prepare for the 2024 Synod.

We have received these guidelines from the Synod Office in Rome that will help lead members of local dioceses, parishes, and Small Christian Communities (SCCs) through the process of setting up synodal gatherings to call on the Spirit to open our minds and hearts as we share the important issues that we believe will help transform the Church into the kind of community that Jesus would want in today's world. [Click here to read these guidelines.](#)



SYNOD.VA`

How to be a synodal Church in mission?

How to be a synodal Church in mission?

This is a challenge to SCC members to participate actively in the Synodal Process.

A common mantra today is “go where the synodal energy is.” Here is an example:

How SCCs can be involved in the Synodal Church:

From the October, 2023 issue of *The Southern Cross*, the official newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of San Diego, California, USA: “The Synodal Process was carried out in Small Group Listening Sessions/Dialogues:

When: October, 2023

Where: in Parishes, Schools, Ministries, Small Communities, Apostolic Groups, Other Communities and Organizations

Languages: English, Spanish, Vietnamese

Format: Eight participants sitting in a circle around a Round Table sharing their experiences in turn.

Topic/Theme: “Reawakening the Eucharist in our Communities.”

Message to SCC members:

If you're unable to find or begin your own Synodal Gathering, join Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) to participate. Beginning the first of the year 2024, CCRI will be facilitating monthly gatherings for all who have no other way to participate. These will be held at the following times:

- the 1st Saturday of every month beginning on January 6, 2024
- the 2nd Friday of every month beginning on January 12, 2024
- the second Saturday of every month beginning on January 13, 2024
- the third Wednesday of every month beginning on January 17, 2024

To find the times for you in your locale, click on our universal calendar now:

<https://spiritunbounded.org/calendar> Save this in a special place so you can access this at any time and learn what is going on worldwide and how and when to join. This calendar will show you the time of the meeting in your own time zone.



SPIRITUNBOUNDED.ORG
Calendar – Spirit Unbounded

Small Christian Communities members can learn about the steps of the Synodal Process in different ways. One way: in one specific gathering spend half of the time using the steps of the Synodal Process and half of the time using the Parliamentary Process (normal

business agenda). You will see a big difference. Part of the big difference is that the Synodal Process uses a small discernment reflection group process while the Parliamentary Process uses a small discussion group process.

SCC members fit into the Synodal Process of: "New consultations in every diocese."

These consultations are to be guided by this question: "How can we be a synodal Church in mission?" In practice, it would be more realistic for each local diocese "to focus on those aspects that enable it to make a contribution in the light of its own situation, character and experience", the new document says. "This work is not a question of starting the synodal process from scratch or repeating the process of listening and consultation undertaken during the first stage," the Synod office notes. Rather, it says the idea is to involve people "whose point of view is of particular help in focusing on the 'how'", the document points out, such as ordained ministers, pastoral leaders, consecrated persons, leaders of ecclesial movements and new communities, etc.

The Synod secretariat is urging each national bishops' conference to collect the various contributions and put them into a summary document consisting of no more than eight pages. These should be sent to the secretariat's office in Rome by May 15, 2024.

Read more at:



INTERNATIONAL.LA-CROIX.COM

Synod office urges local dioceses to hold further consultations

4. Seven Case Studies of SCCs in Eastern Africa

1. 36 Year (1986-2023) Journey of St. Jude Thaddeus Small Christian Community (SCC) in Tanzania and the World⁵²⁴

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 10 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:

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

⁵²⁴ 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 Saint 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 wider implication is that when there is suffering or pain or loss in your family there is suffering or pain or loss in our family. When there is suffering or pain or loss in your SCC there is suffering or pain or loss in our SCC. In other words, when you are hurting I am hurting.

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 groups⁵²⁵ during the Faith-sharing and everyone began speaking and sharing. Now SCC members reflect easily on different scripture passages. Even Blandina

⁵²⁵ Based on the LUMKO, South Africa Method of small buzz groups in SCCs that are a feature of group dynamics.

Mgita (now deceased), a 75-year-old woman who could not read and write, occasionally led a small group.

Sometimes the children form their own Small Reflection Group so they could participate more freely in their own way.⁵²⁶ 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.”⁵²⁷

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 money/wealth/mammon.”

⁵²⁶ 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.”

⁵²⁷ 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.

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 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 Eastern Africa. One priest in Musoma, Tanzania complains that SCCs don't stand on their own, but survive because of regular blood transfusions, that is, animation and help from the outside. 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.⁵²⁸ 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

⁵²⁸ 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.

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?"

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 1996.⁵²⁹ 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.

⁵²⁹ 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.

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." 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.

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 of the Apostles* 1:8) to proclaim the Good News of Salvation. "The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs⁵³⁰ 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.⁵³¹

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

⁵³⁰ Other translations use "two by two." The meaning is the apostles journey as partners, as collaborators, as a team, helping each other.

⁵³¹ See Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, pp. 344-345.

government leaders were the best people to intervene. The SCC members prayed the rosary and hoped for the best.⁵³²

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.

In July, 2014 I visited Musoma for the first time in 13 years. It was the occasion of the 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.⁵³³

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.

In a Facebook Message dated 8 November, 2019 Mwanajumuiya Msanii Charles Ndege reports:

St. Jude Thaddeus Small Christian Community (SCC) in the Mwisenge Juu section of the St. Augustine Parish, Musoma Diocese, Tanzania that started in 1986 is still going strong after almost 34 years. SCC Members meet every Saturday. A crucial test is passing on the local leadership to a new generation. Presently a woman is the Chairperson/Animator and a young man the secretary.

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

⁵³² 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 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)

⁵³³ Wilson Chacha, conversation with the author in Musoma, Tanzania on 10 July, 2014.

communications ministry of the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB) 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.⁵³⁴ 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 SCCs⁵³⁵ 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.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴ See Holy Trinity Catholic Parish, Kariobangi North, Nairobi, Kenya (<http://www.holytrinitykariobangi.org>)

⁵³⁵ 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.

⁵³⁶ 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.⁵³⁷ 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.⁵³⁸

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.⁵³⁹ 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.⁵⁴⁰ 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

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.

⁵³⁷ Harrison Yaa, *Building, Strengthening and Sustaining Small Christian Communities*.

⁵³⁸ Daniel Moschetti, *Urban Ministry in Africa: Need for New Models*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* Nos. 145-147, 1997, p. 64.

⁵³⁹ 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.

⁵⁴⁰ 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 *jumuiyas* and it is an experience that the people like. Through the *jumuiya* 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 *jumuiya* 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 a total 59 SCCs⁵⁴¹ 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, 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 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.”⁵⁴² 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?” Another translation starts with “ought not...:”
- *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/preach 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.’”⁵⁴³

⁵⁴¹ For more background on these SCCs, see Cyprian Binaka, “Towards a Pastoral Theology of Fundraising: Case Study of Fundraising for Funerals in Holy Cross Parish, Dandora.” Long Essay. Nairobi: Tangaza Tangaza University College Library, 2006.

⁵⁴² Another approach is to mention one’s favorite verse(s) at different stages in one’s life.

⁵⁴³ When Ukweli Video in Nairobi, Kenya 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

- *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".⁵⁴⁴

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.

A new development is that young adults (25 years old to 35 for young women and 26 years old to 35 for young men) are in the midst of forming their own SCC called the Young Adults Small Christian Community (YASCC) – the seventh SCC for young people in Dandora Parish. This age group felt out of place in the Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and wanted their own identity. The 40 or so members are half still in school, half working. About 10% are college graduates. When fully formed and approved this will be the 60th SCC in the parish. They are part of the Young Adult Masses in Outer Ring Deanery in Nairobi Archdiocese.

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.

travels to other towns and places in Kenya and Tanzania: Starting in Nairobi, Kenya and traveling 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 that are not geographical but situational. I used this passage in my homily at my 50th 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, Instagram, Skype, YouTube 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.

⁵⁴⁴ 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. Case Study⁵⁴⁵ of St. Kizito SCC in St. Austin Parish in Nairobi, Kenya move to another section

In Nairobi Archdiocese Kenyan diocesan priest Father Cletus Ngugi started SCCs in Ngarariga Parish in Limuru Deanery in 1976. In St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi Deanery Irish Spiritan missionary priest Father Martin Keane, CSSP started SCCs in 2000. Originally one SCC -- St. Austin's SCC -- covered the whole Waruku geographical area. Then more Catholics came into the area and SCCs became a pastoral priority. St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) started in 2003 when it was one of the four new SCCs that branched off from St. Austin SCC in the Waruku area – along with St Charles Lwanga SCC, St. Petro Mwamba SCC and St. Josephine Bakhita SCC. This was the Local Church in the neighborhood. 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.

Here is a Case Study of how an African SCC is involved in family ministry and the family apostolate. St. Kizito SCC 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?"⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁵ This Case Study was originally placed in the context of Chapter 13 on "SCCs Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa" to highlight that a SCC is a communion of families.

⁵⁴⁶ Kenyan lay woman Lucy Nderitu reflected on this question in her St. Matia Mulumba SCC of Don Bosco Parish, Makuyu, Nairobi Archdiocese on 1 March, 2014. In commenting

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 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.⁵⁴⁷

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,⁵⁴⁸ 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

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.

⁵⁴⁷ Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *How Can We Be One?* p. 20.

⁵⁴⁸ 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>

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 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"⁵⁴⁹ -- 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."⁵⁵⁰

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

⁵⁴⁹ Jackline Kwamboka, Formation Meeting of the St. John Paul II Evangelizing Teams. Nairobi, Kenya, 15 March, 3015.

⁵⁵⁰ Jackline Kwamboka in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 17 March, 2015.

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 Annastasia, 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.

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 examples in the Prayer 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?⁵⁵¹ 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

⁵⁵¹ 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 husbands are not Catholics; their husbands are working; and their husbands are just not interested.

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 that are 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:" 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. This was a “fresh marriage,” a term used to describe a marriage where the couple had not been living together beforehand.

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 meeting issues were brought up on

1. Orientation of members.

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 after which the parish priest will plan for the Commissioning."



Congratulations to Paul Makau and Mercy Maita on their Catholic sacramental marriage in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday, 21 August, 2016. Now in our St. Kizito SCC we continue to ask: "Who is next?"

Welcoming visitors is an important part of the "life" of St. Kizito SCC. Ben Wanjala writes:"

It was a great day for me and St. Kizito SCC of Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya to host guests from different parts of the world on Sunday, 23 October, 2016 including Fr. Noel Mpati from DRC, Sister Josée Ngalula from DRC, Michael Meyer from Germany, Fr. Alfred Chaima from Malawi, Fr. Charles Odira from KCCB, Kenya, Fr. Justin Matepa from Zambia, Fr. Vincent Elimah from Kenya and Bishop Method Kilaini from Tanzania among many others. We are in solidarity with our fellow Small Christian Communities in Kenya and around the globe. We can be stronger and more united today and into the future thereby absorbing new members that the next generations can be proud of. We thank Michael Orondo for representing St. Austin's Parish at this SCCs Networking Meeting and organizing this trip to St. Kizito SCC and to St. Agatha Joy Women's Training and Tailoring Group, the women's group in St. Kizito SCC that has a sewing club that sold beautiful African shirts and bags to the visitors.

Nine members of a mission immersion trip (three deacons, two diocesan priests, two laymen, one lay woman and one Maryknoll priest) sponsored by the Maryknoll Society visited St. Kizito SCC in Waruku on Friday, 4 November, 2016. There was an atmosphere of warm hospitality, singing, joy and high spirits. Deacon Matt Dulka, one of the facilitators, wrote to the women members of the St. Agatha Joy Women's Training and Tailoring Group: "Dear sisters, please let me add my deep gratitude for your warm welcome and hospitality. Your hope and joy were contagious. When I get back I'll send you some pictures. Let's continue to hold each other in prayer. All the best with the sewing project." As a "first" Matt recorded the children singing "Happy Birthday" to his mother on his smartphone and sent the video via Facebook back to his mother in North Dakota, USA. The American visitors are going to help market the African bags and shirts in the USA.



Maryknoll seminarian John Siyumbu is wearing the African shirt made for him by the St. Agatha Joy Women's Training and Tailoring Group in Nairobi.

Two cousins of mine in New Jersey give an annual gift to their children's families and their business partners' families of a donation of \$100 each to a particular charity (total of \$1,000). In December, 2017 their message read: "Merry Christmas!. A donation has been made in your name to the self-help group in Nairobi, Kenya -- the St. Agatha Joy Women's Training and Tailoring Group." The card included this photograph:



Members of St. Kizito SCC in Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya pose for a photo with visitors from USA after a bible sharing session on 19 February, 2014.

In the last three years (2018 to 2021) the membership of St. Kizito has grown so that now up to 50 members have been participating in the weekly meetings. The SCC leadership has been discerning how to “divide” the SCC. In a positive metaphor how can the Mother SCC give birth to smaller Children SCCs or to a separate Branch SCC.

Mwanajumuiya Moderator Ben Wanjala reports:

Finally after a long way of 13 years, on Sunday, 14 March, 2021 our St. Kizito SCC, Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya managed to bear another SCC by the name St. Monica⁵⁵² SCC. This happened after we were overwhelmed by the high number of members. Therefore we were not able to meet inside a house during our *jumuiya* meetings. It also took two to three years to complete one round for all members. It has been a long way to really to accomplish this activity. It will go down in the history at our St. Austin's⁵⁵³ Parish that St. Monica SCC, (being the mother of St. Austin, the patron saint of our parish) came out of St. Kizito SCC under the leadership of the Year 2021 Team. I take this opportunity to thank our Parish Priest Father George Wambua, our

⁵⁵² How many people know Monica is an African? She came from Tagaste, a Roman-Berber city in present-day Algeria now called Souk Ahras. The town was the birthplace of St. Augustine, the famous Christian theologian and Bishop of Ancient Hippo Regius (modern name is Annaba in Algeria). In Roman times Hippo Regius was an important and prosperous city in North Africa. It was situated near the mouth of the river Ubus.

⁵⁵³ Austin is the Irish name for Augustine.

executive team and fellow members who stood up and assisted us to reach this level.

St. Monica SCC leaders are as follows:

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These leadership teams will remain this way until the coming election time next year.

Our moderator Mwanajumuiya Ben ("Baba Joseph") has shown excellent leadership during this whole process. Many people have commented that bearing a new child/SCC in our SCCs Model of Church is very hard work on many levels. One friend Mwanajumuiya Belza Ramos congratulated St. Kizito and St. Monica and said: "It is not splitting or dividing, but branching out/expanding, having a baby/having a twin."

As a *Mwanajumuiya Damu Damu* member of St Kizito SCC for 13 years I have seen so much growth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When I first joined, the women would not speak and were so shy/reserved. Now look at all the women leaders/animators. I count five women in the list above.

The obstacles to forming a new SCC were as follows:

Social.

Financial.

Leadership.

We had a very good turnout at the Official Inauguration of the Association for Catholic Information in Africa (ACI Africa) Online News Service at JJ McCarthy Grounds in Nairobi, Kenya on 17 August, 2019. Francis Njuguna and I represented the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team and there was a four member delegation from St. Kizito Small Christian Community. Hellen Mollah, the Children's Mentor, read the: "Good Will Message from the Members of St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC), Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya."

We had a nice visit with Bishop Joseph Obanyi who said that he belongs to St. Charles Lwanga SCC (on the compound of the Bishops' Residence in Kakamega). He said that at the Kakamega Diocesan Synod it was decided that all priests and sisters should belong to a specific SCC in their geographical location. The members of St. Kizito SCC invited Archbishop Bert van Megen, the Apostolic Nuncio in Kenya and South Sudan whose residence is in the geographical location of St. Kizito in St. Austin's Parish, to join our SCC.

A delegation from St. Kizito SCC (three laymen, two laywomen and one priest) paid a courtesy call on the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Hubertus van Megen in Nairobi, Kenya on 30 August, 2019. He was very gracious and welcoming. He remembers, of course, his two Malawian friends, Andrew Kaufa and Emmanuel Chimombo. We invited him to join our SCC since the Apostolic Nunciature is on Manyani Road West, part of the physical location of St. Kizito SCC in St Austin's Parish in Nairobi. He said he would be happy to participate in our events. We joked that we all are part of "our neighborhood" (that includes the Maryknoll Society House across the street).

We had a very interesting conversation and exchange. We talked a lot about the AMECEA pastoral priority of SCCs. The archbishop has served in five of the nine AMECEA countries: Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan and Sudan. Archbishop van Megen asked each SCC member, "How has the SCC personally changed your life," and there were some very striking answers. We gave him some gifts: a small painting of our patron saint St. Kizito, an African stole made by the St. Agatha Joy Sewing Club and two books on SCCs. A bonus for me was viewing the two large African murals on the walls of the large sitting room of the nunciature: "Creation" and "Redemption."

My answer to Archbishop van Megen's question, "How has the SCC personally changed your life?" For me, the experience of weekly lectionary-based Faith-sharing in the SCC has been very enriching and formative especially connecting the Gospel to our daily lives.

Moderator Ben Wanjala and Mwanajumuiya Padri Joe Healey represented St. Kizito SCC at the Mass to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the death of Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Michael Otunga at the Holy Family Basilica on Friday, 6 September, 2019. I told this story: "Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Michael Otunga liked to give the example of the SCC members in Nairobi Archdiocese that donated the bride's wedding dress to a couple in their small community who had insufficient money for all their needs for their Marriage Ceremony in the Catholic Church."

St. Kizito SCC began using the WhatsApp Platform on the social media in 2018 and it has expanded and transformed its communications and networking. Now there are daily posts to share information and plans as part of the daily life of the SCC. Some examples (alphabetically):

- Celebrations.
- Collections for deceased people.
- Daily mass readings and reflections.
- Devotional sayings.
- Highlights of *Jumuiya* Masses.
- Holiday greetings.
- Photographs of SCC events.

Practical action and service outreach projects.

Responsibility for coordinating a Sunday mass at St. Austin's Parish.

Rotating homes of SCC member for the daily evening prayers and rosary (in certain months).

Stories.

Weekly online gatherings.

How members of St. Kizito SCC are putting into practice one of five essential characteristics of the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa -- "Regular practical action and outreach" – can be seen in this exchange of SCC Facebook Messages:

1. Email message sent to the Catholic Bishop of Kakamega Diocese, Kenya:

Dear Bishop Joseph Obanyi,

Christmas greetings from St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi. We enjoyed the photo story on you in the Tuesday, 24 December, 2019 issue of the "Daily Nation": especially the final sentence: "The bishop urged residents to give to the poor during Christmas."

We tried to put your advice into practice here in Waruku in St. Austin's Parish in Nairobi. On Christmas afternoon a delegation of leaders of St. Kizito SCC (three men and two women) visited three very poor families in the local neighborhood. We gave Christmas gift bags containing sugar, flour, cooking oil, soap and candy for the children. We tried to fulfill the Gospel of *Matthew* 25:42: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat."

In one poor flat a Moslem widow named "Rehema" (Swahili for "mercy") welcomed us with her eight children and grandchildren. She led the opening prayer in Arabic. The family was very grateful for our gift that was also a symbol of interreligious dialog. A key is that we visited these three families "kijumuya" (Swahili for in community) -- a five member delegation (three men and two women). These days we are trying to put into practice the Sukuma, Tanzania Proverb: "That which is good is never finished."

Christmas peace.

2. Bishop Joseph Obanyi responded: "That's what I call truly a good story from the grassroots. A story of Christmas from Small Christian Communities is concrete and the Way of the Church. I am happy for St. Kizito. Keep it up. I keep learning."

3. We replied to the bishop: "Many thanks, Bishop Joseph. There are also great photos of our St. Kizito SCC members visit to Waruku on our SCCs Facebook Page. Go to: <https://www.facebook.com/joseph.../posts/1081886608821789...> "The photos are taken by Mwanajumuiya Josephat Mulinya, our official SCCs photographer. He is originally from Kakamega. You met him here in Nairobi.

4. We wrote the bishop: "The next time you visit the Apostolic Nunciature please stop by the Maryknoll House (across the street) to say hello. Karibu. We all keep learning in the SCCs Model of Church. There is a wonderful Ugandan proverb: *One hand washes the other.*"

As I walked around Waruku on Christmas afternoon with Ben Wanjala, the Moderator of St. Kizito SCC, and met members of other SCCs, I understood better that SCCs are a way of life and not just a program or project of St. Austin Parish. When I met the twin

boys of Ben and Agnes Wanjala called Joseph and Josemaria they made my day by saying that "we like church more than school."

There is a popular saying in Spanish -- *We create the path by walking* – that encourages the growth of SCCs in their local context from the grassroots up. In light of today's signs of the times a new path has developed in Kenya and in other countries: Weekly "Online Small Christian Communities."

The popular saying -- *When God closes a door, somewhere He opens a window* – provides a good metaphor. In Kenya in March, 2020 during the terrible coronavirus pandemic crisis a door closed, namely the Kenyan Government wisely ordered that our Catholic Churches be closed and that our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) physical meetings be suspended. But then a window opened, namely Online Small Christian Communities that are also called Virtual SCCs and Digital SCCs. SCC members in Kenya are using WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Team and other social media platforms. SCC members send text messages and audio and video clips to their weekly online meetings. The experience we are getting will give new ideas for our SCCs Courses that are offered every year at CUEA, Tangaza and Hekima and to other SCCs-related courses and online courses/projects.

Take our St. Kizito Online SCC gathering on Sunday, 5 April. We used the Gospel of the following Easter Sunday (*John 20:1-9*): The Gospel Sharing Animator ("Mwalimu wa Neno" in Swahili) or Prayer Leader downloaded the audio version and sent the text version of this gospel to our St. Kizito SCC WhatsApp Page the night before. At exactly 2 p.m. began the *Bible Service*. After the Opening Prayer we shared online through text messages in Swahili the verses that struck us the most. Then SCC members shared their reflections on the Gospel and how this passage applies to our daily lives here in Kenya. Many reflections referred to the coronavirus crisis in the world today. The reoccurring message was to depend on Jesus Christ. Then we had the Prayers of the Faithful and final prayers. We ended with a audio clip of a rousing song provided by Mwanajumuiya Nicholas Mulei.

Our Moderator Mwanajumuiya Ben Wanjala counted 21 members who participated in this weekly WhatsApp St. Kizito Online SCC gathering though text messages and two audio clips on our WhatsApp Page. We overcame problems of lack of electricity and lack of internet connectivity. Our Prayer Leader Mwanajumuiya Gabriel Mwatela did a great job.

Last night I participated in a Live Holy Thursday Prayer Service on Zoom. Following the "See," "Judge" and "Act" Reflection Process/Method, the facilitator began by asking: "What is your context? We members of the St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in St. Austin Parish, Nairobi can answer on two levels:

1. Universal context. The whole world is in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic.
2. Local Nairobi, Kenya context. We are in a situation of partial lockdown, quarantine, night curfew and restricted travel. Our Moderator Ben Wanjala and our Assistant weekly Bible Reflection Leader Agnes Wanjala are stuck in Kitale and restricted by travel. We have an active online WhatsApp community. Our SCC Treasury is way down.

ADD

To my friends in St. Kizito SCC in Waruku, Nairobi: This week I really missed our annual "Outdoor Way of the Cross" from Waruku to the front of St. Austin Church. I had planned to walk with Joseph and Josemaría, the twin boys of Ben and Agnes Wanjala. Because of the government regulations on no public social gatherings because of the coronavirus pandemic, everything changed. Seven African Maryknoll seminarians and I set up the 15 Stations within the Maryknoll Society compound on Manyani Road West. We used the Stations of the Cross of the Eastern Deanery AIDS Relief Program 2020. Yes, we observed social distancing! Perhaps a sentence from the 15th Station says it best: "All our crosses, all our pain, all our sins, are healed, forgiven and transformed. Christ is risen!"

During a Maryknoll-sponsored Zoom Webinar on the topic "Climate Justice in Kenya" on Thursday, 19 November, 2020 I presented a short Case Study of St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi, Kenya covering:

1. Planting trees in the neighborhood of Waruku.
2. Cleaning garbage dumps in the neighborhood.
3. Promoting the ban on certain kinds of plastics in Kenya.

Mwanajumuiya Agnes Alitsi writes: "In my SCC of St. Kizito, Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya we are encouraging each and every one to stay safe by wearing masks, washing hands, maintaining social distance and also to follow the rules and regulations given by the Catholic Church and Ministry of Health. Due to these challenges we are ensuring that we continue with our jumuiya towards our vision."

In the last three years (2018 to 2021) the membership of St. Kizito has grown so that now up to 50-60 members have been participating in the weekly meetings. The SCC leadership has been discerning how to "divide" the SCC. In a positive metaphor how can the Mother SCC give birth to smaller Children SCCs or to a separate Branch SCC.

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As a *Mwanajumuiya Damu Damu* member of St Kizito SCC for 14 years (2007 – 2021) I have seen so much growth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When I first joined, the women would not speak and were so shy/reserved. Now look at all the women leaders/animators. I count five women in the list above.

To clarify further Mwanajumuiya Ben Wanjala wrote the following message on our SCCs Facebook Page:

Dear fellow SCC Members,

I am Mwanajumuiya Ben Wanjala, Moderator to St. Kizito SCC, Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya in Africa. It is under St. Austin's Parish, Muthangari in the Archdiocese of Nairobi run by the congregation of Holy Ghost Fathers (the Spiritans). I found this story very important to share with you, St. Kizito SCC started 18 years ago and I am the fourth chairperson since we started. This *jumuiya* has had the highest number of members in the whole parish of St. Austin's. It happened to me that sometimes when I attend the parish meetings they called me the moderator of the biggest *jumuiya*. This *jumuiya* was overwhelmed. It has 85 families when it comes to members and it ranges to over 100 members. However all members were not active. When it comes to a meeting you may find 60 members attend or participate. It has not been easy to reach to the conclusion of dividing the *jumuiya* into two. I used to have meetings with the parish priest Father George Wambua separately who helped me a lot. Sometimes I met with leaders and members until we all came to an

agreement in January, 2020. We had finished all the preparations. We were left with only one meeting of the Parish Priest with all the *jumuiya* leaders. But then pandemic came and disrupted everything. We had to revisit the whole process again this year in January, 2021 until 14 March, 2021 when our newest Jumuiya of St. Monica was founded.

I know that there are other SCCs out there like ours – too big. This is not something where you can just wake up one day and say “let's divide.” It can't happen that way. My advice to other SCC members is to be patient, intelligent and be focused always to see what is ahead before other members notice. Above all is prayers because prayers can move mountains.

Let us harvest the memories.





Let us harvest the memories. And remember this report from Maryknoll seminarian Victor Mutobera in Nairobi on 12 June, 2019:

On Pentecost Sunday the Maryknoll Family in Manyani hosted the KU postgraduate Small Christian Community of St. Augustine. We had mass together at the main hall and later a shared meal. In the afternoon from 2 pm we had the Feast Day of St. Kizito SCC. The majority were young men and women. Mostly aged between 24 years to 35 years. It was so vibrant and we had Fr. Lance and Fr. Snyder in attendance. One thing that was most interesting was during the jumuiya a young man proposed to his fiancée. It was a surprise indeed. It was the young lady's birthday. And within the birthday day was the engagement ring right inside the cake. As she cut the cake, not known to her, the ring that was in the small box in the cake was removed and the young man went on his knees and proposed to her. I could remember the reason that we young people go to jumuiya is to express ourselves and talk about our relationships. And everyone got so excited, people were shouting and clapping for joy. And Nick Mulei, one of our Maryknoll, prospect candidates shouted at the top most of his voice. The two who are the engaged are Patience and Pascal.

On this Feast of the Ugandan Martyrs, 3 June 2022 let us pray in solidarity with SCC members whose Patron Saints are Charles Lwanga, Kizito, John Muzeeyi, Matia Mulumba, Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe and others.

10 members from St. Kizito and St. Monica's SCCs (four women, three men, a youth and two children) gathered at the Maryknoll Society Gleason House in Nairobi, Kenya to watch John Siyumbu's moving Priesthood Ordination at Maryknoll, New York, USA on Friday, 3 June, 2022 on YouTube on the big screen. The picture was very clear and the sound perfect. The highlight was when Father Lance Nadeau, MM spoke in Luyia. Everyone cheered. Congratulations Mwanajumuiya Padri John Siyumbu, MM. Many prayers. Oyee.

We follow the mantra *think globally, act locally*. Our St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) in Nairobi, Kenya promotes care of the earth and ecology/environment concerns especially during Lent. On Good Friday I take an empty waste paper basket and walk around the perimeter of the Maryknoll Society compound in Nairobi. I collected stray paper, bags and plastic bottles, often stuck in the hedges. I fill at least one basket of trash. I am reminded of the German proverb: *If everyone sweeps in front of his or her house, the whole world will be clean.*

6. Small Christian Community Model of Parish Church: A Case Study of Training SCC and Parish Leaders in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya

By Alphonse C. L. Omolo

Overview

In their declaration in the 1973 Plenary Assembly in Kenya, the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa ([AMECEA](#)) Bishops said:

“We are convinced that in these countries of Eastern Africa, it is time for the Church to become really ‘local’. We believe that in order to achieve this we have to insist on building Church life and work on the Small Communities”. (AFER 16/1-2, 1974, p. 4).

Indeed, in Eastern Africa people live, act, and associate on the level of smaller neighborhood communities i.e., rural villages, or urban estate communities. These integral community settings provide unlimited options for the Church in Eastern Africa to insert her life and work into the daily occurrences of the People of God. The first goal of the AMECEA Pastoral Strategic Plan 2014 – 2024 was to promote new and deeper evangelization. The experience in the formation and training of SCCs and parish leaders discussed in this case study is anchored on training personnel to run SCCs.” This is the first strategy of the number one objective “to revitalize and utilize SCCs as models of evangelization at the grassroots” detailed in the AMECEA Strategic Plan.

Thus, to actualize the strategy to train the lay faithful to effectively manage and facilitate their SCCs, content influenced by the local contexts of the SCCs in the specific parishes in the Archdiocese of Kisumu in Western Kenya was prepared. In the last quarter of 2021 and early 2022, three parishes took part in the training and formation of the SCCs members and parish leaders.

In their research published in the inspiring book *Gathered and Sent*, Lee and Cowan (2003) explain that SCCs leaders deserve focused pastoral formation. And that such leadership pastoral formation is a gift not only to the SCCs but also to the larger parish and diocesan church. Orobator (2013), in his paper “New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress, and Prospects,” argues that the future of SCCs must include the interest of the ecclesiastical leadership and their commitment to the formation and empowerment of the lay faithful. Healey (2022), while discussing the AMECEA Study Conference of 1976 in his e-book *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of SCCs in Eastern Africa* emboldens the systematic formation with attention to SCCs materials, tools, skills, and development of SCCs facilitators as a key pastoral priority. See [APPENDIX: 27 Online E-Resource Materials on the On-going Formation and Training of Small Christian Community \(SCC\) Members.](#)

These admissions and expansive personal hands-on experience in the local, national, regional, and international levels in the setting up, promoting, and strengthening of SCCs are the essential foundation upon which this case study is premised. This involved the assessment of the existing SCCs’ pastoral settings in the parishes through meetings with the parish priests and parish lay leadership. This informed the preparation of the training content to address the pastoral challenges identified during the exploratory meetings. The training on SCCs started at the sub-parishes on the basic level but upgraded to the final training for the parish council

leaders. There was a total of 12 one-day SCCs training sessions at the sub-parish levels and three one-day training sessions at the parish levels. A total of 450 members and leaders of the SCCs (distributed between the three parishes, women and men, young adults, middle-aged and elderly) participated in the training. Constant follow-up was done through the parish priests and the leaders to determine any value additions or big wins arising from the ongoing training.

Identifying the parishes

Inspired by the strategic plan discussed earlier and the rallying call to promote and facilitate the setting up of SCCs across the AMECEA region, the AMECEA SCCs training team successfully actualized one such training in the Metropolitan Diocese of Kisumu in 2017 attended by 36 young priests. The Parish Priest of the St. James the Apostles Magadi Catholic Parish, upon the excitement from the knowledge gained from this training was the first to call for the formation and capacity strengthening of his sub-parishes and parish leaders on SCCs. Thus, and following the sentiment of Lee and Cowan (2003), the church will thrive through perpetual renewal in a free decision of faith by the Christians in the midst of a secular world. The Parish Priest of the St. Monica Catholic Parish Nyamasaria gathered the SCCs' training idea from one of the parish council leaders. Four years earlier, the leader had organized an SCCs' training for his sub-parish. Even though the training (which took place in the church hall) was approved by the then parish priest, he did not personally attend or officially open it. The Parish Priest from St. Dominic Catholic Parish Kianja became aware of the training (in a meet-up with the Parish Priest of St. Monica) while the St. Monica parish training was ongoing and expressed interest in similar training for his parish.

Coincidentally, the Parish Priest of the St. Dominic Catholic Parish Kianja attended a required postgraduate course on SCCs at the Tangaza University College in Nairobi during his pastoral theology studies. Hence, his aspirations toward the effective functioning of SCCs were planted then.

Assessing parish pastoral challenges for SCCs

The preparation and use of basic questions helped in exploring and evaluating the existing pastoral conditions in the parish in relation to the SCCs. This follows the sentiments of Chimombo et al., (2018) in the AMECEA training handbook for SCCs facilitators *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa*. Such questions included but were not limited to:

- How many SCCs are there in the parish, when and how were they established and how are they located?
- How many members do they have, how often and where do they conduct their meetings?
- What do the faithful do during the meetings, what is the length of the meetings, and who facilitates such meetings?
- How are SCCs integrated into the pastoral structure of the parish and how are the SCCs represented on the parish pastoral council?
- Are there any consistent formation or training (for members and leaders) or general activities in the parish concerning the SCCs?
- What do they consider to be the biggest hindrance to the effective functioning and the thriving of the SCCs in the parish?

The aim of these and additional explorative questions is to help identify pastoral challenges getting in the way of the setting up, promoting, and effective functioning of the SCCs in the parish. Of great importance is the fact that each parish and parish neighborhood has its own

unique culture and characteristics. And as reinforced by Baranowski (1988) in his book *Creating Small Faith Communities*, it is critical to understand the history of the parish, racial and ethnic groups, and types of neighborhoods within the parish location. It is upon this exploration that a strategy on how to proceed with the formation and training options and the timing of the next steps for the SCCs and the parish emerged. It is imperative to consider the fact that there can never be a ‘one size fits all’ approach to training or formation due to the individual nature of each parish.

Emerging parish pastoral concerns for SCCs

For obvious reasons, the outcome of these assessments varied from one SCC to the next and from parish to parish. Important to note is the fact that some of the assessed parishes were partly located within mixed urban and rural settings. While some of the sub-parishes were within peri-urban neighborhoods and some (not many distances away) were in a rural neighborhood with a homestead-to-homestead setting. As such, the outcome of the SCCs evaluation questions was wide-ranging. A great deal of the items documented below has been discussed in several forums organized to generate views that can help improve the conditions and functioning of SCCs not only in Eastern Africa but also in other countries of the world. These include but are not limited to:

- Scarcity of clarity on what is an SCC and what should happen in them.
- The misrepresentation about the number of members for each SCC, how often and for how long should the SCCs meeting take place.
- The continuously escalating parish and diocesan financial responsibilities that are overburdening the SCCs members.
- The social burdens of the individual and group members of the SCCs and the common socio-cultural impediments.
- The absence of inclusive and representative leadership and the non-use of a common language during the SCCs meetings remains a critical challenge in the SCCs with mixed ethnic and racial communities.
- The unanswered question about the absence of men and youth in the daily life of the SCCs.
- The challenge of leadership, leadership, and facilitation skills gap in the SCCs.
- Inadequate or absence of any training or basic theological formation initiative by the parish for the lay faithful and the SCCs leaders.
- The case of the ‘diaspora membership’ in the SCCs and the challenge of keeping to the recommended geographical neighborhood memberships.

These and many other concerns not documented here came up very strongly during the explorative consultations with the parish priests and a representation of the parish pastoral lay council leaders for the three parishes. These questions and concerns remained significant during all the training sessions. Thus, becoming the foundation upon which, the training contents were designed and delivered as detailed below. The consultative sessions were concluded by the preparation of a training calendar for the SCCs leaders at the sub-parish and parish levels. Important to note is that even though all the leaders of the SCCs were encouraged to attend the training at their sub-parishes, the SCCs members were also welcomed to take part if they had the space to do so.

Starting with the local experience

The settings for the training varied from sub-parish to sub-parish. Some of the training took place at the sub-parish prayer houses (centers) or in the house of one of the parish or sub-parish

leaders. Lunches were prepared at the training venues and the nearby houses of the SCCs leaders or members. For some of the sub-parishes, a packed lunch or snack sufficed. The training was offered on a *pro bono publico* but the leaders arranged for a token to cover the basic costs of facilitation i.e. video projector, facilitators transport, and other logistics. These arrangements were all made at the local levels by the leaders with the support of the parish priests and parish councils. The training content was based on the outcome of the consultative meeting discussed above and started with the exploration of the experience and understanding of the participants about SCCs. This is inspired by Baranowski's (1988) sentiments that the circumstances in the local SCCs and the wider parish environment must be factored into the plan and design of the lay formation and training blueprint while preparing the contents. Chimombo et al., (2018) reinforce that such training sessions and contents should be based on the concrete experience of the participants while the role of the trainer is to realign them with similar experiences and the existing historical, socio-cultural, and theological underpinnings. The training areas at the sub-parishes level included:

- Understanding what an SCC really is and the centrality of the Word of God in SCCs.
- Who are the members of SCCs and how many members should make each SCC?
- Essential characteristics of SCCs – lectionary-based, linked to the parish as communion of communities, neighborhood outreach, and ongoing training and formation.
- Churchhood of SCCs – koinonia, diakonia, kerygma and leitourgia.
- Leadership in SCCs – basic skills, characters, election, roles and duties, transition, etc.
- Leadership obligation to the SCCs, parish planning, and strategic direction,
- The leadership posture, teamwork, and the servant leadership model for the SCCs.
- The role of the SCCs, parish leaders, and parish priests in developing leadership skills in SCCs.
- The common leadership challenges in SCCs and their possible solutions. To further emphasize this, Orobator (2013) explains that SCCs are confronted with diverse pastoral and social challenges that ought to be understood in the local cultural, theological, and sociological contexts.
- The steps for the Bible-sharing meetings in the SCCs.

The training areas for the parishes level included:

- Mutual communication and conversation as the root metaphor of the SCCs – i.e., the life of an SCC is built around mutuality and conversation amongst the members and the environment to which they belong. And from the steward's point of view (not owning the SCCs but making it work perfectly for the sake of members and the church – Lee and Cowan, 2003).
- Two basic qualities of SCCs – “Gathered” and “Sent.” It is like moving through the world with the “BIBLE” in one hand and “NEWSPAPER/RADIO/TELEVISION /SMARTPHONE,” etc. in the other.
- Questions SCCs face – on focus, involvement of members, emotional sharing, behaviour regulation, obligation to each other, and evaluating members of SCCs (Whitehead and Whitehead, 1992).
- Understanding the parish – presbyterium, lay associations, parish sustainability, etc.
- Catholic Social Teaching, identity, and nature of the Church.
- Parish leadership transition, challenges, and possible solutions.
- Roles of the parish pastoral lay council – training and formation of SCCs, parish planning, and parish strategic direction.
-

It is important to emphasize that the design and presentations on these topics must be modeled and grounded on the existing local socio-cultural and spiritual realities.

Training approach

Even though a lot more information had been gathered during the parish explorative meetings, the training sessions were naturally started by exploring the knowledge and understanding of the participants. The questions and answer method were used in plenary, group work, and buzz groups. For example, please share your understanding of an SCC and what happens in them? How do you call an SCC in your local dialect? Please share any characteristics of the members of SCCs that you are aware of. What are the roles of the leaders of SCCs? What leadership challenges have you experienced in your SCCs? This was in line with the guidance of Chimombo et al., 2018 and Healey 2013. These, and additional probing and explorative questions in the plenary steered the learning sessions and participants' engagement during the training.

A very critical requirement for the training to ensure ownership and continuation was the participation of the parish priest in all the sessions of training. This worked very well for all the parishes however, in some instances, the parish priest had to leave for an urgent parish matter and returned immediately after such engagements were concluded.

Considering the ethnic, age, education, and cultural diversities of the participants, the training was conducted in three languages – Luo, Swahili, and English. The plenary and group discussions were organized deliberately to incorporate the young adults, middle-aged, and elderly participants. At the parish level training, Google Document was used to undertake a simple online survey on the questions SCCs face included in the content discussed above. That outcome was instantaneously shared with the participants adding to their learning on the positions of most of the group on the focus of SCC, involvement of members, emotional sharing, behaviour regulations, obligations to each other, and evaluation of members of the SCCs. The sessions ended with questions and answer moments and take-home messages upon which the SCCs leaders can ground the implementation of the lessons learned. The participants had to give their email contacts upon which the facilitator's notes were made available to them in a pdf format. Such notes formed valuable content for the participating leaders when training their own SCCs members. A copy of the steps for the Bible-sharing sessions (developed from the Seven Steps of the LUMKO method) was also availed to the members (in hard and digital copies) to help systematize their weekly SCCs' gatherings. The Seven Steps are found on pages 49-50 of the AMECEA training handbook for SCCs facilitators, Chimombo et al., (2018) *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa* that were availed to the participants who wanted to buy them for further readings.

It is important to end the training sessions with a brief evaluation by the participants and a 'sending off ceremony' by the parish priest. Now that the SCCs leaders are equipped with basic skills and tools to facilitate the effective functioning of the SCCs, they are encouraged to go forth and become model animators of SCCs in the parish and beyond.

Follow up

Lee and Cowan (2003), Healey (2012 and 2022), Healey (2017), and Chimombo et al., (2018), reinforce that, decisions on the implementation strategies for the learning outcome must include ideas on follow-up mechanisms. It is important to emphasize that planning for moments for reflection concerning any change that has occurred due to the actualization of the training, must be a critical part of the training at all levels of leadership. Such implementation strategies and evaluation mechanisms must equally underscore both the sociological and the theological

health of the concerned SCCs. Lee and Cowan (2003) argue that we must keep the disciplined rhythm of “reflection-action-reflection” to enhance our understanding of the world and the Word of God since a poorly understood world is as disastrous as a poorly understood Word of God.

While the dates for the in-person follow-up sessions are being explored, from telephone conversations, informal meetups, and visits with the parish priests and a few leaders, there are positive indications that the SCCs leaders are experiencing a great deal of motivation in implementing the training outcomes. For example, the use of systematic steps in conducting the Bible sharing sessions, prioritizing the Word of God in the SCCs meetings, keeping the meeting of the SCCs to one hour, and giving each member the chance to share how the Word of God is appealing to them and consistent plan for outreach to the needy in their neighborhoods and beyond, etc.

Important points to emphasize during the follow up are mainly:

- What has changed since the initial sub-parish and parish level training?
- What additional training and formation areas are required and at what level?
- What next steps are required to strengthen and promote SCCs in the parish?

Lessons learned

This training occasioned treasure-trove of lessons at different levels that are critical for visioning the setting up, promotion, and strengthening of SCCs now and in the future. A few of the emerging ideas are detailed below:

1. There is minimal understanding of what SCCs really are, membership limits and diversity, and what Christians should do in them.
2. The importance of sharing the daily life experiences during the SCCs meetings and the centrality of the Word of God in SCCs is still not well understood by the Catholic faithful.
3. Financial overburdens (i.e., solidarity fund, social support amongst faithful, etc.) upon the SCCs (especially within humble neighborhoods) remain a hindrance to the promotion of SCCs in parishes without creative options.
4. The “sent” character of the SCCs (especially beyond the membership) is less understood by the members of the SCCs. A great deal of these SCCs are likely to be considered more or less of a self-support group rather than SCCs.
5. Active participation of the parish priests is key in any training of the lay faithful that seek to shape and promote the functioning of the SCCs.
6. Inadequate leadership skills in the functioning of the SCCs remain a key impediment to the thriving of the SCCs in parishes.
7. Basic theological formation and training on group dynamics remain a missing lens for the SCCs members to read the signs of the times and exploit the opportunities available around them.
8. Any training or formation that seeks to improve the functioning of the SCCs in parishes must consider the local context in the planning and the designing of content.

Conclusions

To claim authentically the title “SCC” is to integrate the *inner* (gathered) and *public* (sent) dimensions of SCCs. It is like moving through the world with the “Bible” in one hand and the “Newspaper/Radio/Television/Smartphone,” etc. on the other. Being in an SCC demands a high level of relationship and task orientation. Consequently, SCCs must provide a strong sense of belonging to members as well as be able to address questions of justice and mercy. Members

of the SCCs must explore and realize their own power to change their living conditions by popularising action-oriented Bible reflections (Omolo 2005). In addition, mutuality and conversation should remain at the heart of the inner life and the public life of the SCCs. This can then awaken the question, how can groups of Catholic faithful organize around a common good? And with this occurrence, a safe and favorable environment is created not only for the membership of the SCCs but also for their neighborhood communities, and beyond.

The keenness to this SCCs training assignment on the part of the facilitator, the parish priest, and the parish lay leaders cannot be emphasized well enough. It must be a compelling desire on the part of the parish priest and the parish lay leaders to realize functioning SCCs in their parish. It is only such enthralling aspirations that can navigate the actualization of the planning and implementation of the training outcomes at the SCCs and the parish levels. The opportunity, warmth, and support that was availed by the parish priests and the parish lay leaders of the three parishes involved in the training cannot be taken for granted. The incomparable obligation and interest in realizing efficacious SCCs cannot go without recognition and earnest appreciation.

This was intensive one-day training for each sub-parish and at the parish levels. Over and above, is a recommended training for a parish team of facilitators for select members and leaders of the SCCs for not less than three days. These individuals must be selected from leaders and members of the SCCs who have shown great commitment to the setting up and promotion of SCCs, individuals who are inherently facilitators. These teams of trainers can ensure the continuation of training and formation at the SCCs and at the parish levels. Similarly, a team of SCCs trainers can be trained at a diocesan, national, and regional bishop's conference levels. Such teams of SCCs facilitators must be inclusive and should receive continuous capacity building and refresher training.

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7. Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Gathered and Sent: A Case Study of Two Online SCCs Courses

By Alphonse C. L. Omolo

NOTE: These two courses are part of the Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) of Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

Overview

Perhaps, the best place to start this conversation on the experience gained from the Loyola Institute for Ministry ([LIM](#)) online course on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is to evoke the foresight of Lee and Cowan that SCCs are *gathered* and *sent*. In their visionary book, *Gathered and Sent: The Mission of Small Church Communities Today*, Lee and Cowan (2003) elucidate that: “Our conviction rooted in both theology and sociology, that a [Small Christian] Community is both gathered and sent. As gathered, it attends to the conversation of its inner life. As sent, it carries on a conversation with the larger world beyond its immediate constituency” (pg. 31).

The SCCs gather in the spirit of mutuality to pray together, relate with one another, share the Word of God, and discern what God is asking of them as individuals and as a group. They gather to support one another in their spiritual and social journeys. Rutechura (2013) reinforces that, mutual sharing of prayer, meal (sustenance), wisdom, and nurturing of the pastoral vision in the light of the Word are the hallmarks of the life of an SCC. According to Paul the Apostle, (in *Romans* 12:5), even though there are so many of us, we make one body of Christ, and we are joined to one another. Lee and Cowan have christened this relationship, the *inner life* of an SCC. This has to do with what happens when the SCCs gather. However, in order to put their faith into action, members of the SCCs must engage with the world of which they are a part. This involves participating in the works of mercy and the works of justice beyond their memberships. Guzmán (2013), Healey (2013), and Omolo (2005) consider these outreach responses as neighborhood lay ministries and a Vatican II theology of the People of God. The members of the SCCs must recognize the fact that their communities and the broader society are the settings in which the life of an SCC happens. While putting their faith into action, they are encouraged to seek far-reaching partnerships (broad-based organizing) in their desire to evangelize the world and attain the common good. This aspect of the SCC we shall call the *public life* of an SCC.

While engaging the students (laywomen, laymen, religious, and priests) in an in-depth appraisal of the *inner* and *public* life of SCCs, the local settings of their own countries, dioceses, parishes, and SCCs become the key premise upon which learning is generated. LIM provides a conducive online opportunity for the students to explore the meaning of all these arguments and their consequences for integral human and faith development.

As a case study of an online learning platform, this paper explores the LIM’s inner life and public life of SCCs courses as a model for championing pathways for setting up and uplifting leadership capabilities in SCCs. This includes the chance to promote SCCs as a vehicle for evangelizing parishes, their neighborhoods, and beyond. The case study includes the course experience for the academic years 2020, 2021, and 2022. The partnership between LIM and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa ([AMECEA](#)) can be likened

to the African proverb that states, “*If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.*” According to Healey (2022), for any intervention to be long-term and sustaining, the participation of others in a shared vision is the best approach. Gratitude for expansive broad-based networking with several Family Foundations in the United States of America who provided the scholarship for the 29 students who have participated in the course. This case study emphasizes the cooperation, and commitments of the students, the AMECEA, LIM, and the Catholic Family Foundations that have outstandingly contributed to the success of the course. It can be confidently stated that it is now upon the represented Bishops’ Conferences or dioceses to make good use of the knowledge, tools, and skills gained by the students throughout the course.

The history of LIM, the founding of the partnership, the SCCs course contents, the selection and admission of the students, the course experience, and appraisal by the students are well-documented in the sections that follow.

Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM)

Founded in 1968 as part of the Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, then moved to Loyola University in 1978, and following the call to put faith into action, Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) started offering online courses in 2000. In 2010, LIM’s degree [courses](#) (Bachelor of Arts in Ministry and Theology, Master of Pastoral Studies (MPS), Master of Religious Education, Certificate in Theology and Ministry, Dual MPS/Master of Business Administration, Dual MPS/Master of Science in Counselling, Dual MPS/Master of Science in Criminology, and Justice,) were fully online. The Small Christian Communities courses are offered under the Masters of Pastoral Studies degree. Thus, LIM offers graduate courses, continuing education, and advanced level certificates to meet the specific needs of its diverse community of students.

The SCCs courses prioritize the experience the students bring into the course by giving essential attention to practical theology. This involves comparing daily lived and faith experiences in the light of the Word of God in order to act effectively and faithfully in the Church and world today. Pope Francis, in his Wednesday Audience (Francis, 26 June 2019), explains that “What is extraordinary becomes ordinary, and everyday life becomes the site of the manifestation of living Christ.” The Holy Father reinforces that our communities must be places for experiencing communion, places for encountering God, places for exercising the works of solidarity, and places that are open to the heavenly Jerusalem.

The creation and the commencement of the SCCs course emerged from the LIM’s aspiration to develop and offer courses that respond to the signs of the times and are impactful in tackling the worrying needs of the world today (Loyola University, 2022). Fortunately for LIM, AMECEA (and upon its 2014 – 2024 strategic plan that prioritized training of leaders for SCCs, Chimombo et al., 2018 and Chimombo et al., 2022) was seeking ideas on how to effectively realize this strategic intervention. This case study concerns the two online modules of the Small Christian Communities courses – the *Inner life* and the *Public life* of the SCCs.

The Recruitment of the Students for the LIM SCCs Courses

The provision of the LIM SCCs course follows the decision of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) to make SCC a pastoral priority during their Plenary Meeting of 1973 in Kenya. Thus, the training and development of SCCs materials

were encouraged (Chimombo et al., 2018 and Chimombo et al., 2022). Lee and Cowan (2003) explain that lay men and lay women can gain access to and make good use of essential SCCs materials without becoming theological scholars themselves. It can be emphasized that when SCCs are functional, local neighborhoods and communities, parishes, and dioceses thrive too. The availability of the LIM online SCCs course provided an opportunity to accomplish this vital objective of the AMECEA with minimal financial constraints. Fortunately for these initial pioneering moments, a couple of Catholic Family Foundations in the United States of America provided tuition fees for ten students for each course from 2020 to 2022. Additional students were recruited from the larger student family at LIM and outside the University community.

LIM's well-established distance-education delivery system and its pragmatic "*practical theology*" approach were the most fitting for the diverse categories of students from Africa and the Western world. Lee and Cowan (2003) maintain that practical theology is a theology of praxis. It provides the chance for the students to reflect on their social lives in the light of the Word of God. By so doing, their faith and social well-being is wholistically reinforced.

The students were recruited through the AMECEA Pastoral Department by means of communication to the Bishops' Conferences. Upon the local selection of a pair or more students, the potential candidates were asked to undertake a simple survey (through Google Docs) that helped to understand their capability and SCCs' background before they were given the chance and the link to apply through the LIM application systems. It was from this process that ten students were admitted to the course bearing in mind the representation in terms of their gender, laity, priests, and religious. In the academic period 2020 to 2022, twenty-nine (29) students successfully went through the course. The students were from (Ireland (1), Ethiopia (1), the USA (2), Nigeria (3), Tanzania (3), Uganda (6), and Kenya (13). The 29 students were distributed as follows: sisters (3), laymen (7), laywomen, (8), and priests (11).

Course Content

The LIM course in SCCs explores the *inner* life and the *public* life of the SCCs. Each course takes one complete semester and includes about 15 modules (depending on the designated length of the semester) delivered on a week-by-week basis. The two courses provided the students with the unique chance to integrate theological underpinnings with their lived SCCs experiences on a reflection-praxis-reflection basis. Lee and Cowan (2003) explain this as the engagement of grassroots theological reflection in conversation with the larger church's mission to discourse with God's intention for the world. Orobator (2013) and Rutechura (2013) reinforce that reflection on the Word of God in SCCs provides the premise for discussing common concerns and social action of the local faithful. According to Healey (2022), while citing the ideas of John Dewey (world-renowned American philosopher and educator) we learn from reflecting on experience. Thus, the use of challenging questions and probing deeper is key in discovering boundlessly hidden meanings.

At the end of the course, the students gained the knowledge and skills required to facilitate functional SCCs in their parishes or dioceses. The students came to the realization of how practical theology happens in the gathering and outreach experience of the SCCs (Lee and Cowan 2003 and Healey 2022). This further confirms practical theology as an appreciated mode of conversation in the SCCs.

The *Inner Life of SCCs* explores SCCs as gathered, that is, best practices within SCCs. Course topics include communication and conversation skills in SCCs, community in church history

and as mediating structure, practical theology, the churchhood of SCCs, leadership and consensus-building, lay co-responsibility, and breaking open the Word. The *Public Life of SCCs* examines SCCs as sent out into the world to announce and act on God's love, justice, and mercy. Course topics include mission, Catholic Social Teaching, faith engagement, the socio-cultural context of SCCs, challenges of SCCs, youth and young adults, breaking open the Word, significance and future of SCCs.

Course Delivery Methods

Students are engaged in a weekly discussion centered on thematic questions delivered through the Canvas platform online. To enhance the quality of these weekly student engagements, the students are subdivided into discussion groups with changing student discussion leaders. Each student is tasked to post a designated number of postings and respond to the postings and questions from their course mates and the course instructor. Such postings (of specified lengths) have to be done within a stipulated timeframe so as to allow other students the chance to read through and seek any clarification before the end of the module week.

Adequate digital learning materials are provided for each module i.e., textbooks, theological papers, audios, and videos. The students are engaged in lectionary-based *Bible* sharing through the ZOOM platform on a fortnightly basis. Such *Bible* sharing gatherings are facilitated by the students themselves in a rotational form just as it happens in their own local SCCs. Additionally, and on a fortnightly basis, the students are engaged in a spiritual formation exercise based on the tradition of Ignatian spirituality. This helps the students to develop a life of prayer and an in-depth sense of their calling in the Church. With this, LIM intends to integrate the spiritual growth of the students into their theological education. As such, their relationship with God has a great chance to invigorate their ministries. Students make informal spiritual exercises based on selected themes and *Bible* passages.

Students' internalization and comprehension of the course contents is assessed throughout the course by means of their weekly responses and two essays for each course. The essays are planned for the middle and the end of each semester. On successful performance i.e., on the graded classwork and essays, students are awarded certificates and transcripts detailing their participation and accomplishments. On requests by the student, and when required to do so, the academic transcripts can also be sent directly to any institution of higher education. To continue to the next session, students have to present proof of application of the knowledge they gathered from the initial course in their SCCs, parish, or diocese. This can be an outcome of a workshop, a talk, or training conducted to help set up, promote, and strengthen SCCs in their localities.

Model for Future Online Courses on SCCs

The LIM *Inner Life* and *Public Life* of SCC course is a success story worth replicating as an opportunity and a model to inform future courses on SCCs. The lessons from the Covid-19 Pandemic moments favorably appraise the online/virtual spaces of learning as the future 'classrooms' upon which courses, workshops, and conferences on SCCs in the AMECEA countries and the world over can be successfully implemented. The 'new normal' in this digital world is online/virtual learning. If well designed and effectively delivered, it is cost-effective in terms of resources required and limited movement of the participants to be in physical or face-to-face learning/meeting locations. In view of this, the Loyola SCCs course is a model

that can be utilized by the AMECEA Pastoral Department and the AMECEA institutes of higher learning (i.e., Catholic University of Eastern Africa - [CUEA](#), AMECEA Pastoral Institute – API in Eldoret Kenya, etc.) to facilitate and coordinate online/virtual SCCs courses, training or workshops at all levels in the future.

Lessons Learned

1. Coordination of the recruitment of the candidates for admission to the LIM inner and public life of SCCs courses at the bishop's conferences level is essential. It is important to ensure a balanced allocation of students across the conferences.
2. Some of the students nominated by the dioceses (conferences) were already too busy with their pastoral duties or ministries that it became a great challenge for them to allocate the 6 to 9 hours (required) per week for the course.
3. Some of the selected and admitted students had limited-lived experiences on SCCs. As such, they encountered significant difficulties in writing essays that prioritized the analysis of actual conditions in SCCs and their surrounding neighborhoods.
4. The students with limited SCCs lived-in experience especially from Eastern Africa easily confused the term Small Groups (commonly used in the USA in references to SCCs – Lee and Cowan 2003, Healey 2022, etc.) to mean any other small groups in their parishes including clubs, sodalities, and associations founded in their parishes with no SCCs character at all.
5. Internet limitations and instability in some of the locations in Eastern and West Africa negatively impacted the chances for the students to access study materials and deliver their course assignments in time.
6. Severe weather i.e., the frequent occurrences of storms and hurricanes (i.e., Delta, Laura, Zeta, Ida, etc.) disrupted the learning and participation of the students living in New Orleans and the wider State of Louisiana.
7. Lay students added great value to the learning by bringing in their actual and daily lived experiences in SCCs and the social conditions of their neighborhoods.
8. Working with students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (i.e., Eastern Africa, West Africa, United States of America, and Europe) widened the learning contexts considering the wide-ranging knowledge and lived-in experience on SCCs they brought into the course.
9. The virtual ZOOM face-to-face sessions (i.e., the fortnightly *Bible* sharing meetings) helped in cementing group dynamics, and students' relationships in addition to inspiring their commitment and performance in the course.
10. To achieve an in-depth understanding of what SCC really is and what should happen in them, the students should complete the two courses (the *Inner Life* and the *Public Life* of SCCs) as designed by LIM.

Moving Forward

The inner and public life of SCCs is centred on concrete experience in SCCs. As such, a critical requirement for the students attending this course is a lived experience of SCCs and not a hypothetical knowledge or counterfactual reasoning about SCCs. Local (conference, dioceses, etc.) student selection mechanisms and processes need to take this into account. In addition, such selection of students needs to consider an equitable balance between the gender, religious, lay, and priests. The participation of the students from the USA and Europe makes the course a unique multicultural experience. A deliberate strategy is encouraged to attract such students to join the course.

A concerted effort is required while working on the funding so that the attendance of the students in the two courses (*Inner and Public Life of SCCs*) is assured upon their admission. In order to ensure an impactful outcome from the course, the AMECEA and other regions can set up a network of alumni students who can remain, ambassadors of the SCCs, AMECEA, and LIM in their regions and localities. Such networks and groupings can be operationalized through a clearly crafted coordination via any chosen social media (Skype, ZOOM, Google Meet, WhatsApp, etc.) platform.

Individually, the conferences should make adequate use of the graduates from the SCCs course whether lay, religious, or priests to help in the setting up and promotion of SCCs across their local parishes and dioceses. Such individuals can also form the national, diocesan, or parish teams of SCCs facilitators/trainers. It should be encouraged that each parish commits to establishing a team of SCCs facilitators/trainers to continuously build the capacity of the faithful and leaders of the SCCs from time to time. Such commitment should be accompanied by clear action plans and budgetary allocations to ensure their fulfillment. As discussed earlier, the formation and training of SCCs is one of the key priorities of the AMECEA Bishops in their 2014 – 2024 strategic plan. Thus, these online SCCs courses provide an ideal chance to put together a group of trainers to help implement this strategic commitment at different levels of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa.

Conclusion

By means of aggressive inoculations, many nations have made great paces in mitigating the ‘fangs’ of the Covid-19 Pandemic. However, it will take more than the dynamic effort of a single nation or the cooperation of a single region to bring the world into full restoration from the Covid-19 Pandemic. The online learning platforms continue to provide valuable openings to impart and gain knowledge without, or with reduced movement to any physical location. The LIM courses (Inner and Public Life) on SCCs remain a cut above the edge in the reading and responding to the signs of the times. In the course evaluation, the students agreed in unanimity that the stated course objectives in the syllabus were effectively met, the course delivery methods stimulated critical, analytical, creative, and independent thinking among the students and the provided learning materials were adequate and beneficial.

When asked their views about the strength of the course, the students responded that it was an eye-opener into the emerging realities of SCCs. It brought out in the open plenty of limitations of awareness on what SCCs really are and what their roles and purpose should be. The course has also simplified what the leaders and members of the SCCs need to do to remain functional and relevant to the calling of synodality and subsidiarity as explained by Pope Francis (Healey 2022). The reflection-praxis-reflection approach provided the students with the premise for reflecting on the pastoral ministries they are engaged in and drawing new strategies for pastoral care. The skills gained will be valuable in reflecting on and improving pastoral conditions in their parishes and dioceses. The students concluded that the course has provided them with new knowledge about SCCs, given them the tools and practical skills to facilitate effective functional SCCs, and nurtured in them the desire to promote the setting up and the development of SCCs in their local parishes and dioceses. Even though there was a fortnightly ZOOM video gathering for *Bible* sharing, some of the students cited the inability to have an in-person interaction with their instructor and course mates as the one thing they missed in the course. Internet connection challenges (especially for students based in rural or mountain locations) was also mentioned as another weak point, especially during the ZOOM video meetings.

The 29 students (detailed above) who have gone through this course remain a critical resource in the setting up and the promotion of SCCs in the AMECEA and the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) regions. They can be part of a network of pioneer SCCs facilitators and training teams in their regions.

The overall gap in this course is a sustainable funding strategy and strategic coordination to ensure a continuous flow of groups of students attending the course and linking their learning to their concrete local SCCs situations.

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5. 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.⁵⁵⁴

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).⁵⁵⁵

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 14 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. African Christians need to live out deeper Gospel values that sometimes go counter to certain traditional values of African culture.

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

⁵⁵⁴ O'Halloran, *Living Cells*, p. 203.

⁵⁵⁵ 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](#).

the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another" (*Ephesians* 4:25). Another translation is "speak the truth in love." A related term is the positive meaning of good and loyal "critical friends:" A group of peers who can speak honestly to us, encouraging our strengths while not ignoring our weaknesses. People we can trust to critique our work and remind us of what we didn't see or weren't even aware of. Friends who could speak openly and truthfully to us, but also with kindness and understanding.

So Mwoleka challenged our SCCs to live on a deeper level and to grow together by speaking the truth in love.

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.⁵⁵⁶

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.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁶ Laurenti Magesa, *What is Not Sacred? African Spirituality*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014, pp. 190-91.

⁵⁵⁷ 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.

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 ethnicity.⁵⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁵⁹

St. Martin de Porres SCC in Holy Trinity Parish, Buruburu I in Nairobi Archdiocese had a similar experience – a critical incident⁵⁶⁰ -- 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.⁵⁶¹ During the SCC Course at Hekima University 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

⁵⁵⁸ 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.

⁵⁵⁹ 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.

⁵⁶⁰ "Critical incident" is a specific term used in Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR). It refers to a life changing experience or 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. It has a deeper meaning in Spanish as explained by Jesuit American theologian John Coleman, SJ.

⁵⁶¹ Based on Rose Musimba's conversations with the author in Nairobi, Kenya in 2010 and 2011.

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.⁵⁶²

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*,⁵⁶³ 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.⁵⁶⁴ 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) 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."⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² Hillary Awiti, MHM (complier), "Suggestions on the Peacebuilding Process in Christ the King Parish, Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2009.

⁵⁶³ Origin in the mid-18th century in the sense of a "a talk between tribespeople and traders." From Portuguese *palavra* "word" and from Latin *parabola* "comparison."

⁵⁶⁴ 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>

⁵⁶⁵ 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)

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: "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.⁵⁶⁶

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.

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.

⁵⁶⁶ 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 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 Prayer 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. The lively mass that focused on community (*jumuiya* in Swahili) was filled with singing and processions.⁵⁶⁷

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.⁵⁶⁸

The famous Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe (who died in 2013) inspires SCC members to tell their stories:

There is that great African proverb – *until the lions produce (have) their own historians, the story (history) of the hunt will always glorify (glorify only) 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-

⁵⁶⁷ 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)

⁵⁶⁸ Leonard Shayo, "How SCCs Promote Justice, Reconciliation and Peace in Kenya," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2013, p. 10.

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 Tegat (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 Kikuyu Ethnic Groups.⁵⁶⁹ 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 (June, 2018) the peace continues and the local people are forgetting the past disputes.⁵⁷⁰

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

⁵⁶⁹ Our Eastern Africa 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.

⁵⁷⁰ 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)

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.”

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 our SCCs as we sit around in a circle and read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday, we feel

that we women are equals and have a voice.”⁵⁷¹ Often women take leaderships 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 Jeffry Odell Korgen documents how some of the 20,000 base communities (another name for SCCs) were involved in the reconciliation and healing ministry in Rwanda after the 2004 genocide.⁵⁷²

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.⁵⁷³ 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:

⁵⁷¹ “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 4 October,

2023, <https://afriprov.tangaza.ac.ke/afri-story/we-women-are-equals-and-have-a-voice/>

⁵⁷² 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.

⁵⁷³ See Healey, Joseph and Donald Sybertz. *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa and Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 286.

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).⁵⁷⁴
2. Bemba, Zambia: blood and flour.
3. Bukusu (Luyia), Kenya: joint meal including drinking local beer from a common pot.
4. Chagga, Tanzania: green isale leaf itself; and isale tree, a special reconciliation tree,⁵⁷⁵ 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.⁵⁷⁶
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. Malagache, Madagascar: with outstretched arms holding hands and

⁵⁷⁴ 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.

⁵⁷⁵ 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).

⁵⁷⁶ The Zaire Rite (**French**: *Rite zairois*) or Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire is a variation of the common **Mass** of the **Roman Catholic Church**. While containing many of the elements of the **Ordinary Form** of the Mass of the **Roman Rite**, it incorporates elements from **sub-Saharan** African culture, particularly Congolese, a process referred to as **inculturation**. Additionally, the Zaire Rite may refer to the adjusted sacramental rites used by the Congolese dioceses. It is largely a product of the **Second Vatican Council's** constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, particularly the move "for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples, especially in mission lands, provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved." Promulgated by the Decree *Zairensium Dioecesium* on 30 April, 1988, by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the *Missel romain pour les diocèses du Zaïre* (Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire) is an attempt to inculturate the Roman Missal in an African context, inspired by the liturgical reform initiated at the Second Vatican Council. The missal is now officially entitled *Congolese Missal for the dioceses of Zaire*. Wikipedia, retrieved on 23 February, 2020 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaire_Use

swaying back and forth.

13. Marakwet, Kenya: green leaves; a belt of cowry shells.

14. 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, tap the shoulder and say "Peace." South Sudan and Sudan liturgical dancers also use this symbol in a dance during Eucharistic Celebrations.⁵⁷⁷

15. Pökot⁵⁷⁸ and Turkana, Kenya; Logir, South Sudan: breaking a spear.

16. Sabaot, Kenya: breaking a stick.

17. Several ethnic groups in South Sudan: clap, shake hands and clap again.

18. Sukuma, Tanzania: spittle.

19. 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.

⁵⁷⁷ During two masses at Don Bosco Chapel in the Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement in Arua, Uganda in August, 2018 the Children's Choir and Dance Group performed several different rhythmic dances using this peace symbol in different forms and styles. See the true story "Yes, Peace Is Possible":

In Nairobi, Kenya we created an African Inculturated Small Christian Community (SCC) Mass following the order of the Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) Rite. The Exchange of Peace took place at the end of the Penitential Rite and before the scripture readings. The goal was that the community of believers would be reconciled and at peace with each other before hearing the Word of God. We wanted to use a genuine African sign of peace so we chose a common sign/symbol from both South Sudan/Sudan and Sierra Leone (opposite ends of the African continent): Place your right hand on the left shoulder of the other person and say "Peace" in your home language/mother tongue. At the end we sang *Bind Us Together, Lord* that is the unofficial worldwide theme song of SCCs. It expresses the conscious solidarity and bonding between SCC members.

Later in Juba, South Sudan I concelebrated during a mass on 1 October at St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Cathedral, the patroness of Juba Archdiocese. During the offertory young girls from different ethnic groups (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Logir, etc.) in South Sudan sang and danced a "Peace Prayer." In twos they danced up to each other and placed their right hand on the left shoulder of the other person. It was very moving. These dancing girls taught me that "yes, peace is possible."

⁵⁷⁸ 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).

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).⁵⁷⁹ Our whole class read:

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?"⁵⁷⁹ 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

⁵⁷⁹ "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...21st Century Slaves -- the Silent Epidemic...Our Story--Our Challenge," New Slavery Conference, Rome: Unpublished Paper, 11 November, 2012, p. 12.

realization of the Church as a Family Model community of believers which reflects the Ecclesiology of communion of Vatican II.⁵⁸⁰

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.

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*.⁵⁸¹ 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.”⁵⁸² SCCs are encouraged to:

1. Analyze and discuss the drawing (cartoon) on page 8.⁵⁸³
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:

⁵⁸⁰ 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.

⁵⁸¹ 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.

⁵⁸² 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>

⁵⁸³ Kenyan Youth Groups perform little plays and skits based on these cartoons as part of the Sunday Homilies.

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.⁵⁸⁴

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.

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.”⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁴ Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *The Leadership Handbook* (Swahili is *Maelekezo ya Uongozi*), Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2012.

⁵⁸⁵ “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-ales-january-february-2014>

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.”⁵⁸⁶ 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. 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?⁵⁸⁷

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.

⁵⁸⁶ 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.

⁵⁸⁷ 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>

During this Election Year in Kenya it is our responsibility in our SCCs to promote civic education on the local level.”⁵⁸⁸

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 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.⁵⁸⁹

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

⁵⁸⁸ 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>

⁵⁸⁹ 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>

members gather) and the public life of SCCs (when SCC members are sent).⁵⁹⁰ 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”⁵⁹¹ at Hekima University 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

⁵⁹⁰ 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.

⁵⁹¹ Listed under the area “Methodologies of Evangelization.”

community development, especially at the Small Christian Community level?⁵⁹² 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 healthcare, home-based healthcare, 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, 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.⁵⁹³

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

⁵⁹² SCCs are used as Case Study Reference Groups in Community Development, Action and Mobilization Studies in two courses at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya.

⁵⁹³ 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=YsJ3CAAAQBAJ&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

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 Spiral⁵⁹⁴ 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.⁵⁹⁵

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 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.⁵⁹⁶

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:

⁵⁹⁴ An important online resource is ADD

⁵⁹⁵ See a fuller explanation in Christine Bodewes, *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums: Voices of Kibera, Kenya*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005.

⁵⁹⁶ Walter Ingosi, "A Challenge of Using Different Languages in a SCC," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2013, p. 4.

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.⁵⁹⁷

Recently I have been participating in discussions⁵⁹⁸ 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 (actions for structural change).⁵⁹⁹ Does each phase incorporate and build upon the previous one? Is there a natural evolution for SCC members to become social activists? ⁶⁰⁰ 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

⁵⁹⁷ 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>

⁵⁹⁸ See exchanges with American theologian layman Terence McGoldrick by email, phone and Skype in July and August, 2013.

⁵⁹⁹ These stages or types of church are based on Francisco Claver, *Making of a Local Church*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008, pp. 92-94.

⁶⁰⁰ See Francisco Claver, for an elaboration of this natural evolution of BECs, chapter 7.

theological reflection on the Eucharistic politics implicit in the Small Christian Community.⁶⁰¹

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.”⁶⁰²

The planning and realization of the African Year of Reconciliation (AYR), recommended by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *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

⁶⁰¹ 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.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 315.

Family is the ‘Patron of the Small Christian Communities’ to which all SCCs have to be consecrated.”⁶⁰³

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.
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.⁶⁰⁴

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,

⁶⁰³ Jean-Marie Speich, “Africa is an “Extended Holy Land,” Nuncio in Ghana Clarifies,” Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA), 27 November, 2014.

⁶⁰⁴ “SECAM Workshop Recommends Creation and Strengthening of Small Christian Communities in Africa,” Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA), 27 November, 2014.

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

So far six people have clicked “Like.” **ADD**

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 Church⁶⁰⁵ as Family⁶⁰⁶ 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, dialog 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".⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁵ 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.

⁶⁰⁶ 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."

⁶⁰⁷ 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.⁶⁰⁸

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:

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.

⁶⁰⁸ 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.

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 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.⁶⁰⁹

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.”⁶¹⁰

Waliggo adds:

The [African] bishops could have chosen the Vatican II concept of

⁶⁰⁹ Menghhesteab Tesfamariam, “The Role of the Church,” *New People*, No. 135, November-December, 2011, p. 13.

⁶¹⁰ A. E. Orobator, *The Church as Family*, p. 24.

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.⁶¹¹

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.⁶¹²

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?”⁶¹³ St. Paul shifted his missionary operation center from synagogues to families making them the true milieus of solidarity (Domestic Churches or House Churches), open to other Domestic Churches.

Paul founded the first Small Christian Communities as House Churches⁶¹⁴ 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, Ephesians* and *Philippians*. *Acts of the Apostles* 2:46 describes a twofold dynamic: The early Christians

⁶¹¹ John Mary Waliggo, "The Church as Family of God and Small Christian Communities," *AMECEA Documentation Service*, No. 429 (1 December, 1994), p. 1

⁶¹² 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

⁶¹³ 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*, 11th Interdisciplinary Theological Session at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi: Unpublished paper, 2009, p. 1.

⁶¹⁴ 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?”

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 bread⁶¹⁵ in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”

Paul writes to the Romans: “You and I may be mutually encouraged by one another’s faith, yours and mine” (*Romans* 1:12). In our contemporary world we need friends in faith to grow closer to Jesus Christ. We are called in participate in Small Faith-sharing Communities.

English theologian Father Diarmuid O’Murchu, MSH, states:

I wish to propose that a revitalization of Eucharist needs to start where it originally began, namely in the home, or in small household groups gathering around a common vision or enterprise (House Churches, or Basic Christian Communities). In these informal and friendly groups experimentation and exploration can, and should, be normative. And in that context, the use of Eucharistic Prayers such as those I provide seems a very adult and responsible thing to do.⁶¹⁶

A concrete example is *Romans* 16:3-5: “Greet Prisca [the diminutive is Priscilla or “Little 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 also all the churches of the Gentiles.⁶¹⁷ Greet also the church in their house.”

Prisca and Aquila were Jewish Christians who were co-workers with the Apostle Paul. They lived, worked, and traveled with Paul. They were tent makers who because of the persecution of Christians lived in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome at different times in the *New Testament*. They welcomed Paul to live with them and join their tentmaking trade. In all three cities their homes became House Churches, the place where Christians gathered for prayer and the eucharist in the first three centuries. Paul preached in their homes.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁵ “To break bread” is a common reference to the Eucharist. Also popular is the expression “to bread open the Word of God” that refers to reading, reflecting on and interpreting the *Bible*.

⁶¹⁶ Diarmuid O’Murchu, “Eucharistic Prayers: “Eucharist in turmoil,” Diarmuid Website, retrieved on 4 October, 2016, <http://www.diarmuid13.com/eucharistic-prayers>

⁶¹⁷ “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. These words are not politically correct today and so are normally avoided except when trying to make a specific point.

⁶¹⁸ An interesting historical novel is *Paul – A Novel* by Walter Wangerin (Oxford: Lion, 2000). It is set in different cities/towns of Paul’s missionary journeys (chronologically): Corinth, Damascus, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Jerusalem and Rome. The 99 short chapters uses the creative literary device of first person narrative where Paul’s story is told through the eyes and experiences of Prisca, James, Annaeus Seneca, Barnabas, Timothy and Luke. House Churches are mentioned frequently in the novel especially those of Prisca and Aquila. Prisca has a particularly large role in the novel.

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.⁶¹⁹

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.”⁶²⁰ 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).⁶²¹

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 1st Century roots by establishing believers that are a network of Small Christian Communities, bound together in prayer, faith, mutual support, service, missionary" outreach and accountability. In a world increasingly suspicious of grandiose institutions and “trickle down collegiality,” the Small

⁶¹⁹ 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.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁶²¹ See *Mwongozo – Jubilei ya Mwaka wa Paulo 2008/2009*, Jimbo Kuu la Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam: Privately Printed, 2008, p. 16.

Christian Community would appear to be an apt and viable model to emulate.⁶²²

Many SCCs in Eastern Africa follow this House Church⁶²³ 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."⁶²⁴ A mass in a home (a Home Mass or a House Mass) anywhere in the world can be called a type of House Church.⁶²⁵

⁶²² 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.

⁶²³ 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 [and alternative faith communities] 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 three 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

⁶²⁴ Vicki Smith in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 18 September, 2013.

⁶²⁵ 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,

So far 21 B.A., M.A. and Ph. D. Theses have been written at CUEA on SCCs and more are in process.⁶²⁶ 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). Kenyan diocesan priest Father Paul Mungathia wrote his thesis on a similar topic 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: First, the "first small community" (the Trinity -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit). 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

Richard Currier and Francis Gram begin the first chapter of their book *Forming Small Christian Communities: A Personal Journey* with these words: "It is surprising how much we can learn about Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the first chapter of Genesis, the first

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 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.

⁶²⁶ 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.

book of the Bible.”⁶²⁷ There is no doubt that this statement refers to the friendship that existed between God the creator and the creatures, Adam and Eve, a community of love and caring for one another, since the writer tells us how God used to take a stroll with Adam in the garden in the evenings (cf. Genesis 3:8). From this source of the first community including God and humans, originated the aspect of communion which runs throughout the scriptures, showing the relationship between God and His people, the chosen race (cf. *Genesis* 17:1-11; *Exodus* 12; 20:2-11), as well as a relationship between the people themselves (cf. *Genesis* 4:1-16; *Exodus* 20:12-17).

Second, the “first Small Christian Community” (the Holy Family – Jesus, Joseph and Mary).⁶²⁸

Magesa boldly states: "Ecclesiologicaly they (SCCs) are the best thing that has happened since the *New Testament*."⁶²⁹

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: 32-35⁶³⁰ and the implications for Africa

⁶²⁷ R. Currier and F. Gram, *Forming a Small Christian Community: A Personal Journey*, Mystic: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992, p. 5.

⁶²⁸ Technically the Holy Family may not have been a “Christian” Community, but was the prefigurement of the first one.

⁶²⁹ Laurenti Magesa in a private letter to the author, July, 1983.

⁶³⁰ 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 (originally agricultural) 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:

1. 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.
2. Religious institutions such as abbeys and monasteries.
3. Kibbutz (plural is kibbutzim) in Israel is an example of officially organized communes. [Wikipedia](#)'s description: “A kibbutz is a collective community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture. The first kibbutz, established in 1909, was Degania. Today, farming has been partly supplanted by other economic branches, including industrial plants and high-tech enterprises.”
4. A popular style that does not have a specific religious affiliation is young musicians living in a shared community in Amsterdam.
5. There are many small justice and peace groups that live a community or communitarian lifestyle.
6. Catholic Charismatic Movement.

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 together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Let us look more closely at these two passages in *Acts of the Apostles*.

Chapter 2:42-45:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

The five pillars of these activities:

1. Teaching of the apostles.
2. Fellowship⁶³¹/Communal life.
3. Breaking of bread: celebrating the Eucharist in the homes (House Churches or House Communities⁶³²).
4. Prayers.
5. Help the needy.

Chapter 4: 32-35:

The whole community of believers was one in heart and mind (of one heart and mind). None of them would say, "This is mine!" about any of their possessions, but held everything in common. The apostles continued to bear powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and an abundance of grace was at work among them all. There were no needy persons among them. Those who owned properties or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds from the sales, and place them in the care and under the authority of the apostles. Then it was distributed to anyone who was in need.

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7. Some Intentional Christian Communities.
 8. The communal religious life described in Rod Dreher's book *The Benedict Option*.

⁶³¹ A difficult word to express in gender neutral or gender free, non-sexist language.

⁶³² English laywoman Jacqueline points out: "There is a need to remember that in the very early church it was the community rather than the Eucharist that was the Body of Christ. The emphasis shifted as Roman models of power took hold. It follows, as the early Christians understood, that there is a place for house communities to assemble and to do as Jesus did at the Last Supper. *Tablet*, Vol. 271, No. 9202 (27 May, 2017), p. 18. *Tablet* Website, retrieved on 15 June, 2017, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/270517issue.pdf>

The description of their life:

1. One in heart and mind (of one heart and mind).
2. Shared everything they had.
3. Testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
4. Distributed money to anyone who had need.

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.⁶³³ Jesus is first the Listener and then the Teacher. So with our leaders in the Catholic Church. First, the Listening Church and second, the Teaching Church. This is stressed by Pope Francis.

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, after listening 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.⁶³⁴

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

⁶³³ The Emmaus story and SCCs in Eastern Africa are intertwined with 36 references in this Ebook.

⁶³⁴ 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."

both its demands and the necessity to join a religious community in order to bear witness.⁶³⁵

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.⁶³⁶

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.⁶³⁷

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.*

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

⁶³⁵ André Kabasele Mukenge, “The Biblical Approach,” p. 6.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 13.

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?⁶³⁸

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 together in my name, there am I in the midst of 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."⁶³⁹

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, death⁶⁴⁰ 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 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

⁶³⁸ Francis, "Francis' Address to Bishops [of Brazil]," 27 July, 2013, in an email message from the *Zenit Daily Dispatch*, 27 July, 2013.

⁶³⁹ André Kabasele Mukenge, "The Biblical Approach," p. 6.

⁶⁴⁰ 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."

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.⁶⁴¹ 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.⁶⁴²

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 them new hope. At the end of the SCC meeting the younger bishop says: "They have proclaimed the Resurrected Lord to us."⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹ Another dimension of narrative theology is seen in Catherine Hilkert'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.

⁶⁴² 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).

⁶⁴³ 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)

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” in creative African paintings, carvings, stories, poems, plays, songs, liturgies, homilies and liturgical symbols.⁶⁴⁴ 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.

The reflection process in the story of the “Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus” can be compared to other reflection methods that start with our daily experience and can be used in the SCCs Model of Church such as:

Emmaus Walk

See, Discern, Act

Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR)

Review of Life

“Consciousness Examen”

George Aschenbrenner, S.J., is well-known as the author of a seminal article on the “Consciousness Examen” which transformed the way we approach this fundamental Ignatian exercise, moving from a moralistic appraisal to a growing awareness of how God is active in one’s life and how one is responding to that divine action.

"God-incidence" rather than a “coincidence”... **ADD**

Catholics reflecting on their personal experience such as Kathleen Kollman Birch’s “Christ’s Presence Illumines Sorrows and Joys” in the *Houston Catholic Worker*. Kathleen Kollman Birch lived and worked with refugee and immigrant women at the Catholic Worker house in Houston, Texas in the summer of 2015. Her late evening reflection in the chapel in Houston is “almost perfect.” I use it in both SCCs Workshops and Writing Workshops. She has a gift of writing eloquently and honestly on her own personal experience. Before going

⁶⁴⁴ 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).

into quiet contemplative prayer when she empties her mind of thoughts, she knows that she has to “sift through the memories” of the day and discover how God wants her to see them.

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 especially 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.” Magesa “thinks outside of the box” when he says:

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 of the Apostles* 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*.⁶⁴⁵

I was vividly reminded of this “living history” when I visited the city of Philippi, an eastern Macedonia town that was a Roman colony and 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) that is the predecessor of SCCs on the site of the business woman Lydia’s house. *Acts of the Apostles* 16: 14-15 recounts how Lydia and her household were baptized and offered hospitality to the traveling preachers such as St. Paul and Silas (“come and stay at my home/house”). Lydia’s house became the site for the Local Church in Philippi, with her as its host and perhaps leader.

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

⁶⁴⁵ Laurenti Magesa, “The Joy of Community,” p. 24.

Domestic Churches.⁶⁴⁶ Pengo calls “the family the smallest Christian Community.”⁶⁴⁷ 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.⁶⁴⁸ 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.⁶⁴⁹

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 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

⁶⁴⁶ 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.

⁶⁴⁷ 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.

⁶⁴⁸ 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.

In a similar vein Pope Francis says that “The Trinity is not just a mystery to adore, but a model for how to interact in all our relationships from friends to family to coworkers.” So SCCs is all about relationships.

⁶⁴⁹ Mwoleka and Healey, eds., *Ujamaa and Christian Communities*, p. 15. Unfortunately *Ujamaa* was critiqued and criticised mainly for its flawed economic policy. As the word and principles went out of fashion/style, some of the community values were lost or submerged.

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"⁶⁵⁰ 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 Eastern 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,⁶⁵¹
To Jesus, the Great Healer and Eldest Brother/Chief Intercessor
And to the Unsurpassed Great Spirit. Amen."⁶⁵²

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.⁶⁵³ 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)⁶⁵⁴ and Children SCCs.⁶⁵⁵ There are a variety of other SCCs that go by names such

⁶⁵⁰ Benedict XVI **CHECK**

⁶⁵¹ 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."

⁶⁵² Joseph Healey (compiled), *Once Upon a Time in Africa*, p. 128.

⁶⁵³ Described in Simon Rurinjah, "Importance of Small Christian Communities in Our Lives," Nairobi: Unpublished talk in SCCs Classes at Hekima University College and Tangaza University College, 2009, p. 1.

⁶⁵⁴ 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.

⁶⁵⁵ 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 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

as Young Adult SCCs, Young Married Couples SCCs, ⁶⁵⁶ 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)⁶⁵⁷ 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.⁶⁵⁸

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.⁶⁵⁹ Other SCCs have night prayers for families in

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)

⁶⁵⁶ 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.

⁶⁵⁷ 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?

⁶⁵⁸ 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.

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 Ecclesiology⁶⁶⁰ 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."⁶⁶¹ 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."⁶⁶² 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 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

⁶⁵⁹ 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.

⁶⁶⁰ 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.

⁶⁶¹ John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994, pp. 319-320.

⁶⁶² 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.

within itself, without undue discrimination, all those who seek refuge in its fold.⁶⁶³

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.”⁶⁶⁴

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.”⁶⁶⁵ 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.”⁶⁶⁶ 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 (*fons*) and summit (*culmen*) of the Christian life” (Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, No. 10 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*). No. 1324), then fostering eucharistic communities at all levels – from the SCC Mass in the home to the Sunday and weekday Eucharists in the parish church – is vitally important. African relationship and community values enrich the meaning of the Eucharistic

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁴ Baur, *2000 Years*, Second Edition, 2009, p. 391.

⁶⁶⁵ 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.

⁶⁶⁶ 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.

community. A Ganda, Uganda proverb says *Relationship is in the eating together* that can be the starting point for a rich eucharistic theology.⁶⁶⁷

A specific pastoral challenge in Africa today is what we call the “Eucharistic Famine”⁶⁶⁸ (also called the “Eucharistic Hunger” or the “Eucharistic Drought”). Due to the lack of priests, on any given Sunday most Catholics in Africa (up to 60%⁶⁶⁹ in some surveys) participate in a “Sunday Service Without a Priest” especially in rural areas where there is usually 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 (*viri 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 Fritz Lobinger (formerly of Aliwal Diocese, South Africa) has written extensively in books such as *Like His Brothers and Sisters* (Crossways, Publishing Company, 1999), *Teams of Elders: Moving Beyond “Viri Probati”* (Claretian Publications, 2007), *Every Community Its Own Ordained Leaders* (Claretian Publications, 2008) and *The Empty Altar: An Illustrated Book to Help Talk about the Lack of Parish Priests* (Crossroad Publishing Company, 2016). He states:

"The Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper belong together" must remain our key principle. In about half of all Catholic communities in the world, these two things -- the Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper, which intrinsically belong together, have in fact become separated. Thousands of communities meet on Sunday not for the Eucharist but for a “Service of the Word.” [In fact] more than half of the Catholic Church's communities have no resident priest. This is

⁶⁶⁷ 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.

⁶⁶⁸ While not a common expression in the West, it is well known in Africa. Archbishop Ndingi used the term in his intervention at the First African Synod in 1994.

⁶⁶⁹ This figure is quoted in Joseph Healey, “Beyond Vatican II: Imagining the Catholic Church of Nairobi I,” in Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2016, p. 199.

especially the case in Asia, Africa, and Latin America but also to some extent in Europe and North America. We cannot allow this situation to continue.⁶⁷⁰

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.”⁶⁷¹ 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 early 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 of God”) that are also called Early Household Church Gatherings and First Century SCCs 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*.⁶⁷²

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,⁶⁷³ adopted into the family of God. The church is the new “household of God's reign.” This is related to the deeply Trinitarian theology of the church as a communion of persons.

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.

⁶⁷⁰ Bishop Fritz Lobinger, “Homegrown Clergy: The Case for a New Kind of Priesthood,” *US Catholic* Website, retrieved on 30 December, 2016, <http://www.uscatholic.org/ordainelders>

⁶⁷¹ 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.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁶⁷³ 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.

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."⁶⁷⁴ 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.

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

⁶⁷⁴ Flynn, *Communities*, p. 99.

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."⁶⁷⁵

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 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.⁶⁷⁶

In various SCCs Training Workshops we use a very simple, but effective demonstration (role play) on unity, cooperation and the “Communitarian Model of Church”.⁶⁷⁷ 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.

⁶⁷⁵ Paul Sankey, “The Church as Clan: Critical Reflections on African Ecclesiology,” *International Review of Mission*, 83, 33 (July, 1994), p. 437.

⁶⁷⁶ See the section” “Small Christian Communities: Ecclesiologies and Models of Church” in Flynn, *Communities*, pp. 67-81.

⁶⁷⁷ I first saw this demonstration (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.

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.⁶⁷⁸

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.⁶⁷⁹

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,⁶⁸⁰ *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.⁶⁸¹

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:

⁶⁷⁸ Robert White, “Small Christian Communities – A Dynamic Christianity for Young People,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2011, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁷⁹ David Andrews, *Ministry in the Small Church*, Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1988. pp. 16-19.

⁶⁸⁰ 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.”

⁶⁸¹ Robert White, “Small Christian Communities – A Dynamic Christianity,” p. 18.

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.⁶⁸²

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."⁶⁸³ 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."⁶⁸⁴

The African organization of the Christian community (Ecclesiology) offers some fresh insights. Waliggo points out:

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.⁶⁸⁵

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."⁶⁸⁶ 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.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸² *Cast Away Fear*, Nairobi: New People Media Center, 1994, pp. 25-26.

⁶⁸³ *Final Statement of the Symposium on "The Reception of the Communio-Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council,"* Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 1993, p. 3

⁶⁸⁴ *Cast Away Fear*, p. 26.

⁶⁸⁵ Waliggo, "The African Clan as the True Model of the African Church," p. 125.

⁶⁸⁶ *Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful*, No. 19.

⁶⁸⁷ Walter Kasper, "Church as Communio," p. 115.

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.⁶⁸⁸

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 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").⁶⁸⁹ Some feel that the most complete term is *sensus fidei*

⁶⁸⁸ Anselm Prior, "Equipping the People of God for Christian Witness -- A Roman Catholic Account," *International Review of Mission*, 83, 328 (January, 1994): 59.

⁶⁸⁹ 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,

fidelium (Latin for the collective “sense of the faithful” of the People of God or whole church).⁶⁹⁰

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.⁶⁹¹

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.

movements ... It follows that none of these channels of tradition may be treated with disrespect.”

⁶⁹⁰ Latin American theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, OP and Maria Clara Lucchetti Binger emphasize that contributions to the *sensus fidelium* from Latin America include liberation theology, the preferential option for the poor, base communities and “women listening to women.”

⁶⁹¹ Also in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 92-93.

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 methods⁶⁹² 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 peers⁶⁹³ as their diverse theological 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).⁶⁹⁴ It is interesting to track and analysis the shift in content in the two series.

⁶⁹² An interesting background to this discussion is Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology*.

⁶⁹³ 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*, *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.

⁶⁹⁴ 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%](http://docs.mak.ac.ug/sites/default/files/Regional%20Theological%20Associations%20and%20)

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).⁶⁹⁵

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;”⁶⁹⁶ “African Theology as

[20Theological%20Curriculum%20Development%20in%20East%20Africa%20-%20Philomena%20Mwaura.pdf](#)

⁶⁹⁵ Joséé 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.

⁶⁹⁶ 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 in Africa is long, slow and winding process especially in money matters.

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,

Conversation;” “African Conversation Theology;” African Christian *Palaver* Theology;” and “African Christian Conversation Theology.”⁶⁹⁷ 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.

This *Palaver* Theology is similar to Mango Tree Theology, Theology Under a Tree, Shade Tree Theology, Story-telling Theology, African Reverential Dialog⁶⁹⁸ and *Matatu* Theology.⁶⁹⁹ This terms can describe 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 Katongole, Teresa Okure and Elochukwu Uzukwu. 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."⁷⁰⁰

This is African Theology as Conversation,⁷⁰¹ Active Dialog, Intensive Listening and Learning from Each Other (described as “listening in conversation”) and Consensus.

http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc_view/1845-the-palaver-a-model-to-reconcile-africa

⁶⁹⁷ 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.

⁶⁹⁸ Tanzanian diocesan priest Nicholas Segeja wrote his Doctorate Dissertation in the Pastoral Department at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) on *An Ecclesiology of Reverential Dialog in the Family (Shikome)*.

⁶⁹⁹ *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 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.

⁷⁰⁰ 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>

⁷⁰¹ 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

Conversation is a very important way of doing theology on the continent of Africa.⁷⁰² 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).⁷⁰³

Kenyan laywoman theologian Teresia Hinga states:

I would urge efforts to enhance the marketability of edited volumes rather than abandon publishing these collaborative works and joint authorship. I urge support of this kind of publishing because as I have argued elsewhere (see “Acknowledgments” pages of my book *African, Christian, Feminist*), such collaboration arises out of methodological imperatives in Africa. Instead of competition and publishing for individual enhancement, an emerging, and in my view most commendable, trend is towards collaborative research, writing and publishing on “Matters that Matter in Africa.” Writing in community, and for the enrichment of community (for the Common Good), is an idea perhaps well captured by the notion of *palaver* as I explain in my book.

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.

⁷⁰² American theologian David Tracy writes about “theology as a conversation” as part of theological method.

⁷⁰³ Harold Miller in an email to the author dated 28 October, 2013.

And so, rather than hesitating to publish works produced by communities of scholars using the *Palaver* Model, I would urge support, even extra support, for these kinds of books for several reasons:

1. This collaborative model does not supplant individual publication; rather it complements it since would-be authors of individual manuscripts can learn useful skills from and with each other when they participate in such communal *palavers* for publication.
2. Moreover, ideologically and from an African theological perspective, collaboration rather than competition is the more morally viable path in many contexts and not just in book writing.
3. The *palaver* model and the resulting anthologies also allow “multiple voices” to emerge and to be heard -- another added benefit of writing collaboratively rather than competitively.⁷⁰⁴

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 dialog 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.⁷⁰⁵

The starting point of this kind of African Christian Theology is both context and experience.⁷⁰⁶ Local, contextual theologies can be constructed in Africa with the local

⁷⁰⁴ Teresia Hinga in Joseph Healey, “Creative Ways of Promoting ‘Africa Matters’ -- Part II 2017 Report of the Africa Region to the Orbis Books Advisory Committee Meeting,” Maryknoll, NY: privately photocopied, p. 3.

⁷⁰⁵ J.J. Carney, “The People Bonded Together,” p. 316.

⁷⁰⁶ 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:

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 University 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 dialog, debate and converse.⁷⁰⁷

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. Palaver can also be associated with problem solving. Thus 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.⁷⁰⁸

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

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>

⁷⁰⁷ Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe E., *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, Maryknoll, New York, USA: Orbis Books, 2008, page xi.

⁷⁰⁸ Based on conversations with John Sivalon, Randy Young, Helen Mugambi and others.

fullness” of life of the community through fellowship among all three dimensions of the community.”⁷⁰⁹ 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.”⁷¹⁰ 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 that the community can confirm or invalidate the vivifying effectiveness of what comes out of the mouth.”⁷¹¹

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.⁷¹²

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 Agbonkhanmeghe 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

⁷⁰⁹ Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004, p. 161.

⁷¹⁰ 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.

⁷¹¹ Bénézet Bujo, *Christmas: God Becomes Man in Black Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995.

⁷¹² Diane Stinton in the “Introduction” to Stinton, Diane (ed.). *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations*, London: SPCK International Study Guide 46, 2010.

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.⁷¹³ 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 conclusions⁷¹⁴ of the conference. Not all the papers are published in this 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.⁷¹⁵

“Palaver sessions”⁷¹⁶ 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

⁷¹³ 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.

⁷¹⁴ 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” and “traditional people.” But it is positive in the sense of the “Church Tradition” or the “Tradition of the 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.

⁷¹⁵ Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, page 3.

⁷¹⁶ 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.

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."⁷¹⁷ 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 process. Similarly he prefers Theology of Liberation to Liberation Theology because it gives more weight to the liberation process.⁷¹⁸

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."⁷¹⁹ 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."⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁷ Jesse Mugambi in an email to the author dated 19 November, 2010.

⁷¹⁸ Summary of the author's conversation with Jesse Mugambi in Nairobi on 12 October, 2013.

⁷¹⁹ 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>

⁷²⁰ Orobator, *Theological Reimagination*, p. 9.

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 dialog.⁷²¹

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.”⁷²²

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 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 and 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 focuses on people's allegiances and relations with each other – the essence of being human. It can be variously translated as “togetherness” or “interconnectedness” or “interdependence” or “humanity” or “humanness.” 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.⁷²³

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷²² Aylward Shorter, “Foreword,” *Endless Quest*, p. ii.

⁷²³ 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*. Tanzanian Augustinian priest Zakaria Kashinje states:

The proper word for discussion in using parables in Sukuma is *susu* meaning “talking by using parables” or *mahoya ga jigemelo* that means “talking with examples.” Some say *mahoya ga jigano* that in Swahili is *maongezi ya kutumia hadithi* and in English means “talking by using riddles and examples.” It is also correct to use the word *gwiganila* that means “talking

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 dialog and consensus in addressing pertinent theological and ethical issues. This conversation was led by newer African scholars in dialog with established scholars and ecclesial leaders [including three bishops].⁷²⁴

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 dialog 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.”⁷²⁵

by using riddles.” However, all in all, *susu* includes all these words such as talking by using parables and riddles as well as examples. Therefore, Father Donald Sybertz got it correct by using the word *susu* from his deep research that did with some of the Sukuma elders.

Zakaria Kashinje, in an email to the author, 9 October, 2107.

But later we learned that *susu* also means “shit” in Sheng, the popular street language in Kenya. The difference is that the pronunciation of the Sukuma word *susu* has two meanings: when the tones are equal/even it means “conversation.” When it is tonal with the the accent on the second syllable it means “chicks,” the children of a chicken.

⁷²⁴ Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice, Building Peace: Conversations in Catholic Theological Ethics in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013, p. 20.

⁷²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

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 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.⁷²⁶ In words of Dieudonné M. Ngona, “the Word of God is among the prominent characteristics of the Small Christian Communities.”⁷²⁷

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.”⁷²⁸

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 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,

⁷²⁶ 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.

⁷²⁷ 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 Dialog, 2009, Santa Clara: Unpublished Paper.

⁷²⁸ Francis, “Francis' Address to Bishops [of Brazil],” 27 July, 2013, in an email message from the *Zenit Daily Dispatch*, 27 July, 2013.

wise sayings, legends, myths, stories, proverbs and oral history."⁷²⁹ 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."⁷³⁰

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.⁷³¹

American theologian and storyteller John Shea and others⁷³² have popularized Story Theology, but Narrative Theology is broader and more inclusive of all narrative forms.⁷³³ 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 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.⁷³⁴

⁷²⁹ Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, "Feminism and African Theology," *African Christian Studies*, 9, 2 (June, 1993), p. 22.

⁷³⁰ John Mbiti, "Children Confer Glory On a Home," *Draft Introduction to African Proverbs Series*, Burgdorf: Unpublished Paper, 1993, p. 2.

⁷³¹ John Waliggo in an interview with John Allen, "An African Perspective," *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 14 July, 2006. NCR Website, retrieved on 2 July, 2017, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/african-perspective>

⁷³² 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. William Bausch is a diocesan priest from St Mary's Parish, Colts Neck, Trenton Diocese, New Jersey, USA who always uses at least three stories per homily integrated with the scripture themes.

⁷³³ 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.

⁷³⁴ John Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p. 21.

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.⁷³⁵

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."⁷³⁶ 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 autobiographical theology.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁵ 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.

⁷³⁶ Laurenti Magesa in Healey and Sybertz, *Towards an African*, p. 377.

⁷³⁷ 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.⁷³⁸

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.⁷³⁹

Nigerian theologian Afe Adogame points out that an important element of “doing theology” in Africa today is a dialog that is not confined to the seminary or the academy. African churches offer spaces of dialog that are empowering in themselves:

They engage in theological reflection with grassroots men, women and even children in *Bible* study groups, house-cell fellowships,⁷⁴⁰ 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.⁷⁴¹

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, to lay people involved in the “local community as theologian” is significant. The emphasis is on praxis not principles.

⁷³⁸ Orobator, *Practicing Reconciliation*, p. 20.

⁷³⁹ Agbonkhianmeghe 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.

⁷⁴⁰ The Anglican (Episcopalian) name for SCCs.

⁷⁴¹ Afe Adogame in *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations*. Edited by Diane Stinton (London: SPCK International Study Guide 46, 2010), 170.

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.⁷⁴²

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."⁷⁴³ 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' dialog 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 (especially circles of African laywomen who connect the *Bible* to daily life) as "marketplace hermeneutics,"⁷⁴⁴ 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 Tangaza Maryknoll Centre for African Studies (TAMCAS) that was formerly 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 23 May, 2022 is 1288 pages and is available as a free Ebook on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: [Microsoft Word - 11 March 2022 version of Building the Church as Family of God \(smallchristiancommunities.org\)](http://smallchristiancommunities.org)

⁷⁴² 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>

⁷⁴³ This theological method is described at length in Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi*, Gweru: Mambo Press. 1999.

⁷⁴⁴ 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 or Baraza 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 SCCs 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," "Discern" 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 University 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.”⁷⁴⁵

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.

⁷⁴⁵ 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

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 Schreiter 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**⁷⁴⁶

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)**

- "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

⁷⁴⁶ Published on the Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University Website
<http://www.kucatholic.or.ke>

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 apply 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 dialog.”⁷⁴⁷

- “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**⁷⁴⁸

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.

⁷⁴⁷ Joseph Healey, “God is Like A Large Baobab Tree,” African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 22 May, 2017, <http://www.afriprov.org/african-stories-by-season/10-christian-values/55-god-is-like-a-large-baobab-tree.html>. Also reprinted in *Current Issues in Prayer*, May 2017, retrieved on 22 May, 2017, http://www.laikos.org/Fr1_Int_May_2017.pdf

⁷⁴⁸ 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.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁹ 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.”⁷⁵⁰ 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.”⁷⁵¹ 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.⁷⁵² These masses take place on the annual feast of the Patron/Patroness Saint of the SCC⁷⁵³, 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.

⁷⁵⁰Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*, p. 6.

⁷⁵¹ Protase Rugambwa in a letter to the author, Rome, Italy, 5 December, 2013.

⁷⁵² Family Masses are also very popular in homes, for special intentions such as the blessing of a new home, birthday, graduation, anniversary of marriage, anniversary of death, etc. Sometimes SCC members are invited.

⁷⁵³ This annual mass is an occasion to remember all the members of the SCC and their families who have died in the past year.

A good example of how SCCs are a New Pastoral Ecclesial Model of Church, a New Way of Being/Becoming Church is how the homily is given in a specific SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass) in a family home of SCC members (mostly lay people) or in the neighborhood. There is a big difference between a specific SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass) celebrated in a family home or in the neighborhood and a regular mass celebrated in a family home or in the neighborhood. In a specific SCC Mass the homily is different:

1. It can be a shared homily when the priest gives the first reflection and then invites the SCC members to give their own reflections.
2. Or the priest can introduce the theme of the homily and then invite SCC members to sit two by two and share their reflections with each other (in the style of buzz groups).

This topic usually provokes lively and animated discussion and debate at SCC Workshops for priests. It is generally felt that the priest should not stand up and “preach” a homily as though he was in the parish church or outstation church. One option is that he sits and facilitates a shared homily – first, he gives a short reflection on the readings himself and then invite the SCC members to share their reflections. But other priests disagree and want to follow the strict liturgical rules and regulations.

Archbishop Boniface Lele, the deceased archbishop of Mombasa Archdiocese (who died in 2014, told me: “When you give the 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.” On another occasion during a priests workshop 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. He said that this applies to the homily as well during a SCC Mass in a home that should be a Shared Homily.

Other bishops have told me that in this kind of SCC Mass -- as the model of the church from the grassroots up in the SCC members’ homes or in the neighborhood -- 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 a sermon, but participates in the sharing just like any other present member who is present. Thus, it is the entire community preaching to itself.”⁷⁵⁴ So, it is not up to the individual priest to decide what he wants to do. Shared homilies in SCC Masses is the pastoral policy of Kitui 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* and the *Sacramentary* that only priests and deacons should preach during mass. This is clearly the norm in the Catholic Church and is intended for parish churches, outstation churches, religious institutions, etc. The authors were probably not familiar with the newer SCCs Model of Church from the grassroots, from below.

Some 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

⁷⁵⁴ Catholic Diocese of Kitui Website, retrieved 11 August, 2011, <http://www.dioceseofkitui.org/subpage6.html>.

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 in the local context of Eastern Africa (where SCCs are the AMECEA pastoral priority) shared homilies are appropriate for SCCs Masses in the homes of lay members or in the neighborhood. 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.⁷⁵⁵ 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](#).”⁷⁵⁶ 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:

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.”⁷⁵⁷

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:”

⁷⁵⁵ 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.

⁷⁵⁶ 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.

⁷⁵⁷ 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.

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!⁷⁵⁸

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 structures, money has doubled and tripled in some parishes.⁷⁵⁹ 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

⁷⁵⁸ 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)

⁷⁵⁹ 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.

would make sure that he was sick and couldn't attend.⁷⁶⁰ 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.⁷⁶¹

After a great deal of research in Eastern Africa, 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 common is used in our major seminaries, theological institutes and formation houses in Eastern Africa.⁷⁶² Seminarians are divided into small sharing groups with saints' names,⁷⁶³ often according to the dormitories or residence halls or hostels or houses that they live in. In 2008 the AMECEA Office in Nairobi conducted a survey⁷⁶⁴ 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

⁷⁶⁰ 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.

⁷⁶¹ Michael Orondo in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 21 April, 2013.

⁷⁶² 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.

⁷⁶³ 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).

⁷⁶⁴ 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.

average for these kinds of surveys.⁷⁶⁵ The survey results stated: “Many seminarians live in some kind of Small Christian Community structure/set-up in the Residence Halls/Dormitories/Hostels/Houses of the seminaries and institutes that includes regular prayer, masses, shared reflections and apostolic activities.”⁷⁶⁶

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 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

⁷⁶⁵ 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.”

⁷⁶⁶ We celebrated a *Jumuiya* [Swahili for “Community”] Mass in *Kwetu Kwenu* (“For Us and You Too”) Hostel at Hekima University 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.”

community on a rotational basis. The same applies to taking responsibility at mass and other liturgical activities.⁷⁶⁷

^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.⁷⁶⁸

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.⁷⁶⁹

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 Saint⁷⁷⁰ and Priest Adviser (from the seminary staff). These SCCs meet every Thursday night

⁷⁶⁷ Timothy Chikweto email message to the author dated 4 May, 2014.

⁷⁶⁸ See "The Proposed Constitution of the Teams -- St. Anthony's Major Seminary."

⁷⁶⁹ Summarized from conversations with Fathers Raphael Mbendera and Vincent Mwakhwawa, Mchinji, Malawi, 10 December, 2013.

⁷⁷⁰ In the first class of the SCCs courses at Hekima University 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

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.⁷⁷¹

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:

- “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.⁷⁷²

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.

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.

⁷⁷¹ John Oballa in conversations with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 25 and 28 March, 2011.

⁷⁷² See the Catholic University of Eastern Africa Gaba Campus Eldoret Website, retrieved on 11 January, 2014, <http://www.cuea.edu/gaba>.

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 sisters⁷⁷³ 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 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.⁷⁷⁴

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

⁷⁷³ See Francis Njuguna, "Religious Women Take a Leading Role in SCCs Programs," *National Mirror*, 1:10 (October, 2012), p. 16.

⁷⁷⁴ Based on the author's conversation with Kenyan Daughter of Charity Sister Teresa Nyawira, DC in Nairobi, Kenya on 28 March, 2015.

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?"⁷⁷⁵ "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:

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.⁷⁷⁶

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.⁷⁷⁷ A woman in St. Clare SCC

⁷⁷⁵ One of the commonest Gospel texts used in homilies and religious education talks in Africa is this 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?"

⁷⁷⁶ Ngalula in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, p. 5.

⁷⁷⁷ Abrha Tesfay Teare, *Women's Role in Small Christian*, pp. 47-49.

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.”⁷⁷⁸

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.”⁷⁷⁹ 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.”⁷⁸⁰ 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**

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, gives 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.⁷⁸¹

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.”⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁷⁹ “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)

⁷⁸⁰ Anne Arabome, “Women, You Are Set Free! Women and Discipleship in the Church” in Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, p. 126.

⁷⁸¹ Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 16. This book has 10 references to SCCs.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

This is the local African Christian community theologizing.⁷⁸³ 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."⁷⁸⁴

Doing theology with local people on the ground⁷⁸⁵ 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 world. Its relevancy is gone.⁷⁸⁶ 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

⁷⁸³ 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.

⁷⁸⁴ Anselme Sanon, "Press Conference," *The African Synod*, 5, 2 (March/April, 1994, p. 14.

⁷⁸⁵ 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. The second course explores how SCCs reach out to service, advocacy and witness in the marketplace.

⁷⁸⁶ J.J. Mueller, *What Are They Saying About the Theological Method?* New York: Paulist Press, 1984, p. 26.

becomes an out-station and later a parish. Through SCCs they develop a solidarity that builds parishes.⁷⁸⁷

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 Archdiocese SCCs Training Team⁷⁸⁸ 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

⁷⁸⁷ Method Kilaini, "Small Christian Communities," p. 5.

⁷⁸⁸ 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.

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?

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.⁷⁸⁹ 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.⁷⁹⁰

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

⁷⁸⁹ Based on a conversation of James Maria Wainaina with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 8 April 2015.

⁷⁹⁰ From a conversation of Martin Kivuva with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 9 April 2015.

encouraged to help with the dowry.”⁷⁹¹ 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.”⁷⁹² 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.”⁷⁹³ 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.

⁷⁹¹ 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.

⁷⁹² 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).

⁷⁹³ *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*.⁷⁹⁴ 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 1973-2018 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

⁷⁹⁴ 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 Dialog:” “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.⁷⁹⁵ 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."⁷⁹⁶

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

⁷⁹⁵ 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.

⁷⁹⁶ 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!⁷⁹⁷

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."⁷⁹⁸

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. St. Paul VI used the expression Base or Basic Christian Communities that shows the Latin American influence. St. John Paul II⁷⁹⁹ 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 Communities (as well as Small

⁷⁹⁷ 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>

⁷⁹⁸ "General Report on the SECAM Post Synodal Consultation on Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa," Cotonou: Privately Printed, 23 November, 2011, No. 5.

⁷⁹⁹ 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) 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. Quoting Jesus’ words in the Gospel Bishop Mukwaya said: “Come and see.” “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, Ecclesial Model of the SCCs in the AMECEA Region.

Mukwaya was very committed to the SCC Model of Church. Although a loyal, orthodox bishop he did not put rules and regulations ahead of pastoral care. We were visiting a parish in his diocese. The next morning he celebrated a Children’s Mass for the children of the local Catholic Primary School. The Lectionary Reading was the story of “The Woman Caught in Adultery.” Mukwaya said that it doesn’t fit his congregation of little children so he changed to the Gospel story of “Let The Children Come To Me” (*Mark 10:13-16*).⁸⁰⁰

⁸⁰⁰ On Tuesday, 28 September, 2021 our St. Isidore of Seville SCC had its weekly online gathering to read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday – the story of “Let The Children Come To Me” (*Mark 10:13-16*). Following my usual practice, on the previous Monday I read and reflected on this Gospel passage and chose “let the children come to me” as my mantra or special verse. During our weekly online gathering our usual practice was to:

1. Read the Gospel of the following Sunday (first time).
2. 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.
3. Read the Gospel of the following Sunday (second time).
4. Silence. Listen to what God is saying/what God wants to tell us today in this Gospel passage. This period of silence is not wasted time or empty time. This can be a time of deeper listening, deeper reflection and new insights.
5. *Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection/*Bible*—Daily Life Connections. Connect, relate and apply the *Bible* (Gospel) to our daily lives and lived experience on both the personal and society-wide levels. This is lectionary-based faith-sharing/Gospel-based faith-sharing. SCC members share their reflections sitting together in a circle and for a maximum of five minutes.

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 2017 over 200 books, booklets, reports and case studies have 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 Japanese name for “door”), 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.⁸⁰¹

Yet tensions and differences of theological opinion remain. An African priest wanted to write a Master’s Thesis at the Urbaniana on the importance of SCCs in the Pastoral Plan of his diocese. One of the more conservative (traditional) African professors at the university advised him against the project. The professor said a Diocesan Pastoral Plan was not necessary. All you need is Canon Law.

There always has been a close bond between the Local Church in Eastern Africa and the Local Church in Germany.

On the global stage a SCC team from Eastern Africa participated in four physical international SCCs/BCCs/CEBs meetings: Notre Dame, Indiana, USA in December, 1991 (when Bishop Christopher Mwoleka⁸⁰² participated)⁸⁰³; Notre Dame, Indiana, USA in October, 1996 (when Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki participated);

During the silence I felt God moving me to a new reflection. I recalled the Mukwaya story above and remembered Pope Francis emphasizing the spirit of the Gospels rather than the legal liturgical and canonical regulations.

⁸⁰¹ 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 Urbaniana, 2008.

⁸⁰² At this consultation each national delegation led a prayer event. The East African Delegation led an African Mass with Mwoleka as the Chief Celebrant. The Brazil Delegation, consisting of four young women in their twenties and an Irish missionary sister, led a “Prayer Service with Communion.” Mwoleka received communion from one of these young women who was the Eucharistic Minister. He said that this style of communion was a dramatic example of this new way of being church. It was the first time he had ever received communion from a lay person and from a woman.

⁸⁰³ The delegation consisted of a Tanzanian bishop; a Kenyan-based priest; a Tanzanian Sister; a Kenyan laywoman; and a Kenyan young layman chosen from the Fish Group in Kisumu.

Cochabamba, Bolivia in November, 1999; and Notre Dame, Indiana, USA in November, 2002⁸⁰⁴ (when Bishop Patrick Kalilombe participated). Several international meetings have taken place as International Audio Conferences (by regular phone, smartphone and various social media). The SCC presentations and additional reports helped delegates to understand our Eastern African experience of SCCs as a new way of being church and a new model of church.⁸⁰⁵ Sharing experiences of SCCs around the world was an experience of mutual enrichment and mutual illumination.⁸⁰⁶ 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^{807 808} 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.

⁸⁰⁴ “Global Spirituality for SCCs” sponsored by Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, 14-15 November, 2002.

⁸⁰⁵ Reports on some of these meetings are listed in the “Select Annotated Bibliography of Books, Booklets, Articles, Reports, Papers and Printed Materials.”

⁸⁰⁶ *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.

⁸⁰⁷ 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.

⁸⁰⁸ Full multimedia (print, audio and video) documentation of these five international SCC consultations is found in the Robert S. Pelton, CSC Collection (Examples of Pastoral Fortitude) in the Moreau Seminary Library at Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.

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.

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 people 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)^{809 810} and Online SCCs.

⁸⁰⁹ 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).”

⁸¹⁰ 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-
html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=348703385&utm_campaign=2013)

Challenges

1. Men and youth are leaving the SCCs to women.
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 Swahili) 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 Africa SCCs Training Team present, 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 30s⁸¹¹)? 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

⁸¹¹ As an amusing aside, CARA at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA conducted research on how to invite young adults to participate in Small Faith Communities in the United States. One respondent said: "If I had this answer I would be the most famous person in the world."

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.

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. Some comments:

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.⁸¹²

Let us hope that there are more similar SCCs Webinars in the future.

RENEW International coordinates national and international “online/virtual conferences” through GoToMeetings video conferencing software and Skype.⁸¹³ The Marianist Lay Formation Initiative (MLFI) uses Google Hangouts.

⁸¹² Thomas Dabre email message to the author dated 1 April, 2014.

⁸¹³ 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

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 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.”⁸¹⁴

Some of these SCCs could be classified as the Small Apostolic Group Model of Church.

One interesting example of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is the 60 active Chapters of Maryknoll Affiliates throughout the world. I have had an opportunity to participate in many of the meetings and the activities of these chapters in: San Jose, California; South Bend, Indiana; Spokane, Washington; Washington DC; Westchester Country, New York; Mwanza, Tanzania and the online Kenyan Maryknoll Affiliates. These chapters can be classified as Small Mission Communities (SMCs).

The Affiliates Chapter in Mwanza, Tanzania was founded by Tanzanian Catholic lay women who graduated from high schools (secondary schools) of the Maryknoll Sisters.

On 1 October, 2017 the Maryknoll Kenya Affiliates Online Chapter had its first online meeting using the Zoom technology. Participants came from Mombasa and Nairobi, Kenya and various parts of the USA. The theme was inter-faith or inter-religious dialog. Another online meeting took place on 17 August, 2019.

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.

⁸¹⁴ 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>

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.⁸¹⁵ Some USA parishes use faith reflection starting with prayer as a “way of life” as seen in the style of their meetings,⁸¹⁶ 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 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.”⁸¹⁷

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.

⁸¹⁵ 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>

⁸¹⁶ 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.

⁸¹⁷ Ron Rolheiser, Mid-Atlantic Congress, 7 March, 2013. Quoted in “November 2015 Monthly Message from Small Christian Communities,” email message dated 2 November, 2015.

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.⁸¹⁸

“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.

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.⁸¹⁹

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

⁸¹⁸ Susan DeGuidé and Steven Valenzuela, “Development of SFCs in San Bernardino Diocese, California,” *Small Christian Communities Today*, p. 46.

⁸¹⁹ 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.

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. They do not want to share their weaknesses and vulnerability. 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>

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.⁸²⁰

One model is Small Intentional Eucharistic Communities (IECs)⁸²¹ that are usually 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, but not the parish and some function independently.

An example in Kenya is the Catholic International Community (CIC)⁸²² located at Loreto School, Msongari and connected to St. Austin Parish in Nairobi.

⁸²⁰ St. Lawrence Catholic Church Website, retrieved on 7 December, 2015, <http://www.saintlaw.org/small-christian-communities>

⁸²¹ They need to be distinguished from the Large Intentional Eucharistic Communities that can be 200 Catholics that gather for mass on Sunday

⁸²² “CIC is an international community of people who wish to come together to celebrate the Catholic faith. CIC was formed in 1983 by a small group of American families who met once a month to celebrate mass together and share other social activities. Very quickly, it grew and soon mass was being said weekly in the chapel of Loreto Msongari thanks to the generosity of the Loreto sisters. CIC today has over 150 active members/families and regularly we have over three hundred people attending our Sunday morning mass.

CIC is a part of St. Austin’s Parish. We operate under the authority of and with the support and guidance of Father George Wambua, the parish priest of St Austin’s and his assistant. We seek to support the parish in whatever way possible and, for example, at various times in the year we will take up the diocesan collections as part of the parish and the parish poverty alleviation programs receive regular contributions from us.

CIC is an entirely volunteer community everything we do is only done if someone volunteers to make this happen. This includes the celebration of mass, for which our celebrants volunteer. They all have other full time roles in Nairobi and CIC activities are things they support as an extra. We remain ever grateful for this.”

Catholic International Community (CIC) Website, retrieved on 6 October, 2017, <http://cickenya.co.ke>

Presently there are 129 IECs⁸²³ 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.⁸²⁴

These IECs can be grouped under the broad category of "alternative faith communities." The diversity of models is remarkable:

- alternative prayer/liturgy/mass models within conventional parishes (with priest and/or lay presiders).
- connected to a monastery, convent or Formation House.
- splinter parishes (separated for legal or protest reasons).
- alternative faith communities led by ministers from offshoot Christian denominations.
- ecumenical churches/communities.
- non-denominational churches/communities.
- woman priest-led communities.
- independent lay-led communities.

Another organization is the Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM) that is a Christ-inspired, ecumenical, post-denominational religious body. It is one of the many of reformgroups that are searching for new models of ministry.

These alternative faith communities are creatively responding to the contemporary signs of the times.

Certain new types of SCCs in the USA fit into this ongoing creativity. Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, the Archbishop of San Francisco, California and chairman of the US Bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage states:

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>

⁸²³ Some examples of Intentional Eucharistic Communities are *Communitas*, Francis House and Nova.

⁸²⁴ See William D'Antonio, "Communitas Celebrating Twenty Years of Building Community" in Healey and Hinton (eds.) *Small Christian Communities Today*, pp. 49-54.

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

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 Groups⁸²⁵ described as follow:

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.⁸²⁶

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 *everyone can make a*

⁸²⁵ 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 same time." CityLife Website, retrieved on 30 December, 2015, <https://www.citylife.church/life-groups>.

⁸²⁶ Menlo Church Website, retrieved on 5 December, 2015. <http://menlo.church/#life-groups>

difference. A South African proverb says, *If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito.*

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.⁸²⁷

Research⁸²⁸ 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.⁸²⁹

The SmallGroups Website documents this case study by M. Scott Boren, Carolyn Taketa, Mark Ingmire, and more, *Become a Church of Groups*:

⁸²⁷ 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.

⁸²⁸ 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

⁸²⁹ Amy Jackson, “Become a Church of Groups,” *Small Groups Newsletter*, 17 December, 2014.

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 churches are clear upfront: small groups are the core of our ministry and the way we develop disciples.⁸³⁰

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.⁸³¹

In the United States reports on SCCs in Africa are regularly published by *Gatherings*, *Small Christian Community Connection*, RENEW International,⁸³² 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

⁸³⁰ 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-
html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=418845744&utm_campaign=email)

⁸³¹ Amy Jackson, “Become a Church of Groups,” *Small Groups Newsletter*, 4 April, 2014.

⁸³² 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 community 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

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 (described as the “pervasive religious individualism of postmodern American culture”)⁸³³, 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 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 Catholic 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.⁸³³

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.⁸³⁴

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

⁸³³ 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>

⁸³⁴ 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.

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.⁸³⁵

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 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.⁸³⁶

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.⁸³⁷

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

⁸³⁵ 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.

⁸³⁶ Damian Kearney conversations with the author, Portsmouth, RI, USA, 22 and 24 May, 2015.

⁸³⁷ 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>

spiritual growth. This is described in their book *Rebuilt*⁸³⁸ 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.

This represents a new trend⁸³⁹ 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?

We do not agree with Rich Warren's top down style. His Saddleback Church is an Evangelical Baptist multi-site megachurch, based in Lake Forest, California. It is the largest church in California, and one of the largest in the United States of America. The church has several campuses in California and around the world. After his sermon on a particular theme on Sunday that is broadcast simultaneously in the various campus/satellite churches of Saddleback Church in California, 1000s of small groups meet (in person or online) in the middle of the week to view a video based on the previous Sunday's sermon. Then small group discussion follows.

⁸³⁸ 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.

⁸³⁹ 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, retrieved 28 February, 2015.

Our Catholic SCCs Model is from the grassroots up. Ideally our SCCs are weekly lectionary based faith-sharing small communities that reflect on the *Gospel* of the following Sunday and connect it to our daily lives and promote regular practical action and social outreach.

At the RENEW Gala⁸⁴⁰ 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.⁸⁴¹ This was a special teaching moment to share the rich experiences of SCCs in the 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: ...”

⁸⁴⁰ 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

⁸⁴¹ 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_85fa866553-67938ed69c-6746297 and “An Icon of SCCs and Communication Veteran Receives Award,” *The News Dispatch with Omolo Beste*, Email Message, 14 September 2013.

- 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 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:

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.⁸⁴²

⁸⁴² 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

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 “Small Christian Communities,” which have become a strong embodiment and expression of the Local Church in our country.⁸⁴³

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.”⁸⁴⁴

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.

⁸⁴³ 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.

⁸⁴⁴ 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

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 experience⁸⁴⁵ where family life and parish life are weakening. Africa's model of family-based SCCs with 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.⁸⁴⁶

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.⁸⁴⁷

The Eastern African SCCs are part of the growing influence of SCCs/BCCs/BECs in the Global South. Filipino Comboni seminarian Caspis Jemboy, MCCJ, wrote a fine Final Paper in our 2013 SCCs Seminar Course at Hekima University 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,⁸⁴⁸ 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.

community 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.

⁸⁴⁵ 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.

⁸⁴⁶ For a Case Study of the Eastern African model see Cieslikiewicz, "Pastoral Involvement," pp. 100-101.

⁸⁴⁷ James, Cronin, "One Faith, One Family." *Tablet*, 19 October, 2013, p.14.

⁸⁴⁸ Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 28 April, 2013 at: https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Jemboy_Caspis.pdf

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 option⁸⁴⁹ for the poor. The word “ecclesial” emphasizes that these communities are in themselves “church” – church at the most local level.⁸⁵⁰

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 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!’”⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁹ In English “option” often has a weak or tentative meaning like “possibility” or “alternative.” But in the original Spanish its is stronger like “choice” or “decision.”

⁸⁵⁰ Healey and Hinton, *Small Communities Today*, p. 7.

⁸⁵¹ “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>

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.”⁸⁵²

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:

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

⁸⁵² Francis McDonagh, “Banging the Big Base Drum,” *Tablet*, 18 January, 2014, pp. 13-14.

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.”⁸⁵³

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.⁸⁵⁴

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://cbcpebc.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

⁸⁵³ Fritz Lobinger, “What SCCs and CEBs Can Learn from Each Other,” *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 2013/3, p. 287-297.

⁸⁵⁴ Radoli, *How Local is the Local Church*, pp. 59-103.

ecclesial communities in which the idea of forming persons of dialog 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.⁸⁵⁵

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 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.⁸⁵⁶

The influence of our SCCs website is seen in this email message from the Philippines:

⁸⁵⁵ 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>

⁸⁵⁶ See Luis Antonio Tagle's comments in **ADD**

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.⁸⁵⁷

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 *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.⁸⁵⁸

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

⁸⁵⁷ Joel L. Magpayo in an email message to the author dated 30 July, 2011.

⁸⁵⁸ Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 24 October, 2012, <https://www.face-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

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* 16:4-5⁸⁵⁹).”⁸⁶⁰

Another learning from Asia is the growing importance of Basic Human Communities (BHCs), also referred to as Basic Human (Neighborhood) Communities, in the context of challenges faced by SCCs/BECs in interreligious dialog. 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.

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).⁸⁶¹

Through the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC)⁸⁶² 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

⁸⁵⁹ The greeting after “to Prisca [Priscilla] 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.

⁸⁶⁰ 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.”

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⁸⁶² 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.

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!”⁸⁶³

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 their SCCs and with some of their priests. Seven thousand leaders of SCCs were present.⁸⁶⁴

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.”⁸⁶⁵

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

⁸⁶³ “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)

⁸⁶⁴ 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>

⁸⁶⁵ “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.

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 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.⁸⁶⁶

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.⁸⁶⁷

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

⁸⁶⁶ *Code of Canon Law, Vatican Website, retrieved on 8 March, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM*

⁸⁶⁷ “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))

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 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.⁸⁶⁸

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."⁸⁶⁹ He goes on to explain:

⁸⁶⁸ 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.

⁸⁶⁹ Gerry Proctor, "BECs/SCCs Both Spirit and Law," *Buena Vista Ink*, 18:5 (Sept/Oct 2004) and 18:6 (Nov/Dec 2004).

“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.”⁸⁷⁰

Democratic Republic of the Congo diocesan priest Father Dieudonné Ngonu 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 successfully, it would certainly be sanctioned later on. In fact, life always come first. Other provisions, be they juridic or other, follow.⁸⁷¹

Ngonu 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.⁸⁷²

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

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷¹ Dieudonné Ngonu, “The Small Christian Communities and the Internal Organization of the Local Churches: A Juridical Point of View,” *African Christian Studies*, Vol.19, No.3 (2003), pp. 11-12. Ngonu 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.

⁸⁷² *Ibid.*, p.12.

Council II there has been greater recognition for this informal way of structuring the parish to effect greater pastoral results.⁸⁷³

So hopefully a future revision of the *Code of Canon Law* will specifically mention SCCs and the SCCs Model of Church. 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:

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 Medellín (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.⁸⁷⁴

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 Catholic Church particularly in way they are

⁸⁷³ 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.

⁸⁷⁴ 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.

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.⁸⁷⁵

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 clericalism⁸⁷⁶ and to increase lay responsibility.”⁸⁷⁷

Reflecting on SCCs as a pastoral structure in the Catholic Church the following anecdote from the Introduction to the “International Section” of the book *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* is significant:

⁸⁷⁵ 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.”

⁸⁷⁶ Unfortunately, clericalism is still “alive and well” in Eastern Africa. An example is titles such as “Rev. Father,” “Rev. Sister,” “Rev. Brother” and “Rev. Professor.” Similarly are the holdovers from British colonialism and the judicial system 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.”

⁸⁷⁷ 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

In January, 1986 Joe Healey participated in the South African Missiological Conference in Pretoria, South Africa. The keynote speaker of the congress was Hans Küng. 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 Küng wanted to see him at the next coffee break. Küng 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. Küng 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" in the same book by Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor is prophetic: "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".⁸⁷⁸

What is the new structure or model or paradigm? Clearly SCCs and the SCCs Model of Church 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 synodality (including various synod models), collegiality, 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 Asia⁸⁷⁹ will bring significant changes in new pastoral structures corresponding to our reading of the contemporary signs of the times, contemporary Communion Ecclesiology and the ecclesial reality on the local level.

⁸⁷⁸ Healey and Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today*, p. 155.

⁸⁷⁹ 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>

Here is a partial summary of an article on a March, 2017 Italian document (not available in English) by the International Theological Commission -- ITC (*Commissione Teologica Internazionale*) called *La Sinodalità Nella Vita E Nella Missione Della Chiesa*:

A problem that is hampering Pope Francis' efforts to facilitate greater synodality is the difficulty of Catholic theologians to give practical expression to the idea of *episcopal collegiality*, which was developed at the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and in the post-conciliar theological debates, and to the *ecclesial synodality* that a truly global Catholic Church needs. The introduction to the document roots the ecclesiology of synodality "in the footsteps of Vatican II," acknowledging the need to proceed further in the trajectory of the council (par. 8). The text paints an overly optimistic picture of the development of synodality in the post-Vatican II Church, but is silent about the frustration experienced these last 50 years regarding the demands and the need for synodality and collegiality at the universal, national, and local levels of the church (par. 41). It is also almost totally silent about the need to integrate synodality with new forms of Catholic life and ministry in the church; that is, the new lay ecclesial movements and new communities [here we can include the Small Christian Communities Model of Church]. It relies heavily on the episcopal ecclesiology of Vatican II and is therefore based on the parish and diocesan model that is not the model of the new movements and new communities — the new "creative minorities."⁸⁸⁰

Evolving and developing true synodality is seen in the context of reading the contemporary signs of the times. 2108 is very different from 1965 (end of Vatican II). The Catholic culture of 60-75 years ago is gone. This includes the increasing influence of culture and secularism from outside the church on pastoral solutions, decisions and changes inside the church.

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

⁸⁸⁰ Summarized from Massimo Faggioli, "The Uncertain Future of Synodality: Polarization and Ecclesial Paralysis," *La Croix International*, 11 June, 2018, *La Croix International* Website, retrieved 12 June, 2018, https://international.la-croix.com/news/the-uncertain-future-of-synodality/7790?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=e-mail&utm_content=11-06-2018&utm_campaign=newsletter_crx_lci&PMID=471b333f614896b57f1beb62b72402ef

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.

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.⁸⁸¹

Visits to Europe and North America allow me to share the Eastern African experience with the rest of the world.

I was invited by Father Paul Steffen, SVD, a Professor in the Missiology Department at the Urbaniana University, to give input on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” in three of his classes:

1. “Seminar on Small Christian Communities” (“Un nuovo modo di essere Chiesa: il metodo Lumko in Africa, Asia ed Europa e sua promozione delle Piccole Comunità Cristiane”)
2. “Theology and Praxis of the Christian Community” (“Teologia e prassi della comunità Cristiana”)
3. “Contextual Practical Theology in a Missionary Perspective or Practical Theology of Evangelization” (“Teologia della pastorale missionaria”)

The students included two from Kenya (a sister from Nairobi Archdiocese and a priest from Isiolo Diocese), a priest from Tanzania and a priest from Ethiopia.

In Paterson Diocese in New Jersey, USA I have been asked to propose a design for a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Workshop for parish teams of a priest and two members of the Parish Pastoral Team/Parish Pastoral Council. I have tried to respond to Pope Francis’s challenge to be “bold and creative.” The theme is: “Possible Models of Small Christian Communities in the Parishes of Paterson Diocese.” These are both English and Spanish-speaking parishes. The starting point is the unique situation/local context/pastoral plan of each parish.

⁸⁸¹ Robert Leżohupski’s phone conversation with the author on 17 June, 2015.

At the same time the ideal is that all these small communities⁸⁸² meet **weekly** either in private homes, in religious centers or in the parishes. All of them are **lectionary-based SCCs**, that is, in the middle of the week the SCC members usually reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday.

Some models (alphabetically):

Bible Study SCC
 Christian Life Community (CLC)
 Contemplative Prayer SCC
 Ecumenical SCC
Lectio Divina SCC
 LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) SCC
 Men's SCC
 Neighborhood (geographical) SCC
 Online SCC
 Parish Pastoral Team SCC
 Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC)
 Women's SCC

The ideal is also that these SCCs be parish-based, that is, connected to the pastoral life and decision-making in the parish such as being directly represented on the Parish Pastoral Council. These SCCs are foundational to the parish. They are not optional small "groups" in the parish. Also, these SCCs have a practical action/social outreach component.

Key is contextualization. One size does not fit all. There is no cookie cutter design. There is no blueprint for building SCCs. This is the Catholic Church from below/from the grassroots/from the local pastoral priorities/from local felt needs.

These models are connected with many other small "groups:"

Book Clubs
 Christ Renews His Parish (and other parish renewal programs)

⁸⁸² The challenge is to create a successful "branding" of the name and meaning of Small Christian Communities. "Communities" is deeper and more focused than the generic "groups" that can cover everything. See multiple references in other parts of this book. In the Eastern Africa local context, "communities" has a deep social and cultural meaning connected to the family, clan and ethnic group.

"Christian" helps to give the SCC members and their SCCs a specific ecclesial identity. "Church" has a similar meaning in the name Small Christian Communities. SCCs' ecclesial identity is connected to the Local Church especially the parish. Religious and pastoral activities are more important than social activities. In their weekly meetings SCC members emphasize the values of *Bible* reflection and Faith-sharing. A combined version is lectionary-based Faith-sharing.

Latin America has a similar experience where the common names are ecclesial names. Most common is Christian Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) and Christian Base Communities (CBCs).

Cornerstone
 Cursillo
 JustFaith
 Mothers Club
 RENEW (with its many programs and Modules)

This SCCs Workshop do not include traditional Small Prayer Groups and Small Apostolic Groups that have a different role and purpose in the parish.

A key part of the workshop is that the participants meet in small groups of 10 people to actually reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday (lectionary-based Faith-sharing).

Magesa's assessment is as follows:

What the prospects are in some dimensions of the [Catholic] Church in Africa is what we have been trying to gauge. What has happened there and what is to be expected? In conclusion, let us briefly identify and assess a few key points... There is an experience of change, seen most evidently in the growth and development of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) spreading across the continent. Where they have been established and are flourishing, "SCCs are an important pastoral strategy and even a new way of being a communitarian Church"⁸⁸³ rather than a strictly hierarchical one. SCCs reflect a new way of being Church in Africa, a "restructuring process", whereby the Church arises from and is primarily based on the faith of the faithful, the *sensus fidei fidelium*. In this paradigm, ministries and pastoral action, although coordinated by the clergy and hierarchy for the sake of unity and order, begin and are galvanized here. It is at this level, where people are intimately connected, know one another, and help one another out, that the human face of the church reveals itself.

At the level of SCCs too, ministries arise motivated by real needs of the people. Because of this, lay formation is needed and has been undertaken in various local churches. An example is the establishment of pastoral and catechetical centers for the purpose. The responsibility for innovation is therefore not concentrated exclusively in the hands of the ordained ministry as was the case in the past, but is spread out among the faithful as the Spirit of God prompts, in line with a new emphasis on an ecclesiology of communion that the Second Vatican Council called for. The movement is in accord with Pope Francis's insistence on the necessity of "change of attitude" which involves the fight against "temptations" like "the ideologization of the Gospel message, the functionalism 'that reduces the reality of the Church to the structure of an NGO [a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization], where what is of value is the ascertainable result and statistics and clericalism.'" Of course,

⁸⁸³ *Small Christian Communities Today*, 97.

the bishop as leader must lead, but Pope Francis insists that leading in the new ecclesiology “is not the same thing as giving orders.”^{884 885}

⁸⁸⁴ Elizabetta Pique, *Pope Francis: Life and Revolution – a Biography of Jorge Bergoglio*, Chicago: Loyola Press, 2013, 276.

⁸⁸⁵ Laurenti Magesa, *The Post-Conciliar Church in Africa: No Turning Back the Clock*, Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2016, 198-199.

9. The Future is Now: Using the Internet⁸⁸⁶ to Promote SCCs in Africa and Around the World

In the 60 year (1961-2021) 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,⁸⁸⁷ 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 Africa⁸⁸⁸ and many other online SCCs resources. A quick summary of the resources to promote SCCs in Eastern Africa and around the world is as follows:

⁸⁸⁶ On 22 April 2017 putting “Small Christian Communities” in the Google Search Engine box, our SCCs Website comes up first. Putting “Small Christian Communities” in the Facebook Search Engine box, our SCCs Facebook Page comes up first.

⁸⁸⁷ Kenya is leading Africa in internet penetration with over 30 million people having access to the internet, according to a report. The report by Jumia Business Intelligence and GSMA Mobile titled “White Paper 2017: Trends from the Kenyan Smartphone and E-Commerce Industry,” shows that 67 per cent of the population in Kenya is classified as internet users. This in absolute numbers translates to 31.99 million internet users going by the current projected Kenyan population of about 48.31 million people. This means that two in every three Kenyans have access to the internet.

This is way better than the average African internet penetration where only 18 per cent of the total African population defined as internet users.

In what Sam Chappatte, Jumia Kenya Country Manager, calls “the democratization of smartphones’ this trend has been largely driven by a reduction in average price of smartphones with the price of a smartphone having more than halved from Sh23,100 (231 dollars) in 2013 to Sh9,700 (97 dollars) in 2016 with the lowest price smartphone currently being sold on Jumia X-Tigi P3, a 4 inch phone, at Sh2,799 (28 dollars).

Daily Nation, 20 April, 2017, accessed on 20 April, 2017,
<http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Internet-access-grows-in-Kenya/1056-3895304-format-xhtml-75ovt9z/index.html>

⁸⁸⁸ Some examples by diocese, deanery, parish, SCC are:

Arua Diocese, Uganda (<http://www.tualu.org/ARUA%20DIOCESE/index.htm>);

Jinja Diocese, Uganda (jinjadiocese.org)

Karonga Diocese, Malawi (<http://www.karongadiocese.org>)

Kitui Catholic Diocese, Kenya (<https://dioceseofkitui.org>)

Malindi Catholic Diocese, Kenya (<http://www.malindicatholicdiocese.org>)

Marsabit Diocese, Kenya (<http://marsabitdiocese.org>)

Meru Diocese, Kenya (<https://catholicdioceseofmeru.org>)

Meru Diocese, Kenya -- Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Official Website (<https://minscs.org>)

Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya (<http://www.archdioceseofnairobi.or.ke>)

Ngong Diocese, Kenya (<http://ngongcatholic.org>). See "Strategic Plan 2016-2020" of the Catholic Diocese of Ngong.

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://christthekingkibera.org/>; Holy Family Minor Basilica, Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya <http://www.holyfamilybasilica.info>; 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. Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Adams Arcade, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya <http://www.guadalupeparishke.org>; 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://staustinschurch.or.ke>; S. Ignatius Catholic Church, Lusaka, Zambia <https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Ignatius-Church/535505633183153>; St. Joseph Catholic Church Diani Ukunda, Mombasa Archdiocese, Kenya <http://www.ukundacatholicparish.com/index.php/ministries/the-small-christian-communities>; 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; St. Patrick's Catholic Parish, Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi (http://stpatricksmalawi.org/main.php?page_id=Mphakati); St. Augustine SCC, Karen, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya 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>

Antivirus Programs: AVG CloudCare Antivirus, Kaspersky, Webroot.
 Archives: WayBack Machine, a digital archive that allows people to see websites as they existed at various points in time.
 Browsers: Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Lockdown, Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox, Opera Mini, Safari, Torch.
 Celebrations: Kudoboard.
 Content change detection and notification service/content delivery network (CDN) service (monitor web for interesting new content): Google Alert. CloudFront.
 Content Management Systems (CMSs): Drupal, Joomla, Mailchimp, Wiki, WordPress.
 Delivery Systems: UPS SurePost.
 Ebook format: PDF or EPUB.
 Ebook Readers: Amazon Kindle, Barnes and Noble Nook, Kobo, Sony.
 Editing: BookBaby, Track Changes.
 Email messages: AOL, Oath.
 Event management and marketing software: Whova.
 Group email discussion list/electronic mailing list: Listserv.
 Integrated employee experience platform: Microsoft Viva.
 Learning software platforms/Learning management systems/Teaching platforms: Canvas, BBB, Blackboard, Goggle Classroom, Moodle, Sakai, Zoom.
 Mobile Messaging and Calling App (with video calls): Facebook Messenger, WeChat, WhatsApp.
 Networks: Kenya Education Network (KENET).
 Note Taking: Google Keep, One Note.
 Online Bookshelf: VitalSource.
 Online payment system: Facebook Pay, Google Pay, PayPal, Pioneer.
 Online Surveys/Polls: SurveyMonkey, 360Reach, Tripetto, WP-Polls plugin.
 Operating Systems: Windows (many versions)
 Photo services: Google Photo, Open Space, PhotoShelter, PhotoStick, Portal, Shutterfly, WeTransfer.
 Presentation app: Google Slides, PowerPoint.
 Publishing platforms: CreateSpace.
 Remote Tech Support: Alpinebiz, Quick Assist (Microsoft Tech Support)
 TeamViewer (Charles Gikera).
 Router: Safaricom “Fiber Home” 4G WiFi Router (like a hotspot),
 Search engines: Ask, Bing, Firefox, Google Chrome,⁸⁸⁹ Microsoft Edge, Opera, Yahoo.
 Social media and social networking⁸⁹⁰websites/platforms/applications (apps),

⁸⁸⁹ 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).

⁸⁹⁰ 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

messaging apps/services/tools/plugins: AOL, Bot, Botox, Boxbe, Instant Messenger, Blogspot, BuzzFeed, ChatOn, Clubhouse, Facebook, Facebook Live, Facebook Messenger, Facetime, Flickr, Google+, Google Duo, Google Drive, Google Groups (online forums and email-based groups that shares documents, pictures, calendars, invitations and other resources), Google Hangouts, Google Jamboard, Google Meet, Google News, Instagrams, Imo, iBook, iTunes, LinkedIn, Messages, MySpace, Patch, Periscope, Pinterest, Quibi, Quora, Reddit, Signal, Siri, Skype, Slack, Snapchat, SOUND CLOUD, Spotify, Supfrica, Tango, Telegtam, Telegram Messenger, Tidal, Tumblr, Twitch, Twitter, Yahoo Chat, YouTube, Viadeo, Viber, Vimeo, Vine, Viv, WeChat, WhatsApp, WhatsApp Chat, WhatsApp Messenger, Zoom.⁸⁹¹

Spreadsheets: Google Sheets, Microsoft Excel.

Storage (file hosting service): Dashlane, Dropbox, Google Drive, Mega, Moodle, YouTube.

Tool for converting videos: Handbrake.

Video Calling/Video Conferencing/Video Meetings/Real-time Meetings/Real-Communications Technology: Blue Jeans, Bright Talk, Cisco WebEx, Facebook, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, GoToMeetings, GoToWebinar, MeSkype, Microsoft Teams, Owl, Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom.

Video Editors: Movavi.

Video Transcoder: Handbrake.

Virtual/digital (smartphone) personal assistant: Buzby, Cortana, Google Now, Okay Google, Siri.

Virtual event platform: Hopin.

Other internet resources/applications (apps)/platforms (in alphabetical order):

Audio CD, apps (special applications),⁸⁹²

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),

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.

⁸⁹¹ Zoom unifies cloud video conferencing, simple online meetings, and cross platform group chat into one easy-to-use platform.

⁸⁹² 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.

Facebook Messenger, Facetime, facetime(s) with, feature phone, fiber-optic cable, flipdocs, fonepad,

Google AdSense, Google Chat, Google Docs, Google Glass, Google Keep (note taking service), Google Sheets, Google Slides, 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, messaging platforms, 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,⁸⁹³ online journals, online locker, online messaging app, online Powerpoint presentations, online storage, Patch, phablets, Photo Shop, platforms, plug-ins, podcasts (digital audio file), 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,

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, twittering⁸⁹⁴

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, weblog, web seminars, webinars, webinar software applications, webliography, WiFi hotspot, wiki, Wikipedia, wireless network.

We have a new language such as:

“access rights,”

“access technology,”

“actions that stress the server,”

“active networkers,”

“active networking,”

“active online presence,”

⁸⁹³ 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>

⁸⁹⁴ 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.

“activeSync,”
 “adaptive fast charging travel charger/compatible device,”
 “Ad blocker,”
 “add-ons,”
 “Africa's data revolution,”
 “age of clickbait,”
 “age of connectivity,”
 “algorithm tweaking,”
 “algorithmic marketplace,”
 “AI-powered search engine,”
 “all digital access,”
 “all-digital workflow and production process,”
 “all-knowing digital helper,”
 “aluminosilicate glass screen,”
 “always-now world of social media,”
 “Amazon’s algorithm,”
 “Amazon’s Hub Group distribution system,”
 “Android App development,”
 “Analog Cardinal vis-a-vis Digital Cardinal,”
 “anchor text,”
 “app development,”
 “app driving via waze,”
 “app ecosystem,”
 “app fatigue,”
 “app-like site,”
 “app-powered service companies,”
 “app’s algorithm,”
 “apps culture,”
 “application to optimize a document for viewing,”
 “artificial technology software,”
 “magic of audiobooks,”
 “audio platforms,”
 “audio publishing,”
 “augmented reality,”
 “augmented reality smartphone game,”
 “augmented video app,”
 “authentication app,”
 “auto chat iPhone app,”
 “auto dial,”
 “auto pay,”
 “auto purged,”
 “auto renewal,”
 “automatic calendars,”
 “available live online,”
 “available online live,”
 “AVG CloudCare,”
 “background app refresh,”
 “background print,”
 “backlinks”—having your website name mentioned and hyperlinked by other
 websites,
 “balancing privacy and security in the digital age,”

“balcony church,”
 “baptizing the digital world,”
 “behind a paywall (you could not read it without subscribing),”
 “better use technology to deepen relationships,”
 “bibliographical manager,”
 “binge listening,”
 “bingeworthy,”
 “bingeworthy TV,”
 “biometric information,”
 “biometrics registration,”
 “biometric technology,”
 “BIOS,”
 “blacklisted,”
 “blended format,”
 “blended learning (combining online modules and on-campus learning),”
 “blended virtual learning,”
 “bloatware,”
 “blockchain technology (bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies),”
 “blocklist,”
 “bloggers see things differently,”
 “blogging,”
 “blogging platform,”
 “blog – online diary,”
 “blog website,”
 “blogsphere,”
 “blogs – personal websites,”
 “books on a flash drive,”
 “Born Before Computers (BBC),”
 “born digital,”
 “bound galleys,”
 “brand awareness,”
 “brave new digital world,”
 “breadcrumb trail,”
 “bring the content of the Word of God to people who use digital means,”
 “Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Principle.”
 “Bring Your Own Phone (BYOP) Activation Kit.”
 “broadcast networks (NBC, etc.)
 “broadcast on the internet,”
 “broadcast TV (NBC, etc.)
 “broad-scale digital counterinsurgency,”
 “browser-based reading,”
 “browser compatibility testing.”
 “burner phone,”
 “buy an app,”
 “cable TV talk shows,”
 “caller ID,”
 “calls keep dropping,”
 “capacity building,”
 “captioned video,”
 “capture (Google “I am not a robot”),
 “casting,”

“casting the digital net,”
 “Catholic blogosphere,”
 “Catholic Church’s digital engagement,”
 “Catholic Church's digital reality,”
 “Catholic Church’s media presence,”
 “Catholic Church’s online presence,”
 “Catholic Church Priority – web designer, programmer, developer,”
 “Catholic Metaverse,”
 “Catholic social media editors,”
 “Catholic Social Network Teaching,”
 “challenges of internet connectivity,”⁸⁹⁵
 “charging station,”
 “chat apps,”
 “cellphone cameras,”
 “cellphone charger dock.”
 “cellphone lot,”
 “cellphone ministry,”
 “cellphone technology,”
 “cellular bandwidth,”
 “central part of the church’s mission now,”
 “challenge of increasing traffic,”
 “check button,” (many choices)
 “chip reader,”
 “Christian crowdfunding sites,”
 “Christianity in a Digital Age,”
 “Christianity in the Digital Culture,”
 “citizen journalism,”
 “citizen journalists,”
 “church as field hospital in the digital media world,”
 “church-based online news agencies,”
 “church and communication in an e-age,”
 “Church Mobile App,”
 “clean air,”
 “clickbait,”
 “clickbait headlines,”
 “clickbait journalism (tracking celebrities),”
 “clickbait minefield,”
 “clickbait news stories,”
 “click-through activity,”
 “climate portal,”
 “cloud application,”
 “cloud backup,”
 “cloud backup provider,”
 “cloud-based,”
 “cloud-based hub,”

⁸⁹⁵ 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.

“cloud-based software,”
 “cloud-based video conferencing service,”
 “cloud care,”
 “cloud computing,”
 “cloud gaming,”
 “Cloud HD,”
 “Cloud HD Video.”
 “Cloud HD Video Meeting,”
 “cloud hosting,”
 “cloud phone solution,”
 “cloud services (online storage),”
 “cloud storage,”
 “cloud video conferencing,”
 “coders/coding,”
 “code-switching,”
 “coding classes,”
 “collective cellphone memory capacity,”
 “combining text, voice and video,”
 “communal, household computer,”
 “communicating thru YOUCAT (short for *Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church*),”
 “communication hub,”
 “communication platforms,”
 “communication tools,”
 “compatibility (forward, backward, downward).”
 “compatible with all mobile devices,”
 “competitive keyword phrases.”
 “comprehensive, multidisciplinary full-text database,”
 “computer algorithm,”
 “computer-generated,”
 “computer-generated imagery,”
 “computer instruction,”
 “computer technology field,”
 “Computer Vision,”
 “connected devices talking to each other,”
 “consciousness of information technology,”
 “consecrated life in the digital age,”
 “constant digital connectedness,”
 “consumer culture of Facebook ‘friendships’”
 “containment measures,”
 “content driven,”
 “content optimization,”
 “content provider,”
 “content-rich apps,”
 “content writing,”
 “contextual apps,”
 “converting a full talk/presentation into a Powerpoint Presentation,”
 “cookie policy,”
 “corrupt files in the registry,”
 “course management system,”
 “create a culture of encounter,”
 “creating the SCC path by walking,”

“creative marketing,”
 “critical media literacy tools,”
 “crowdfunding,”
 “crowdfunding page,”
 “crowdfunding push,”
 “crowdsourced voice library,”
 “crowdsourcing,”
 “crowdsourcing website,”
 “cross-learning platform,”
 “cross platform group chat,”
 “cyber brothers and sisters,”
 “cyber connectivity,”
 “cyber crime,”
 “cyber discipleship,”
 “cyber encounters,”
 “cyber-evangelist,”
 “cyber fold,”
 “cyber group,”
 “cyber group ministry,”
 “cyber liturgy,”
 “cyber media,”
 “cyber office,”
 “cybersecurity,”
 “cybersex,”
 “cybersmart background,”
 “cyberspace world,”
 “cyberstalking,”
 “cybertheology,”
 “cybertraditionalism,”
 “cyberwarfare,”
 “cyborg Christian,”
 “daily gospel online,”
 “data cleanse,”
 “data organization training,”
 “data protections laws,”
 “data protection standards,”
 “data recovery software,”
 “data signal on my phone,”
 “data visualization” (“data viz”),
 “deactivate the old version,”
 “deadlock,”
 “dedicated support team,”
 “deepfake,”
 “default social platform,”
 “democratization of smartphones,”
 “democratized information,”
 “demonstration video,”
 “designer communities (book clubs, etc.)”
 “desktop connectivity,”
 “desktop and mobile versions of websites,”
 “Developer vis-vis Maintenance Person

“device-to-device communications,”
 “dial in via Global Meet,”
 “digi forum,”
 “digitalism activism,”
 “digital access,”
 “Digital Africa,”
 “digital African-themed platform,”
 “digital age,”
 “digital age publishing,”
 “digital apocalypse,”
 “digital archives,”
 “digital archives system,”
 “digital areopagus,”
 “digital arts,”
 “digital Babylon,”
 “digital banking,”
 “digital bibles,”
 “digital book,”
 “digital breadcrumbs,”
 “digital campaigning,”
 “digital-centric news operation,”
 “digital channels,”
 “digital chat room,”
 “digital church,”
 “digital church and E-culture in the New Media Age,”
 “digital church ministry,”
 “digital citizens,”
 “digital city,”
 “digital commerce,”
 “digital commons,”
 “digital communication(s),”
 “digital community,”
 “digital company,”
 “digital conference,”
 “digital connectedness,”
 “digital connectivity,”
 “digital contact,”
 “digital content,”
 “digital contexts,”
 “digital continent,”
 “digital, convergence model,”
 “digital conversations,”
 “digital culture,”
 “digital culture is changing our world,”
 “digital delivery companies,”
 “digital democracy,”
 “Digital Department,”
 “digital detox zone,”
 “digital disciple,”
 “digital discussion group,”
 “digital divide.”

“digital documents library,”
 “digital door,”
 “digital downloading,”
 “digital ecosystem,”
 “digital edition,”
 “digital environment,”
 “digital epidemic,”
 “digital era,”
 “digital evangelism,”
 “digital evangelization,”
 “digital-first editorial,”
 “digital-first editorial strategy,”
 “digital-first media landscape,”
 “digital footprint,”
 “digital formats,”
 “digital forum,”
 “digital games,”
 “digital generation,”
 “digital giving,”
 “digital highway,”
 “digital housecleaning,”
 “digital identity,”
 “digital immigrants,”
 “digital information galaxy,”
 “digital is the new default,”
 “digital is the norm,”
 “digital journalism,”
 “digital kids,”
 “digital learning,”
 “digital learning center,”
 “digital learning options,”
 “digital learning platforms,”
 “digital libraries community,”
 “digital library,”
 “digital library systems,”
 “digital life,”
 “digital life is our new normal,”
 “digital literacy,”
 “digital literacy program,”
 “digital loop,”
 “digital mantra: “update and restart, NOT download.”
 “digital market,”
 “digital marketing,”
 “digital marketing is a science/profession,”
 “digital marketing strategy,”
 “digital means,”
 “digital media,”
 “digital media campaign,”
 “digital media platform,”
 “digital media (social networks, email) are 21st century town square,”
 “digital media team,”

“digital media world,”
 “digital membership,
 “digital membership program,”
 “digital migration,”
 “digital ministry,”
 “digital missionaries on the electronic continent,”
 “digital/mobile first business model,”
 “digital movies,”
 “digital multi-media age,”
 “digital, multimedia and transmedia from the beginning,”
 “digital nation,”
 “digital native,”
 “digital network,”
 “digital news,”
 “digital news hub,”
 “digital newspaper,”
 “digital noise,”
 “digital notebook,”
 “digital-only future,”
 “Digital Outreach Agent,”
 “digital overload,”
 “digital partnership,”
 “digital pilgrims,”
 “digital platform(s),”
 “digital pre-order,”
 “digital presence,”
 “digital and print delivery,”
 “digital privacy,”
 “digital propaganda,”
 “digital quotient test (DQ Test),”
 “digital reader,”
 “digital reformation,”
 “digital relationships,”
 “digital religion,”
 “digital repository,”
 “digital revenue,”
 “digital revolution,”
 “digital sabbath,”
 “digital services,”
 “digital set-up box,”
 “digital seminary,”
 “digital set-up box,”
 “digital social media”
 “digital social networking”
 “digital solution agenda,”
 “digital space,”
 “digital space to share, ”
 “digital spirituality,”
 “digital storytelling,”
 “digital strategy,”
 “digital streets,”

“digital streaming service,”
 “digital subscription,”
 “digital subscription business,”
 “digital summit,”
 “digital support group,”
 “digital technology,”
 “digital technologies,”
 “digital theology,”
 “digital three-dimensional environments,”
 “digital transformation,”
 “digital transformation of books,”
 “digital transformation strategy,”
 “digital video recorders,”
 “digital video stream,”
 “digital wireless system,”
 “digital world,”
 “digital world is a democratic environment,”
 “digital world is a network not of wires, but of people,”
 “digital world is a public square,”
 “digitally emergent new generation,”
 “digitally -focused enterprise,”
 “digitally propelled world in contemporary evangelization,”
 “digitalized documents,”
 “digitized documents,”
 “digitalized men and women moving hand in hand with the digital generation,”
 “digitalizing family records,”
 “direct wire transfer method,”
 “discover the web once click at a time,”
 “discretionary sales,”
 “distance e-learning mode of study,”
 “distance learning,”
 “distant learning,”
 “Distributed Computing Technology,”
 “DocuSign” (electronic signatures)
 “do digital,”
 “domain parking account,”
 “dot.com Catholic,”
 “dot.com Christian,”
 “dot.com priest,”
 “dot-com-era start up,”
 “drive-by download,”
 “drivers of digital subscription growth,”
 “download Sunday,”
 “dynamic calendar,”
 “dynamic pricing,”
 “E-Age,”
 “earbuds,”
 “early web,”
 “eblast,”
 “ebook (electronic book),”
 “ebook platforms,”

“ebook revolution,”
“ecclesial information service,”
“e-Church,”
“e-commerce jungle”
“e-commuting,”
“eConference (E-Conference or web conference),”
“e-Courses,”
“eco-ritual,”
“eco-skies,”
“e-Culture,”
“e-Data,”
“education platform,”
“e-Editions,”
“effective business marketing tool,”
“e-Friends,”
“e-format,”
“ejournal,”
“elastic database pools,”
“e-learning,”
“e-Meeting,”
“e-meet you,”
“eNotice,”
“electronic address,”
“electronic ballot tracking system,”
“electronic book,”
“electronic classroom,”
“electronic database,”
“electronic data interchange (EDI),”
“Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT),”
“electronic hearth,”
“electronic introduction,”
“electronic learning,”
“electronic magic,”
“electronic publishing,”
“electronic resources,”
“electronic subscription,”
“email-based groups,”
“email editor,”
“email marketing,”
“email networker,”
“email thread,”
“embedded mobile compatibility,”
“embedded content,”
“embedded viewing,”
“emerging virtual community,”
“emoticon,”
“empowerment of social media,”
“encrypted messaging services,”
“Energy (alternative, carbon-free, clean, renewable),”
“end-to-end encryption,”
“engaging with people in the digital realm,”

“enhance internet and wi-fi connectivity,”
 “enhanced driver license,”
 “Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System,”
 “ERP System,”
 “Ethesis,”
 “EV (Electronic Vehicle)”
 “evangelization of the digital continent,”
 “evangelize digitally,”
 “evangelizing in cyberspace,”
 “evangelizing online,”
 “evangomercials,”
 “Every solution starts with sharing a problem. Technology thrives in the open,”
 “evidenced-based content,”
 “evolution of our society from the industrial age to the information age,”
 “experiencing God in the internet age,”
 “experiential centers/stores,”
 “external personal assistant service,”
 “extreme blogging,”
 “extreme diaspora situation,”
 “extreme impact protection,”
 “e-Waste,”
 “5G networks remake the internet,”
 “Facebook apostolate,”
 “Facebook as a social media tool.”
 “Facebook fanpage,”
 “Facebook Live,”
 “Facebook ministry,”
 “Facebook page looks even better on mobile,
 ”facebooking,”
 “face to face time,”
 “facilitation skills,”
 “FB community,”
 “faith-based website design company,”
 “family facetime,”
 “fear of missing out (FoMO),”
 “feature phone,”
 “fiber cut,”
 “fiber home,”
 “filter applied,”
 “firmware,”
 “first fully digital generation,”
 “first message in the thread,”
 “403 Forbidden Error,”
 “5G -- fifth-generation cellular networks
 “5G is a New Frontier for Mobile Carriers and Tech Companies,”
 “flagship site,”
 “flash features,”
 “flashmob,”
 “flip classroom,”
 “flip phone,”
 “flush the system,”

“flocknotes,”
 “flourishing media ministry,”
 “focused marketing,”
 “focused networking,”
 “forced ads on smartphones,”
 “forensic author identification software,”
 “forming church ministers in a digital age,”
 “4G data bundle,”
 “4G LTE (Fourth Generation Long Term Evolution) standard,”
 “free conference call,”
 “free creation tools,”
 “Free ‘domain parking’ account,”
 “free media platform,”
 “free messaging application for smartphones,”
 “freestanding presentation of online video,”
 “front cam,”
 “full digital access,”
 “full digital edition,”
 “full-text content,”
 “fullvid,”
 “future is now,”
 “gadget tutoring,”
 “gaining traction,”
 “gaming platforms,”
 “gaming video,”
 “gated [restricted) content,”
 “gchat.”
 “Gen z audience,”
 “Generation Z,”
 “geofencing,”
 “giant digital space,”
 “give the internet a soul,”
 “glass screen protection/protector,”
 “Global Church Digital Collection,”
 “global digital brand,”
 “global digital campaign,”
 “global digital subscription membership service,”
 “global gaming,”
 “global livestream,”
 “Global Positioning Service (GPS) Rollover,”
 “Global Protect software,”
 “global smartphone market,”
 “global text messaging system,”
 “global village,”
 “go digital or die,”
 “go digital or perish,”
 “going totally digital,”
 “going viral,”
 “good texters,”
 “Google classroom,”
 “Google organic search,”

“Google Play Store,”
 “Google trendspotters,”
 “Google voice search,”
 “Google webmaster tools,”
 “Gospel in the digital age,”
 “Gospel of the New Media,”
 “group chat,”
 “group push notifications,”
 “group video calling,”
 “grey literature,”
 “grow/growing youth/young leadership,”
 “grow your audience,”
 “growing the church through new media,”
 “growth hacking,”
 “GSM (global system for mobile)”
 “hacker ethic,”
 “handheld cameras,”
 “handheld devices,”
 “handheld electronic devices,”
 “handmade web design,”
 “handset,”
 “hard reset,”
 “hard shut down/reboot,”
 “hashtag,”
 “hashtag activism,”
 “hashtag #ccmaconvention,”
 “#hashtag ‘Kenya on Twitter’ (#KOT),”
 “heavy duty plastic sleeve,”
 “highly globalized, highly digitalized 21st century world,”
 “high speed fiber-optic network,”
 “high-speed 4G mobile internet connectivity puts Africa on fast track,”
 “holograms” (heads-up displays),
 “hosted podcasts,”
 “hot desks,”
 “hot mail,”
 “how to be holy online,”
 “https:// (the ‘s’ is for additional security),”
 “hub networking,”
 “hub technology,”
 “‘hybrid model’ of ministry,”
 “hyper commerciality of the new media,”
 “hyperlink,”
 “hypertext,”
 “I am also a call away,”
 “iMessage,”
 “impact of the new information and communication technologies on family life,”
 “inbox me,”
 “ICT compliant,”
 “ICT & evangelization,”
 “ICT for evangelization/spreading the Good News to others.”
 “ICT impact,”

“ICT infrastructure,”
 “ICT is not a game changer, it is a life changer,”
 “ICT is the new DNA,”
 “ICT is now part and parcel of everyday lives,”
 “ICT is the tail wagging the dog,”
 “ICT literacy,”
 “ICT is now part and parcel of everyday lives,”
 “ICT personnel,”
 “ICTs skills,”
 “ICT Training Forum,”
 “iCloud Storage,”
 “iGen’ers,”
 “image and video sharing social media,”
 “IMO (in my opinion),”
 “increasingly video-friendly social media platforms,”
 “independent Catholic news site,”
 “individual data safe (typically a sliver of server space),”
 “infodemic,”
 “infographics,”
 “infographic world,”
 “informatics specialists,”
 “Information Communication Technology (ICT),”
 “Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a tool to evangelization,”
 “information drive,”
 “information literacy,”
 “information superhighway,”
 “information systems,”
 “information technology (IT),⁸⁹⁶
 “information technology infrastructural library (ITIL),
 “information website,”
 “informational democratization,”
 “infovid,”
 “innovative multimedia,”
 “instant communication system,”
 “instant messaging,”
 “instant messaging on social media,”
 “instant mobile chatting services,”
 “institutional repository services,”
 “Integrated Management Information System (IMIS).”
 “intelligent assistant,”
 “intelligent personal assistant,”
 “interactive board,”
 “interactive communications,”
 “interactive mobile platform,”
 “interactive module,”
 “interactive virtual venues,”

⁸⁹⁶ 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.”

“interactive virtual venues where youth congregate,”
 “interactive wall,”
 “interactive website,”
 “interface between the browser and the printer,”
 “internal reboot,”
 “international cellular backhaul,”
 “international computer driving license,”
 “international, peer-reviewed, open access online journal,”
 “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,”
 “internet connectivity as a daily and conscious need,”
 “internet directory,”
 “internet directories web page,”
 “internet evangelization,”
 “internet feed,”
 “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,”
 “internet meme,”
 “internet ministry,”
 “internet networking,”
 “internet or digital future,”
 “internet.org app,”
 “internet outreach,”
 “internet platforms,”
 “internet progressive notion of ecclesial gathering,”
 “internet publishing strategies,”
 “internet revolution,”
 “internet service,”
 “internet/social media are going to save us,”
 “internet, text messages and social networks are a gift from God,”
 “internet theology,”
 “internet towns of Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp, etc.,”
 “internet towns that are not geographical but situational,”
 “internet traffic jam,”
 “internet TV,”
 “internet user workshop,”
 “internet video,”
 “internet world.”
 “iPhone App development,”
 “iPhone and laptop generation,”
 “iPod Shuffle,”

“IP blacklisting,”
“IP whitelisting,”
“iTalk,”
“IT era,”
“IT mantra: ‘If you don’t’ use it, you lose it,”
“IT pathways,”
“Joomla Migration,”
“Journalism of Assertion,”
“keyboard warriors,”
“keyword optimization,”
“Kindle Cloud Reader,”
“Kindle content creation tools,”
“Kindle Direct Publisher (KDP),”
“landing page,”
“leadership podcast,”
“learning management platform (LMP),”
“learning management system (LMS),”
“learning platform,”
“learning pods, pandemic pods, microschoools (teachers for small-group instruction)”
“let’s Facetime,”
“library as an information providing department in support of learning, teaching and research,”
“life in the digital space,”
“liquid glass screen protection/protector,”
“link building,”
“live.church,”
“live online streaming,”
“livestream” or “live stream,”
“livestream now,”
“livestreamed”
“livestream mass,”
“livestreaming,”
“livestreaming apps,”
“livestreaming Sunday,”
“live streaming technology,”
“livestreaming video/live streaming television feed,”
“livestream online,”
“live link,”
“live stream watch online,”
“live video,”
“live video chat,”
“live video streaming,”
“living in a bubble,”
“loading credit,”
“local resource mobilization,”
“lockdown,”
“log-in remotely,”
“long distance learning,”
“long journey in the ICT world,”
“long-tail keywords,”
“long-term archiving,”

“low-cost, high-speed internet,”
“low-cost video messaging,”
“journalism in the age of smart phones,”
“junk computing,”
“magic of audiobooks,”
“mail server settings,”
“mainstream media,”
“marketing databases,”
“marketing program,”
“massive open online courses” (MOOCs),
“massive scale distance learning course,”
“mass mobile telephony,”
“media freedom activists,”
“media platforms,”
“media sensitization,”
“media unit,”
“media universe,”
“mediated online communities,”
“meme accounts on Instagram,”
“Memorial Service on Skype,”
“message exchange system,”
“message platform,”
“message this page,”
“messaging application,”
“messaging apps as default portals,”
“messaging platform,”
“messaging services,”
“metadata,”
“metadata adjustment,”
“metadata tag,”
“Meta tag updates,”
“metaverse (virtual universe),”
“microcell device,”
“micro or palm-sized desktop,”
“microrun (under 50 copies, as few as 10 copies),”
“Microsoft Account Problem,”
“Microsoft Word is hanging,”
“Microsoft Outlook web app,”
“mic test,”
“micro site,”
“migrating to a new interface,”
“millennials tethered to their smartphones and tablets,”
“mission critical systems,”
“mission in the digital environment,”
“missiographics,”
“mixed reality device,”
“mobi formats,”
“mobile algorithm change,”
“mobile app development,”
“mobile apps,”
“mobile boarding pass,”

“mobile broadband access,”
“mobile chat app,”
“mobile compatibility,”
“mobile compliant,”
“mobile connectivity,”
“mobile coverage,”
“mobile data roaming,”
“mobile device,”
“mobile devices compatible,”
“mobile digital revolution,”
“mobile digital technology platform,”
“mobile eco-system,”
“mobile-first world,”
“mobile friendly,”
“mobile friendly sites,”
“mobile friendly website,”
“mobile-inspired Windows 11,”
“mobile messaging,”
“mobile money,”
“mobile network coverage,”
“mobile network provider,”
“mobile office,”
“Mobile Passport Control,”
“mobile phone app,”
“mobile phone networks,”
“mobile platform provider,”
“mobile players,”
“mobile porting process,”
“mobile readiness check,”
“mobile reading platform,”
“mobile-responsive website solution,”
“mobile revolution” (spread of mobile devices)
“mobile search provider,”
“mobile services,”
“mobile sharing,”
“mobile technology,”
“mobile telephony,”
“mobile ticketing,”
“mobile wallet,”
“mobile web,”
“mobile website design,”
“modern digital information world,”
“modern digital media,”
“modern Twenty First Century digital content company,”
“monetization tools,”
“monetize a website (make money from your website),”
“monetizing students is tough,”
“more digital-friendly Vatican,”
“more globally connected than ever before,”
“more user-friendly interface,”
“most active platform for communication and networking,”

“moving to the digital world,”
 “mp4 or avi file of a video,”
 “multi-colored layers,”
 “Multi Factor Authentication (MFA),”
 “multimedia content,”
 “Multimedia Content Manager,”
 “multimedia marketing,”
 “multimedia platform ministry,”
 “multimedia platforms,”
 “multimedia and social media platforms,”
 “multi-modal” format,”
 “multi-platform,”
 “multi-platform media, including digital, social, print and events,”
 “multi-platform media ministry,”
 “Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS),”
 “multiple platforms,”
 “‘multiplication system’ through apps and social media,”
 “my email address keeps going south,”
 “national culture of the news media,”
 “Netflix streaming,”
 “Net TV,”
 “network bubble.”
 “network connectivity,”
 “network device,”
 “network is down,”
 “network security company,”
 “networked social journalism,”
 “networking a book,”
 “netizens (citizens of the net),”
 “networked world,”
 “network effect,”
 “networks of social relationships,”
 “new areopagus of our contemporary age,”
 “new data ecosystem,”
 “new digital content,”
 “new digital environment,”
 “new digital and social media means of communication,”
 “new digital wireless system,”
 “‘new disrupter,’ Amazon’s same-day delivery model,”
 “new ecosystem of independent Catholic media and social media,”
 “newest buzzword: IoT (internet of things),”
 “New Evangelization in the Digital Age,”
 “new horizons in digital marketing and social networking,”
 “new media landscape,”
 “new media start-up,”
 “new media technology,”
 “new media technology as an effective tool for evangelization,”
 “newness of the digital environment,”
 “New Normal,”
 “new online practice/praxis,”
 “new place for evangelization,”

“new platform for downloading Ebooks,”
“news aggregator”
“news feed algorithm,”
“news media websites,”
“new spaces for evangelization,”
“next gen,”
“next gen network,”
“next gen young people,”
“next generation small groups,”
“next is now,”
“niche publishing house,”
“nones are alright,”
“Oculus Rift, the immersive virtual-reality headsets,”
“off-campus e-resources access,”
“one all-purpose device,”
“one-stop IT solutions provider,”
“One Time Password (OTP),”
“ongoing networking,”
“online account,”
“online addiction,”
“online advertising,”
“online article limit,”
“online banking services,”
“online bulletin board system,”
“online campus,”
“online chat room party,”
“online Cloud backup,”
“online communications,”
“online community,”
“online congregation,”
“online consumption,”
“online crime,”
“online distribution,”
“online ecclesial gathering,”
“online education,”
“online electronic database,”
“online forums,”
“online friendships.”
“online fundraising,”
“Online House Churches,”
“online influencer,”
“online influencer world,”
“online international contemporary theological learning platform,”
“online journalism,”
“online journal via the internet,”
“online learning,”
“online learning community,”
“online live video,”
“online marketing,”
“online marketing presence,”
“online marketing services,”

“online marketing strategies,”
“online media,”
“online meetings,”
“online messaging app,”
“online mode,”
“online multimedia content,”
“online networking,”
“online networks,”
“online news correspondents,”
“online participation,”
“online payment platform service provider,”
“online payment processing provider,”
“online platforms,”
“online portal,”
“online powerpoint presentations,”
“online presence,”
“online publications,”
“online publicity,”
“online publishing,”
“online publishing companies/houses,”
“online reporting,”
“online service on internet platforms,”
“online services,”
“Online SCC,”
“online streaming sites,”
“online tools and resources,”
“online technology,”
“online threaded discussion.”
“online training,”
“online vendor,”
“online voices,”
“Online Wisdom Community,”
“online writing,”
“online Zoom webinar,”
“on-screen Zoom boxes,”
“on-site workshops,”
“open access journal,”
“open access publishing,”
“open platform,”
“open research practices,”
“open source commercial version,”
“open source package,”
“open source repository application/software package,”
“open source software,”
“open-source software project,”
“open source theology,”
“optimization,”
“organic IT services,”
“organic search engine traffic,”
“organic search results,”
“organic traffic,”

“organizes desktop papers,”
 “the original surfers,”
 “our incredible shrinking attention span,”
 “our lives are becoming technology/digitally centered,”
 “outboard or auxiliary keyboard,”
 “Outlook Web App,”
 “outsourced vendor,”
 “over quota,”
 “P2P (person to person talks),”
 “Page Flip,”
 “PageRank algorithm,”
 “Pauline eReader App,”
 “parish app as a faith resource,”
 “Patch Tuesday,”
 “‘perfect bind’ binding,”
 “password app,”
 “password embedded in link,”
 “password services,”
 “Pastoral Sub-domain on Word Press,”
 “paywall,”
 “pdf format/version/file,”
 “periscoping,”
 “personal data sovereignty,”
 “Personal Device Entertainment System,”
 “Personal Identifiable Information (PII),”
 “phablet-only life,”
 “phishing website,”
 “photo app,”
 “photo-driven social network,”
 “photo-sharing social network,”
 “photog spacing,”
 “Picture-in-Picture feature,”
 “place holder for a valid handle prefix.”
 “please google...”
 “plug-ins.”
 “plug-in running online calendar system,”
 “Pods (personal online data stores),”
 “POD service providers,”
 “popular online instant messaging tool,”
 “post app period,”
 “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”
 “printer spread format,”
 “print and online platforms,”

“Print on Demand (POD),”⁸⁹⁷
 “Print on Demand book publishing,”
 “Print on Demand protocols,”
 “Print on Demand with digital technology,”
 “print to order,”
 “priority of File Management,”
 “programming the settings for different apps and programs,”
 “proprietary deep web technology,”
 “proprietary videotelephony product,”
 “public service media,”
 “public service media ethics,”
 “Publish4All Print Centre,”
 “publishing platform,” (same as CMS)
 “pure clickbait,”
 “push the reset button,”
 “QR Code,”
 “quantum bits or qubits,”
 “quantum computing,”
 “quick-hit convenience of digital media,

⁸⁹⁷ **Print-on-demand (POD)** is a [printing](#) technology and business process in which book copies (or other documents) are not printed until the company receives an order, allowing prints of singular or small quantities. While other industries established the [build to order](#) business model, "print-on-demand" could only develop after the beginning of [digital printing](#), because it was not economical to print single copies using traditional printing technology such as [letterpress](#) and [offset printing](#).

Many traditional [small presses](#) have replaced their traditional printing equipment with POD equipment or contract their printing to POD service providers. Many [academic publishers](#), including [university presses](#), use POD services to maintain large [backlists](#) (lists of older publications); some use POD for all of their publications. Larger publishers may use POD in special circumstances, such as reprinting older, out of print titles or for test marketing.



A print-on-demand book printer at the [Internet Archive](#) headquarters in [San Francisco, California](#). Two large printers print the pages (left) and the cover (right) and feed them into the rest of the machine for collating and binding. Depending on the number of pages, printing may take 5 to 20 minutes.

Wikipedia Website, retrieved on 11 December, 20127,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Print_on_demand

“radio button,” (one choice)
 “rapid response media operation,”
 “reach more readers,”
 “‘Read Aloud’ Version,”
 “reader spread format,”
 “reading on multifunction devices,”
 “really going digital,”
 “real-time translator,”
 “red flag,”
 “refresh or clear the cache,”
 “relationships in the internet age,”
 “remote control journalism,”
 “remote control and online meeting,”
 “remote control writing,”
 “remote learning,”
 “remote teaching,”
 “remote teaching platform,”
 “reoccurring” (Zoom code)
 “research capacity,”
 “reset system,”
 “respondus online platform,”
 “responsive template,”
 “‘restore point’ to recover Windows,”
 “rich, multimedia digital content that can be streamlined for particular broadcast media,”
 “robot journalism,”
 “salary is grant funded,”
 “Samsung Galaxy S® 6, an AT&T 4G LTE smartphone,”
 “satellite coverage,”
 “satellite internet,”
 “satellite reunion,”
 “saving in another window,”
 “scam site,”
 “scan app,”
 “SCCs networking platform or forum,”
 “SCCs-related Apps,”
 “screen culture,”
 “screenshot (from Zoom Call or film),”
 “screen sharing,”
 “seamless installation of software,”
 “search engine marketing” (SEM),
 “search engine optimization” (SEO),
 “search engine performance,”
 “search engine rankings matter,”
 “second machine age,”
 “second-screen experience,”
 “secure socket layer (SSL),”
 “seismic generational gap,”
 “selfies -- emergent form of folk art for millennials.”
 “self-publishing company,”
 “Sender Policy Framework (SPF),”

“server farms,”
 “server migration,”
 “service delivery platforms,”
 “sex text messages,”
 “sexting,”
 “share on your own timeline,”
 “sharing apps,”
 “shift to a whole new way of virtual thinking,”
 “shelter-in-place,”
 “Shopify migration,”
 “short form streaming platform,”
 “Short Messaging Service (SMS),”
 “side-feed,”
 “signature on tablet rather than scanning paper copy,”
 “simpler, more intuitive website,”
 “simultaneous captioning technology,”
 “site visitors,”
 “Skype Mass,”
 “skyping,”
 “small group faith-sharing online resource,”
 “small group software management platform,”
 “smart cars,”
 “smart homes,”
 “smart city,”
 “smartphone app,”
 “smartphone capability of mobile website,”
 “smartphone conversation,”
 “smartphone industry,”
 “smartphone is an extension of young people’s communications,”
 “smartphone is a third eye or extra eye for young people,”
 “smartphone – early 21st century’s defining technology,”
 “smartphone malware,”
 “smartphone messages,”
 “smartphone messaging service,”
 “smartphone network,”
 “smartphone parish app,”
 “smartphone Photography,”
 “smartphone platform,”
 “smartphone prayer network,”
 “smartphone’s embedded global positioning system (GPS),”
 “smartphone, smart photography,”
 “smartphone technology,”
 “smartphone writer and hardware analyst with technical chops,”
 “smart photography,”
 “smart switch app,”
 “smart video conferencing camera,”
 “smart wall,”
 “social engineering,”
 “social engineering attacks,”
 “social impact of the digital media,”
 “social presence,”

“social marketing,”
 “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 channels,”
 “social media communities,”
 “social media conversations,”
 “social media ecosystem,”
 “social media environment,”
 “social media giant,”
 “social media interactions,”
 “social media is the new CV,”
 “social media marketing,”
 “social media networking,”
 “social media networks,”
 “Social Media Optimization,”
 “social media optimization services,”
 “social media outreach,”
 “social media platform(s),”
 “social media platforms as vibrant tools for promoting the works of evangelization,”
 “social media presence,”
 “Social Media SCC,”
 “social media – single greatest form of connectivity between Generation X and Millennials,”
 “social media strategist,”
 “social media strategy,”
 “social media website,”
 “social media wired,”
 “social networking forums/platforms are “the new pulpits of our time,”
 “social networking media,”
 “social networking sites (SNSs),”
 “social network's algorithm,”
 “social networks,”
 “social networks are the great digital continent,”
 “social networks are helping to rewire human society,”
 “social platforms,”
 “social plugin,”
 “socially networked world,”
 “software ecosystem,”
 “solar microgrid,”
 “spam arrest,”
 “Spam Arrest Service,”
 “specialized search engine providers,”
 “speech to text software (such as Dragon Dictate)
 “speed depends on the number of users.”
 “spirituality of technology – the internet as life-giving,”
 “spoofed website,”
 “SSL (Secure Sockets Layer),”
 “stall speed,”

“stand alone captions,”
“stay connected, seamlessly,”
“steep IT learning curve,”
“sticky notes on causal diagram,”
“storefront to the world,”
“streamable,”
“stream in,”
“streaming,”
“streaming license,”
“streaming live on YouTube,”
“streaming outlets,”
“streaming services,”
“streaming TV,”
“streaming video content,”
“streaming video service,”
“subdomain platform,”
“subscribe at your app store,”
“subscription-first journalism,”
“subscription video on demand platform,”
"surfing the net,"
“switch between real and virtual worlds,”
“switching from digital reading to digital listening,”
“sync and transfer files via Micro USB data cable,”
“synchronized digital marketing,”
“system architecture,”
“tablet devices,”
“tech lifestyle,”
“tech literacy,”
“Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED),”
“technology and spirituality are compatible,”
“technology-based virtual learning,”
“technology-driven world order,”
“technology is not for work but for life,”
“technological interconnectedness,”
“techo-savvy church,”
“tech-savvy,”
“tech-savvy Generation Z,”
“tech values,”
“teleconference calls as an easy means of communications,”
“teleconferencing app.”
“telecommunication platforms,”
“telecommuting,”
“tele-presence device,”
“tele-press conference,”
“television application space,”
“tent,”
“tethering,”
“text message marketing,”
“text messaging services,”
“text neck syndrome,”
“text to mobile phone,”

“textalyzer,”
 “textspeak,”
 “text stop,”
 “text-to-speech enabled,”
 “theo-bloggers,”
 “Think Before You Click,”
 “thumb drive,”
 “Thunderbolt 3/USB-3 port,”
 “timelapse,”
 “title cards/cue cards,”
 “tokenization,”
 “toolbar customization,”
 “tools for hybrid work,”
 “track changes,”
 “traditional media outlets,”
 “transferring a smartphone photo to Facebook,”
 “trending worldwide,”
 “true digital platforms,”
 “turbo group,”
 “turning a hashtag into movements,”
 “21st-century media ministry,”
 “21st-century multiplatform media ministry,”
 “twerking,”
 “tweet hard,”
 “tweetstorm,”
 “Twittersphere,”
 “Twitter Handle,” (comment after the article)
 “Twitter Theology,”
 “ubiquitous ambient computing,”
 “unfettered streaming,”
 “unfiltered messages,”
 “Uniform Resource Locator (URL),”
 “unimaginable opportunity for evangelization,”
 “universal mobile money transfers,”
 “universal remote learning,”
 “unlimited digital subscription/unlimited digital access,”
 “unplugged but connected,”
 “unsupported device,”
 “updated spreadsheet,”
 “updating operating systems is not clean,”
 “URL matching,”
 “USB stick/flash drive,”
 “use of ICT in evangelization,”
 “user friendly IT instructions,”
 “user friendly on mobile devices,”
 “user friendly websites,”
 “use your multipliers in communications and networking,”
 “using the Cloud to stay relevant,”
 “using ICT for evangelizing,”
 “vacation suspension,”
 “video bites,”

“video board,”
“video call messenger,”
“video call on smartphone,”
“video calling app,”
“video chat,”
“video chat service,”
“video chatting,”
“video clips,”
“video communication service,”
“video conference,”
“video conference app,”
“video conference call application,”
“video conferencing,”
“video conferencing app,”
“video conferencing application,”
“video conferencing system,”
“video editing software,”
“video embedded in Ebook text,”
“video game store,”
“video journalist,”
“video-link form,”
“video meetings,”
“video mixer,”
“video metrics.”
“video multitasking,”
“video sharing website,”
“video storytelling,”
“video teleconferencing platforms,”
“video and written platforms”
“view as a web page,”
“view this email in a web page,”
“view this email in your browser,”
“viral link structure,”
“viral mechanism,”
“viral video games,”
“virgin message form,”
“virtual agent,”
“virtual assistant,”
“virtual assistant software,”
“virtual assistant AI technology,”
“virtual audience,”
“virtual background on Zoom, etc.”
“virtual civic space,”
“virtual chapel,”
“virtual classroom,”
“virtual communities,”
“virtual conference discount,”
“virtual conference software package,”
“Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI),”
“virtual dioceses,”
“virtual education,”

“virtual education,”
 “virtual educational seminar/event,”
 “virtual environment,”
 “virtual events,”
 “virtual immersion experience,”
 “virtual in-person future,”
 “virtual instruction,”
 “Virtual International Conference,”
 “virtual language,”
 “virtual learning,”
 “virtual meetings,”
 “virtual mind rather than a geographical mind,”
 “virtual papal audience,”
 “virtual parishes,”
 “virtual private networks (VPNs),”
 “virtual reality,”
 “virtual reality check,”
 “virtual reality church,”
 “virtual reality device,”
 “virtual reality platform,”
 “virtual reality systems,”
 “virtual reality (VR) in the classroom,”
 “virtual reflection and prayer,”
 “virtual reunion,”
 “virtual structures,”
 “virtual table,”
 “virtual ticket,”
 “virtual travel assistant services,”
 “virtualization of Catholicism – the creation of religious identities in cyberspace,”
 “visual content strategy,”
 “visual platforms,”
 “visual voicemail,”
 “vlogging,”
 “vmail,”
 “v-safe,”
 “voice-activated helpers,”
 “voice activated home device,”
 “voice-controlled digital assistants,”
 “voice mail transcribed into text,”
 “voice over internet system,”
 “voice technology,”
 “VoIP – phone services over the internet,”
 “VPN access.”
 “VPN (Virtual Private Network) connection,”
 “Wall = Social Media Message Board,”
 “watch party” (group viewing on the internet/social media)
 “We are living in an Apps world,”
 “web and mobile ready,”
 “web as sort of life environment especially for the young,”
 “webathon,”
 “web-based activism,”

“web-based Catholic apologetics,”
“web-based fidelity watchdogs,”
“web-based media,”
“web-based news,”
“web-based news management,”
“webbing,”
“web browsing,”
“webcasting and satellite transmissions,”
“webconferencing,”
“web conferencing meeting,”
“web connectivity,”
“web design,”
“web development,”
“web-friendly,”
“webinar,”
“weblink,”
“web-linked TV,”
“web pornography,”
“web portal,”
“web presence,”
“web programmer/developer,”
“web service provider,”
“website analytics,”
“web analytics basics,”
“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,”
“web-streamed mass,”
“we’ve reached peak app,”
“WhatsApp communication,”
“WhatsApp *harambees*,”
“whitelisted,”
“Windows Network diagnostics,”
“Windows 10 phone,”
“wireless connection,”
“WordClouds,”
“WordPress plugin called ‘FG Joomla to WordPress,’”
“work around,”
“workflows.”
“work station,”
“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,”
“you may telephone us, use email, sms or whatsapp,”

“YouTube Channel,”
 “young adult outreach,”
 “young people are natives of the digital world,”
 “young people as digital natives,”
 “young people like text messaging,”
 “zero royalties sale price,”
 “zip drive,”
 “zooming,”
 “zoom access,”
 “zoom bomb,”
 “zoom bombing,”
 “zoom boom generation,”
 “Zoom Church,”
 “zoom fatigue,”
 “zoom generation,”
 “zoom invitation,”
 “zoom meeting,”
 “zoom participant windows,”
 “zoom room,”
 “zoom social platform,”
 “zoom storage,”
 “zoom way of life.”

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 called the “new sleeping giant.”⁸⁹⁸

Kenyan seminarian John Siyumbu, the former Moderator of the SCCs Facebook Page, describes the internet/cyberspace as a two edged sword.⁸⁹⁹ 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/animators/facilitators/coordinators in Africa. Second, the internet and the social media/new media can help members of SCCs in Africa

⁸⁹⁸ A term used for the Catholic laity after the Second Vatican Council.

⁸⁹⁹ 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.

especially in the AMECEA Region to share their experience with the rest of the world.⁹⁰⁰ 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.⁹⁰¹

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

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 13 women and men, different nationalities, different religious denominations, different ethnic groups and different 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 (seven countries plus AsIPA), Europe (six countries), Latin America (four countries), North America (three countries) and Oceania (one country).

The AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team of 16 people includes 15 Africans from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia and one expatriate missionary based in Nairobi, Kenya. We regularly consult SCCs Coordinators on the diocesan and parish levels.

The Africa Continent Section includes a lot of continent-wide material (51 entries as of 19 December, 2019) and specific national material from the Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya (53 entries as of 19 December, 2019), Malawi, Rwanda, Nigeria, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe so far. It contains many articles, reports, Case Studies,

⁹⁰⁰ 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](#)).

⁹⁰¹ 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.

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 Word Press 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 19 December, 2019.

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 8670 (7279 plus 1391) hits (visits). This timeline has proven very useful to many people and is quoted in books, articles, reports and talks. [“Applying the Eight National Priority Concerns of SCCs in America to the Catholic Church Context in Africa”](#) (in two sections) has 8567 hits (visits).

This is followed by: [“The Role of Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in the Implementation of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa”](#) has 7641 hits (visits). [Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa](#) has 6986 hits (visits). [Checklist of 16 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in Africa Today](#) has 6819 hits (visits). [Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Evangelization in Africa](#) has 6021 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 4165 hits (visits). The most popular Archive Event (now up to 76 events) is [“Recently we analyzed the data...”](#) and has 5012 hits (visits).

Other features on the website are: Academia Website: <https://princeton.academia.edu/JosephHealey>⁹⁰² (47 papers⁹⁰³ and 10,780 total views as of 3 June, 2022) including:

⁹⁰² The research questions or keywords entered into the Search Engines outside Academia, but linked to [academia.edu](https://princeton.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.” “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 firstborn 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.” History of myth of Sukuma.” “The hero child in the Sukuma society.” “How can Small Christian Communities promote pastoral conversion.” “Latest video of Pope Francis’ speech on Small Christian Communities.” “African example of the church as Family of God.” “Challenges of Small Christian Communities in Catholic Diocese of Eldoret pdf.” “History of Small Christian Communities.” “Small Christian Communities in East Africa on Youtube.” “See Judge Act Reconciliation.” “Sukuma sayings.” “Bartholomew Bauleni born 1952 biography, “History of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church.” “Definition of Small Christian Community.” “St. Matia Mulumba CTC.” “Importance of *Jumuiya* in the Catholic Church.” “Nyanja song gospel Oscar Phiri download sda.” “Basic Ecclesial Community 2015.” “Describe and analyze the origins and developments of Christian faith in Nyeri.” http://www.academia.edu/8022439/Small_Christian_Communities_as_Domestic_Church_in_the_Context_of_African_Ecclesiology. “Activities at Small Christian Community gatherings.” “History of Small Christian Communities.” Anthony Ntang Ndichia.” “Are nuns members of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church?” “Objectives of a Youth Small Christian Community.” “Some of the strategies of Small Christian Communities to serve the needy in Malawi.” “The need of salvation in Sukumaland.” “The need of salvation in Sukuma.” “Term paper of need of salvation to Sukuma Ethnic Group.” “The way we can help the Sukuma to get the salvation.” “Anniversary texts for a Small Christian Community.” “History of Small Christian Communities in AMECEA.” “Church self-help groups Constitutions in Kenya.” “Rev. Fr. Titus Amigu.” “The need of salvation in Sukumaland.” “The Sukumas’ origin in Africa.” “Location of Vincentian Prayer House, Lavington, Kenya using a matatu.” “Download video for installation of Archbishop Martin Kivuva Musonde of Mombasa.” “Terms of Basic Christian Community.” “Small Christian Community in Swahili.” “St. Peter’s Square Small Christian Communities.” “Theology of Small Christian Community.” “Marianist Nairobi Kangemi water.” “Sr. Joséé Ngalula publications.” “Li Shing’weng’we na Masala Kulangwa.” St. Andrews CTC, Mumias.” “List of ordained priests in Kisii Diocese, Kenya.” “Duties of a chairperson of a Small Christian Community.” “Relationship between Small Christian Community and Family.” “Small Christian Community and family apostolate.” “Father Lance Nadeau, MM.” Plainfield chairlady name in Kenya.” “Why Small Christian Communities animate Mass on Sunday.” “Joseph G Healey, Maryknoll.” “Pd. Charles Nyamiti - CUEA, Kenya.” “Promoting Small Christian Community.” Youth topics in Small Christian Communities.” “Historical background of Small Christian Community in Tanzania.” “Mathematics concepts among the Sukuma.” “Research on Small Christian Communities.” “Karibuni kwetu Nanyuki Monastery.” “Titus Amigu.” “Who was the first parish priest at St. Joseph Catholic Church, Tudor, Mombasa, Kenya?” “Guidance of contacting Catholic Small Christian Community.” “Role of treasurer in a Small Christian Community.” “Pontifical Council for the pastoral care of migrants and itinerant people.” “Methali za Kisukuma (pdf).” “Leadership in Small Christian Communities.” “How the Sukuma people inherit the value of the human person.” “Challenges facing Small Christian Communities today in Kenya.” “Small Christian

Communities in Nairobi.” “Vatican Council 2 about Small Christian Communities.” “Research studies done in Kenya on Small Christian Communities.” “Economic activities Small Christian Communities engage in Kitale Diocese.” “What is the meaning of Sukuma word ‘shikome’?” “Father Armogast Mdawida the New Bishop of Machakos.” “Small Christian Communities in Catholic Nairobi.” “Importance of Small Christian Communities.” “How can the youth be involved in a small christian community, pdf.” “Promoting family apostolate in Africa today: a Catholic perspective.” “Christology in SCCs.” “How important are Christian Small Communities in Malawi?” “Professor C. Majawa on Christian Small Communities.” “How the Sukuma understand Jesus Christ.” “Gospel mission CMS.” “‘Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa,’ by Joseph G. Healey, MM.” “*Hadithi ya Shing'weng"we*.” “Holy Week program Catholic Church Guadalupe Parish Adams/Nairobi.” “SCCs in Vatican Two.” “Download new life single Kafufuka.” “Sukuma riddles and proverbs.” “Sacramental initiation -- Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops.” “Wasukuma magicians.” “Small Christian Communities in diocese of Kisii.” “Small Christian Communities in Archdiocese of Nyeri.” “*Liwelelo* in Sukuma.” “Small Christian Community --agents of transformation.” “Download picture of Small Christian Community.” “Lineamenta.com.” “Gibson Phiri Junior Marianist.” “Challenges of the Sukuma people.” “In the Service of the Holy Spirit: The Ecclesial Vocation of the Canon Lawyer Ladislas Orsy.” “Lance in relation to Cardinal Otunga sainthood.” “Challenges of Small Christian Community.” “What are the challenges of Small Christian Communities in the Church and what are the solutions to these challenges.” “History of Young Christian Students (YCS) in Sudan.” “Importance of Small Christian Communities in building the domestic church.” “What is the procedure of conducting Small Christian Communities in the Catholic Church?” “Archdiocese of Lusaka Tentative Schedule of 2017 SCCs/Committees/Movements/Lay Organizations Elections.” “Challenges of spiritual formation in Small Christian Communities.” “What Happened at the African Synod. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Orobator AE (2000).” “Pope Francis on Small Christian Communities.” “Link between *Africae Munus* and *Of Human Development*.” “Small Christian Communities Establishment in Africa.” “Basic Christian Communities Padila.” “Basic Ecclesial Community.” “African Christology.” “Small Christian Communities Asia.” “Small Christian Communities.” “Sukuma.” “Under the Vatican.” “Vatican II: Theology of the Laity.” “Building a Christian Marriage in Africa.” “Functions of Small Christian Communities.”

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. On 18 July, 2016 inquires came from Burundi, Canada, Kenya, Namibia and USA. On 27 August, 2016 inquires came from Australia, Kenya, Netherlands, Tanzania and USA. On 6 October, 2016 inquires came from China, India, Kenya, Netherlands, South Africa, Uganda, United Kingdom and USA. On 8 October, 2016 inquires came from India, Kenya, Netherlands, Nigeria, Tanzania, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA and Zimbabwe. On 21 November, 2016 the last week’s inquiries came from (in alphabetical order): Cameroon, Canada, Ghana, India, Italy, Kenya, Poland, South Africa, Tanzania and United States. On 6 March, 2017 inquires came from Cameroon, India, Kenya, Malawi, Philippines and the United States. On 9 June, 2017 inquires came from Austria, Botswana, Europe, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and USA. On 12 March, 2018 inquires came from Ghana, Japan, Kenya, Tanzania and USA. On 13 March, 2018 inquires came from Austria, Finland, Kenya, South Africa, USA and Zambia. On 16 April, 2018 inquires came from Germany, Italy, Tanzania, United Kingdom and USA.

“Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa” leading with 1,918 all-time page views (hits or visits).

Small Christian Communities as Domestic Church in the Context of African Ecclesiology (1,661).

“Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa” (815).

“Three Case Studies of African Christology among the Sukuma People in Tanzania” (804).

“New Learnings in Animating a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa Today,” (763).

“Promoting Small Christian Communities in Africa through the Internet” (425)

“How Small Christian Communities Promote Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa” (421).

“How African Small Christian Communities Implement the Pastoral and Missionary Vision of Vatican II” (411).

“Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa in the Light of ‘The Joy of the Gospel’” (261).

“The Sukuma Sacrificial Goat and Christianity: A Basis for Inculturation in Africa” (191)

“Now it is Your Turn: East Africans Go in Mission” (180).

“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” (179)

“Promoting SCCs via the Internet” (143).

“Histories, Themes, Development and Challenges of Small Christian Communities in Africa” (135)

“Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Agents of Change in the Fight against HIV and AIDS in Eastern Africa” (121).

Archives,⁹⁰⁴ Book Reviews (18), Reports and Announcements, Calendar of Events, Ebooks (four), FAQ, Links to other SCCs Websites, Photo Gallery, SCC Polls, SCCs

As of 22 August, 2018 “All-time Views” (frequency of access by countries) have come from: Kenya (1,487), United States (838), India (304), Tanzania (326), Italy (304), Philippines (134), Nigeria (130), United Kingdom (120), Burundi (111), Rwanda (99), Zambia (87), South Africa (89), Uganda (82), Zimbabwe (56), Germany (56), Australia (44), Ghana (47), Canada (44), Malawi (41), Malaysia (19), Ethiopia (19), Holy See Vatican City State (17) and Sudan (3).

The top search engines are Google, Bing and Ask.com.

⁹⁰³ Academia recently reached a major milestone in the world’s research in 2017 towards enabling Open Access for academic research. It now have over 50 million members, who collectively have uploaded 18 million papers, read by 850 million people all over the world.

⁹⁰⁴ Through Word Press all past “Calendar of Events” items are automatically stored in the “Archives Section.” As of 1 January, 2017 there are 62 items.

Resources (including Radio Programs), SCCs Stories Database, Search Engine, Videos [also on YouTube] and Presentations (13), 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 five pages of new research, statistics, quotations, reports, stories and examples. The latest version of 1 January, 2020 is 1,113 pages and has 16,198 hits (visits)⁹⁰⁵ of 20 December, 2019.

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 did research for a doctorate on the Social Trinity with a Case Study on Small Christian Communities in Tabora Archdiocese, Tanzania⁹⁰⁶ at Heythrop College, University of London, England.⁹⁰⁷

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"!⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁵ Combined with the special 4135 hits (visits) and including 937 on Word Press directly to this Ebook via the Africa Continent Page of the SCCs Website, 1,920 page views on [Academia.edu](#), 343 reads on [ResearchGate](#), and 14 results on [Google Scholar](#) makes a total of 20,333 hits (visits) as of 20 December, 2019. 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.

⁹⁰⁶ The exact title is: "Critique of the Trinitarian Social Model of Leonardo Boff: Small Christian Communities of the Archdiocese of Tabora, a Case Study."

⁹⁰⁷ Wilbert Gobbo, email message to the author dated 1 May, 2013.

⁹⁰⁸ The dictionary defines the word coincidence as: "a remarkable concurrence of events or circumstances without apparent causal connection." Christians sometimes see their daily activities and encounters not as a coincidence but rather as a God-incidence. A God-incidence might be defined as: "A happy coincidence or outcome that was most likely directed or orchestrated by God."

An example: In preparing the "Rite of Committal" for the ashes of my first cousin Louise Headley in the Headley plot at the Lexington Cemetery in Lexington, Kentucky on Saturday, 23 November, 2019, I personally chose the Scripture reading of *Matthew* 25:24: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, says the Lord. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Later I checked the *Ritual* book and this was the very first reading of the many readings suggested. Later when I prepared some reflections for the "Celebration of the Life of Louise Headley" at the reception I chose the text of *Luke* 20:38: "God is not the God of the dead but of the living. All are alive for him." Later I found by God-incidence this was the same text as the Gospel for that day – Saturday of the 33rd Week in Ordinary Time, Year I.

May the good Lord bless you and all your activities! Since yesterday I have been reading different things on the site 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 participation⁹⁰⁹ and interaction. The first poll began in April, 2009. The poll uses the statement -- **The best part of my Small Christian Community is...** -- followed by five choices that are taken from 1353 important characteristics or features of SCCs as of 24 June, 2020. Based on research (surveys, questionnaires, interviews, conversations, visits to SCCs and meetings/conferences/and workshops on SCCs) we identified these 1353 important characteristics or features of SCCs around the world: 721 on the dynamics of SCCs and 632 on the activities of SCCs.

We change the poll every two months. Tops is January – February, 2018 (769 votes) followed by: September -- October, 2017 (512 votes). March - April, 2018 (455 votes). May-June, 2020 (436 votes). September – October, 2019 (421 votes). March - April, 2017 (410 votes). November – December, 2017 (395 votes). January – February, 2019 (374 votes). January – February, 201 (362 votes). November – December, 2017 (345 votes).

The results (highest number of votes) of the first sixty-seven rounds are as follows:⁹¹⁰

Peer group small Faith-sharing community. 486⁹¹¹
 Mass in the neighborhood. 211
 Special prayers for people with Covid-19. A 136
 Helps deepen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A 136
 Personal encounter with Jesus Christ through SCC. A 134
 Sharing life experiences. A 133
 Prayer, reflection and faith-sharing grounds me. A Special Poll 125
 Personal encounter with Jesus Christ through SCC. A 114
 Tool for evangelization today. D 110
 Safe place for people to share and grow. D 108
 Gospel-based faith-sharing. A 108
 Prayer, reflection and faith-sharing grounds me. A 105
 Reaches out to the marginated and those on the periphery of society. A 105
 Way of life, not just a program or project in the parish. D 104
 Empowerment of women. D Special Poll 103

Another expression that has the same meaning is God-moment.

⁹⁰⁹ 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.

⁹¹⁰ Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 18 February, 2018, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/polls.html>

⁹¹¹ The high number is due to Chinese hackers.

Combines Bible⁹¹² Sharing and Faith Sharing. A 101
Youth peer group small faith-sharing community. D Special Poll 100

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 16 August, 2016 in the three search engines:

- Entering “Small Christian Communities,” our SCCs Website ranks No. 2 on Yahoo and Bing and No. 7 on Google.
- Entering “SCCs Facebook Page” we rank No. 1 on Google, No. 5 on Bing and No. 13 on Yahoo.

⁹¹² 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 the *Bible* in one hand and the BBC World News (that can be found on the radio, TV and the internet that includes video clips) in the other hand. “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.” NOTE: The SCCs Website has links to the BBC RSS FEEDS for African News. We can also say: “We should preach with the *Bible* in one hand and our smartphone in the other hand.” “We should preach with one eye on the *Bible* and the other eye on our smartphone.”

- Entering “SCCs Website” we rank No. 6 on Google, No. 13 on Bing and No. 15 on Yahoo.

As of 11 February, 2021 in our browsers: Entering “Small Christian Communities,” our SCCs Website ranks

No. 1 on Google Search Engine (Google, Firefox and Internet Explorer Browsers)
No. 2 on Bing Search Engine (Microsoft Edge Browser)

Many individual SCCs in Africa have their own websites, Facebook Pages, What’sApp Pages and email mailing lists. This activity is growing fast.

- b. Small Christian Communities Facebook Page⁹¹³ and Groups⁹¹⁴
<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

It is noteworthy that after China and India, Facebook is the third largest “nation” in the world with over with 2.27 billion monthly active users as of the third quarter of 2018.

This social network is the most powerful force in the news industry. Live steaming apps made by Facebook and Twitter have succeeded cable TV news networks (channels) such as CNN, Fox News and MSNBC that in turn succeeded traditional TV news networks (channels such as ABC, CBS and NBC). Latest worldwide research shows most of these people log into Facebook on a mobile device.

We started the Small Christian Communities Facebook Page 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 seven years the page provides a wonderful history of SCCs and an important Archive/Record.

As of 6 January, 2019: Of the first 2,266 “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

⁹¹³ Entering the term “Small Christian Communities” (plural) in a Facebook Search on Google, one gets six Facebook pages with these three words at the beginning. Ours is the first listed and has the most members (fans) by far. Plus hundreds of other pages with various names and titles.

⁹¹⁴ 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>

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.⁹¹⁵ 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 “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?”⁹¹⁶

“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 eight years here is a sample of the wide variety of comments and reflections:

“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

⁹¹⁵ 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.”

⁹¹⁶ SCCs Facebook Page retrieved on 1 November, 2011
<http://www.facE-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

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. “

“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 Bukenya, 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) 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 the 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 AMECEA 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*⁹¹⁷). 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!”

⁹¹⁷ 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.

“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.”

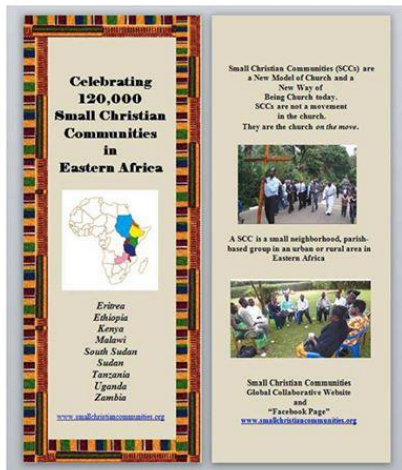
From Dela Caesar in Sunyani, Ghana: “Here in Sunyani the SCCs concept has not yet been fully developed. They are still practicing the larger type of SCCs, but gradually I am sharing the idea with the pastoral team.”

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: alphonseomolo@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 Agbonkhianmeghe 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 Master's Degree 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”⁹¹⁸ Activity Calendar.” For 2013 this includes the following:

⁹¹⁸ 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

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.”

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."

that is annually on the second Monday of October remembers Christopher Columbus' arrival to the Americas on 12 October, 1492.

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.⁹¹⁹ 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 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."

⁹¹⁹ Kenyan diocesan priest Father Edward Mashua said that the workshop was "of great assistance to me and my parish of Mulo" that presently has 70 SCCs. Conversation with the author in Ngong, Kenya on 15 April, 2014.

“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/mzee kijana*, 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

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."

AMECEA 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. You 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 recapitulate 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 Mwakhwawa in Malawi: "Those interested to learn and be reminded about Missionary Month (October) and Mission Sunday -- 19 October (*Chibalalitso cha Mpingo*) -- tune into Radio Maria Malawi. There will be some programs on Missionary 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 Gathering. 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 from Waruku, 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. Mwanajumuiya Padri 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 had 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 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 was 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

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 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 garbage and waste/refuse collection in the neighborhood. These are documented in our free online Ebook at:
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 Chrésiennes 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 Whatspp 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.”
5. From Julius Philip Nyandiga Ouma, CP: “The members of the YSCC of the Cooperative University of Kenya in Nairobi, Kenya have a WhatsApp Small Community that discusses and debates controversial issues such as premarital sex, choosing a marriage partner and challenged doctrines in the Catholic Church.”

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 Willington Irungu:

“Dear AMECEASmall 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 Grouth 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 AMECEASmall 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 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 helpers⁹²⁰ 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:

⁹²⁰ 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

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 AMECEASmall Christian Communities Training Team. 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 (thee 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.”

“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 Groups/Small Faith Communities.

2. Join a Small Faith Group or Intentional Small 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 dialog. 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, Josphat, 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 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 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 he 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*). See "Be My Witness," a program of RENEW International. <https://bemywitness.org/en>

From Alphonse Omolo:

Dear Members of our St. Isidore of Seville International Online 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 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 dialogs as you can read on my website: 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 dialog 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 dialog, 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 HealthCare Worker (CHW) 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 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 16 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 his or her's local geographical area (the church in the neighborhood pastoral model).
- 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 AMECEASmall 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:

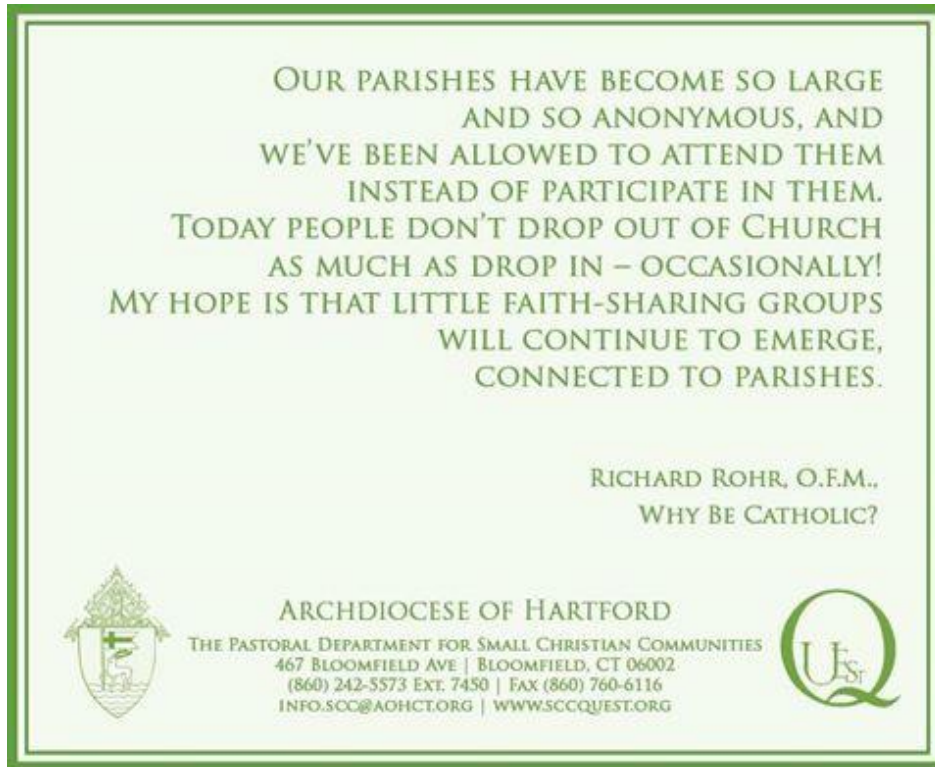
- St. Veronica SCC contribution Kshs 20,000
- St. Paul Catholic Parish contribution Kshs 15,000
- Other 8 SCCs contribution Kshs 18,000

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. Padri 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 disciplines⁹²¹ 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.

⁹²¹ "What especially strikes me about these spiritual disciplines is that many have been traditionally practiced in groups—something we don't often do in our churches today. The early believers, though, understood their faith in community, and we can begin to regain this understanding when we practice spiritual disciplines together... We will help you introduce spiritual disciplines to your small groups. You'll learn about *lectio divina*, fasting, contemplative prayer, confession, and more. Plus, we've included helpful tips for incorporating these practices into a small-group setting and how to overcome common obstacles related to practicing as a group." Amy Jackson, "Spiritual Disciplines for Small Groups," *Small Groups Newsletter*, retrieved on 12 November, 2016, http://www.christianitytoday.com/lyris/smallgroups/archives/11-02-2016.html?utm_source=buildingsmallgroups-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=9077722&utm_content=475384227&utm_campaign=email

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 14-page handout covered "Important Quotations Related to African Ecclesiology" (16 on "Content" and 8 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 marginalized 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 Padri 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."

“Dr. Philomena Mwaura, Associate Professor in the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya reports that two of her Master’s Degree students are writing their theses on Small Christian Communities (SCCs) – one on the SCCs in Nyanza and the other on the SCCs in Kiambu.”

“The new Bishop of Wa, Ghana, Bishop Richard Baawobr, MAfr, answered the question – ‘As the Bishop, what are some of the priority areas would you envisage to tackle?’ – by saying: ‘It will be the case, for example, of bringing the Word of God to the Small Christian Communities in our towns and villages.’”

“How many SCC members know that the Feast of Pentecost (15 May, 2016) is the second most important feast in the Liturgical Calendar of the Catholic Church. For more information the free, online digital Ebook -- "Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" – has 44 references to Pentecost and 54 references to the Holy Spirit. This Ebook is available on the left hand side of the “Home Page” of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../pdf/Build_new.pdf

“New book on SCCs:

Gobbo, Wilbert, "Critique of the Trinitarian Social Model of Leonardo Boff: Small Christian Communities of the Archdiocese of Tabora in Tanzania, a Case Study," Lambert Academic

Publishing, 2016. Available as a paperback (Print on Demand) on Amazon at:https://www.amazon.co.uk/Critique-Trinitarian.../ref=sr_1_1...

Paperback: 148 pages

Publisher: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing (29 April 2016)

Language: English

Cost: £29.00

ISBN-10: 3659882666

ISBN-13: 978-3659882661”

Memories from Jeanne Hinton in Plymouth, England on 23 September, 2014: "At the moment we are planning together a Winter Fete in November in our local park and are about to take part in a city wide arts/culture initiative to bring together youth, students, refugees, people with disabilities and older persons to work together to make a difference in their neighborhoods through arts and creativity. I often think of the Jose Marins' BCCs workshop where he challenged those of us present 'to go to the furthest ends of our particular world'. In Lytchett it meant for me the village stores and the bus stop, here in Plymouth a little urban park!"

This reminds me so much of Pope Francis’s challenge to “evangelize the peripheries and the marginated” that is a special call to SCCs members.

The second article by a Tangaza student is now posted on our SCCs Website:
 "Improving the Effectiveness of Small Christian Communities in St. Jude Taddeo Kyarusenzi Catholic Parish, Fort Portal Diocese, Uganda"
 By Leonard Ronald Iragaba, CSC
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../371-improving-th...>

“We just finished our weekly St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC Bible Reflection for next Sunday -- the Feast of the Holy Trinity. We prayed that SCC members would remember that the Trinity is the first ‘small community.’ Each SCC member can ask: 'What is my personal relationship to each member (person) of the Holy Trinity: to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit?’”



Members of St. Kizito SCC, Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya pose for a photo with Father Joseph Graham Healey, MM after the weekly Bible Sharing session at the Marian Statue on the Maryknoll Society Compound on Manyani Road West. They celebrate the readiness of his Golden Jubilee celebration of Maryknoll Missionary Priesthood to be held in New Jersey, USA on 12 June 2016.

Kenyan Mariannahill seminarian Benedict Kimutai from our Don Bosco Utume SCC Class reports:

The Small Christian Communities can use WhatsApp to pass information and engage themselves. For example, in St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish in Kericho Kenya Father John Paul Cheruiyot has empowered the Christians to interact through WhatsApp and Twitter. Every week in the SCCs WhatsApp Groups he poses a question for the Christians to reflect on. On Saturday evening he concludes with his contribution and the topic forms the basis of his homily on Sunday.

Just published:

Healey, Joseph, "When Smaller is Better: Small Faith Communities and the Future of the U.S. Church," "America," 24 May 2016, America Website, retrieved on 25 May, 2016, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/when-smaller-better>

This article treats four sections:

1. The Origins of Small Faith Communities.
2. Taking Hold on U.S. Campuses.
3. Small Groups as a Model for Change.
4. A Course for Action.

When it comes to nurturing faith, smaller is often better.

The church in America cannot ignore the success of small Christian communities.
 AMERICAMAGAZINE.ORG⁹²²

[“VERBUM DEI:” WEEKLY PRAYER & SCRIPTURE GROUP](#)

Every Sunday at 12:30 PM (after 11:00 am Mass)

Harvard Catholic Center, Rm 204 (Enter at 20 Arrow Street or at 29 Mount Auburn Street, Boston, Massachusetts, USA). Grad students and young professionals gather each Sunday as a Small Church Community to read and reflect on the Sunday readings and to share and pray about finding God in everyday life. E-mail: alex.angstrom@gmail.com Verbum Dei (Latin for the “Word of God”) is a Small Church Community that meets every Sunday at the Harvard Catholic Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. One member, a second-year Harvard graduate student said: “I certainly think that a small group based on *Bible* Study is an essential part of any Christian life. I would hope to find and encourage this kind of prayerful group engagement with scripture wherever I end up.”

“As students around the world do final exams, let us remember the words of one young woman in a weekly Small Faith-sharing Community at Santa Clara University, California, USA: "I need this period of prayer, reflection and Faith-sharing to 'ground me' for the intellectual challenge and pressure in the busy exam days ahead."

From "The Field Hospital: Covering Parish Life" in *National Catholic Reporter* (3 June, 2016):

<http://ncronline.org/.../field-hospital-covering-parish-life-...>

If the Catholic church in North America "holds any aspirations of remaining relevant in the lives of millions of young adults," the effectiveness and strength of Small Faith-sharing Communities -- of any name -- "constitute a grass-roots effort whose success" should not be ignored, posits Maryknoll Father Joseph Graham Healey in *America* magazine. The role of what are sometimes called Basic Ecclesial Communities could become all the more important as the number of priests plummets and a "steady and alarming drift" away from the institutional church continues, argues the scholar.

Three Gikuyu, Kenya Proverbs:

Traveling is learning.

Traveling is seeing.

Traveling opens one's eyes.

During my visit to Maryknoll, NY, USA I met Father Ed Byrne, the Pastor of St. Ann's Parish in New York Archdiocese in Ossining, NY. He said that 70% of his parish are immigrants from Ecuador in South America. The parish has a wide variety of Spanish-speaking Small Prayer Groups:

⁹²² See the entry in the “Annotated Bibliography” for detailed feedback.

- contemplative (the most grounded group)
- charismatic
- devotional (many types)

"RENEW International Inspires Parishioners through Small Groups."

Peter Feuerherd | Jun. 9, 2016 *NCR Today*

"The Field Hospital"

The link is: <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/renew-international-inspires-parishioners-through-small-groups>

From the NCR "Field Hospital Series:"

“Father Michael Saporito, pastor of St. Helen's Church in Westfield, New Jersey, USA said his participation in the Parish Catalyst Program reinforces that parishes need to intentionally plan, that cultural Catholicism no longer effectively brings Catholics into active participation.

‘The times have changed and people's churchgoing patterns have changed along with it. As a result, we have do a much better job at planning. We have to be intentional in all we do. We have to have goal statements that we really use. We have to make plans that we really keep ourselves accountable,’ he said.

One concrete result of *Parish Catalyst*: St. Helen's has implemented Small Faith-sharing Groups reflecting upon the papal 2016 Year of Mercy. The 50 groups have attracted 500 parishioners.’

“Nora Bolcon gave a very complete and very informative survey of the rich variety of Small Groups in the USA. Truly the Holy Spirit is working in these groups. On the *NCR Website* I replied to Nora: ‘This is very complete and very informative survey of the rich variety of Small Groups in the USA. Truly the Holy Spirit is working here. I am a Maryknoll Missionary Priest serving in nine countries in Eastern Africa. Our experience is quite different. Rather than a Small Group Model of Church we have a Small Christian Communities Model of Church. These two models are different in ecclesial structure and pastoral involvement. Our SCCs are parish-based, neighborhood small groups that meet weekly in homes to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday and apply it to our daily life.’”

“As I visit parishes in the United States, I see the Small Group Model of Church in action. Parishes form Small Parish Groups of Catholics for a fixed number of weeks (for example, five to eight weeks) to discuss, reflect on and plan action steps on specific current topics or themes: Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si (Praise Be to You)* on the environment and ecology; the 2016 Year of Mercy; a Small Reading Group on a book or article of current interest; etc.”



Ms. Jennifer Ehrentraut, a member of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and Maryknoll Sister Theresia Ndesoma, MM from Moshi Diocese in Tanzania at Father Joe Healey, MM's Golden Jubilee Anniversary Mass of Maryknoll Missionary Priesthood in New Vernon, New Jersey USA on 12 June, 2016.



From an article in the 4 June, 2016 issue of *The Tablet* (London, England):

“More and more people are convinced that small groups like the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) are at the heart of evangelization, where people can reflect together in a personal way. Maybe there is a case for parishes to have small Faith-sharing groups for everyone in the parish, including post-RCIA groups. They would support new Catholics and old ones alike. These groups could be led by people who have experienced conversion and transformation through their experience of the RCIA. Through their involvement with these groups, I suspect they would grow and deepen in their relationship with Christ, thereby keeping the momentum going.”

“Monday, 20 June, 2016, is the annual United Nations World Refugee Day. May we SCC members pray for the many immigrants, migrants, refugees and internally displaced people around the world. We are reminded of the 26 Small Christian Communities in Holy Cross Parish in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Lodwar Diocese in northwestern Kenya. More information can be found on our SCCs Website.”

“Presently we are exploring possibilities to sponsor an ‘International Encounter of College Students Involved in Small Christian Communities to take place in New York, USA in Summer, 2017. Your suggestions are welcome.” **NOTE:** This post received the following comments:

1. We are preparing an “Encounter of College Students Involved in Small Christian Communities” to take place in late July--early August, 2017 at Manhattan College, Riverdale, New York, USA. The 110 participants will include three three-member teams

(delegations) from Africa: Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya; Lusaka, Zambia; and the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) – Pax Romana -- (Nairobi, Kenya; Benin; Paris, France). The “Background Note” to the meeting states:

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is the “umbrella” term/overall term used in this Encounter and is the most common expression for this new way of being or becoming church/new pastoral model of church in many parts of the world. Specific Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) are found on college campuses and in parishes. Different terms are used in English in different places. BCC means “Basic Christian Community” and BEC means “Base [Basic] Ecclesial Community” and is sometimes written “Ecclesial Base [Basic] Community.” A variety of names are used in the USA. In some parishes and colleges/universities in the USA the specific name “Small Christian Communities” is not known or used, that is, it has very little “Name Recognition.” People would more immediately recognize “Small Groups” or “Small Prayer Groups” or “Small Church Communities” or “Small Faith Communities” or “Small Faith-sharing Communities” or “Small Bible Study Groups” or “Campus RENEW Groups” or “Christian Life Communities (CLCs).”

The challenge is to create a successful “branding” of the name and meaning of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs). “Communities” is deeper and more focused than the generic “groups” that can cover everything. “Christian” helps to give the SCC members a specific identity. In their weekly meetings SCC members emphasize both the values of Faith-sharing and Bible reflection. A combined version is lectionary-based Faith-sharing.

2. This is great idea. I am very happy to have been part of a Youth Small Christian Community at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. It has been a nice experience among ourselves as the youth. I can't forget to recognize my membership and contribution to the Pax Romana (IMCS Kenya) family for the five years that I was on campus. This group introduced me to my life in campus the very first week when I stepped into Kenyatta University back in 2011. Bible Sharing, rosary, and sharing personal experiences as youth to make our Christian faith strong dominated our YSCC meetings.

Forming social media groups for our YSCCs has always helped members to share a lot even when we are far from each other and back to our local communities. Thanks to Fr. Joseph Healey. God bless you as inspire young people to remain strong in church.

3. This looks really great progress. Hopefully we could be able to organize an African version of the "Encounter" a year later. I will be happy to get involved in the preparation of the African version and I am certain Simon would be available too. That is dreaming for the near future and borrowing from the knowledge that will have been gathered from the "Encounter". Alloys will have experienced it firsthand. God's blessings and success with the planning.

4. Attending some SCCs classes in Tangaza University College and Don Bosco Utume, Nairobi, Kenya was an eye opener to me and my friends about the need to participate actively in the YSCCs. After interacting with some students and Father Joe Healey I came to understand the need and joy of YSCCs in our churches and universities today. They lay a strong base for our Christianity and the church. Members can be able to get enough time to share Bible verses more so the Sunday Gospel readings are more meaningful. Above all we can easily identify the challenges each member is facing and help him or her. My YSCC is my choice and pride.

5. Please call. I can send a student from one of our Kenyan universities, They are wonderful students.

6. Good job. Blessings. We have Jumuiyas in the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania at the Main Campus and Mabibo Hostel. I am from Kowak Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania and was a leader and coordinator of YSCCs while an undergraduate student at the university.

7. YSCCs are very important and lay a strong Christian foundation for the youth, more so in colleges and universities where there are many challenges. Youth get to share their problems and also try and get solutions. Youth pray together, read the Bible together and above all have team building activities that strengthen their bonds. Father Joe Healey remains a focused missionary in matters concerning YSCCs and has laid a good foundation in Africa where most of the youth now recognize him as *kijana wa zamani/mzee kijana*.

8. What a great idea! May this time be blessed!

9. I am very happy for the Encounter you made us know here. I wish I will be able to attend some of these events in future.

New Book to follow up Pope Francis' *The Joy of Love* on family and marriage:

Daily Companion for Married Couples by Allan Wright

Catholic Book Publishing Corp.: 2016

192 Pages

Price: \$8.95

Order from Amazon

Daily meditations to help support the relationships of both engaged and married couples. Good for prayer and discussion in our SCCs.

To the members of our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC, here are some reflections on "The Good Samaritan" (*Luke 10:25-37*) -- the Gospel for 10 July, 2016:

Themes of love, compassion and service to others. There are many creative opportunities for a Bible Play. Children and youth can do a role play on this parable during a SCC meeting or workshop. The short Scripture DVD music video "Who Is My Neighbor" (5:57 minutes in the Parables Alive! Series produced by Paulines Africa Books and Audiovisuals) 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.

From part of "Being a Christian in the XXI Century," a manifesto of the Moviment de Professionals Catòlics de Barcelona (MPCB), on its 25th anniversary (February, 2016):

WE SHARE

Our dreams, hopes and sufferings in small groups that help us appreciate our own lives; there are groups in which we share the faith to grow both humanly and spiritually, groups where we can feel listened to, accepted, comforted through our losses and appreciated beyond professional, economic or social success criteria. Groups that form a movement that offers spaces for personal growth, prayer and reflection together with other movements of the pastoral of the workers, cities and country, and with the young, adults and professionals from other dioceses and countries.

At the AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 2011, Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, pointed out that one of the drawbacks for the solidarity of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa is that many Catholics on the grassroots do not easily see the link between AMECEA (that comes across as a big organization of Catholic bishops at the top) and the 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 just an institution of the bishops." *Seed 23*: 8-9 (August-September 2011), p. 9.

Now five years later what is the reality? Has there been a change/a shift in thinking, attitude and "ownership?"

One concrete way for SCC members in Africa to participate in the higher church levels is to pray for the SECAM 17th Plenary Assembly to take place in Luanda, Angola from 18-25 July, 2016. The Plenary Theme is: "The Family in Africa, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow in the Light of the Gospel."

As a "Prayer Corner" may this SCCs Facebook Page encourage all people to pray for a "cease fire as soon as possible" in South Sudan.

From Father Jim Ferry, MM: "Here is an update on SCCs in the Philippines. Under the leadership of Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila, the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) -- the common name -- are very strong. They are pastoral and parish-based. A newer version is more of an NGO style."

Pax Christi International invites SCCs members to pray for peace in Africa especially on Fridays. This is very timely as the African Union and SECAM are having their continental meetings this week of 18 July, 2016.

From the *Tablet Magazine* (23 July, 2016): "For Pope Francis evangelization is less about the big events and more effective in Small Communities and Movements -- with people rolling their sleeves up to serve the poor and marginalized."

"The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA conducted research on how to invite young adults to participate in Small Faith Communities in the United States. One respondent said: "If I had this answer I would be the most famous person in the world."

Let us pray for and with the encounter of Pope Francis and the Catholic youth of the world during the World Youth Day (WYD) in Poland this week. As we pray for and with the

1 and 1/2 million young people at the WYD, let us also pray for the spiritual journey of the billions of youth who are not there.”

“New Book:

Orobator, Agbonkhanmeghe E. (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2016.

Part One: “The Francis Effect and the Church in Africa.”

Part Two: “Critique of Theological Methodology and Ecclesial Practice.”

Part Three: “A Church that Goes Forth with Boldness and Creativity.”

Africa continues to experience great religious ferment, not only in the enormous growth of Christianity over the past century but also in the robust intellectual output of African theologians and pastoral agents all over the continent. This volume brings together Africa’s theological elders with new and emerging voices to bring analysis and reflection on what John L. Allen Jr. has called “the most dynamic corner of the Christian map.” The volume is a treasure for anyone with an interest in theological reflection from an African perspective, and a necessary resource for theologians, scholars and pastoral agents working in a church that is steadily moving its center to the Global South.

Order from:

Amazon https://www.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.com%2FChurch-We-Want-African-Catholics%2Fdp%2F1626982031%2Fref%3Dsr_1_1%3Fs%3Dbooks%26ie%3DUTF8%26qid%3D1469731962%26sr%3D1-1%26keywords%3DOrobator&h=uAQFpR9KTAQEOVnQbS7KGUwxSx2SW0TneEJNbgKIws01oIA&enc=AZM48gBggjw95NSvLrXUX7hulemvSALh9wV3Sh8EpitvDTozKwGc32whPsvjvZcHvy0mcFsMPD3Z4ahT3UqlMx5WpNYq44ixRdhqIqDHDtSbZ9uDqwGRq-zbrXdmWUnS8vspqg2pCyRG14gEo56R-oxlstZVAM0e8n8T7iwAE8UgyUF_Yh4YIIfilkk9ZiJ6lrHvznDaPNTtV4EKmMfGB5E&s=1

Paperback: \$35

Ebook: \$28.50

Kindle Ebook: \$15.39 (as of 3 January, 2017)

https://www.amazon.com/Church-We-Want-African-Catholics/dp/1626982031/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1469731962&sr=1-1&keywords=Orobator

Featuring essays from a broad range of contributors this book is a treasure for anyone interested in theological reflection from an African perspective and is a necessary resource for theologians and scholars working in a church that is steadily moving its center to the Global South.

Orbis Books

Paperback: \$35

<http://www.orbisbooks.com/the-church-we-want.html>

Acton Publishers

Paperback: Price \$18

<http://www.acton.co.ke/indexframeset.php?region=int>

Includes a chapter “Beyond Vatican II: Imaging the Catholic Church of Nairobi I” by Joseph G. Healey, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 23 July, 2016, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../s.../pdf/TCCRSA.pdf>. Includes a section on “From the Perspective of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa.”

For a very good example of applying the Sunday Gospel to our everyday life (specifically to young people today), see Pope Francis’ homily at the closing mass of World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland in August, 2016. <http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.co.ke>

Excellent website with many SCC Resources:

Office of Evangelization, Small Christian Communities and Adult Faith Formation, Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida, USA
<http://dosp.org/evangelization>

Spirit FM’s Annual Women’s Conference - 2016 Conference Brochure Spirit FM’s Catholic Women’s Conference Saturday, September 24, 2016 St. Lawrence Catholic Church/Higgins Hall 5225 N. Himes Ave. Tampa, FL 33614 Register Here DOSP Small Christian Community efforts mentioned in *America* article.

“The Christian Churches in Seoul, Korea have Small Communities for special ministries:

North Korean defectors.
Ecumenical.
Migrant workers.”

“A recent report from Santa Clara University in California, USA says that weekly Christian Life Communities (CLCs) are the most important program in campus ministry at the university. There are about 400 students in the CLCs.”

Please pray for:

Monday, 15 August to Saturday, 10 September, 2016:
Lumko East Africa SCCs Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya
Lumko East Africa SCCs Workshop (Waumini Pastoral Programme)
Theme: “Towards Communion of Communities”
Mary Ward Centre
Nairobi, Kenya
Monday, 15 August to Saturday, 10 September, 2016

The Lumko East Africa SCCs Workshop in Mary Ward Center in Nairobi is going on well with six nationalities represented: Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Italy and South Sudan... I wish the guidance of Holy Spirit for the workshop facilitators and wonderful time for all the participants. I was there last year with many East African brothers and sisters. Really enjoyed it, but I will miss this year... Great to have four participants from Eritrea -- four religious sisters involved in pastoral ministry in four different dioceses. May they carry the flame of SCCs back to their home country.

From the 2013 *Pastoral Plan* of Lansing Diocese, Michigan, USA:

I would like our Department of Formation to provide more opportunities for improving the quality of our homilies for both priests and deacons. In addition, I urge all priests and deacons to become part of some homily preparation session, perhaps with other clergy or with some parishioners, which would meet weekly, or at least regularly, to study, pray over and reflect upon the upcoming Sunday readings.

The 2016 *Follow-up Report* stated:

There was a strong push to promote small discipleship groups. We really cannot be disciples alone. For many, the parish may seem too big, and that can create a sense of anonymity. We need the support, challenge and accountability that small groups can provide in order for us to follow Christ more closely. Thanks be to God, these groups have been sprouting up all across the diocese with reports of many lives changed!⁹²³

Congratulations to Paul Makau and Mercy Maita on their Catholic sacramental marriage today in St. Austin's Parish, Nairobi, Kenya on 21 August, 2016. Now in our St. Kizito SCC we ask: "Who is next?"

Hailu Adalo in South Africa replied: "I wish to be a next year Sacrament of Marriage-bound receiver. Therefore, I humbly ask you to support me in your prayers as SCC members because I am a single person and our group's Marriage Preparation Trainer since 2007. I had prepared more than 20 Couples for Sacramental Marriage in South Africa as an evangelist in the Catholic Church. I am hoping to get married in plan of Lord and your spiritual and social assistance. 'Holy Family Jesus, Mary and Joseph pray for us!'"

Updated website of the National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC): <http://naprc.net/>

"Ordinary People Connecting Life and Faith on a Regular Basis."

NAPRC is a National Alliance of Parishes committed to a new vision of parish life that is based on the purpose of building an atmosphere in which ordinary people help each other regularly to connect their faith and life in all that they do. Indeed, we seek to build parish communities through which people...

[See More](#)



NAPRC - National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities
NAPRC.NET

⁹²³ [Lansing Diocese](https://www.dioceseoflansing.org), Michigan, USA Website: <https://www.dioceseoflansing.org>

The "2016 Catholic College Guide" in the September, 2016 issue of the *Catholic Digest* features the Faith Dimension of campus ministry programs in 20 Catholic universities and colleges in the USA including:

Assumption College: discussion groups
 Catholic University of America: small community groups
 University of Dayton: Small Faith Communities
 Belmont Abbey College: men and women's households
 University of San Francisco: Communities of Reflection (CORE) --modeled after the Christian Life Communities (CLCs)

A new essay has been added to the [Academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) website:

"Beyond Vatican II: Imagining the Catholic Church of Nairobi I."
https://www.academia.edu/.../Beyond_Vatican_II_Imagining_the_...

An essay in the book Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2016. This essay treats: 1. "Be Bold and Creative"...
 ACADEMIA.EDU

Toolkit for Small Faith-sharing Groups on College Campuses in the USA

The Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA)'s Member Services and Formation and Education Committees are pleased to bring you a toolkit to assist in the planning and execution of Small Faith-sharing Groups on College Campuses in the USA. The toolkit will provide useful information and suggested steps to planning gatherings, resources to use during small group sharing and more! Please contact the CCMA National Office at info@ccmanet.org if you have any resources, articles or best practices to share.
 Website: <http://www.ccmanet.org>

"Universities and colleges in most places of the world are beginning their Fall Academic Semesters (roughly September to December). Students are joining weekly College Students Small Christian Communities, Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and Small Faith-sharing Communities. At the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, USA the format includes:

"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."

"New Book:

Azetsop, Jacqueline (ed.), *HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016.

Contains Seven Parts.

This comprehensive look by African scholars at the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Africa features contributions from noted scholars from across the continent, offering analysis from theological, sociological, ecclesiological, and public health perspectives. It is a valuable resource for social analysis and theological reflection from an African perspective, something badly needed for theologians and academics alike.

Order from:

Amazon

Paperback: \$24.96 (as of 3 January, 2017)

Ebook: \$28.50

Kindle Ebook: price fluctuates

https://www.amazon.com/HIV-AIDS-Africa-Reflec.../.../ref=sr_1_1...

Orbis Books

Paperback: \$35

<http://www.orbisbooks.com/hiv-and-aids-in-africa.html>

Includes a chapter “Small Christian Communities as Agents of Change in the Fight against HIV and AIDS in Eastern Africa” by Joseph G. Healey, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 1 September, 2016, http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../.../scc_targets.pdf

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 and AIDS. SCC members are important agents of change and transformation in the fight against HIV and AIDS.”

Vote in the New POLL September-October, 2016:

The best part of my Small Christian Community is:

1. Best way to smell the sheep.
2. Parish-based Small Faith-sharing Group.
3. Cell-based (SCCs) student movement.
4. Young adult peer group Small Faith-sharing Group.
5. Lectionary-based Catholic.

Go to: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/>

“An exciting pastoral vision of church for St. Matthew’s Parish in Baltimore, Maryland, USA is a “Communion of Small Christian Communities (SCCs).” This builds on the rich and diverse variety of SCCs that the parish already has (NOTE: I prefer “Communities” that is deeper and more focused than the generic “groups” that can cover everything and “Christian” that helps to give the SCC members a specific ecclesial identity) and new small communities to be formed based on the parishioners’ felt needs, concerns and questions. Then the timing would be the energy of the Advent Season.”

“From the SCC Research that I have been doing this summer in the USA, leadership training is “the key” in getting a variety of active SCCs going on university and college campuses. The new leaders facilitate SCCs that start where the college student participants are at -- their passions, their felt needs, their desires, their concerns, their priorities, their interests, their questions, their styles.”

“Sunday, 18 September, 2016 is the Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C. The Gospel reading is Luke 16:1-13. This Gospel passage ends with verse 13: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

This reminds us of the African story and proverb called "Two Roads Overcame the Hyena:"

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.*

This is an excellent example of how an African story and proverb enriches the biblical teaching.

Alloys Nyakundi (the representative of St. Dominic SCC on the Parish Pastoral Council) writes: “September every year marks another academic year at Kenyatta University (KU) in Nairobi, Kenya. At this particular time the first year students (freshers) report to KU. They all meet in the graduation square for orientation and every church in Kenyatta University is given a chance to register its members -- our University Catholic Parish called Christ the Teacher at Kenyatta University being one of them.

After this the first year students come to our university parish church and we start registering them in our Small Christian Communities (SCCs). Every student parishioner is supposed to join and belong to one SCC. We do the registration before and after the first and second masses whereby we take the students’ names, contacts and where they stay. After the registration the Parish Pastoral Council representative of each SCC takes the names and contacts to the leaders of the respective SCCs whereby they call or text the new members and inform them where their SCC will meet (time and venue).”

From Sister Mehret Tzeggay: “Before we leave this beautiful country of Kenya on behalf of the Eritrean Catholic Church, the sisters who are pastoral coordinators and my own behalf, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the AMECEA Pastoral Coordinator and to the sponsors who made it possible for us to come and be part of the AMECEA family as we participated in the 2016 Lumko Course on “Towards Communion of Communities.” We don't know how to express it. We cannot reward your office and the donors. We assure you of our prayers so that the Lord may be the one to reward each one for the good that you have done to the Eritrean Church.”

“My two main learnings after visiting the Campus Ministry and ACE Programs at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA from 12-19 September, 2016:

1. I have been researching a wide variety of:
 - a. Specific College Students Small Christian Communities on college campuses.

- b. Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and Young Adult Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) in parishes.
- c. Young Professionals SCCs (parish-based or across parish lines).

Among the most interesting are **Small Intentional Living Communities** in a service project or a volunteer project (for example, Jesuit Volunteers, Focus Teams, Evangelical Catholic Teams, St. Paul's Outreach Teams, Notre Dame Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) Program, Notre Dame Echo Program, Campus Ministry Teams, the Catholic Worker, Steubenville Campus Teams, etc.). The members live in the same physical community and share their daily lives including meals and prayer. *Bible* Reflection and Faith-sharing are regular features.

2. The starting point of the weekly meetings of most SCCs on college campuses is the students' energy, passion, felt needs, concerns, questions and way is ligr-ging, not *Bible* Sharing (for example, the Gospel of the following Sunday) or personal Faith-sharing. These come later as the students build up the trust level in their small community and are more comfortable with their spiritual identity as well as religious practices in the Catholic Church.'

Brother Bob Moriarty comments: "I have an interesting exception to report. Last night I spoke at the supper beginning this Fall, 2016 semester's SCCs at the Chapel at Yale University, USA. Bob Beloin introduced me by explicitly focusing on the SCCs approach at the chapel at Yale. He spoke specifically about their lectionary-based approach oriented to preparing students to enter more richly into the weekly celebration of Eucharist.

At his request, my own reflections about the heart of the SCC experience focused on this same theme. It was a good experience. The dining room at the Golden Center was full, and Bob mentioned to me that there could have been another 40 there as well.

A short report on the "Africa Matters" Book Discussion at Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts, USA on 20 September, 2016 on our two new Orbis books on Africa:

The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III
HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation

With Nontando's planned Book Event in South Africa making No. 12 in our overall plan, BC is No. 3 and the first in the USA.

I use two proverbs:

*Many hands make light work.*⁹²⁴ Great hospitality by the Jesuits. Many people helped with African cloth decorations, Shawn bought a powerful African carving, tech people came right on time. Father Marcel was great taking photos to send to Orbis Books for the social media.

Slow but sure. About 25 participated – committed, interested people. A pleasant surprise was Sister Anne Celestine Achieng' Oyier who is on a Post-Doctorate Program here.

⁹²⁴ *Many hands make light work* is a common community-centered African proverb found in Haya, Tanzania and in many other languages such as *It takes many hands to capture a buffalo. Many cooks spoil the broth/pot* is another common African proverb found in Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa and in many other languages. These seemingly opposites show the complexity, hidden meanings, mysteriousness and illusiveness of African proverbs.

Sales: 10 of the AIDS Book. 8 of "The Church We Want." The discussion and interchange after the presentations was excellent. Two highlights for me (I look forward Jim Keane's comments):

1. Challenges of women in Africa. The good number of African women theologians in the two books.
2. The reality that Africa does not matter to many people in the USA. What we can do to change that.

My presentation was: "African Conversational Theology: A New Way of Doing Theology." It is 9 minutes. I need to expand it to 15 minutes for the presentation at Duquesne. Go to: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../377--african-con...>



The Jesuit Institute at Boston College in Boston, Massachusetts, hosted the first AFRICA MATTERS event in the USA on Tuesday, 20 September, 2016. (L-R) Maryknoll's Father Joseph G. Healey, MM from Kenya, Sister Anne Celestine Achieng' Oyier from Kenya, Father Marcel Uwineza, SJ from Rwanda and Orbis Books editor James Keane.

Pamela Ogoi of our International Skype SCC reflects on next Sunday's Gospel:

I will still communicate to you through writing what is touching me in today's reading in the Gospel according to *Luke* chapter 17: 11-19. The theme of the reading is the "Cleansing of the Ten Lepers." Out of the ten lepers healed only one of them who was a Samaritan and a foreigner went back to thank Jesus while other nine did not. Why do you think so? When I compare this reading with the one read last week in *Luke* 9: 51-56, the Samaritans never welcomed Jesus and in today's Gospel, Jesus himself has healed a Samaritan leper who was among the ten lepers. This Samaritan who is a foreigner has gone back to Jesus to thank him for having healed him. What I am personally learning from this reading is to be thankful and sorry every time in our life because God is non-discriminative, non-tribalistic. God is loving, forgiving, merciful and is ever faithful in his work. Let us keep praying to Jesus to strengthen our faith and make us be like him. God bless all of us today and my action verse during this week will be to pray to be strong in faith together with my children. My dear brothers and sisters please do pray with/for me and my family. NOTE: The "action verse" is like a "mantra" that helps us be more aware of, and conscious of, scripture texts and their corresponding actions. Another example: "except this foreigner?"

Evangelization Prayer Intention of Pope Francis for October, 2016: "World Mission Sunday:

"That World Mission Sunday may renew within all Christian communities the joy of the Gospel and the responsibility to announce it."

Question: How are our SCCs responding? Let us reflect more closely how we SCC members express or show: our "JOY" of the Gospel and our RESPONSIBILITY to announce or proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are reminded of the practical examples in Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*. May the famous words of St. Paul resound in our hearts: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

It is very appropriate that we begin this month of October with the Feast of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus who is the Patroness of Mission. Many SCCs have her as their Patroness Saint.

From Nicodemus Echessa: "All the sub parishes of Bimini Parish are now busy preparing for the welcoming of the bishop of Kakamega Diocese to open the new beautiful Khaimba Church in Mumias Sub County about 16 kilometers due west from Kakamega town. We the parishioners are looking forward to the occasion. The SCCs will present a few choirs to sing for and welcome the bishop. The vibrant bishop is new. He took over from the previous bishop (Bishop Sulumeti) one year ago."

Yesterday was a "first." With the help of Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi I used a smartphone to communicate "live" with the members of St. Dominic SCC in their weekly meeting at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya. We shared our reflections on the Gospel of next Sunday. Alloys' comment: "It was really beautiful. You really encouraged us Father Joe. We are grateful for the encouragement you gave us Father and everybody is happy about it."

From Mwanajumuia John Baptist Katembo: "I am now a committed mwanajumuia who participates in SCCs and who helps people especially youth to participate fully. I liked the SCCs Course at Tangaza last semester. Thank you for the teaching on SCCs. Thank you for the spirit. I wrote my long essay on: "SCCs as New Way of Being Church. A Challenge to the Youth of Binja Parish in DRC."

As yesterday (7 October) we celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary during this "October Month of the Rosary," we are reminded that in some SCCs the Religious Education Animator/Catechesis Animator teaches the meaning of the 20 mysteries of the rosary (the five JOYFUL MYSTERIES, the five LUMINOUS MYSTERIES, the five SORROWFUL MYSTERIES, and the five GLORIOUS MYSTERIES) especially during the months of May and October.

From Father Joe Muth in St. Matthew's Parish, Baltimore, Maryland USA: "All of you have expressed some interest in being involved in Small Christian Communities during the Advent Season. There will be a meeting next Wednesday, October 12 at 6:30 pm to begin to explore this possibility. The meeting will be in the rectory. We will have discussion, prayer, and give out some materials for your reflection. We will model how Lectionary-based Faith-sharing in a SCC works on a weekly basis. Small Christian Communities are a new way of being Church. A Burkina Faso Proverb says, "If you want to walk fast---go alone! If you want to walk far--go together!!" Hopefully during Advent we can walk together.

Small Christian Communities Meeting on Wednesday, 12 October, 2016, 6:30 pm.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to *Luke*: 18:1-8 (preparation for Sunday, 16 October, 2016, 29th Sunday of Ordinary Time)

Jesus told his disciples a parable on the necessity of praying always and not losing heart: "Once there was a judge in a certain city who respected neither God nor people. A widow in that city kept coming to him saying, 'Give me my rights against my opponent.' For a time he refused, but finally he thought, 'I care little for God or people, but this widow is wearing me out. I am going to settle in her favor or she will end by doing me violence.' " The Lord said, "Listen to what the corrupt judge has to say. Will not God then do justice to his chosen who call out to him day and night? Will he delay long over them, do you suppose? I tell you, he will give them swift justice. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on the earth?"

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Gather -- Enjoy Refreshments -- Greet One Another!!

When ready to meet -- Light a candle or play music -- Sit in silence for a moment to gather your thoughts.

Introduce yourselves with a brief sharing of any significant news in your life -- three minutes.

Read the Scripture -- then take some Quiet Time -- then someone reads the same Scripture again and each person considers a word or a phrase that speaks to them.

Quiet Time. This is followed by that sharing of their word or phrase without discussion.

Then the facilitator/leader begins with a question, or three questions, or comments for the whole group. After sufficient time, the facilitator/leader draws the session to a close with the request, 'for whom or for what shall we pray'.

The Lord's Prayer is prayed together.

Arrangements are made for the next gathering; When and where.

Final dismissal and thanks."

From Godfrey Gizamba: "I have gone around our SCC and we want to give Kshs.5000/= for the operation of your sick SCC member. Our email address is gizamba.godfree68@gmail. Can you send me your Mpesa number? I am from Catholic Diocese of Soroti Uganda. Pray for us too. God bless the ailing lady."

This is a wonderful example of SCC members helping each other: There is a

Ugandan proverb: *One hand washes the other*. SCC members in the Catholic Diocese of Soroti, Uganda taking a collection for a woman in a SCC in Nairobi, Kenya who needs an urgent operation. Also the promise of mutual prayers.

From a SCCs Course Paper at Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya in April, 2016 on "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as New Way of Being Church in Africa" by Seminarian John Baptiste Katembo:

The Small Christian Communities predated the fruit of the renewed Ecclesiology of Vatican II. The first informal small communities began to appear already in 1956 in Brazil, six years before the opening of Vatican II and in statements of the Catholic Bishops in DRC in 1961. Certainly, after Vatican II Small Christian Communities were seen all over the world as presenting an ideal way of being the church in the way the council had envisaged. They were recognized as the work of the Holy Spirit leading the members of the Catholic Church into all truth, as Christ has promised.

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 1962.⁹²⁵

"Opening Prayer and Meditation at Africa Book Event in Nairobi, Kenya"

Book Event -- Three New Books on Africa
Hekima College -- HIPSIR
Nairobi, Kenya
Saturday, 15 October, 2016

"Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth. O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant

⁹²⁵ As an example of detailed research Marco Moerschbacher writes in an email message dated 30 October, 2018: "Your question of course made me curious, and with the help of our librarian Michael Drummen (you know that they have a very good website and a sophisticated system of keywords: www.mikado-ac.info) we found out that the first Brazilian Pastoral Plan dates back to 1962, covering 1962-1965. You will find some indications in Leonardo Boff, *The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1986, page 3-4. Another reference would be the article of Jose Marins on "Basic Ecclesial Communities in Latin America," published in *Concilium* 1975 (we only have the German version). He also points to the first experiences in the 1950s which eventually led to the pastoral plan.

that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.”

“This morning our meditation is on African Christian Conversation Theology in the context of the Pastoral Cycle or Pastoral Circle – the experience of “See,” “Judge” and “Act.” Let us compare the process of our own pastoral experience and theological reflection in Africa with Chapter 6 of the Gospel of St. *Mark*. In verse 7 Jesus sends out the 12 disciples two by two to preach and to heal. Here we encounter the disciples’ mission experience. What is our own practical experience of missionary discipleship in Africa? (PAUSE FOR SILENT REFLECTION).

Then in verse 30 “the apostles rejoined (gathered together with) Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.” In prayer and meditation do we share our own pastoral, missionary and theological experiences with Jesus Christ? (PAUSE FOR SILENT REFLECTION). As we share our stories with each other there is active dialog and intensive listening and learning from each other – what we call “listening in conversation.”

African theologians listen to the real life stories of the African people. Stories are not just anecdotal. African Storytelling is a way of living, a way of listening, a way of being theologian. Thus real storytelling is storylistening. Creative listening is deeper than just hearing. It is listening on a more fundamental level. It internalizes our experience. We participate in a theology of listening. This involves a critical analysis of our society and the Catholic Church. Based on yesterday’s challenge to be prophetic, do we do quality critical analysis of our society and the Catholic Church? (PAUSE FOR SILENT REFLECTION).

Then in verse 31 Jesus says, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” Silence is an important part of pastoral reflection and the theological process. Do we give quality time to silence in our lives and ministry? (PAUSE FOR SILENT REFLECTION). After a period of rest, the disciples started a new action. In our pastoral activity and theologizing in Africa we participate in this same experience in the cycle of “see,” “judge,” “act” and then start a new action.

Amen.”



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



A workshop aimed at establishing a network of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa is scheduled to take place in DR Congo's capital, Kinshasa, from 20-27 October, 2016. It is being organized by Missio-Aachen and the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, under the Patronage of Laurent Cardinal Monsengwo, the Archbishop of Kinshasa. The network of SCCs to be established will provide a forum for sharing ideas, experiences, knowledge, and a wealth of relevant competences around the reality of SCCs across Africa and in the diaspora. Creating and hosting a website to facilitate the sharing of information is one of the immediate objectives of the planned workshop, a forum that will make possible the networking of the different SCCs stakeholders.

May our SCC members pray for the success of this important Pan-African Workshop. Because of visa problems the meeting was shifted from Kinshasa to Nairobi, Kenya. Certainly the "AMECEA SCCs Pastoral Model of Church" will be presented well. We will

have many good grassroots SCCs reports and a good sharing. Michael Orondo of St. Kizito SCC will represent St Austin's Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese.

One emerging type of SCC is a circle of women. South African lay woman theologian Nontando Hadebe reports: "Greetings from Lusaka, Zambia. We thank our dear FB friends for your messages and support. Our meeting is going well as we reflect on how the Zambian Chapter of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians can continue to be a safe space for women to share their stories as the first step in creating liberating theologians for women. Stories mediate the multiple realities of women's lives. It's wonderful to have in our midst the founding members of Circle Omega Chilufya Bula and Peggy Kabonde guiding and pushing us to go deeper in our analysis and to remember our mission -- to generate liberating theologies. Feeling inspired.

A very good Case Study of how the SCCs Facebook Page is a forum for discussion and reflection on an important SCC topic is this exchange:

1. Good Case Studies of the Pastoral Spiral are the theses and essays on the obstacle or challenge of the size of the SCC being too big -- in some cases 100-200 people/50 families. In 2016 at Tangaza University College in Nairobi one Master's Thesis in Pastoral Ministry (Meru Diocese, Kenya) and one long essay (Binga Diocese, DRC) addressed this issue. The social and cultural analysis step can dig deeper into the meaning and practice of African community life and extended families. The theological reflection step can pinpoint how a small community of Catholics in the neighborhood is an official ecclesial unit within the parish pastoral structure. The action step can divide the big community into manageable SCCs where 15-20 members participate in the weekly meetings.

2. From our experience in Lagos Archdiocese, Nigeria 15 families or 30 regular members should be the maximum. The smaller the better.

3. A big number becomes a very big challenge. Based on the example of the Small Christian Communities in Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya most SCCs have more than 100 members. If you try to divide the members, some are not ready to move out of these SCCs. Some may even stop attending SCCs that is very dangerous and a big challenge. Members are attached strongly to their specific SCCs.

Our jumuiyas are divided into smaller communities called families. Jumuiyas meet on Wednesday and families meet on the day of their choice but within the week when they read the Gospel of the following Sunday, reflect on it and try to find out how they can apply it to our daily lives. A SCC can have up to seven families according to the number of members. We find the name family comfortable since the members relate to one another as brother and sister just like what happens in a real family.

This is a good description of the "communion of communities model of church." The Larger Christian Communities of University Students (up to 100 students) like St. Dominic SCC are divided into smaller Family SCCs of 20 to 30 students. St. Dominic's has four Family SCCs: St. John Family SCC, St. Jude Family SCC, St. Maria Goretti Family SCC and St. Patrick Family SCC.



St. Francis YSCC was voted the best YSCC at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya.

4. In general we encourage a "both...and" approach. In a Catholic girls boarding school in Meru Diocese, Kenya, each dormitory has one and a half hours for its weekly meetings. So the girls meet for 45 minutes in the large community of 60 girls for announcements and general discussion. Then they meet for 45 minutes in four small communities of 15 girls each for Bible Sharing, Bible Reflection and Faith-sharing on the Gospel of the following Sunday. The guiding principal is: both...and.

6. We are reminded of Christopher Mwoleka's insight that SCCs are "communities with a human face," that is, members sit around in a small enough circle that they can see one another and share together. See Agatha Radoli (ed.), "The Local Church with a Human Face," Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, Spearhead 140-141, 1996.

6. This example reinforces our latest research: In general, we are weak on "evaluation" and "follow-up."

I am Msgr. Tsepo Tsalong from the South African Diocese of Mthatha under Bishop Sithembele Sipuka. The previous two parishes that I worked at had 29 SCCs respectively. In the present one I have 14. We are in the process of forming the 15th one. They are working and meeting in prayer life as SCCs. There is still a big challenge of meeting on their own without the priest intervention or encouragement. But the our diocese see the fruits of the SCCs.

From Ben Wanjala, one of the leaders of our St. Kizito SCC:

"It was a great day for me and St. Kizito SCC of Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya to host guests from different parts of the world on Sunday 23/10/2016 among them Fr. Noel Mpati from DRC, Sister Josée Ngalula from DRC, Michael Meyer from Germany, Fr. Alfred Chaima from Malawi, Fr. Charles

Odira from KCCB, Kenya, Fr. Justin Matepa from Zambia, Fr. Vincent from Kenya and Bishop Method Kilaini from Tanzania among many others. We are in solidarity with fellow Small Christian Communities in Kenya and around the globe. We can be stronger and more united today and into the future thereby absorbing new members that the next generations can be proud of. We thank Michael Orondo for representing St. Austin's Parish at this SCCs Networking Meeting and organizing this trip to St. Kizito SCC. St. Agatha Joy Women's Training and Tailoring Group, the women's group in St. Kizito SCC that has a sewing club, sold beautiful African shirts and bags to the visitors.



Participants in the Pan-African Meeting on SCCs Networking in Nairobi, Kenya in October, 2016

From Mwanajumuiya Rita Ishengoma Damu Damu in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: "You mentioned the meeting of SCCs Networking, I should like to know how it works so that in this time I can do something. My SCC is St. John the Baptist and I am the Mlezi wa Wazee na Wastaafu wa Mt. Augustin."

“Tomorrow, Friday, 28 October, 2016, we join with all SCCs whose Patron Saint is St. Simon or St. Jude, Apostles. St. Jude Thaddeus Small Christian Community (SCC) in the Mwisenge Juu section of the St. Augustine Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania started in 1986. It is a parish-based Small Christian Community with a pastoral focus. After a great deal of discussion St. Jude Thaddeus was chosen as the Patron of this SCC to emphasize its apostolic spirit and the desire to help the neediest (the lost causes). I was an active member in this SCC from 1986 to 1994 and still stay in communication.”

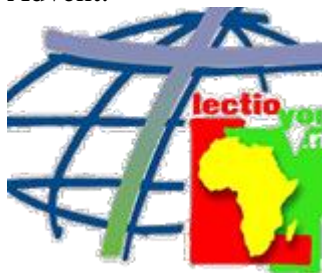
“Great to visit St. Patrick Family SCC, part of St. Dominic's SCC at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya during their Fun Day. Prayers for their election of new student leaders.”

“An important new initiative for our Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in both parishes (like the YSCCs in Dondora Parish in Nairobi) and in universities/colleges (like the YSCCs in Kenyatta University in Nairobi):

I would like to notify you about a new biblical initiative for Africa and Madagascar. It is a program called LectioYouth. This is an initiative of the Catholic Biblical Federation, but developed by the SVDs from AFRAM. At the moment it will be available in English and French, with the Portuguese version expected soon.

The program, intended primarily but not exclusively for the youth provides materials for forming and running local *Bible* Study Groups and Reflection Groups [like YSCCs]. These will be available online (www.lectioyouth.net), on Facebook, and also through a smartphone app. I believe it has great potential for expanding our biblical outreach because it has many unique and useful features. The approach is quite innovative (see the attached Information sheet). This new initiative offers a new possibility to focus and reinvigorate our biblical apostolate.

Please familiarize yourself with the program through the attached information sheet and website, and advertise it to whomever and wherever you wish. I will inform you when the website becomes active, which will be November 21, with materials for the 1st Sunday of Advent.



Coming Soon
LECTIOYOUTH.NET

Monday, 14 November, 2016 to Thursday, 17 November, 2016: SCCs Workshop on “Formation and Training of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Leaders in Meru Diocese.” St. Michael Retreat Centre Meru, Kenya.

One of the main topics is how to divide the larger Christian communities of up to 100 people. One pastoral solution is to have a Mother SCC that includes all the Christians that

meets monthly or quarterly for social activities and mutual support. Then create smaller, "Children SCCs" or "Branch SCCs" of 15 to 20 regular, active members that meet once a week for *Bible* Sharing and *Bible* Reflection. This relates to the metaphor/analogy is the Mother Tree that has different branches.

Comments on this pastoral challenge are welcome:

- The so-called Mother SCC can include a community of small clans and extended families spread over a larger area. But the so-called Child SCC or the "Branch" SCC are just those Catholics living next to each other and within walking distance of each other.
- That is very important formation! *Hongera* to all members. St. Kizito is praying for you.
- May the pastoral solution in Meru Diocese on dividing the larger Christian Communities into smaller SCCs ("communities with a human face") help other dioceses that face the same challenge.
- All the best. Hope you bring people closer and reach out to one another.

Today we are having an Online Skype SCCs Workshop for the Maryknoll Lay Missioners (MLMers) in their Orientation Program. We are connecting: Maryknoll, New York, USA; San Salvador, El Salvador; and Nairobi, Kenya. During this Maryknoll Lay Missioner Orientation Program Workshop at Maryknoll, New York, USA Maryknoll Lay Missioner Rick Dixon spoke from San Salvador, El Savador about the base communities in Central America, Sister Esther Walioba, MM spoke about SCCs in Tanzania (especially the SCCs in the University of Dar es Salaam) and I shared the SCCs Website the SCCs and Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. A young American couple with two daughters are going to serve in Mwanza, Tanzania.

Please pray for:

SCCs Membership Workshop/Meeting (like a Recruitment Workshop)
 Consolata Shrine Community
 Nairobi, Kenya
 Sunday, 13 November 2016
 Starting with the Mass at 9 a.m. and going to 1 p.m.

The workshop itself at Consolata Shrine Parish, Nairobi started at 10:30 am and ended with lunch at 1:00 pm. The facilitators were Mwanajumuiya Father [Joseph G. Healey](#), Mwanajumuiya Francis Njuguna and Mwanajumuiya [Alloys Nyakundi](#). The main aim of the workshop was to welcome new members and orient them and ground them well about the importance and activities of the Small Christian Communities.

This workshop/meeting began by asking the 30 newcomers what are their expectations. Why do they want to join a SCC? What are their felt needs, desires, hopes, interests, questions? Some answers: "To share their Catholic faith with other Catholics." "To learn about the *Bible*." "The socializing aspect." "Being part of a family community." We talked about the importance of being "Lectionary Catholics" or "Gospel Catholics" who

follow closely the Catholic Church's Liturgical Cycle and every week read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday.

We also learnt about the importance and the need of all Christians in a parish to belong to a SCC. Consolata Shrine has seven SCCs and the new members joined the existing SCCs according to how suitable and convenient it is for them to make it to their weekly meetings. New SCCs will start according to the need. One challenge facing Consolata Shrine is that some SCCs do not meet on a weekly basis but twice a month. This is problematic. For example, a SCC would meet on Ascension Sunday, but not the following Sunday that is Pentecost Sunday, the second most important liturgical feast of the year. But after the formation concerning the importance of being Lectionary Catholics and Lectionary *Jumuiyas*, all the *Jumuiyas* promised to try to meet every week.⁹²⁶ Wanajumuiya oyee!!!



Joe Healey speaking at SCCs Workshop at Consolata Shrine Community

“The Synod of Bishops Office in Rome has been revising the Preparatory Document (*Lineamenta*) that includes a questionnaire for the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to take place in Rome in October, 2018 on “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” In the usual way, this document will be submitted to the episcopal conferences and the synods of the *sui iuris* Oriental Catholic Churches so that it can be transmitted to the dioceses and other ecclesial institutions.

⁹²⁶ On Sunday, 28 May, 2017 we had a follow-up SCCs workshop (now planned for every six months). Two SCCs came up with this creative pastoral solution to meet weekly and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday: twice a month (every two weeks) they would meet physically to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday. Twice a month (the alternating two weeks) they would have a 30-minute Conference Call called “Share the Gospel” to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday.

Father Charles Odira from the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) Commission for Pastoral and Lay Apostolate reports: "I have already notified the youth leaders and chaplains and pastoral coordinators." This is a special time for our Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in Kenya (both in parishes and in universities and colleges) to be involved. This is also a great opportunity to share the experience of the Catholic Church in Kenya with the rest of the world."

From Alloys Nyakundi in Kenya: "How we can use social media to sensitize the world about SCCs -- the importance of SCCs and the need of belonging to SCCs? Am planning to look for forums in KU TV, KU FM and our local radio stations where most of the people in the rural areas are active participants. Check out Citizen Radio and also visit SCCs and take videos during their meetings to know what they are doing at the grassroots level."

Please give your comments, suggestions and examples."

Mike St. Pierre reports: "We have a monthly Faith-sharing (Lectionary-based) meeting on Saturday mornings after the 8 am Mass. Laity run the meetings and it lasts about 45 minutes. We meet at the Shrine of St. Joseph in Sterling, New Jersey, USA that is sponsored by the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity. Last month we had a young priest, just ordained, who sat in on the meeting. He found it very helpful for his own Sunday homily preparation in hearing the perspectives of laity.

"Reflection for Second Sunday of Advent (4 December, 2016):

Another way of being a lectionary-based Catholic is to choose a particular person in the *Bible*, or more specifically in the Sunday Gospel, to be your companion during the week. Say that on Monday in the First Week of Advent you read the Gospel of the following Sunday (Second Sunday of Advent). You choose John the Baptist to be your companion (and conversely you are his companion). For the next six days you walk with him (and conversely he walks with you). By Sunday you have gotten to know him much better and he leads you into themes of preparation, repentance and simple lifestyle of the Advent Season. Your participation in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration is deeper and richer."

"During this week we commemorate World AIDS Day (1 December, 2016). See: Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Agents of Change in the Fight Against HIV and AIDS in Eastern Africa," African Jesuit AIDS Network, Nairobi: Published Paper, 17 pages, 2015. Published in Jacquineau Azetsop, "HIV and AIDS in Africa: Theological Reflection, Public Health Crises, and Social Transformation," Orbis Books, 2016. Go to: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../311-small-christ...>

"Reflection for Third Sunday of Advent (11 December, 2016):

"Another way of being a lectionary-based Catholic is to choose a particular person in the *Bible*, or more specifically in the Sunday Readings, to be your companion during the week. Say that on Monday in the Second Week of Advent you read the First Reading of the following Sunday (Third Sunday of Advent). You choose the Prophet Isaiah (a Hebrew prophet who was believed to have lived about 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Born in Jerusalem, Israel, he was said to have found his calling as a prophet when he saw a vision in the year of King Uzziah's death. Isaiah prophesized the coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ) to be your companion (and conversely you are his companion). For the next six days you walk with him (and conversely he walks with you). By Sunday you have gotten to know

Isaiah much better and he inspires you through the theme of “joyful hope” in his writings during this Advent Season. Your participation in the Sunday Eucharistic Celebration is deeper and richer.”

Here are comments and feedback:

“To choose a saint from the *Bible* for the week is a new method for me but can be helpful. Thank you. I going to start doing so.”

“This is a better way of reflecting on the Sunday gospel.”

“I will give this method a trial. I already use it to think of my Patron saint. I suggest people should know theirs. My Patron saint is St John, the beloved disciple.”

“I read this message in an email. We had a SCC meeting this morning and I used some of the sharing from this message.”

“Your suggestion is a good one. We should all have a personal and spiritual relationship with our Patron Saint (our Name Saint). I am suggesting something in addition to that. That is, to identify with specific saints following the Catholic Church's Liturgical Year and the *Bible* Readings. Like now during this season of Advent.”

“Another important person in the *Bible* and the Lectionary Readings during this Advent Season is the Blessed Virgin Mary with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on 12 December. Our Hispanic/Latino CEBs will be especially participating in the second feast.”

“Research indicates that many people use email and social media to receive, read and reflect on the Scripture Readings of the following Sunday: through Email Mailing Lists, List-serve, What'sApp small communities, Skype Sessions, *Bible* Study small communities, weekly reflections from various religious institutions and organizations, sample homilies, homily notes, etc.”

“FEEDBACK ON MANUAL TRAINING HANDBOOK FOR CIVIC EDUCATION IN KENYA. One correspondent writes: ‘This is a great initiative, Joachim. I hope the SCCs in Kenya will use it. I am proposing that our St. Kizito SCC facilitate a “Workshop on Civic Education” at St. Austin’s Parish, Nairobi, Kenya – similar to what we did at the last election.’ Yesterday I presented the paper during our AGM meeting for clergy of Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya to priests to use it as a tool for civic education in preparation to next year’s elections, particularly from the SCCs level to the parish level.”

”Some highlights of the Orbis Books Advisory Committee Meeting that took place at Maryknoll, New York, USA on 13-14 December, 2016:

1. We discussed at length how to attract the millennial generation of young adults (18 –35) to participate more actively in the Catholic Church. A young adult woman was quoted: “As a seeker I dissent and doubt, and that’s a good thing. It is something to be embraced.” Like many in her generation she seeks out small communities “because they give me the freedom to be myself.”

2. It was mentioned that a Senior Maryknoll priest who is retired in Los Altos, California, USA, and who served for many years in Latin America, praised and was touched by selections from the new Orbis Book *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III* (available in Eastern Africa in the Acton Publishers African Edition). He regards the articles in the book as a template for Catholic Church reform beyond Africa. The book refers to the importance of SCCs.

3. In the spirit of the collaborative, collegial and synodal style of our African Conversational Theology there is a well-known Burkina Faso Proverb that is also very popular in Western countries: "If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together."

Here are some reflections for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (18 December, 2016):

Another way of being a lectionary-based Catholic or Gospel-based Catholic is to choose a particular person in the *Bible*, or more specifically in the Sunday Readings, to be your companion during the week. Say that on Monday in the Third Week of Advent you read the Gospel of the following Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Advent). You choose Joseph, the fiancé of Mary and specifically the mantra: "he decided to divorce her quietly." In my pastoral ministry in Eastern Africa I have encountered painful cases like this one of Joseph and Mary's engagement and the aftermath. For the next six days let us walk with Joseph (and conversely invite him to walk with us). By Sunday we have gotten to know Joseph much better and he inspires us through the themes of accompaniment, faithfulness, honor and compassion during this Advent Season. Our participation in the Sunday Eucharistic celebration is deeper and richer.

Here are some reflections for Christmas Day (Sunday, 25 December, 2016):

Another way of being a lectionary-based Catholic or Gospel-based Catholic is to choose a particular person in the *Bible*, or more specifically in the Sunday Readings, to be our companion during the week. Say that on Monday of this Fourth Week of Advent we read the Gospel of the following Sunday (Christmas Day). We read Luke 2:1-20 that tells the story of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. We choose a shepherd and specifically the mantra: "The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem." For the next six days let us walk with this shepherd (and conversely invite this shepherd to walk with us). Luke associates the birth of Jesus with shepherds, poor people, members of a despised trade just as he will do later with prostitutes and other sinners. These disadvantaged people have seen the light. Our take away this Christmas is to reach out to the people that Pope Francis calls "the marginated and those on the periphery of society" such as undocumented immigrants.

The "Preface" of the Spring, 2017 issue of *Quest* (A Reflection Booklet for Small Christian Communities) begins: "If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.' This slice of African proverbial wisdom captures an insight that is all the more meaningful when we reflect on it with the eyes of faith."

Calendar of Events:

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Course. Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya. 12 January, 2017 to 23 March, 2017.

Two Credit Core Course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today” (PTC418). Thursdays 8:30 a.m. to 11:25 a.m. Tangaza University College (CUEA), Nairobi, Kenya.

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Course. Hekima University College, Nairobi, Kenya. 18 January, 2017 to 22 March, 2017.

One Credit Elective Course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today” (THE1410). Wednesdays 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Hekima University College (CUEA), Nairobi, Kenya.

If you are looking for a nice African Christmas Story for your SCC here is:

"This African Mary Understands My Swahili Prayers"

Theme: Prayer

Sub Theme: Christmas, Inculturation, Inspiration, Mary

Author/City/Country: Mrs. Perpetua Mashelle // Tanzania

Genre/Type: Prayer

Locale: Tanzania

Publication Information: *African Stories For Preachers and Teachers* (Paulines Publications Africa, 2005)

Story Text:

It was the week before Christmas in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and a Tanzanian mother was reminding her young daughter Bahati about the Christmas story. She took a Christmas card of a European painting of the birth of Jesus Christ from the table in their sitting room and said: "Bahati, here you can see Mary, Joseph and the new born child Jesus. And there are the shepherds and the animals in the manger." Bahati nodded happily. Her mother went on: "If you pray to Mary, the mother of Jesus, she will always help you." But suddenly Bahati frowned and said in a sad voice: "But I don't think this foreign Mary -- this *Mzungu* (Swahili for foreigner) Mary -- will understand my Swahili prayers."

Bahati's mother was taken aback and said: "Oh!" Then Bahati's mother went over to the table, picked up another Christmas card and said: "Maybe you'll like this one better." It was a painting by a well-known Tanzanian artist that portrayed the scene of Jesus Christ's birth in an African setting. The cave or stable in Bethlehem had become an African hut with a thatched roof. Several sheep nuzzled the straw that the baby Jesus lay on. The African Mary sat quietly receiving gifts of maize meal, milk, oil to shine her baby and firewood from her neighbors. Joseph sat attentively off to the side. A single chicken wandered around in the background. Bahati's mother sat waiting. Suddenly Bahati's face glowed with a big smile and she cried out: "Oh, yes! I'm sure this African Mary understands my Swahili prayers."

"The Lobinger Model:" The Lobinger Model is an innovative model rooted in the particular needs and talents of local communities. It addresses the theological conundrum presented by the priest shortage by expanding the role of lay leaders and ordaining them into service. The Lobinger model was developed by Bishop Fritz Lobinger who, early on, was

instrumental in developing the pastoral model of the Small Christian Communities -- including a particular model of *Bible* study with central roles for lay leadership in liturgical services, catechesis and the social gospel. He ministered in regions of South Africa where there were few priests. He recognized the enormous faith and talents of lay people in the communities under his care and sought to empower them to carry out the fullness of sacramental life in their community. You can learn more about his model by reading his interview at <http://www.uscatholic.org/ordainelders>

In preparation for the 3rd international meeting of priest associations and reform groups in October, 2017 Father Wolfgang Gamer offers his view of the Lobinger model based on his experience as a priest in South America. His model is based on the one advanced by Bishop Fritz Lobinger and the Vienna pastoral theologian Paul Zulehner of “Paul priests (originating outside the community, i.e. ordained by the bishop)” and “Corinth priests (originating within the community—recognized and chosen from within the community).” Gamer notes that in *Romans* 16 and 1 *Corinthians* 16 the apostle Paul offers a variety of leadership roles that are exercised in Rome and Corinth.

To begin, each community opens itself to that Spirit, prayerfully reflects on its situation and sets priorities in order to live out their faith in today’s world. In order to be a community of mission, they spell out their activities under the guidelines of worship, service and witness. In this process, the community is accompanied and supported by “Paul priests” and full time lay people who assist in the discovery of charisms within the community. The aim of this process is to build a team of “Corinth priests” of at least three persons. Lobinger and Zulehner speak of *virii probati* and eventually also of *feminae probatae*. Women and men, both single or married and couples, like Prisca and Aquilla in *Acts of the Apostles*, provide a robust model for missionary outreach and community leadership and ministry. From this process emerges a team of leaders, accepted and supported by all members of a community, whatever their size or number. This team may well undergo formation and will eventually be ordained for service. Source: https://www.amazon.com/Like-His-Brothers-SistersOrdaining/dp/0824518500/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

“May the new year of 2017 bring many blessings and much fruit to the SCCs around the world especially in promoting peace, justice and equality.”

“I am writing from the Military Vicariate of Nairobi, Kahawa Garrison, St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Church. We beg the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team to kindly help us to find a wheel chair for a member whose two legs were amputated. We visit rarely this Facebook Page. We raised some money but not enough to purchase the wheel chair. Cpr. Joseph Olenkaiya, Chairman, St. Lucy SCC.”

From Venture Danitez: A MESSAGE OF PEACE

Fellow members of our Small Christian Communities in Kenya, we've started a new year and we are the drivers of our own vehicle and that vehicle is Kenya. This is a year of elections and I beseech you dear ones to help me preach peace. Speak loudly and boldly against divisive politics, champion for peace and uphold brotherhood and sisterhood. Preaching peace countrywide and worldwide is one way in which "The Church in the Move" (Small Christian Communities) continue with its evangelization mission. I plead you to listen to this...

You are a Luo and I am a KIKUYU. She is a Luhya and he is a Kalenjin. Uhuru is the President, Raila the opposition leader, Ruto the Deputy President while Wetangula is the Minority Leader. By their standards, you are poor and I am poor. Each one of them is wealthy. They call each other "brother." Every time they meet, they hug. According to them, we have many things in common -- Poverty, Ignorance, Stupidity, Blind Fanaticism, Short Memory and are willing slaves.

The fact that I come from the president's turf does not make me better than you. Neither does coming from opposition region make you worse than me. We all face insecurity, corruption, unemployment and we all feel the pinch in the rise of cost of living. When we seriously fall ill, our families have no choice but to choose between death or going bankrupt. Whether in Nyeri, Kisumu, Machakos, Eldoret or Busia, most families are struggling to choose between paying school fees or going to bed half hungry. We all struggle to survive regardless of our so called tribes or our Tribal Kings. And when elections come, they incite us against one another. When the fighting starts, they get protection from state securities and police. Others hire private security to guard their homes and families, while at the same time they hire thugs and militias to kill us. Look back at 2007 - 2008 Post Election violence!!!

The sad truth is that when Waiguru loots NYS, she doesn't do it for Kikuyus or the average person from Kirinyaga County. When a Bruce Odhiambo loots youth, he doesn't do it for Luos or jobless youth from the Nyalenda Slums in Kisumu. When a Muthama is accused of grabbing land, he doesn't share his spoils with landless squatters from Ukambani. When a Wetangula's hand is oiled with "BAT" Money, an average Mfula in Bungoma doesn't get a dime. When a William Ruto grabs 100 acres of land in Eldoret, the average Kipyego doesn't get even an inch.

DEAR KENYANS, WAKE UP! Folks, these guys are in bed together. You don't believe it?? Check this one out!! In 2007 Raila, Ruto and Duale were in the same camp. Likewise, Uhuru, Wetangula and Kalonzo were in the other. Come 2013, Uhuru, Ruto and Duale were on one side while Raila, Kalonzo and Wetangula were on the other.

SO WHAT CHANGED????? The day we start thinking beyond our tribes, we shall make this country a better place, where there is no room for *Mtu Wetu*. Friends, it starts with you and me. It is time for you and me to start hugging and thinking together as "Kenyans" and not as "Tribes." WHEN SOMEONE FROM YOUR TRIBE IS ELECTED AS THE NEXT PRESIDENT YOU WILL GAIN NOTHING OTHER THAN EMPTY TRIBAL FAME. UPHOLD PEACE.

"I am Monica from St. Mary SCC, Dagretti Corner Parish. I greet you all members of SCCs in Jesus' name. I kindly request you to join me and other SCCs to help the family of Gladys who has a problem of her 16 year old girl who was one of victims of the Naivasha Accident. Two of her daughters burned to ashes, but this girl survived and we thank God. They want her to pay a bill of 85,000/=. Our priest has given 15,000/=:, we St. Mary SCC has given 15,000/=:, other SCCs have given 15,000/=:, friends have given 5,000/=: . Now balance

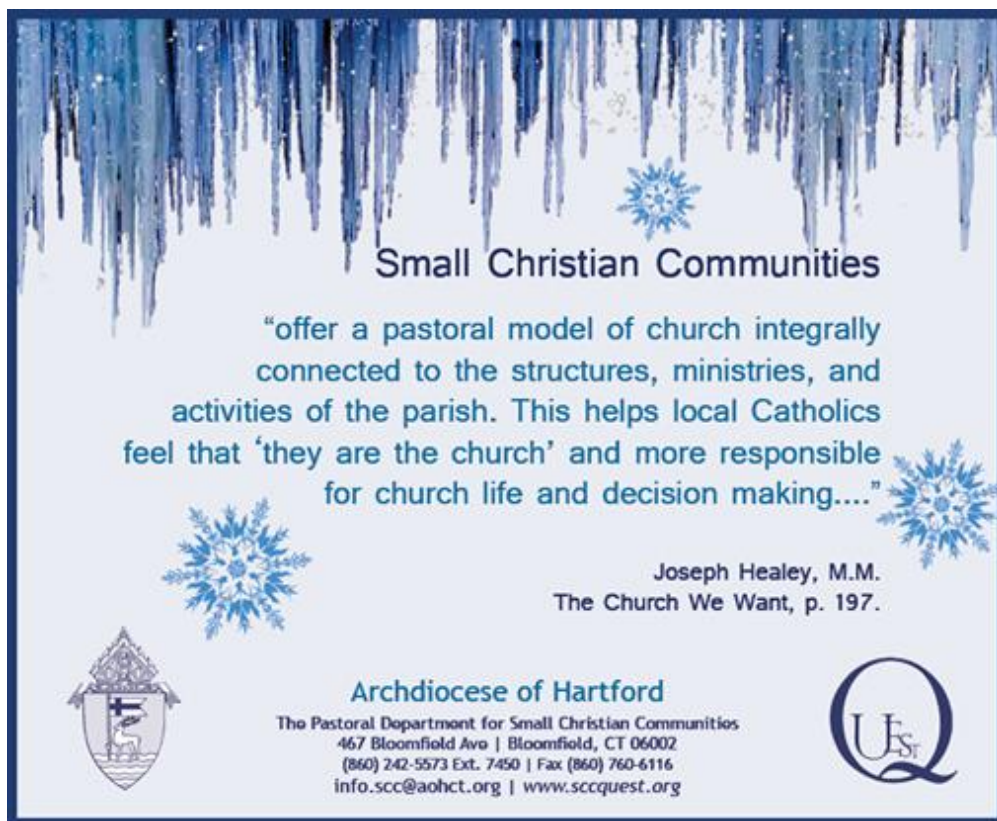
remaining is 35,000/=. Kindly my good Christians, please stand with me plz and save this poor young girl please. May God bless you all. Happy New Year 2017. M.C.N.

The free, online Ebook "Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" has been revised and updated to 859 pages including:

1. A new chapter: "Tracking the Growth of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs)."
2. APPENDIX: 25 Online E-Resource Materials on the On-going Formation and Training of Small Christian Community (SCC) Members
3. "Select Annotated Bibliography of Books, Booklets, Articles, Reports and Printed Materials" (348 entries)
4. "DVD/Video/Audio-Visual Resources" (47 entries)
5. "Internet Resources/Websites/E-Resources" (89 entries)

The direct hyperlink to the full Ebook is:

http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../pdf/Build_new.pdf



Small Christian Communities

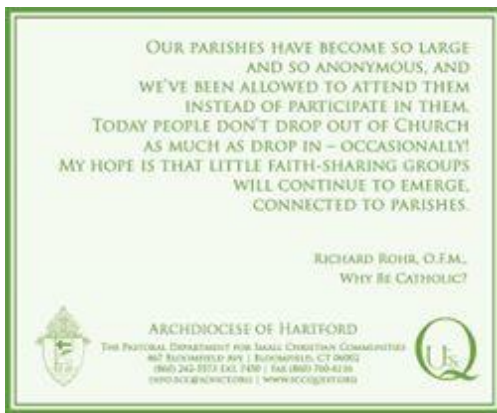
"offer a pastoral model of church integrally connected to the structures, ministries, and activities of the parish. This helps local Catholics feel that 'they are the church' and more responsible for church life and decision making...."

Joseph Healey, M.M.
The Church We Want, p. 197.

Archdiocese of Hartford
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Jennifer Ehrentraut, Joe Healey and Teresia Mdesoma at 50 Jubilee Mass



From Alloys Nyakundi: “This was a joint SCC meeting at Kenyatta University that happens at the start of every semester. Members of all the nine Youth Small Christian Communities came together before. We had prayers and Gospel Sharing together. I was also given a chance to talk about our Youth Small Christian Communities.”



Alloys Nyakundi speaking at Kenyatta University on YSCCs

Important for SCCs:

From *The Tablet* (7 January, 2017): "Pope Francis' reforms should not be seen as personal projects, but a continuation and revitalization of the reform movement that began with the Second Vatican Council. The Catholic Church, Francis explains, is an inverted pyramid, with the People of God at the top and its priests and bishops, including the Pope, below: a church that sees leadership as service, that engages in a dialog with the world and offers it the medicine of mercy."

Today in Nairobi, Kenya I had a very interesting conversation with Father Marcos Muino, SJ, an Argentinian Jesuit priest who is presently doing research on SCCs in Eastern Africa. I showed him our SCCs Website and articles on Latin America.

We compared the:

"Small Christian Communities Model of Church." This has a very specific meaning and context in Eastern Africa. Although the term "Small Christian Communities" is used in many different ways, 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.

and the

"New Ecclesial Movements Model of Church." A phenomenon of the past 75 years is the new ecclesial movements that have seen rapid growth and influence worldwide. Examples are the Neocatechumenal Way, Focolare, Opus Dei, etc. Note their strong influence in Argentina. 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. They appeal more to the elite (wealth and education). Also they have a more inductive style, top-down style.

"Eritrea SCCs Update: After finishing the Lumko Course in Nairobi from 15 August to 10 September, 2016, the four Eritrean Comboni Sisters returned to promote SCCs in their country. Sister Mehret Tzeggzai writes asking for our prayers. She is the Coordinator of the National Pastoral Department. They are presently restructuring the existing SCCs in Eritrea."

On the occasion of the death on 8 January, 2017 of English Bishop Colin Davies, MHM the former bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya and one of the founding fathers of SCCs in the AMECEA countries, I wrote these "Four Personal Vignettes of Marehemu Bishop Colin Davies, MHM:"

1. In the 1970s when I needed a weekend break from the busy activities of the AMECEA Bishops' Office in Nairobi, Bishop Davies would invite me to his Ngong Residence. I would walk the Ngong Hills and then have English high tea and pleasant conversation with the bishop. The teapot was covered with a "cozy" (a new English word for me that referred to a knitted covering made by his Mother).

2. In helping the bishop on research on the Second Vatican Council for his books and talks, he pulled out these very little precious black notebooks with the notes he made on the spot during the Third and Fourth Sessions of the Second Vatican Council in Rome in 1964-65. He commented on the bishops and theologians (like Congar and Chenu) that inspired him and the hardliner Roman Curial folks that didn't want change. He was amazed that all the bishops from all over the world signed some of the final documents in the hall on the last full day of the council – 7 December, 1965.

3. Sister Rachel Butler, the Assistant Librarian at Tangaza University College in Nairobi and I drove out to his Ngong Residence where we selected books, magazines and printed materials from Bishop Davies' personal library to donate to the Tangaza Library. These materials represented 60 years of his pastoral life and reading in East Africa. Some of these materials related to SCCs.

4. In his final years in Nairobi, Kenya we had long conversations on the future of the Catholic Church. I was inspired by Davies' prophetic vision of the option of married priests into the Roman Rite for "pastoral reasons." He wrote a challenging article "A Call to Action on Eucharistic Hunger – Now! Making the Eucharist Available to All Baptized People as the Bread of Eternal Life." He saw married priests as a pastoral solution to providing Mass and the Eucharist to all SCCs members.

At the Memorial Mass for Bishop Davies in Ngong, Kenya on 20 January, 2017 I read this tribute:

It is an honor to Ngong Diocese, to the Kenya Bishops Conference and to the AMECEA Region that Marehemu Bishop Colin Davies, MHM participated in the Third and Fourth Sessions of the Second Vatican Council in Rome in 1964-65. He was one of the dozen original Vatican II participants that concelebrated with Pope Benedict XVI at the 50th Anniversary Mass of the Second Vatican Council in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on 11 October, 2012. Bishop Davies' little precious black personal pocket diaries with the notes he made on the spot during the council are an historical treasure.

“The members of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Course at Hekima University College, Nairobi, Kenya formed a SCC and chose St. Mother Teresa and St. Paul the Apostle as their co-Patrons.”

From Urbanus Munywoki: “Small Christian Communities are the avenues for God revealing himself anew to people in a more personal way. Where everyone sees the other as a brother and a sister. A communion among the people of God. In one faith, baptism, in love and unity. Sharing and celebrating their joys and happiness.”

From Nancy Njehia: “*Wanajumuia* hoyee!! Yesterday we had a meeting with five *wanajumuia*s from Kenyatta University where we deliberated on forming a group to reignite the YSCCs in high schools and dioceses where they have been dormant over time. Requesting for your prayers so that all our plans will be successful.”

“In our SCCs Course at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya, the Tea Break was a unique opportunity to show how SCCs are a “new way of being church.” Rather than drink coffee or tea in the Faculty Lounge (with mainly priests), the two visiting priest presenters from Meru Diocese had tea and a friendly discussion with the student seminarians in the canteen.”

May our SCCs members participate in the following:

“Communication from the Nairobi, Kenya Archdiocesan Family Life Office:

To all Priests in Parishes and Chaplaincies,

This is to bring to your attention that the World Marriage Day (WMD) this year will be celebrated on 12 February, 2017. This is a day that is celebrated on the 2nd Sunday of February every year worldwide. The theme for this day will be "Love One Another." This phrase is the commandment given us by Jesus in *John 15:12*.

We request that you organize so that all married couples can renew their marriage commitment to one another during mass in your parish. We urge the priests to organize so that the couples animate the mass that day and also if possible to renew their marriage vows.”

From Father Febian Pikiti, a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team, presently living in Zambia: "We have a busy parish program and SCCs are part of our weekly visitation around the main Parish Centre. We have in our program training for Church Councils represented by leaders in SCCs. But this we can only do after the rain season in April."

Very sad public announcement from the Hartford Archdiocesan Communications Office in Connecticut, USA:

“After 25+ years of support from the Archdiocese of Hartford, the Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities will cease operations on March 31, 2017. In the meantime, the office will continue to fill orders for spring ‘17 *Quest* through the first weeks of Lent. Further editions of *Quest* and "Summer Reflections" will not be produced by the archdiocese. Existing unfulfilled subscriptions will be refunded in a timely manner. Continuing support for small communities in the archdiocese will be managed by parishes at the local level.

Started by Archbishop John F. Whealon, our Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities has ably and enthusiastically promoted and supported small church communities in many parishes of the archdiocese through visits, informational evenings, training workshops, retreats and many other Faith-sharing initiatives. To augment these activities, the department has produced publications and support materials, management resources, and booklets. However, today *Quest* and print materials like it are in direct competition with digital formats and internet platforms, which are readily available.

Under the leadership of Director Brother Robert Moriarty, S.M., we greatly appreciate the many years of service that the Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities has dedicated to parishes in the Archdiocese of Hartford, and are grateful for all the lives and hearts it has touched through its dedicated work and outreach.”

From Moses Muriira: “Today I had one of the best SCC gatherings (name of Patron Saint is St. Nicholas in my parish of St Peter and Paul Parish, Meru Diocese, Kenya. Elderly and illiterate men and women gave the best *Bible* Sharing ever. I used the Buzz Method as taught in our class at Tangaza by Mwanajumuyia Padri Joe Healey. Everyone seems to enjoy this method. Please try it. It works well. SCC is the best way to go. Truly a new way of being the church.”

During our weekly SCC Gospel Sharing in Kibarani, Kibwezi (Diocese of Machakos) Kenya yesterday we had the step:

"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."

I mentioned one word -- "must" -- when Jesus says, "your light must shine before others." Today my homily is on: “Yes, you can make a difference in the church and Kenyan society.” How do we shine our light in specific situations and contexts in our daily life?

From various Kenyatta University students in Nairibi, Kwenya: “Listening to Kenyatta University Catholic show#kufm. Our brother Alloys Nyakundi is representing us well @kufm by enlightening our colleagues around Kenyatta University about the meaning and importance of Small Christian Communities. That was awesome teaching by Mwanajumuiya. Have learnt about the importance of SCCs in the Catholic Church. I mean that SCCs have a lot to contribute. We have learned how important the SCCs are because they prepare us for the readings of the coming Sunday. Thus one is able to internalize the message before it is further elaborated by the priest in his homily on the Sunday. SCCs are central to the growth of the church as an entity. Encompassing members through different age levels. Have learned of Basic Ecclesial Community as a name of SCC. Types of small Christian Communities.”

“Prayers, please, for the:

Meeting of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team

2:30 p.m., Wednesday, 8 February 2017

AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) Secretariat
49 Gitanga Road
Nairobi, Kenya

This is the first meeting of the team that has 15 members: 14 Africans (nine from Kenya, two from Zambia, one from Malawi and one from Tanzania), and one expatriate missionary based in Eastern Africa. There are six laymen, three laywomen, five priests and one religious sister.”



Members of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities Training Team at the AMECEA Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya.

“Now available for 150/= Kenyan Shillings (\$1.50) is the printed version of the:

Preparatory Document for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly. "Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment," Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2017.

The electronic version is available on the Vatican Website:
<http://press.vatican.va/.../pubbl.../2017/01/13/0021/00050.html...>



Documento Preparatorio della XV Assemblea Generale Ordinaria del Sinodo dei Vescovi sul tema “I giovani, la fede e il discernimento vocazionale”

PRESS.VATICAN.VA

“10 people participated in the first Meeting of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team at the AMECEA Secretariat on 8 February 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya on 8 February 2017. There were five laymen, three priests, one laywoman and one religious sister. We discussed SCCs training especially the latest draft of the new booklet *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators* and designing online SCCs Webinars.”

From Chishimba Chishimba: “It is so great to see how social media such as WhatsApp has enhanced communication in my SCC. Everyday a member of my SCC – St. Maximilian Kolbe of the Cathedral of the Child Jesus Parish in Lusaka, Zambia -- shares daily *Bible* readings and reflections that help us all to pray even when we seem to be too busy to do so. I therefore urge everyone to make good use of social media to enhance SCCs.”



Alloys Nyakundi on Kenyatta University FM.

“Theme: God within people’s reality.

Good afternoon, friends of this page on Small Christian Communities. My name is Edu Revolledo and I am a Comboni seminarian studying in the SCCs Class at Tangaza University College in Nairobi.

I come from Peru in Latin America and what I would like to share is an experience that I had in my country about the Small Christian Communities (that we call in Spanish *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* -- CEBs). It happened in one of the villages of my country within the Amazon jungle, specifically in the native community called “Nomatsiguenga” in the province of Pangoa. This community is called “Sonomoro.”

I went to this village for around two months as a part of my missionary experience during my long holidays and I was sent to a community to do my missionary service for those months. I was very happy and animated to share my faith and to be a witness of what God has done into my life. When I reached the place I was amazed to know that since a long time there was no presence of priests, sisters or religious people. I mean, the priests who usually go there, go rarely because of the size of the territory and the lack of priests and religious.

However when I started visiting the families I met a group of people who told me that they usually meet to share the Word of God. I was surprised when they told me that because I thought that they would not have any meeting or sharing around the Word of God. But it was just the opposite because, despite of the lack of religious and priests in that native area, the people kept alive their faith in the sharing of the Word of God in their daily life in their Small Christian Community.

I participated during those two months with them actively and I could see how they used to meet to share the Word of God, to discuss different issues concerning to the village and to do concrete actions in order to help one another in their village. During those months I was an observer and I learned many things from them: community life, pious prayers, collaboration, etc. I also learned that the Small Christian Community is a really blessed and sacred space for the Christians where they can be actively listeners to what God speaks to them through their own reality and in practical ways how to apply those teachings. Definitely, I would never forget that experience of Small Christian Community in Sonomoro. As an evangelizer, I was evangelized by them and surely they taught me that **GOD IS FULLY PRESENT AND WITHIN THEM!**



Edu Revollo with the Sonomoro SCC in Peru.

From Chishimba Chishimba: “You may have people in your family who feel isolated or excluded. Reach out to them. Think about that terminally ill uncle who never makes it to family gatherings or that aunt in a nursing home whom nobody visits. Think about your grandson or nephew who isn’t going to church anymore and just moved in with his girlfriend. Go and visit them. Spend time with them if you can; or reach across the distance, and send them an email. Jesus wants to touch them. You can make a difference!” “Lord, help me to reach out to those who feel like outsiders. Help me show them your love and mercy.”

Genesis 2:18-25

Psalms 128:1-5



Mwanajumuiya Joe Healey's Celebration of his Golden Jubilee of Missionary Priesthood at the AMECEA Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya on 8 February, 2017.

A revised, updated version of the free, online book -- Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa* – is available on the SCCs Website at:

http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../pdf/Build_new.pdf

It includes new SCCs material from Kenyatta University, the AMECEA Pastoral Department and our SCCs Courses at Tangaza and Hekima in Nairobi. What I have discovered is that this free, online Ebook version actually helps to sell the print version. As I travel around giving SCCs Courses and Workshops I teach online using the Ebook. I refer to the print version and continue to sell copies. For example, 14 copies recently in Meru Diocese. Copies to the seminarians in my Tangaza and Hekima Courses in Nairobi. This is why I ordered 100 more copies recently. I am reminded of the Ugandan proverb, *one hand washes the other*.

You are invited to an African Inculturated "Small Christian Community Mass" ("Jumuiya Mass") on Wednesday, 15 February, 2017

12 Noon
 Wednesday, 15 February, 2017
 Hekima University College
 Joseph Kang'ethe Road, off Ngong Road
 Nairobi, Kenya

Wednesday of the Sixth Week of Ordinary Time -- Year A.
 Special features:

1. Shared Homily (in buzz groups of two each).
2. Spontaneous "Prayer of the Faithful" starting from our everyday local experience.
3. African Exchange of Peace using a sign of peace from Zimbabwe.



KU Reigniters of YSCCs Team planning their presentations.

Dear Fr. Joseph Healey and the entire Small Christian Communities Training Team of Eastern Africa.

We thank you for the Small Christian Communities Facebook Page that I visit on behalf of Saint Stephen SCC and the faithful of the Catholic Diocese of Lodwar, Saint Catherine of Siena Catholic Church.

We are making a humanitarian request both to the public and all well wishers here in Turkana where hunger has struck everywhere both human and animals. Worse than last year with 10 to 15 daily dying of hunger. We set up as a community to reach out to our dear ones who are dying in different places.

We set the ball rolling starting in January. We tried to raise money and bought 300 bags of maize and 100 bags of beans. We need to have a grinding machine for maize meal at a cost of KSHS 230,000/=. We have 150,000/= raised among our communities. We are less 80,000/=. Kindly help Saint Stephen SCC to reach out to the needy.

“May our YSCC members respond to:

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales is to gather the views of thousands of young people on the future of the Catholic Church through a mobile phone app. The app will be launched at the Flame Congress on 11 March, 2017 in Wembley Arena, London, and will be one of the ways that young people will be consulted ahead of the forthcoming Synod on “Young People” due to be held in Rome in October, 2018.”



Representatives of the YSCCs in Dandora Parish, Nairobi presenting in our SCCs Class.

Additional hyperlinks to access the free, online Ebook *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*:

1. African SCCs Networking Website. Go to: Right hand sidebar >Quick Links>Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa at: <http://africansccsnetworking.org/>

2. AMECEA Pastoral Department Website. Go to: top menu bar>Small Christians Communities> Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa at: www.ameceapastoral.amecea.org
Or

3. AMECEA Pastoral Department Website. Go to: Right hand sidebar>More news> Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa at: www.ameceapastoral.amecea.org

“We have serious drought and hunger in Kenya. A friend from the USA gave a gift to our SCCs Fund (*Mfuko wa Jumuiya*) that is coordinated by our AMECEA SCCs Training Team. So far we have helped seven SCCs with 20,000/= (\$200) each in seven different dioceses in Northern and Eastern Kenya: Eldoret, Garissa, Isiolo, Lodwar, Malindi, Maralal and Marsabit. Five SCCs bought maize meal and maize (corn) and one SCC contributed to buying a Grinding Machine. Prayers please.”

An example of how this SCCs Facebook Page can be a forum for analysis, conversation, discussion and exchange. The first post was:

“Pope Francis encourages us to discuss and respectfully debate the pastoral issues in the Catholic Church. So in our SCCs Classes in Nairobi we wrestling with: Difference between a SCC Model of Church and a Small Apostolic Group (including solidarities and

parish associations) Model of Church. Difference between a Small Christian Community (Jumuiya Mass) celebrated in a home or in the neighborhood and a regular parish-style mass celebrated in a home or in the neighborhood. Comments on this Facebook Page are welcome.”

Then the comments included:

“SCCs are a new way of being the church and they are very different from other smaller groups in the church. When we are having a Small Christian Community mass the lay people should be given a chance to give their reflections on the gospel and also take a lion’s share in most of the activities taking place and not the priest.”

“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. 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 Small Christian Community (SCC) of his friend. But this was not really a SCC Mass (Jumuiya Mass). The mass was exactly the same mass that the priest celebrates in the parish or outstation church. The priest preached and there was very little lay participation. In SCC classes, workshops, meetings and discussions this issue comes up again and again. There is a big difference between a specific SCC Mass (Jumuiya Mass) celebrated in a home or in the neighborhood and a regular mass celebrated in a home or in the neighborhood.”

“The Small Christian Communities can collaborate with other groups in the parish.”

“Wow nice teaching here! I have not seen this happen in my home parish. I will carry the gospel home.”

During a talk at the AOSK Seminar on “Community Life” in Nyeri, Kenya on 25 February, 2017 Fr. John Bosco Odongo, CM said:

We have to be patient with each other, forgiving, supporting, and refraining from judging each other. We can practice this so easily when we have Small Christian Communities in our local houses, regional houses and even provincial structures. It will ease our work and mission. We will be bold and creative, missionaries like the Son of God, and truly live as the first Small Christian Communities in *Acts of the Apostles* did. *Acts 2:42-47* is a model of community life: Importance of witness of life, praying together, breaking of the bread (sharing what we have), Eucharist. We have to live as Small Christian Communities. Working together, praying together, sharing life just as the first Christian communities. We ought to love and share the Word of God in the smaller units in our communities -- Small Christian Communities in our own larger communities.

Today we have many Small Christian Communities in Africa, especially here in Eastern Africa, for example, St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC (this is a worldwide SCC; we are all welcome to join). At Tassia Parish in Nairobi, Kenya we have a good number of SCCs, for example St. John Bosco SCC, St. Stephen SCC, St. John the Baptist SCC, St. Ann SCC, Holy Family SCC, among others. These SCCs offer good examples

to this new way of life. In Christ the King Major Seminary in Nyeri, Kenya masses, evaluations, etc. are done in terms of Small Christian Communities. We thank God for the SCC member, Father Joseph Healey, a Maryknoll Priest and Lecturer on Small Christian Community at Tangaza University College, who has worked hard to form many people into an awareness of the significance of SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AS A NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH.

“Good evening *wanajumuiyas*, I, Armand Mayumbu Maku with my brothers and sisters *wanajumuiyas* in the *Jumuiya* of St. Padri Pio, St Monica Parish, Kitengela, Machakos Diocese.”



A Presentation on “Small Christian Communities as An Approach to New Evangelization” by Sr. Mary Nzilani at the 19th Interdisciplinary Theological Session at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA).

“We have visited the Small Christian Community Facebook Page and posted our request. Kindly help us buy at least 100 bags of maize (corn) for members who are dying after a recent tribal war that has displaced a number of people and for those suffering through the drought in Baringo.

St. Anne SCC-----10,000/=
 St. Joseph Catholic Parish-----10,000/=
 Other SCCs-----10,000/=
 Total collections-----30,000/=
 Request-----70,000/=

Thanking you in advance.
 Chairman Cornelius Arap
 Catholic Diocese of Eldoret

Food for thought for SCCs members during Lent. “Do you read the *Bible* as often as you check your cellphone?” Pope Francis asks.

On the first Sunday of Lent, Pope Francis said if we want to fight against the temptation of sin, we must be familiar with the Word of God – treating the *Bible* more like how we treat our cellphone. “During the forty days of Lent, as Christians we are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and address the spiritual battle against evil with the power of the Word of God,” he said on March 5. “For this you have to become familiar with the *Bible*, read it often, meditate on it, assimilate it.” “Someone said: “What would happen if we treated the *Bible* like we treat our cellphone? If we always carried it with us; or at least the small pocket-sized Gospel, what would happen?” Pope Francis spoke to pilgrims before leading the Angelus in St. Peter’s Square, drawing a stark comparison between the attention we give our cellphones and the attention we give Scripture, for example, always taking it with us, and going back if we forget it at home. “You forget your mobile phone – oh! I do not have it, I go back to look for it. If only you read the messages of God contained in the *Bible* as we read the messages of the phone...” he said. “And, please, do not forget – do not forget! – What would happen if we treated the *Bible* like we treat our cellphone. Think about this. The *Bible* can always be with us, close to us!”

“Below the parish level Vatican documents and Pope Francis himself use the term ‘family communities’ that can be understood in different senses including Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

In commenting on contemporary USA in his book *Strangers in a Strange Land: Living the Catholic Faith in a Post-Christian World*, American Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia Archdiocese states:

It’s really going to be the family that’s going to be the primary tool that God will use to evangelize, beginning with their children of course. But then families associating together in smaller groups, support groups of one another will be very important in the future as well. As parishes are supposed to be, but they’re institutions now rather than support groups. Secondly, find ways for those families to network in some circumstances, for instance in a parish, right?

Charles Chaput in John Allen, "Philly's Chaput on a Post-Christian Culture, 'Amoris', and More," CRUX, 2 March, 2017, CRUX Website, retrieved 5 March, 2017, <https://cruxnow.com/.../phillys-chaput-post-christian-culture...>

Chaput's analysis is right, but he doesn't go far enough. These small support groups could be dynamic SCCs in the parish that are a "communion of families." Then the parish becomes a "communion of SCCs."

From Ian Freestone in Australia:

"For over 20 years I have been leading the 'Ruach' Network of House Churches based in Australia. BCCs /SCCs have been significant in informing my own ministry. I am presently studying/writing on 'animation' as a model of leadership and am trying to find resources that would help in presenting a theology of animation -- a concept that is more understood in Catholic expression than Protestant Evangelicalism (my own background). I am familiar with 'animator'/'animation' because of my adult education background and the role of action research (especially in the 80s and 90s), but it is not a model that has found traction or usage in the Protestant West (as far as I am aware). I think it is a term that well describes the role of House Church leaders and I think it could be given a much broader application in Protestantism."

In an interview in the March, 2017 issue of *The Catholic Mirror*, Bishop Rodrigo Mejia, SJ states:

1. In describing the growth of the Catholic Church in Kenya: "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) have been given a priority and every parish has established SCCs."
2. From its beginning in 1988 the Kenyan Lenten Campaign helped a lot in the establishment of SCCs and to create an awareness on issues of justice and peace.
3. "My book in Swahili on SCCs -- *Kanisa la Kimazingira* -- consists of real experiences in parishes."

As we read the "signs of the times," new types of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) emerge on college campuses. The Aquinas Institute, the Catholic Campus Ministry at Princeton University, New Jersey, USA has developed the Joan of Arc Ministry that is a welcoming and confidential space to openly discuss the intersections of Catholic faith, sexuality and gender identity. All are welcome!

From Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: "After my trip to Nairobi I had organized a seminar here. First I met the parish priest, the chairperson of the parish and the sisters of the three religious congregations in Kisarawe Parish. Five SCCs members attended as well as one priest and four sisters. I used the objects like the ones in the SCCs Course in Tangaza and added a *jembe* 😊 (= the *Bible*). This process will be on going until we animate the new way of sharing the WORD OF GOD in our parish."

Felista Vuyanzi is a dedicated SCC member in Nairobi, Kenya. In this

month's "Poll:" "The best part of my Small Christian Community is:" ... she answered: "Prayer, reflection and Faith-sharing grounds me." She comments: "On Sunday the priests gives a ten minute homily on the Scripture Readings. In the middle of the week in our SCC we spend a half hour sharing our reflections on the same Scripture readings and connect them to our faith and life. The sharing of our SCC members is very rich indeed."

Today, the Third Sunday of Lent, has the theme "Environmental Conservation and Protection" in the 2017 Kenyan Lenten Campaign. In the context of the present drought and famine especially in Northern Kenya and the Gospel of St. John on "water," one Reflection Question is: "How are we, as Small Christian Communities, concerned about the environment?"

I have a tradition at the end of each SCCs Course in all our Nairobi colleges of posting the "Final Annotated Syllabus" (with hyperlinks) on our SCCs Website (<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>) as a permanent, retrievable record of the course.

Hekima University College

Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA)

Nairobi, Kenya

Final Annotated Syllabus of One Credit Elective Course, Two hours per week for seven weeks, Lecture Format, Pastorally Oriented (January to March, 2017).

Wednesdays 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in Seminar Room 1.

"Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today" (THE1410)

The PDF version of is available at:

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../412-final-annota...>

or

http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../final_syllabus_c...

Any comments and updates are welcome.



SCCs Class at Hekima University College, Nairobi, Kenya.

“Three quarters of the seminarians in my SCCs Classes in Nairobi, Kenya do not know the full meaning of the acronym AMECEA. Do you?”

At the AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya in July, 2011, Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, pointed out that one of the drawbacks for the solidarity of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa is that many Catholics on the grassroots do not easily see the link between AMECEA (that comes across as a big organization of Catholic bishops at the top) and the 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 just an institution of the bishops.” *Seed 23: 8-9* (August-September 2011), p. 9.

“Today I spoke with a Kenyan seminarian studying in Second Theology at Hekima College, Nairobi. He visits the SCCs on Sunday afternoons in the parish where his Formation House is located. When I asked him about the Small Christian Community Masses (Jumuiya Masses) in the homes of SCC members, he said: “They are just like the Sunday Masses in the Parish Church.” So sad. Why don't priests understand that “SCCs as a New Pastoral Model of Church” means that the masses in the homes in the neighborhood are different. They are more participatory and include Shared Homilies.”

Response from Alloys Nyakundi: “Priests should understand that in the *Jumuiya* Mass the lay people should take a lion share in the mass celebration unlike mass at the church where the lay people only listen to the priest. This is a great challenge and I have seen it in my rural home where the priest does not give the lay people any participatory chance in the mass.”

“Peace of our Lord be with the Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team. There's no rain at all and people and animals are starving without food and water. Kindly save us, *wanajumuiya*. I talked to the Coordinator of SCCs in Malindi Catholic Diocese and he said even his budget of SCCs is in a mess. It is empty. We have contributions on our own, but we fail to buy maize and beans for the needy. Any support you put in our way will help.

Daniel Michael Womema
Chairperson, St. Jude SCC
St. Mary's Parish
Catholic Diocese of Malindi.”

Responses:

“Blessings to you and the Eastern Africa Training Team of Small Christian Communities. We have received a helping hand of Kshs.10,000/= from a brother and a good neighbor Gizamba Godfrey from the Catholic Diocese of Soroti, Uganda. May God bless him and all who jointly united to prayerfully to reach us. I thank you Father Joseph Healey through the Small Christian Communities Facebook page. This is indeed showing solidarity in God's love and a challenge to learn and do it as Godfrey wrote *One hand washes another* so wonderfully. We still have no rains and the situation is worse despite our efforts with the Coordinator of Small Christian Communities in the Catholic of Malindi. Any contribution from the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya* will be highly appreciated.

Wishing you God's special blessings.

Daniel Micheal Womema
Chairperson, St. Jude SCC
St. Mary's Parish.

P.S. We have sent special thanks to the Catholic Diocese of Soroti in respect.”

“Thank you so much. you have a long way to go. In Nairobi we are expecting rain even as I write now we feel with you at heart we are ready to send Kshs. 5,000/= through Mpesa Please indicate the number. This is a contribution from our parishioners of St. Stephen Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Nairobi. We pray for you. Sincerely at heart. Celestine Ndwayo.”

From Mwanajumuiya Moses Muira: “I have been reading a 2002 handbook on Catholic charismatic renewal service, and discovered that they have a section on prayer meeting. This has given me an insight about the integration of many Catholic movements. The concept of SCCs can easily be borrowed and used in other church movements. Jesus and the early church used the SCC as their centers of Evangelization. Even as we join and participate in other church movements and activities, let's not shy off bringing up the idea of the SCC.”

Response: “As an example: Right now the Kenyatta University Chaplaincy Center (KUCC) has 28 volunteer Apostolic Groups (some of which are movements in the Catholic Church). Many use a small group model of prayer and reflection similar to a SCC. Some groups have lectionary-based Faith-sharing/Gospel-based Faith-sharing.”

At a 22-25 March, 2017 conference of African Catholic leaders in Rome entitled “African Christian Theology: Memories and Mission for the 21st Century,” it was pointed out that there are 122 million Pentecostals and 110 million Evangelicals⁹²⁷ in Sub-Saharan

⁹²⁷ American priest Father Dwight Longenecker, who served as a Anglican priest before becoming a Catholic priest, points out that one of the attractions of Evangelicals is an emphasis on fellowship:

By “fellowship,” Evangelicals mean the warm, family atmosphere that their churches enjoy. Evangelical congregations tend to be smaller and to attract people from the same socioeconomic bracket. Consequently there is a strong family atmosphere. In smaller communities the congregation is often made up of an extended family or tribe. These social conditions make for a strong and sympathetic community where fellowship, loyalty and mutual caring is strong. Catholic communities, on the other hand, are usually larger, more diverse, and less focussed on fellowship. Catholics find their fellowship in smaller sub groups within a parish community. Therefore when they gather for worship it can sometimes seem impersonal and unwelcoming.

Dwight Longenecker, “The Power and Problems of Pentecostalism,” *Crux*, 31 March 2017, *Crux* Website, retrieved 1 April, 2017, <https://cruxnow.com/commentary/2017/03/31/power-problems-pentecostalism>

These “small sub groups” can be seen as SCCs.

Africa. Their combined total of 232 million outpaces the number of African Catholics at 200 million. Obiageli Nzenwa, a Nigerian Catholic lay woman and independent human resources consultant in Abuja, Nigeria, said that this Pentecostal/Evangelical boom forces the Catholic Church in Africa to “wake up.” She said that the Catholic Church has no real sense of community, and that a person can leave the congregation without being noticed. There is a lack of “deep, interpersonal relationships in the Catholic Church.” She encourages “community groupings” [a Small Christian community model] beginning with Mass and including *Bible* study, discussion of pressing issues and concluding with light refreshments.

John and Cindy Korb, former Maryknoll lay missionaries in Kitale, Kenya report on one type of SCC in the USA. In their parish in New York State they belong to a *Bible* Study Group on the *Acts of the Apostles*.

Four important AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) quotations on SCCs:

1. The AMECEA Study Conference on “Deeper Evangelization in the Third Millennium” took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2002.” 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 of the Major Seminaries and houses of formation of both men and women.” 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.”

2. 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.” [1] He recommended the introduction of Mobile SCCs Training Teams to facilitate workshops and seminars on SCCs as was being done in Malawi.

[1] 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.

3. In conversations over the years with two Secretary Generals of the Uganda Episcopal Conference – Father Joseph Obunga and Msgr. John Kauta – both felt that the best pastoral solution for developing SCCs in Uganda was not setting up an office at the National Catholic Secretariat in Kampala, but to set up Mobile SCCs Training Teams to visit the dioceses, seminaries and pastoral centers.

4. The Online Digital Version of the book *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa* states: “Here are 21 future challenges, priorities 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. No. 3 is: “Train SCC leaders/animators/facilitators/coordinators in animation, facilitation and coordination skills. Set up Mobile SCC Training Teams on the Eastern Africa, national, diocesan, deanery, parish and outstation levels. Use the mass media and the social media like the internet, radio, and TV for SCCs training programs.”

All four quotations can be found in the free, online Ebook on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” at: http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../pdf/Build_new.pdf

Father Laurenti Magesa recommends that the best papers from our SCCs Class at Hekima University College in Nairobi, Kenya should be posted on our SCCs Website. Here is:

"A New Way of Being Class: Reimagining Theological Education in Africa Today"

By Temple Anuforo, SJ

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../pdf/reimagining.pdf>

Temple emphasizes that we need to inculturate the "method" of teaching theology Using African Conversation Theology or African Palaver Theology because at the end of the day what really matters is not content but process. Then he also demonstrates very well how the content of African Christian Contextual Theology today is:

- a. Rooted in personal and community experience.
- b. Based on grassroots research and analysis.

I feel Temple breaks new ground when he gives examples of the local nitty-gritty context of African Conversation Theology or African Palaver Theology -- Connecting Classroom and Mission Ground. This relates to the “new ground” on which the theologians can stand.

Hopefully African Conversation Theology or African Palaver Theology as a distinct theological method/methodology or process will create new inculturated and contextualized African content.

We hope that this SCCs Facebook Page can be a forum for conversation, discussion, exchange, sharing and analysis. Our question today is what is the best term to use for SCCs that are over 100 persons such as at Kenyatta University and in sections of Meru Diocese, Kenya. Some suggestions: "SCCs Zone," "SCCs Cluster," "SCCs Campus," "SCCs Outstation," "Mother SCC." Add your own suggestions. NOTE: These "larger" SCCs divide into small communities of 15-20 members for *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*.

As a "new way of being church" Small Christian Communities have a "new language." I have questions about the expression “Small Groups.” From my visits to college campuses in Eastern Africa and the USA the expression “Small Group” can be used in so many different ways and cover so many different extra-curricular activities and clubs from cooking to Yoga to politics to singing to aerobics to philosophy to evangelization. My experience is that “small community” and especially “Small Christian Community” give a specific identity and focus.



St. Dominic SCCs members meet for a photo before animating the Palm Sunday Mass at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya.

One of the choices in this month's SCC Poll (<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>) -- "Communion of Communities" Model of Church (in Swahili "ushirika wa jumuiya ndogo ndogo za Kikristo") is very important theologically and practically (pastorally). The Sunday morning mass in the parish church is the communion (union) of the different SCCs in the neighborhood (geographical area of the parish). With the focus on this Sunday morning communion, this is why it is not advisable to have separate, individual masses in the SCCs on Sunday afternoon.

From Ben Wanjala: "Today Friday, 14 April. 2017 being Good Friday we members of St. Kizito SCC, Waruku, Nairobi Kenya started the Way of the Cross from Waruku at the bridge at 8:30 a.m. heading to St. Austin Parish. On the way other members from different SCCs and the clergy and religious joined us. We reached at the parish at 12:30 p.m. where the main Way of the Cross performed by the youth started at 1:00 p.m. at the main entrance of the church to St. Mary's field. The service for Good Friday ended in the church at 5:30 p.m.

This has been a long tradition in St. Austin Parish. Members of St. Kizito SCC were joined by Wanajumuiya from St. Charles Lwanga SCC, St. Josephine Bakhita SCC, St. Peter Mwamba SCC and St. John SCC at different places along the route. Photos from past "Ways of the Cross" are found on the Photo Gallery of the SCCC Website (<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/photo-gallery.html>)



Denis Misiko of St. Charles Luanga SCC, Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya carries the cross on Good Friday during the Way of the Cross on 14/04/2017 on the way to St. Austins Church Lavington.



Grace, a member of St. Kizito SCC, Waruku, Nairobi, Kenya is baptised at the Holy Saturday Vigil at St. Austin's Church.

"My Responsibility Towards Elections 2017"

Message from the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC) Commission of the Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya (RSCK): "Find attached a new initiative of AOSK and RSCK, entitled "My Responsibility Towards Elections 2107," that encourages and assists preparation for Kenya's upcoming August, 2017 elections. The document can be printed with one page on each side; then the sheets are to be cut in the middle. It is... hoped that religious communities, Small Christian Communities SCCs), parishes, schools, and other organizations will print multiple copies and share them with members."

"My Responsibility Towards Elections 2107," will appear weekly until the elections. It is sent in .pdf format (rather than in MS Word .docx) to help avoid problems posed by printers that have not been set for the A4 paper sold in Kenya and most of the world. The document should print well, regardless of whether A4 paper or Letter paper (the U.S. standard, slightly wider and slightly shorter than A4) is being used.

If your device cannot open a .pdf file, it is time for a free download of Adobe Acrobat Reader . (Click on the preceding blue hyperlink.) It is usually better to untick the three options offered on the web page.

NOTE: The link to these documents have been sent to SCC members by Email.

May our SCC members be active in civic education programs in Kenya in the next four months.

“The First Reading of today's Catholic Mass (Second Sunday of Easter, Year A, 23 April, 2017) is one of the fundamental, core *New Testament* texts for SCCs:

Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47:

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

“We can always learn new things about SCCs in Eastern Africa. In the exam in our SCCs Course at Tangaza College in Nairobi in March, 2017 to the question:

Describe in detail three Methods of *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible--Life Connections* in SCCs in Africa. **NOTE:** Also called Lectionary-based Faith-sharing/Gospel-based Faith-sharing.

A seminarian answered: "The Mantra Method." This is when a certain verse or word or image from the Gospel Text is repeated often -- even memorized -- during the day or during the week so we can memorize it/remember it/interiorize it/appropriate it on a deeper level. He gave the example of the verse "I am the bread of life" (*John 6:35*). This is linked to the Lumko Method of repeating verses of the *Bible*. This is popular especially in rural areas of Africa where SCC members cannot read and with little children such as a PMC small community.”

Father Stephen Mbugua, the Parish Priest at St. Paul's Catholic University Chapel in Nairobi, Kenya, reports that there are 11 YSCCs in the Residence Halls of the University of Nairobi. There is a Youth Mass on Sunday at 11.30 a.m. There are two Alumni YSCCs that meet on Sunday after mass.

From Father Zakaria Kashinje, OSA in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: “Our mother parish of Mavurunza (Immaculate Conception Parish) has 54 SCCs. Most of the members meet on Saturday Morning. In fact the thousands of SCCs in Dar e Salaam have a unique style. Most meet early (6 or 6:30 a.m. or 7 a.m.) on Saturday mornings. The men are few.”



YSCCs Workshop in Makindu Parish, Machakos Diocese, Kenya.

From Denis Misiko: “Today was a good day for us of St. Charles Lwanga SCC in Nairobi. We had time with Mwanajumuiya Padri Joseph Healey and a chance to share his birthday cake together. It was great indeed. We shared the Word of God and two of us confirmed plans for our wedding days. We are grateful for being part of this Small Christian Community.”



Archbishop Zacchaeus Okoth receives the first copy of our new 80-page booklet *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training*

Handbook for Facilitators during the official launch in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya in May, 2017

I begin all my talks with the words: "I am a student, I am a learner." In the last week our AMECEA Team -- members of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team-- learned a great deal about SCCs in Kakamega Diocese and Kisumu Archdiocese in Kenya. We encountered the " Church on the ground" that is the first choice in our May, 2017 Poll on " The best part of my Small Christian Community is:" Go to: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/>

I am Fr. Laily Fernando in Sri Lanka. I am the National Director of the Small Christian Communities Program. Our Chairman is Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando. There are 12 directors for each diocese. We have four national meetings a year. Our office does several training programs for lay leaders and clergy. We are following Asian Integral Pastoral Approach to developing SCCs in Sri Lanka. This is in collaboration with Asia Bishops conferences. From 1995 we have been successful in developing a process of making a difference in the Catholic Church.

"AMECEA Strategic Pastoral Plan 2014-2024." AMECEA Pastoral Department, "Phase One -- AMECEA Pastoral Department Action Plan 2015-2018" under Objective 1: "Revitalize and utilize SCCs as modes of evangelization at the grassroots". Two goals:

1. "Train personnel to run SCCs."
2. "Develop SCCs resource materials for use by SCCs."

To implement these recommendations the AMECEA Pastoral Department has published: Chimombo, Emmanuel, Joseph G. Healey, Rita Ishengoma, Rose Musimba, Febian P. Mulenga and Alphonse C. L. Omolo, (eds.), *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators*, Nairobi: AMECEA Pastoral Department and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2017. Cost: 200/= Kenyan Shillings (or \$2) at the AMECEA Secretariat, Nairobi and at Paulines Publications Africa Bookstores.



Online learning during the SCCs Workshop at the Apostles of Jesus in Nairobi, Kenya in May, 2017.

“A recent report on revitalizing Catholic parishes in the USA in the context of discipleship development stresses the importance of small groups, or Faith-sharing groups, as highly effective in fostering an individual's spiritual development. This Support Group Model is very positive, but different from our Eastern Africa SCC model that stresses Bible Reflection connected to daily life (gospel-based Faith-sharing) and the community's development.”

“From the SCCs Archives:

Bishop Christopher Mwoleka, the deceased bishop of Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania who was the founder of SCCs in Tanzania, already saw this pastoral challenge in the 1980s when he identified the pressing need for an effective and inculturated method of Bible Reflection in Eastern Africa that goes beyond the small prayer group model. Just as Africa needs an "appropriate technology" for economic development, the Catholic Church in Africa needs an "appropriate methodology" for Bible Reflection that connects the Bible to the real issues of our daily life and includes personal and communal Faith-sharing. He called this "finding the African bait."¹

¹ 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.

“Two cases of children with disabilities who they need wheelchairs have been made from the SCCs in Meru Diocese: one from Stt. Victor SCC in Michaka Parish and one from St. John SCC in Mbaranga Parish. Kindly give your possible support from the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya* and it will be appreciated.”⁹²⁸

“We as Holy Cross Youth Dandora parish regret to announce the death of our secretary Mwanajumuiya Evelyn Nyaituga's mum which occurred last Sunday after a sudden illness the burial will be this weekend in Nyamira county please remember her family in your prayers along with the ongoing burial plans blessed evening!”

On Sunday, 28 May, 2017 we had a follow-up SCCs workshop (now planned for every six months) at Consolata Shrine Community, Nairobi, Kenya. We discussed the challenge of how to meet every week, not just twice a month. The SCCs formation focused on the importance of being Lectionary Catholics and Lectionary Jumuiyas. Two SCCs came up with this creative pastoral solution to meet weekly and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday: twice a month (every two weeks) they would meet physically to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday. Twice a month (the alternating every two weeks) they would have a 30-minute Conference Call called “Sharing on the Gospel” to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday.

In traveling around Eastern Africa we realize the many challenges of internet connectivity and the difficulty of downloading large files on personal computers, in cybercafes, etc. So here is the message that you will find on our SCCs Website under Ebooks: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/eb.../47-ebooks-.html> "Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa." NOTE: This is the SCCs Website Online 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 as of 1 June, 2017. The complete book is found on the Ebooks page or by clicking "here." The book is also available as Part 1 and Part 2 for those with poor internet connection or challenges in downloading the full version. Part 1 can be downloaded by clicking "here" while Part 2 can be downloaded by clicking "here." To order the printed paperback book click "here." NOTE: On the website the words like "here" become hyperlinks and go directly to the text of the Ebook.

Responses:

1. Cyprian Binaka from Nairobi, Kenya writes: "It is a great step to have this resource on SCCs in Eastern Africa online."
2. Peter Mbuchi from Nairobi, Kenya writes: "I downloaded this latest version of the Ebook yesterday and will circulate it as an attachment to those who need it. The Ebook is an amazing narrative on SCCs in Eastern Africa as the "Church on the Move."

“One characteristic of being a lectionary-based Catholic is to choose a particular word or phrase or verse (or an image) -- called a *mantra* -- from the daily readings, and especially the Sunday readings, to use as a *Bible mantra* or prayer *mantra* or action verse during the day

⁹²⁸ Two members of St. Peter SCC in Kariokoo Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese read this message on the SCCs Facebook Page and contributed \$290 each to buy the wheelchairs.

and during the week. Such a particular word or phrase or verse from the Gospel of the following Sunday can nourish and sustain a person or a small community all day and all during the week. SCCs in Kenya call this the *nenola uhai* (Swahili for “word of life”) that is the guiding word for the entire week. Starting on Monday SCC members can prepare for their weekly *Bible Service* in their SCC in the middle of the week and for the next Sunday Mass or Sunday Service Without a Priest (led usually by the catechist). For example, next Sunday -- 11 June, 2017 -- is Most Holy Trinity Sunday. One mantra is *John 3: 16*: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.”

From Small Christian Communities Meru Diocese: “SCCs’ existence in the parish has gotten a wider and more holistic sense touching all aspects of parish life including social development, justice and peace priorities.”

From Lamia Etienne in Mauritius: “Hello friends! I am still grateful to have acquired knowledge and spiritual nourishment from this SCCs since I was in Tangaza. Thanks to Father JGH for this. I am happy that this model is more and more active and on the move. I have put into practice in my ministries what I have gained from the SCCs Course. Enjoy all and be blessed.”

From Rene Reid in USA: "I am the director of Catholic Church Reform Int'l based in the USA and we have a scheduled Zoom call set up with small faith communities for Saturday, June 10 from various parts of the world. So far, we are connecting an SCC (New Zealand) with an IEC (U.S.) with a small faith community in (Belgium) with a CEB in (Mexico). This will take place on Saturday, June 10 (June 11 in New Zealand) via Zoom <https://zoom.us/j/2429500175> based on various times:

We would love to connect our communities with some already involved in the “twinning” project in the SCCs in Eastern Africa. I’ve included Nairobi in the time chart hoping that you might be able to bring in one or two SCCs from your region. If you’re not familiar with Zoom, it is as simple as clicking on the link I’ve included above: <https://zoom.us/j/2429500175>. The purpose of the meeting is to introduce various small faith communities to others in various parts of the world and to give them an opportunity to share how each functions and to learn from each other. This could either be several people gathered in one room or individuals plugging into the Zoom call each from his/her own computer. We can handle up to 50 connections.

From Catholic layman Peter Mbuchi in Nairobi, Kenya who does not just “talk the talk.” He “walks the walk”: "Our Parish Priest has read and positively appraised the new booklet *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa: A Training Handbook for Facilitators*. I bought two books for each of the eight parishes within our Makadara Deanery in Nairobi Archdiocese. Each priest will get one copy and the lay person responsible for Small Christian Communities one copy. Our Parish Priest promised to insure that every Small Christian Community Coordinator within our parish will have a copy of the handbook paid for by the parish." Oyee!

While traveling in the USA I am visiting small communities of different religious faiths and denominations such as the Pentecostal Churches and the Jehovah's Witnesses. One fact is striking: They do not have the sacrament of the Eucharist that is so important in our Catholic faith and practice. This is pertinent as we reflect on next Sunday's Gospel on the "Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ."

You are also reminded that one choice in this month's POLL on our SCCs Website is: "interfaith small communities." <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

From Father James Mallon, a priest in Canada: "We have to rethink our models of parish life, from membership-based communities to assemblies of disciples of Jesus who proclaim and share the good news with all peoples. It is not so much that the Church of Jesus Christ has a mission, as that the mission of Jesus Christ has a Church. More and more people are convinced that the basic parish communities are at the heart of parish renewal, where parishioners are enabled to reflect in a personal way on the Word of God, on their faith and on their call to holiness and discipleship of Jesus in their daily lives at the heart of every parish there will be a community of growing, maturing believers."

Mwanajumuiya Sister Rita Ishengoma on the Gospel Reading of next Sunday (2 July, 2017): *Matthew 10:37-42*:

Verse 38: "Whoever does not take up this cross is not worthy of me." Everybody has a cross. Everybody has to know what kind of cross he/she has to carry. To carry one's cross is a must. "Those who does not take up their cross and follow in my steps are not fit to be my disciples," said Jesus. The cross is light and bearable if you take it as God planned. If you do the will of God your cross will take you, said St. Thomas a Kempis. God does not give you a cross that you are not able to carry. God has examined your cross by his eyes. He knows it. He has tried it. It fits you. By his powerful and love it does not weigh one pound more than you can carry.

We read in *Luke 9:23*: And he said to the all: If want to come with me, you must forget your self, take up your cross every every day and follow me." Know your cross now.

Part of living the "SCCs Model of Church" is homilies about SCCs in our daily life. See:

Homily on the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 02/07/2017
By Fr. Lawrence Murori, Diocese of Meru, Kenya

Small Christian Communities are the *loci* to practice this attitude of Jesus: hospitality and welcoming. In the Small Christian Communities' weekly meetings in the homes of Christians, we encounter several men and women of Shunem welcoming us in their homes to share the Word of God in their homestead. After the sharing of the Word of God they give us a cup of tea. Those times when I had masses in the homes of Christians I several times encountered the reality of Shunem: "Elisha, welcome."

Finally, Small Christian Communities are the places the Christians can encourage one another to take up the cross of Jesus and follow him, to be worthy of Jesus and to practice the Christian virtue of hospitality.

From Tony Llanes: "This evening I meet some leaders who begin to journey with their neighbors as a Small Christian Community. Their struggle is how to bring them all to the Catholic Church and be present and participate in all its activities. I told them to first become a good neighbor and much later they would begin to appreciate the spirit of goodness

and welcome. Then their understanding of the church would be much deeper than "churchy" activities, structures and policies.”

Comment: “This is a very good approach -- to start by living Christianity on the local level neighbor to neighbor. Thus the meaning of the choice in the Poll – ‘Church in the neighborhood.’”

As we do weekly lectionary-based Faith-sharing in our SCCs, I hope our SCCs folks are following the Catholic Church’s liturgical plan where we are systematically going through the Gospel of St. *Matthew* (Year A) chapter by chapter. My scripture mantra for the following 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time: “I will give you rest.” (*Matthew* 11:28).

With the advanced information technology there are many free, online digital tools to help you access the Bible quickly and easily. As a lectionary-based Catholic you can receive the Daily Scripture readings of Mass on your smartphone, tablet, laptop computer, desktop computer, etc. You can put an app on the front page of your home screen. You can set a timer so that the Daily Scripture readings appear on the front page of your home screen at 12 a.m. (midnight) of each new day or at the exact time that you wake up in the morning. You can receive the readings as a daily email message with a link to a webpage. Commentaries, Bible reflections, special prayers and information about the saint of the day are included.

Welcome.

"Daily Scripture-based Faith-sharing" is one choice in the July-August, 2017 POLL on "The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." Vote here: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/>

Cardinal Joseph Tobin, the Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, USA at a Catholic Church meeting in Orlando, Florida, USA in July, 2017:

If community is so essential to a full Christian life, how can we help this happen? Can you name some ways that your parish has been able to offer real community to people? If you are already in a small community, God bless you. And I know it is very important. Perhaps it is your family. Or a special circle of friends. Or co-workers in the vineyard? Does it remain inclusive and open to others.

In discussions here in the USA I have discovered that there are at least three meanings of the expression popularized by Pope Francis: **the marginated** (17 hits or results in our free, online ebook) **and those on the peripheries of society** (19 hits or results in our free, online ebook).

1. By far the most common meaning is (alphabetically) battered women, economically poor, excluded, homeless, immigrants who do not have the proper papers, migrants, outsiders, people and situations in pain and suffering, physically challenged, single mothers, wounded.
2. The second meaning is the “nones,” those who have distanced themselves from the Catholic Church, those who have drifted away, those who have little faith, those who indifferent, those who have never really given thought to God.

3. The third meaning is those people who are separated from, or alienated from, the Catholic Church for a variety of reasons. American Catholic lay woman and campus minister Katie Diller describes them as "imperfect disciples:"

When I commented recently about calling "imperfect disciples" to service, I was thinking of young adults who, like St. Matthew the Tax Collector, may not be living according to Church teachings at the time of their invitation.

1. Young adults who may not attend Mass every Sunday.
2. Young adults may cohabitant with their significant other.
3. Young adults may support movements that the Catholic Church hierarchy is wary of (LGBTQ pride, etc.)

Often, young adults do not seek to hide this divergence from "orthodoxy." Older adults who are called to serve in lay leadership positions may be better at hiding their divergence from church teachings. This may be the use of birth control, lack of almsgiving or concern for the poor, waste or abuse of resources, unethical business practices, racial or sexual discrimination, pornography use (which amounts to support for human trafficking), etc. Hidden sins!

We are all "imperfect disciples," but young people often wear their sins on their sleeves, and therefore are excluded from lay leadership opportunities. I say call them to service anyway and when I say "CALL", I mean actively invite, not passively hope that someone stumbles in the door!⁹²⁹

This third meaning covers a whole variety of people who cannot receive the sacraments like people who have not had their marriage sacramentalized, divorced and remarried Catholics, people in same sex marriages, second wives in polygamous unions.

From Peter Mbichu: "St. Anne SCC in Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Buruburu 1 in Nairobi, Kenya had its weekly session in our house last evening. 11 of the 14 members belonging to this SCC attended. All women except me, no couples except my wife Mary and I. I decided to become a keen observer. Taking the shorter form of the Gospel of next week, *Matthew* 13:1-9 instead of *Matthew* 13:1-23, the members delved into the meaning and application of the parable of the sower. During the session, I fantasized how wonderful it will be when indeed SCCs in Africa are networked and can share faith experiences. SCCs are the "Church on the Move." I am reassured by what I witnessed yesterday: democratic, open, real life application of the Holy Scriptures to daily life. The Church in Africa is alive and well.

⁹²⁹ Katie Diller, "Catholic Standards for Excellence Forum – a Leadership Roundtable Initiative, retrieved on 12 July, 2017,"

http://catholicstandardsforum.org/forum/topics/imperfect-disciple?commentId=6426509%3AComment%3A23314&xg_source=msg_com_forum



The SCC Networking Team met at Donum Dei Conference Center, Karen, Nairobi to discuss on how we can link SCCs within Africa itself and to the outside continents.

The new book *Everyone Leads: How to Revitalize the Catholic Church* by Chris Lowney has an interesting section called “Hey, America, Let's Catch up with Kenya.” It focuses on the Catholic Church's new culture of leadership and describes Small Christian Communities (SCCs) or *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo* (JNNK) in Swahili in St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Nairobi, Kenya. The leadership ministry of the local lay leaders (men and women) such as Lucy Kungu, Peter Karanja and Samuel Waweru is highlighted. Co-responsibility in the church is exemplified in deeds, not just talked about in words. The section ends with: “Just as Africa conceived the *jumuiya* to build the church within its culture, we in USA too must find imaginative ways to unleash each Catholic's gifts.”

From the "Small Groups Newsletter":

<http://www.smallgroups.com>

This insightful book describes concretely the SCCs Model of Church in Eastern Africa and how SCCs are a pastoral structure that empowers lay people and unleashes African lay Catholics’ gifts.

Just this past week in one of my Facebook groups for small-group ministry point people, someone asked the question: Are you in a church of small groups, or a church with small groups? In 2001, *Building a Church of Small Groups* was released, and we learned the story of Willow Creek 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.

Over 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 churches are clear upfront: small groups are the core of our ministry and the way we develop disciples. If your church is ready to transition to a more focused, holistic approach to small-group ministry, this week's featured Training Tool will serve as an excellent resource. For a free sample from this resource, read "Start Where You Are."

In Eastern Africa we could ask: Are we a church of small communities, or a church with small communities?

Some comments:

Ben Wanjala: "We are a church with small communities."

Haile Adalo: "Yes! We started a Christian life from personal life and Small Family Communities to Small Christian Communities, then to Christian Church Community building. Today we focus on Small Christian Community *Bible* sharing and prayer. This has really inspired us. The good news of our Ethiopian and Eritrean SCCs is the arrival of a chaplain from Ethiopian Capuchin Congregation to lead us in South Africa. 'Church' will grow by the SCC spiritual movement worldwide.

Rita Muthayi: "Yes, we are a church with Small Christian Communities in grassroots evangelisation."

"Emerging Models for Community Life and Leadership"
Fall, 2017 Teleconferences Series

Innovative models offering hope and promise for a way of being and doing church that provides all Roman Catholics with the opportunity to participate fully in church life and leadership. Efforts to renew parish structures and ministerial leadership.

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More information such as dates, times, call-in information, and optional reading materials to be provided.

November 8, 2017

Fr. Robert D. Duch

"The Lobinger Model for Parish Leadership and Ministry"

NOTE: Background information on retired Bishop Fritz Lobinger of South Africa can be found in the free, online Ebook:

Joseph Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*. The Online Digital Version, regularly revised and updated from the 2012 print version, is available as a free, online Ebook containing 1105 pages as of 22 June, 2019 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Build_new.pdf

Responses:

Using the "Search" feature in this free, online Ebook the word "Lobinger" comes up 55 times, for example: "A key for Lobinger is that the ordination of [married] 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) [in the local communities] become a leadership team and the traditionally trained priests become formators."

As one challenging response to the "Eucharistic Famine" in Africa: "The Lobinger Model is an innovative model rooted in the particular needs and talents of local communities. It addresses the theological conundrum presented by the priest shortage by expanding the role of lay leaders and ordaining them into service. The Lobinger model was developed by Bishop Fritz Lobinger who, early on, was instrumental in developing the pastoral model of the Small Christian Communities -- including a particular model of Bible study with central roles for lay leadership in liturgical services, catechesis and the social gospel. He ministered in regions of South Africa where there were few priests. He recognized the enormous faith and talents of lay people in the communities under his care and sought to empower them to carry out the fullness of sacramental life in their local community. You can learn more about his model by reading his interview at: <http://www.uscatholic.org/ordainelders>"

Lobinger suggest a unique approach that is a somewhat reduced version of ordination: of the three *munera* (gifts or powers) conferred by the priesthood, it would be only the *munus sanctificandi*, the power to sanctify, not the powers to govern (*regendi*) or teach (*docendi*), that would be bestowed on these local elders by the bishop.

It is very important that we keep giving the Vatican direct feedback and comments. Here is what Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakindi wrote on the Vatican Facebook Page:

I am recommending that the Catholic Church help youth/young adults to establish Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs or *Jumuiya za Vijana*) that will enable the youth to meet weekly and share the gospel of the coming Sunday. Also through this, the church will be able to create an avenue for the youth to share their own experiences as youth because as I work to strengthen Youth Small Christian Communities (*Jumuiya ya Vijana*), I have realized that the youth do not what to attend the same Small Christian Communities with adults, more so there parents. The youth want there own Small Christian Communities (*Jumuiyas*).

We congratulate two members of our AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team-- Father Lawrence Murori and Mr. Alloys Nyakundi -- who are preparing to travel from Kenya to USA. They will be studying about SCCs at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. Hongera. Pongezi.

The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops have called upon Kenyans to pray for "Just, Fair, Peaceful and Credible Elections." Catholics in particular are urged to pray a Novena, that is nine days of prayer beginning Sunday, July 30, 2017 to Monday, August 7, 2017.

May our SCC members actively participate.

Yesterday I met Bishop Edgar Moreira da Cunha, SDV, the bishop of Fall River Catholic Diocese, Massachusetts, USA. He was born in Brazil where he grew up with the CEBs. In Fall River he plans to start the "Be My Witness" program presented by RENEW International. It invites all parishioners to become partners in the New Evangelization using parish-based small communities — a proven way to encounter Christ, reawaken faith and motivate missionary outreach. In the first phase during the first six months RENEW International will guide the parish leadership (staff, pastoral councils, and key leaders) through the transformation process with training and consultation. In the second phase in small community members will explore key insights from Pope Francis' "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"). See "Be My Witness," a program of RENEW International. <https://bemywitness.org/en>

Notable Quote:

"I consider RENEW International's parish renewal process to be at the top of the list of the most valuable gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the Catholic Church over the past three decades. By stressing the centrality of small, Faith-sharing communities, RENEW goes to the heart of what the Church must be."

Father Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ

See RENEW International's Website: <https://bemywitness.org/en>



With the Religious Sisters of the Precious Blood who are more interested in Small Christian Communities. After mass in Machakos, Kenya we visited some of the

needy families and shared the joy of the Gospel with them. It is through Small Christian Communities that you are able to identify the needy cases in the Catholic Church and society at large. Jumuiya Oyee.

From Father Lawrence Otieno, MHM in Northwest Cameroon:

“I have been busy with heavy pastoral work in parish of 17 mission stations and two institutions (a health center and prison). It is a period of three months that I have been serving here alone because the parish priest is away for his holiday. I am doing my best to strengthen the faith of my parishioners according the call of the African Bishops through forming and strengthening Small Christian Communities in my parish. I do that by celebrating the Eucharist in SCCs, seminars and listening to stories of the members of these SCCs. I also minister the sacrament of Baptism and other sacraments in these SCCs. Involving the parishioners in the mission of Christ and of the Catholic Church are major objectives of our SCC apostolate. It is great to see many women, children and a small number of men (one or two men) turning up for the SCC weekly meetings. I am very happy for their response.”

From Alloys Nyakundi: “People have really felt the importance of SCCs because most of the activities are done at the SCCs level. I compare our SCC in Eastern Africa with the Kenyan Government where power has devolved to the counties. I see our *jumuiyas* serving as counties in the Catholic Church with big and great roles to perform.. *Jumuiya oyee*.”

From Donna Ciangio:

North American Forum for Small Christian Communities (NAFSCC) Website and Facebook Page (<http://www.nafsc.org>)

"Dioceses [in the USA] are not putting efforts into SCCs in general. They get a program like RENEW and then it fades. There is no vision for SCCs even though it is mentioned in many documents and as a way of catechesis and evangelization. There are many bishops who don't even like RCIA. Very frustrating. I am trying my best to keep up with all I have to do and keep NAFSCC going. We have a Facebook Page, but it is hard to keep up with, so I am thinking about hiring a college kid to post stuff for me. If you want to post stuff or a few words about what you are doing that would be great. Just send to me first."

The website of St. Mark's Catholic Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA has a website with a section: "Daily *Bible* Reading and Prayer:" "A spiritual reflection on the daily mass readings that help cultivate a pattern of daily prayer and a deepening relationship with God."

From Francis Njuguna after the heavy business of voting in the National Elections in Kenya: "I feel like doing an article based on the impact of prayers on the elections outcome. I visited some SCCs where both prayers and the civic education were quite high."

“Members of the SCCs Model of Church are always looking for creative solutions. Take a SCC of Married Couples with Little Children. Finding a baby sitter when the parents go to a SCC meeting is expensive and time consuming. Solution: bring all the little children to the meeting and have them play together in a separate room.”

The last verse of this Gospel (*Matthew* 18:20) -- “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” -- is the Scripture motto of this SCCs Facebook Page.

Online journals are a creative way of promoting the life and ministries of SCCs. *The Journal of Social Encounters* (JSE) is an interdisciplinary online journal with limited copies in print that publishes scholarly, peer-reviewed essays on peace, conflict, and social justice issues in any part of the world. In keeping with this aim the current online issue, is published by CSJE at CUEA in Nairobi, Kenya, in collaboration with the Department of Peace Studies at the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University (CSB/SJU) in Collegeville, Minnesota. While the JSE will publish essays by authors from any country in each issue, some essays by African authors always will be included in each issue so that African scholarship on peace, conflict and social justice will become better known.

Volume 1, Issue 1 (2017) includes "We Create the Path by Walking: The Involvement of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Peacebuilding in Eastern Africa" by Father Joseph Healey. Go to: http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/social_encounters/

From Father Moses Muttai: "Yesterday I had a very fruitful and interesting one day SCC seminar at Mary Immaculate Parish, Limbine, Meru Diocese. More than 500 people attended including men, woman and the youth. Hongera Padri Lawrence, the parish priest and Padri Mawira, the one in charge of *jumuyias* in the parish."

News From Sri Lanka:

- The year 2017 is dedicated to St. Joseph Vaz, the Apostle of Sri Lanka. He has been the pioneer of the Small Christian Communities in Sri Lanka. Following the footsteps of Saint Joseph Vaz, we have many awareness programs and pilgrims where Vaz has lived and served.
- 2017.07.10: the Second National Meeting was held in Mannar Diocese. It was an enlightening experience to the National Team. We have now started to raise understanding about Inter-religious Dialogue. The national meeting was totally dedicated to prompt it with a fruitful talk by Father Tamil Nesan in charge of Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenism. This was main focus of General Assembly 7th held in Bangkok in 2015. We Sri Lankans naturally live in harmony with the other faith people. Ours is a Buddhist country. But there are all four main religious people. Therefore, we need to create a better atmosphere for Christians.
- In Mannar Diocese since 1995 SCCs has grown and created a Small Christian Community culture among the people.



Our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC is today, Tuesday, August 2017 at 9am in Texas; 10am in New Jersey; 4pm in Germany, 3pm in the UK, 2pm in Accra and 5pm in Kenya and Tanzania. We are reflecting on next Sunday, 27 August, 2017, the Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A. The Gospel reading is *Matthew 16:13-20*. I hope everyone has a chance to read this Gospel text ahead of time.

1. From Father Joe Healey: "My mantra is Jesus' question to the Apostles, "Who do you say that I am? This question is contextualized/inculturated to ask: "Who do you Africans say that I am?" "Who do you SCC members say that I am?"

2. From Father John Bosco Odongo: "WOW, I like this Gospel. My mantra is "who do you say that I am?" In this, I feel the call to a deep personal relationship with Jesus. An invitation for me to reflect on my personal journey and experience with Jesus. I can say he has been and he is still my protector, savior, healer, teacher, instructor, friend, brother, proto-ancestor. He is the cornerstone of my life. Without him, I am nothing. Jesus is my all in all."

3. From Mwanajumuiya Sister Rita Kokulamuka: "Who do people say that the son of man is?" (Mt 16-13). Jesus asked his disciples to let them speak and know that people had different views about him. They did not know who is Jesus. What about ourselves? Do we ask ourselves who Jesus means to us? Who is Jesus to me? My God? My Savior. My Father? My everything? Also let us use well the comments others make to speak about us. We can use them as the building block or like a ladder to climb to heaven."

From Mwanajumuiya Father Lawrence Murori: “Wonderful impression that I got yesterday from two of my classmates at Loyola University in New Orleanad, Lousiaa, USA: The two women were impressed by my sharing on SCCs in Kenya and they made a request that we can start one SCC with them in New Orleans, USA. They think that SCCs can be very helpful in the Catholic Church in USA since they will give Catholics them a chance to demonstrate the love of Christ and maturity in faith.”

Report of the 2016-2017 Campus Ministry Program at St. Paul Inside the Walls, Paterson Diocese, New Jersey, USA. Some highlights covering the college students of Fairleigh Dickinson and Drew Universities:

- Eric Munoz, our Campus Minister and/or Student Leaders facilitated 5 Small Christian Communities (SCCs), each meeting once or twice per week.
- Eric and a Student Leader facilitated a SCC specifically for athletes, which averaged weekly attendance of 15 students and two coaches, and resulted in attracting an unbaptized FDU football player to become fully initiated into the Catholic Church.
- Eric ran 5 retreats during the two semesters, each with their own theme and purpose.
- Eric ran 12 service projects during the two semesters including feeding the homeless on the streets of New York City and building houses with Habitat for Humanity.

From the English writer Margaret Hebblethwaite: “Being incapacitated in a wheelchair brought some unexpected blessings. Rather than an obsessive following of the news and searching for the slightest hope that England escape Brexit, she focused on a daily reading of the Gospels especially the Passion narratives and the Resurrection stories.”

“African Catholics are bringing new life and energy to the Catholic Church in USA. Kenyan Catholics in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul have monthly masses in Swahili in St. Alphonsus Parish and have started six SCCs. This pattern is repeated in other cities in the USA: Boston, Massachusetts; Newark, New Jersey; Baltimore, Maryland, Houston, Texas. Africans immigrating to the USA want to live their community values (religious and social) from their African homelands.”

“Through the generosity of two Catholic Family Foundations in the USA, we can announce that the first phase of our SCCs Training Project in Eastern Africa has now been completed. After our first SCCs Workshop in Lusaka, Zambia from 2 to 5 December, 2013, we have now helped the ninth and last AMECEA country – Sudan -- to get SCCs Training by sponsoring two Sudanese Catholic laymen from El Obeid Diocese in the 2017 Lumko East Africa SCCs Workshop (Waumini Pastoral Program).”

“BREAKING NEWS: The supreme court in Kenya invalidates Uhuru election. My our SCCs in Kenya participate in free, fair and credible elections in a vibrant multi-party democracy.”

Yesterday, 1 September, 2017 we celebrated the brand new World Day of Prayer for Creation launched by Pope Francis in 2015 in the wake of his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. What are our SCCs doing to promote this now annual month of September as "Care for Creation Month" when we focus on ecology and the environment?

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the Retired Archbishop of Westminster in London, England died on 1 September, 2017. May his soul rest in peace. May SCC members all over the world pray for Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor. In his brief introduction to the book

edited by Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton, "Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment," he 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.

Congratulations to our YSCCs Team for preparing a presentation at this important Symposium 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya. Please encourage young people (youth and young adults) from parishes and universities in Kenya to participate in this important Symposium 2017 at Tangaza University College, Nairobi on Friday, 15 September and Saturday, 16 September, 2017. The "Final Report" will be a significant contribution of the Catholic Church in Kenya to the documentation of the World Synod of Bishops to take place in Rome in October, 2018.



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SYMPOSIUM 2017

Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment

VENUE Tangaza University College

DATE 15th & 16th September, 2017

15th September (From 2.00p.m.)

16th September (Full day, 9.00a.m- 4.00p.m)

Youth in Africa:
Emerging New Realities
- Rev. Prof. Sahaya G. Selvam

Youth in Small Christian Communities
- YSCC Group

A model for Youth Ministry:
A Case Study - Nairobi Archdiocesan Youth Office

Evangelisation through Education:
Fr. Peter Mutechura

Parish Youth in the Church - Sr. (Dr) Eleanor Gibson

Catholic Movements in East Africa - Rev. Dr. Joseph Caramazza



CNS photo/ Osservatore Romano



SYNOD OF BISHOPS
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Registration: 15th September only: Ksh 100/-
16th September only: Ksh 200/-
Both days: Ksh 250/-

For more information: Tel: 0722-471474/ 0734-420935 || Email: iysmarketing@tangaza.org



At Tangaza University College Symposium 2017 Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi shares about SCCs with some African sisters.

On our SCCs Website we continue to document new examples of SCCs in the AMECEA Region. Under “South Sudan” under “Africa” see: "Small Christian Communities Changing Lives in South Sudan: Testimony from an African Missionary in St. Joseph's Parish, Narus, Torit Diocese"

By Emmanuel Obi, SPS

http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../pdf/scc_sudan.pdf

Note the reference to the SCCs Workshop in Torit Diocese organized by members of Solidarity for South Sudan in Torit Diocese. Thanks to the Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA) that originally published this article on 31 August, 2017. Please circulate this article to other people.

Pope Francis has issued a document that effectively returns to local bishops' conferences the leading role in liturgical translations. The move, which involved a modification of church law, reverses years of Vatican efforts to exert centralized control on the thorny issue of language in the liturgy. It is bound to set off a new round of criticism by conservative Catholics who fear that Francis is slowly undoing the legacy of his two predecessors. The pope's decision also underscored just how irrelevant the major Roman Curia departments have become under Pope Francis. In this case, the Congregation for Divine Worship (still headed by Cardinal Robert Sarah, one of the more conservative voices at the Vatican) was apparently sidelined. Instead, the pope appointed a commission to study the question and then issued his own document *Motu Proprio* ("on his own initiative"), a formula that the pope has used before to bypass internal Vatican resistance.

APOSTOLIC LETTER (MOTU PROPRIO) OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF FRANCIS *MAGNUM PRINCIPIUM*

BY WHICH CANON 838 OF THE CODE OF CANON LAW IS MODIFIED: Canon 838:

§1. The ordering and guidance of the sacred liturgy depends solely upon the authority of the Church, namely, that of the Apostolic See and, as provided by law, that of the diocesan bishop.

§2. It is for the Apostolic See to order the sacred liturgy of the universal church, publish liturgical books, recognise adaptations approved by the Episcopal Conference according to the norm of law, and exercise vigilance that liturgical regulations are observed faithfully everywhere.

§3. It pertains to the Episcopal Conferences to faithfully prepare versions of the liturgical books in vernacular languages, suitably accommodated within defined limits, and to approve and publish the liturgical books for the regions for which they are responsible after the confirmation of the Apostolic See.

Comments:

1. In the book *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III* under the section: “Continental, Regional and National Bishops’ Conferences:”

In *Evangelii Gaudium* which he calls a sort of blueprint for his pontificate, Pope Francis says clearly, "I am conscious of the need to promote a sound 'decentralization'." This means giving greater authority to our bishops’

conferences. A dramatic case in point is how the Vatican has usurped authority over liturgical matters such as the Mass and the translation of the Bible into local languages. While being respectful of the Vatican, the Gikuyu-speaking Catholic Bishops in Kenya found it absurd that their professional translation of the *Bible* into the Gikuyu language had to be approved by the Sacred Congregation of the Liturgy in Rome (whose officials do not know Gikuyu) even to the point of a Gikuyu-speaking Kenyan seminarian studying in Rome vetting the text on behalf of the congregation. From Joseph Healey, "Beyond Vatican II: Imagining the Catholic Church of Nairobi I," Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2015. Chapter in Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2016. Selection of essays from three Theological Colloquia on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA) in Nairobi, Kenya in 2013-2015.

Available in different online versions:

1. Under the "African Continent" under "Africa" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 6 June, 2015, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../pdf/TCCRSA.pdf>.
 2. Orbis Books Version on the [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu/.../Beyond_Vatican_II_Imagining...) Website, retrieved on 6 June 2015, https://www.academia.edu/.../Beyond_Vatican_II_Imagining...
 3. Mikado Website, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, <http://www.mikado-ac.info/home-uk.html>
 4. Kindle Library, retrieved 24 August, 2016, <https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B01J8VSMU6>
 5. [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu/.../Beyond_Vatican_II_Imagining_the...) Website, retrieved on 27 August, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/.../Beyond_Vatican_II_Imagining_the...
2. This decision indirectly affects SCCs that use many local translations of the *Bible* and liturgical texts.
 3. Thanks to our pope!

"The 10 September, 2017 issue of the *New York Times* describes a faith-filled Prayer Circle of mainly Evangelical Christians in Houston, Texas, USA who gathered together to join hands and hearts to pray and ask for God's help after the destructive force of Hurricane Harvey."

"Slowly the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa is being spread around the world. A telconference/podcast sponsored by FutureChurch in the USA on "a new and more specific exploration of lay ecclesial ministers to oversee non-sacramental aspects of parish life and administration" states: "Also on the call were other priests who have experience with Small Christian Communities led by lay leaders in Africa and Latin America. Those on the call learned in greater detail how those communities function and how they interact with priests."

"Question for discussion and feedback: It is estimated that there are 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa (the nine English-speaking countries of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). How many of these SCCs have a woman as its leader/chairperson/main animator? Please post your answers and comments on this SCCs Facebook Page."

Responses:

1. The reality is that in the Eastern Africa Countries the majority of SCCs are led by men. We have to change our attitude to promote genuine mothers because it is a time to cooperate with the Global Church. I would like to add some example from our South Africa Catholic Churches. The majority of parishes are led by mothers including sodalities and government departments. They are well trained to facilitate their teams in various diocesan areas and national offices. It is so important for our Small Christian Community women leaders to take up pastoral mission with their spiritual families in African countries as equal partners in everything. We as Christians can be led by women leaders because we have grown by their spiritual and social support. I wish a wonderful Heritage Day to all our beloved Christian families.

“To help our SCC Chairperson Martin Chebeti who was seriously injured in the August, 2017 Elections in Kenya while he was working as the Presiding Officer in the General Elections in West Pokot. He was ambushed and beaten severely by unknown people. We rushed him to Moi Referral Hospital and we thank God that now he is in stable condition. We are raising to clear the huge medical bill so that we bring him home. We miss him in our St. Martin SCC meetings and his good leadership.”

“Kindly receive our humble Christian greetings from St. Vincent Small Christian Community of St. Jude Catholic Church, Diocese of Arua, Uganda. We hope that all is well for you together with other servants of God at the Maryknoll Missionaries House, Nairobi. We are very sorry to inform you that currently we have received very many refugees from our neighboring country of South Sudan who seriously require some urgent assistance e.g., food, clothes, beddings, accommodation, medical care, etc as the refugee camps are full. Currently we have over 100 people (men, women and children) in our parish who need the support of the Catholic Church. We therefore need at least the sum of 10 million Uganda shillings to use as we continue to pray that the situation in their country improve.

So far we have managed to receive some assistance from our members as follows:

St . Vincent Small Christian Community ushs 1.5 million
 St . Jude Catholic Parish contribution ushs 1 million
 Other 8 SCCs contribution ushs 3.5 million
 Bishop Sabino Ocan Odoki contribution ushs 1.5 million
 Total amount collected in cash ushs 7 million
 Balance required ushs 3 million

We are therefore appealing to the AMECEASmall Christian Communities Training Team to help us financially to be able to rescue the precious lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ from Uganda. Any assistance extended to us will be very much highly appreciated. Thank you in advance. I will call to find out if you have received our letter of request.
 Yours truly in his service
 Geoffrey Olaro, Chairman -- St . Vincent Small Christian Community”

Response: “We will be able to make a small contribution from our *Mfuko wa Jumuiya*. In addition we are making plans to facilitate a Gulu Metropolitan SCCs Workshop to start new SCCs in the Refugee Settlements (new name for Camps) and encourage the existing SCCs in the settlements.”

“Kindly accept our humble Christian greetings from St. Francis Small Christian Community of St. John Catholic Parish, Arusha Archdiocese, Tanzania. However God’s servant as I had shared with you before you went for long holiday the health condition of one of our members due to breast cancer problem. Currently the situation is very bad and she requires to undergo an urgent medical operation in order to rescue her precious life. She is a widow having a family of six children to take care for. We need a total amount of Tshs 120,000/=. We are therefore appealing to the AMECEASmall Christian Communities Training Team to support us to raise the above mentioned amount required.

The following is our contribution:

St. Francis Small Christian community Tshs 25,000
 Other nine Small Christian Communities Ttshs 40,000
 St. John Catholic Parish contribution Tshs 15,000
 Total amount raised in cash Tshs 80,000
 Balance required to raise Tshs 40,000
 Therefore Fr. Joseph, any contribution given to us will be highly appreciated.
 Yours Sincerely in Christ
 Andrew Mbayiza - Chairman.”

“We express our greetings to you and entire Eastern African Small Christian Community Training Team. We have been much saddened at the loss of one of our church members and his wife. They died while coming back from Sese Island in Lake Victoria. The boat they were traveling in capsized on the way back home. They have left behind four orphans whom we are to care for. We as members of the St. Joseph Balikudembe Small Christian Community in St. Joseph Parish in the Diocese of Jinja have been able to raise Uganda shillings 120,000/=. Other Christian communities ush 110,000/= Jinja diocese ush 80,000/= Others ush 60,000/= TOTAL ush 370,000/=

We expect some ush 1,000,000/= could be enough to support the orphans in this time of need. We humbly pray for your support as we extend a hand of love to these people who lost their loved and sole bread winners.”

“The process for the beatification of the Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Otunga (from Kenya in East Africa) continues. The paper work and documentation are almost finished. What is URGENTLY needed is the proof of a miracle through the intercession of Cardinal Otunga. So we are asking all SCC members to pray for this miracle to take place. Please report any cure of a very sick person that take place in your SCC though the intercession of Cardinal Otunga. Thank you.

Responses:

1. Brother Reginald Crux, the Vice Postulator of the Beatification and Canonization Cause, writes:

“We are asking these SCCs to be attentive to the presence of anyone who is sick in their areas, particularly those suffering from an illness that is severe, and to pray as a community for the healing of this person through the intercession of the Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Otunga. The SCC members should then follow it up and report to our office if a healing takes place.” Contact information on

the office is as follows:

Sister Esther Ichugu
 Cardinal Otunga's Beatification Office
 P.O. Box 27043-00100
 GPO Nairobi, Kenya
 Tel: 254 020 4950000
 Direct Line: 254 020 20 495 0807
 Office Mobile: +254 706 127 147/771 836 557
 Personal: +254 726 442 806
 E mail: e.ichugu@archdioceseofnairobi.org
 cardinalotungabo@gmail.com
 Website: www.cardinalotunga.org

2."This request 'to pray as a community' is very important and can unleash the power of the Holy Spirit.

3."There are over 180,000 SCCs in the nine countries of Eastern Africa. What a powerhouse of prayer they could be in praying for the intercession of Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Otunga to heal sick members in our communities. Please report examples here on this SCCs Facebook Page."

4."I welcome this good move. It has come at the right time when the actual process on the life of Maurice Michael Cardinal Otunga for beatification purposes is on. Any contribution towards this direction is most welcome."

5."We invite SCC members to 'share' this post with your other Facebook Pages. Thank you."

6."Yes, let's pray for an extraordinary miracle to come up after seeking intercession of SOG Cardinal Otunga."

7. "This information is very central. We pray that the move will come to its fruition."

From Kerry Robinson in the USA: "Outward focus on mission strengthens parish unity. Consider those parishes that have organized to bring about more just conditions in their neighborhoods, or who have sponsored a refugee family, or who have formed Small Church Communities and opportunities for social outreach and action. In each example, this outward focus on others results in greater parish cohesiveness and engagement."

"We do send you our warm Christian greetings from St. John the Baptist Catholic Parish, Siginda Diocese in the Republic of Tanzania. We do hope this finds you well with your daily missionary activities. St. Maria Goretti SCC started a fundraiser to help five disabled brethren in our parish to acquire wheel chairs for them and we have so far managed to raise Tshs 1,350,000 and the balance remaining is Tshs 650,000 so that we can purchase the wheel chairs at once. The parish church and other SCCs did contribute. We therefore kindly do ask you for support towards our initiative of helping the disabled persons. Hoping for a positive response."

"Accept our Christian greetings from the Small Christian Community (SCC) of St. Polycarp in the parish of St. Joseph, Musoma Diocese, Tanzania. We have women who were

forcefully circumcised and have been suffering with continuous urine flow and no control at the ends of their digestive systems. By this they have their FISTURA OR THEIR PRIVATE PARTS DAMAGED. Also we have albino girls who have fled their homes for fear of being sacrificed and their body parts used for rituals. Life is sacred and a gift from God. We have to treat them and offer other humanly service but our budget is not enough. We expected to raise Tanzanian shillings 3,400,000/= but we managed only Tzsh 1,020,000/=. This came from: St. Polycarp SCC---Tsh70,000/=, Parish---Tzsh130,000/=, Other SCCs in the parish---Tsh450,000/=, Friends and well-wishers----Tsh280,000/=, Calvary Church----Tsh90,000/=, TOTAL---Tzsh1,020,000/=.

We appeal to you and brothers and sister to come to our aid. Let's support these poor ladies recover from this situation by treating them. May God bless you.

JOHN MAFUMBO
CHAIRPERSON
ST. POLYCARP SCC”

“Holy Cross Cathedral Rumbek
Catholic Diocese of Rumbek
Rumbek, South Sudan
To the Small Christian Community Training Team.

As the chairperson of the Small Christian Community of St. Daniel Comboni in the parish of Holy Cross Cathedral Diocese of Rumbek in South Sudan I would love to thank you and your team for the great work you are doing to empower Small Christian communities in Eastern Africa. We are requesting you to support our Small Christian community purchase musical drums which are very essential during mass to the young audience.

We require a total of 1,800,000 South Sudanese pounds and we have managed to raise 1,000,000 South Sudanese pounds through our parish priest, members contribution and also the Comboni Missionaries Sisters.

We thank you for whatever donation you will offer.
Deng Moses”

“From the Catholic Diocese of Kibungo, Rwanda. Bishop Antonie Kabanda. Request to the Eastern Africa Training Team of Small Christian Communities.

Help for our member. In the 1994 Genocide this member’s two legs were cut off by a landmine. He finds problems to attend *Jumuiya* masses because of difficulties in movement. He needs a wheelchair to get around.

A wheelchair costs Rfr 2,000,000/ = Kshs 80,000/

Contributions -----Rfr 1.500,000/

Balance-----Rfr 500,000/

Chairlady

Grace Nyamukama

Joseph Serugendo

St. Kizito SCC”

St.Charles Lwanga Catholic Church

Catholic Diocese Of Kibungu, Burundi.”

“Small Christian Communities Training Team of Eastern Africa.
RE: REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE TO BUY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS FOR ST.
VERONICA SCC.

Receive our humble Christian greetings from St. Peter's Cathedral of Butare in Rwanda. Hopefully you are fine back there in Nairobi together with the Maryknoll Society and also doing the missionary work through helping the SCCs in strengthening the church. However, we are kindly requesting for your assistance to help us St Veronica to buy musical instruments. The amount required is Rsh 2700000. So far we as St, Veronica have been able to raise Rsh 1500000 and the church plus other SCCs have been able to add us Rsh 600000. Balance remaining is Rsh 400000.

We are therefore appealing to you for a positive consideration towards this cause that we are trying to fulfill so that we can do God's work efficiently.

Yours in service
Watera Susan
C/P St. Veronica SCC
St. Peter's Cathedral
Catholic Church
Diocese of Butare, Rwanda.”

“Monday, 16 October, 2017 ends the First Round of the help to SCCs in East Africa through the ‘Mfuko wa Jumuiya.’ Tuesday, 17 October, 2017 we begin a SCCs Training Session.”

Interesting homily note on today's Gospel of *Matthew* 22:1-14 from Father Lawrence Murori in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA: "When we joyfully respond to the gift of Small Christian Community, we participate in the wedding and make Small Christian Community our wedding garment. When we love the church and support our church as a gratuitous gift of God to us, we put on the church as our wedding garment. When we love our ministry and the services that we render, it becomes a response to that free invitation made to all peoples."

“Through the generosity of our SCCs friends in the USA, in September and October, 2017 we completed one round of our special AMECEA SCCs Training Team Fund ("Mfuko wa Jumuiya" in Swahili). We gave \$70, \$80 and \$100 donations to 77 specific SCCs in Catholic dioceses in Eastern Africa as follows: 26 SCCs in Kenya (covering 24 dioceses, one vicariate and one Military Ordinand); 27 SCCs in Tanzania (covering 27 dioceses); 16 SCCs in Uganda (covering 16 dioceses); 4 SCCs in Rwanda (covering 4 dioceses); and 1 SCC in South Sudan (covering 1 diocese). One SCC member commented using the Ugandan proverb *One hand washes the other*. We say that the two main pillars/priorities of SCCs in Eastern Africa are the weekly lectionary-based Faith-sharing and the practical action/outreach. The use of these donations clearly show the practical action/outreach priority -- helping the sick and the needy. Two concrete examples are providing wheel chairs for disabled SCC members and operations for SCC women members with breast cancer.”

“SCCs are mentioned often in an important new article on our SCCs Website: "We Create the Path by Walking: Evolving an African Narrative Theology" (http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../.../create_path.pdf).”

“During today's meeting of our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo and I came up with this idea. To celebrate World Mission Sunday (22 October) we should invite one person who is not a Catholic to our SCC Meeting this week.”

Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa. **NOTE:** This is the SCCs Website Online 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 as of 20 October, 2017. The complete book is found on the Ebooks page, The book is also available as Part 1 and Part 2 for those with poor internet connection or challenges in downloading the full version.

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

To an article in *America Media and Magazine* on "Can the Catholic Church keep millennials from passing it by?" by Zac Davis we replied:

One solution is what the author Zac Davis refers to at the beginning: he belongs to "a Small Faith-sharing Community in my parish that sustains me." Weekly small lectionary-based Faith-sharing communities (in English, Spanish, etc.) and for different age groups (teenagers, college students, newly married couples, young couples with small children, etc.) can make a real difference in our lives especially if we connect the scriptures to our daily lives. For more information see the free online Ebook -- "Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../pdf/Build_new.pdf

“We hope that this SCCs Facebook Page can be a forum for conversation, discussion, exchange, sharing, important announcements, information, analysis, inspiring and challenging quotations, questions and answers and updates.

As an example, what are your views on the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism in a SCC? Concerning Godparents I feel everyone should have both a Godmother and a Godfather. I suggest choosing one relative from the mother's side of the family and one relative from the father's side of the family.

My ideas about godparenting have developed over the years. I personally think that both Godparents should be active Catholics (preferred to "practicing Catholics" that has a stereotype meaning) who support and encourage the two parents to raise the child. Even as the child grows up the godparents “accompany” (a key word being used more these days following the lead of Pope Francis) him or her in his or her lifetime faith journey.

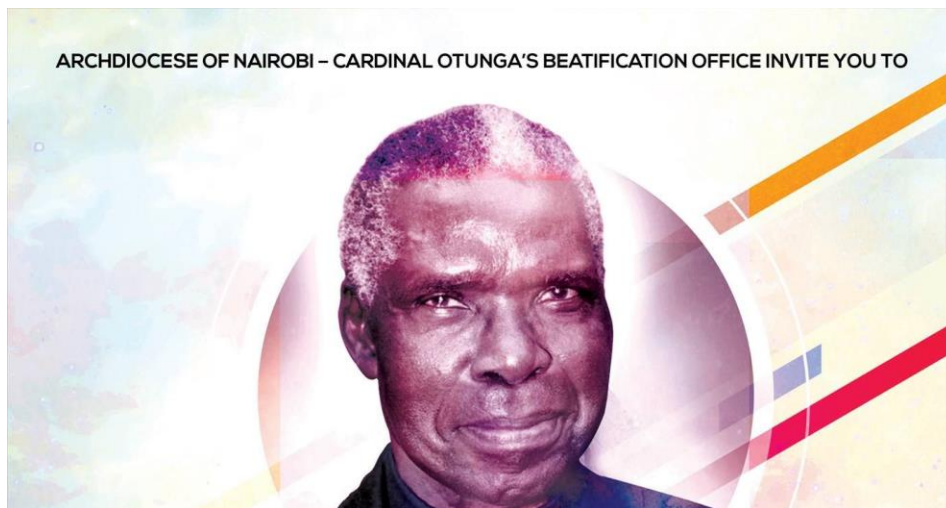
I realize the social side has taken over in some families, but I feel we should hold the line on the religious importance.”

“In a recent interview Bishop Erwin Kräutler, an Austrian-born missionary who headed the sprawling Diocese of Xingu in the Brazilian rain forest from 1981-2015 said finding ways to address the priest shortage would be one of the main topics of the special Synod gathering for the Pan-Amazon region to take place in October, 2019. He said criteria for admission to the priesthood must be modified to allow for

the ordination of married men. And he added that, since women now head many of the Small Catholic Communities, it's also urgent to ordain female deacons.

“Perhaps even Bishop Fritz Lobinger’s suggestion will be taken up,” he said. Lobinger, a missionary from Regensburg (Germany) who was Bishop of Aliwal (South Africa) from 1987-2004, is the author of *Like His Brothers and Sisters – Ordaining Community Leaders* (1998). The 88-year-old retired bishop has argued for an experimental project whereby parish communities would be led by “teams of elders” selected from among their number and based on the earliest days of Christianity. These elders would not be clerics, though they would be sacramentally ordained priests. A celibate priest-animator would oversee these various ministry teams.”

Fund raising concert, performed by St. Paul Chapel Choir and Nakestra Orchestra in honor of the Servant of God Maurice Michael Cardinal Otunga's Beatification and Canonization Process. May our SCC members promote this concert on Sunday, 19 November, 2017. COMMENT: The move to hold a musical concert in honor of our beloved Maurice Michael Cardinal Otunga is most welcome. It goes on well to further the cause, where prayers, among other commitments, are being called for.



NOV19

Interested

Fund raising concert for Cardinal Otunga Beatification Process

Sun 3 PM · St. Paul Catholic University Chapel, State House Road, Nairobi, Kenya

During this month of November may our SCC members pray for and with our deceased members, relatives and friends whom we call our "ancestors in Christ" and our "living dead."

From Bishop Martin Mtumbuka of Karonga, Malawi: "Greetings from Malawi. During our meeting of two weeks ago as priests in the Diocese of Karonga we decided to focus on promoting Small Christian Communities over the next 15 months as outlined in our Strategic Plan. One of the things we agreed to do is to ensure that everybody has some basic understanding of what a Small Christian Community is. To this effect we agreed to produce a brochure with the help of our Pastoral Commission. The attached draft brochure, which will

also be in local languages spoken in the diocese, is based almost entirely on the AMECEA "SCCs Training Handbook for Facilitators" on the same subject. As mentioned already, Father Joseph will lead this work, but my only work is to inform you of this so that you may vet the draft if it captures correctly the material in your Handbook and also grant us the required permission. I will be in Nairobi next week and Father Joseph has asked me to buy more copies of your Handbook."

Some comments:

1.From Emmanuel Chimombo: "Thanks very much for the good work being done in Karonga Diocese especially by embarking on the Promotion of Small Christian Communities which is a key AMECEA pastoral priority. After you sent the email, I quickly touched base with my colleagues like Father Joseph Healey, the Maryknoll priest who is a co-editor of the Handbook, and we have both admired your work. So the Team can proceed with the Brochures and the Translations of the same into the vernacular languages as per your proposal.

I quickly went through the attachment you sent for the proposed Brochure and noted that the Team that worked on it has done a wonderful job in summarising very well important points about Small Christian Communities.

We will organise the books -- copies of "Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators" -- for you as come next week. Take note that you will get a special discount if you purchase from 50 books above. Currently the price is still at \$2 each. The discounted price is \$1.50 each. You may wish to know that we have been receiving very pressing requests internationally to sell the handbook electronically. So we have partnered with the Paulines Publishers Africa and it is now available as an Ebook. We are also working with our ICT department to upload it on AMAZON and we are at an advanced stage to accomplish this. The price for the Ebook is \$1.40."

2."A brochure for the basic knowledge of scc...I like this move."

3."This is very positive and encouraging. The Holy Spirit is working in our Small Christian Communities ministry."

4."That is so great."

5."Dear Bishop Mtumbuka. You are an inspiration to all of us. May the other AMECEA Bishops follow your example."

6.This is wonderful news: "To ensure that everybody has some basic understanding of what a Small Christian Community is." This is very visionary to start from here. Lots of "hongera" to Bishop Mtumbuka for this valuable initiative. I see no problem in encouraging him to go ahead with the brochure. Maybe a simple mention of the origin of the content is enough.

In certain parishes the YSCCs produce and sell the parish leaflet of the Sunday Readings as a means of self-support. It is a good self-reliance plan (good fund-raising). For example, the youth in Dandora Parish, Nairobi, Kenya raise 500,000/= Kenyan Shillings (\$5,000) a year in selling the weekly mass leaflet. It is important that these parish leaflets

print the references to the Scripture readings of the following Sunday. This allows SCCs members and other serious Catholics to read and reflect on the Scripture readings in advance.

Some comments:

1. These church announcements forums -- bulletins, leaflets, newsletters -- should assist the congregation to be aware of the Sunday *Bible* readings in advance. This I take as a major challenge in our time.

2. Another way to get the Scripture readings of the following Sunday is to put "Sunday Mass Readings" and the date in Google Search.

3. The good news is that those of us in the smartphone world continue to benefit from the online services through various websites such as Catholic Online: www.catholic.org/bible

We try to post articles on SCCs from all over Africa. The latest is: "The Challenges of SCCs and Child Formation in Nigeria" by Raphael Okusaga. Go to: http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../challenges_niger...

Raphael Okusaga writes from Lagos, Nigeria: "At SCCs level, we infuse Child Protection into the Seven Step Gospel Method of Bible Sharing. The Gospel reading is connected with Jesus and children. The facilitator for the day enlightens the people on child abuses, the effects and the best way to protect them. It is based on "See," "Judge" and "Act" Method. We are developing training modules."

From the 18 November, 2018 issue of *Tablet*:

"A priest recently commented to me that what most affected how he preached on a Sunday was who he had visited through the week. Pastoral care does include patterns of regular visiting, the encounters around baptisms, weddings and funerals and so forth. But it is by no means confined to this and fundamentally needs to take seriously that clergy are not chaplains to a gathered community but priests for a parish." This relates to priests "smelling the sheep" and visiting parish-based SCCs on the ground.

Suggestion in our family/small community during the season of Advent that begins on Sunday, 3 December, 2017: "During the week when the whole family is present for dinner/supper, have someone read the Gospel of the next Sunday aloud so that when you go to Mass on Sunday you will have a deeper understanding of the Scriptures."

From Alloys Nyakundi: "Reaching youth over the world through Zoom. We should use technology to evangelize and spread the gospel to every corner." Having youth listening sessions with youth all over the world such as the students at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Let us keep on empowering and encouraging the youth."

From Cal Desmond-Pearson: "I don't know how many folks on this Facebook Page are in the UK? However, even if you aren't it might inspire you to do something similar. Last year (inspired by Community Christmas) on Christmas Day I visited a couple of elderly people who I knew would be alone over the Christmas period. I took some cakes, soup, Christmas card etc. I've spent every Christmas alone (except one) since my parent's deaths in 2008 so I knew how bad it can be to be alone whilst most people are busy having festive fun.

Community Christmas believes that no elderly person in the UK should be alone on Christmas Day unless they want to be. Communities are encouraged to provide companionship to older people on Christmas Day by running a community Christmas Lunch event, joining up with others at a local pub or restaurant, popping round for tea and cake, perhaps organizing a film viewing or anything else that can be enjoyed by all those that take part. This should be a chance to meet up with old friends and make new friends creating bonds in the community that last well beyond the single day. We will provide support and guidance to those starting something new on Christmas Day, give a free listing to any events or activities wishing to maximize their reach into the community and guide older people, those who care about them, or those that want to help them, towards activities in their area.”

“Arts and Faith: Advent Faith-sharing 2017” is an adapted SCC Model being used during this month of December in parishes. Small communities of Catholics met weekly in their homes or at the parish center to read the Advent Sunday Scriptures, pray together and share faith. See www.ignatianspirituality.com – a service of Loyola Press, Chicago.

From Francis Njuguna: “In his 2017 *Pastoral Letter on the Nativity*, his Eminence John Cardinal Njue, Archbishop of Nairobi Archdiocese has highlighted the impact of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs). He says: ‘As Christians of the Archdiocese of Nairobi embracing many ethnic and political affiliations, we are in a unique position to help heal our nation, and forge ahead together to build a united, prosperous Kenya where the dignity of each person is respected. This we must do through our Small Christian Communities and apostolic groups, through our parishes and deaneries.’”

“The St. Charles Lwanga Swahili Community in St. Alphonsus Parish, Archdiocese of St Paul -- Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA meets monthly at the parish to pray the rosary and participate in Mass in Swahili. The community provides support for children’s education, baptisms, weddings and funerals. About 150 people come to the gatherings. St. Alphonsus has provided a home for Swahili-speaking Catholics to foster unity.”

“During our Sunday liturgies during this meaningful Christmas and New Year's season, St. Joseph is very important. In our SCCs let us remember the prayer of Little Brother Carlo Carretto (an Orbis Books author) to St. Joseph: ‘Teach us to be small and poor in our work and humble and hidden in life.’”⁹³⁰

“How are we SCC members celebrating today 1 January as the World Day of Peace on the theme of ‘Migrants and Refugees?’ It’s a clear teaching on immigration. Pope Francis calls for greater compassion and inclusion. He gives ‘four mileposts for action’ and provides easy buzz words to the world community: welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating.”

⁹³⁰ This is part of a larger beautiful prayer calling on Mary and Joseph for help: “Just as you were beside Jesus, you are beside us to accompany us to eternal life, to teach us to be small and poor in our work, and humble and hidden in life, courageous in trial, faithful in prayer, ardent in love.”

“Stella Rampai wants to learn more about how to be a good leader of SCC.” Reply: “Please use the free, online resources on ‘leadership in SCCs’ in our free, online EBook. Go to: http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../Build_new.pdf.”

Please vote in the new Poll: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/>

The best part of my Small Christian Community is:

Multi-ethnic small community.
Home blessings.
Peer group small Faith-sharing community.
Basic means of evangelization.
Personal spiritual growth.”

We see our SCCs Facebook Page as evangelization and mission – both a “learning moment” and a “teaching moment.” We have a very active SCCs Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>). Every week we have many messages posted:

- At least two messages from the Moderator.
- Daily Lectionary-based Scripture readings from Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi, Mwanajumuiya Collins Ongoma and Mwanajumuiya Xanchez Brialawry.
- Comments.
- Other fresh messages.
- Some “Shares.”

plus many “Likes.” Messages from the SCC Facebook Page are then permanently saved in various sections of our free, online Ebook.

“We hope that this SCCs Facebook Page can be a forum for conversation, discussion, exchange and sharing, that is, we want and need your comments, posts, messages. Just clicking “Like” is really not enough.

During a discussion at Tangaza University College in Nairobi it was pointed out that our Eastern Africa name/term/expression -- “Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs)” – may be hard for folks in Europe and North American to understand. Also there was a debate on whether the term “small groups” is useful – it can refer to some many different kinds of gatherings. We brainstormed on these names/terms/expressions:

1. Small Bible Study Group for Young People.
2. Young People Peer Group Small Faith-sharing Community (one of the five choices in our online Poll for January--February, 2018 at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>).
3. Bible Study Group for young adults in parishes.
4. Small Faith-sharing Community of Young People.

Please give your feedback/comments. Which name do you like? Is there a better name? Thanks.

The responses on Facebook were:

1. Collins Ongoma: I can go for option No. 4 -- Small Faith-sharing Community for Young People. It gives an elaboration of what the group entails.

2. Frans Wisjen: "Basic Human Communities for Young People." In the European (most secular) and Asian (most non-Christian, except Philippines) I would prefer "basic human communities" (used by some theologians in the FABC context).

3. From USA college campuses: When Christian students and Muslim students share together the name used is "Basic Human Communities for Young People" and "Small Human Communities for Young People." "Student Small Human Communities." "Student Basic Human Communities."

American lay theologian Kevin Ahern has this insight: "I am just finishing editing a book called *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018). One chapter is about the need for young people to be truly heard by their pastors and bishops. This not only enhances our understanding of their experiences of God, but also helps them to see their own dignity and membership in the church."

FutureChurch Teleconference on the theme "Pastoral Responses to the Worldwide Eucharistic Famine." Part of the "Emerging Models for Parish, Community Life and Leadership Teleconferences Series." Includes the importance of the Small Christian Communities Pastoral Model of Church.

8 p.m. USA Eastern Time on Wednesday, 21 March, 2018. 3 a.m. East Africa Time on Thursday, 22 March, 2018. To sign up/register free go to:

FutureChurch Website

<https://www.futurechurch.org/emerging-models-for-community-life-and-leadership-teleconferences-series>

"Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Workshop. Christ the King Major Seminary, Nyeri, Kenya. 22 - 25 February, 2018. There will be 307 seminarians in eight years of training. The Catholic Bishops in Kenya have recommended that all the major seminaries in Kenya have SCC workshops and courses. The retired Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki of Nairobi Archdiocese said: ‘Our seminarians in Kenya must have courses and workshops on SCCs during their seminary training. It is too late if we wait until after they are ordained.’”

"We are discovering that we need specific SCCs for each age group/half generation of young people. A new category is Young Professionals Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs). Claire Caralp, the president of the Coordination of Young Catholic Professionals in France and one of the three member delegation of French young people going to the pre-synod that will be held in Rome from 19-24 March, 2018 has this interesting observation: ‘Falling between student ministry and family ministry, we young professionals are a generation that is often forgotten.’”

Comments:

1. "Pope Francis is aware that we are always forgotten and that's why 2018 is the year for young people. I hope things will change after the synod."

2. "It's true young professionals are forgotten. They actually have difficulty in identifying which group they fit in because they're neither students nor in marriage. YPSCCs suitably bridges the gap."

“A pleasant surprise is the visit of Ugandan layman Peter Mabiya to Nairobi, Kenya. He is a strong supporter of SCCs. Part of the year he teaches in Burundi where the *Communautés Ecclésiales de Base* (CEBs) are strong. Peter's brother in law has adapted our AMECEA SCCs Bookmark into French with the heading: *Pour célébrer les 180,000 Communautés Ecclésiales de Base en Afrique de l'Est*. Besides covering the AMECEA countries the booklet includes Burundi and Rwanda. This bookmark in French will be used especially in Ngozi Diocese, Burundi. The printing of the bookmark is being helped by a grant of \$100 from the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya*. A website is under construction.”

“Prayer Intention of Pope Francis for February, 2018:

Say “No” to Corruption

That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption. This is a clear message for our SCCs Members who have to be prophetic and work for justice, honesty and transparency in both the Christian Churches and in general society. The challenges in Kenya are huge where the expression mega-corruption has entered into our vocabulary.”

A Book Review of *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III* by Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sister Léo Lushombo in the March, 2018 issue of the important American theological journal *Theological Studies* has this very challenging statement:

If the model or paradigm of the future is that of Small Christian Communities, as the book argues, then there is a need for the SCCs to undertake consistent theological formation⁹³¹ because the laity do not have opportunity to access theological formation in many African countries.

Some comments/responses in the “Forum” section of our SCCs Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>):

1. “Right now we have 98 students in our SCCs Class at Tangaza College in Nairobi, Kenya – all seminarians. In a recent SCCs Workshop at Christ the King Major Seminary in Nyeri, Kenya there were 307 participants -- all seminarians. Yet the laity are 99% of the members of SCCs in Africa. How are they going to receive theological formation?”
2. “That's food for thought because it poses a big challenge. For me lay leaders/ animators/ facilitator/coordinators can get the basic skills to empower them if the institutions (Hekima College, Tangaza College, CUEA and Daystar University all based in Nairobi) offer SCCs courses that specifically focus on how laymen and women can be part of evangelization. Can

⁹³¹ American Maryknoll missionary priest and theologian Father John Sivalon, MM has this clarification and insight in an email to the author dated 19 December, 2018: “I react a little against the word formation. It sounds very much like a top down approach or an elitist kind of approach to theology. I think it better to use a word like accompaniment or something else that would put both academically trained theologians and the lay theologians living in SCCs on an equal footing. All of them listening to the voice of God in the world and struggling to understand that voice. I wouldn't think you would want to move this whole process into a classroom but rather do it right in the context of an SCC.”

there be classes meant especially for the lay people so they can share similar pastoral experiences? Can basic theological reflection skills be integrated into leadership training and youth studies? These courses can be attractive to laymen and laywomen. With support from dioceses or parishes, lay people can be able to access these courses just like the way we take our catechists for training.”

3. “Just as we have catechist training centers and programs, we need lay leadership training centers and programs that focus on the theology and practice of SCCs. We need simple, user friendly booklets in English, Swahili and other languages on the “content” of SCCs, for example, the theological foundation of SCCs.

4. This is a real challenge. We have in place the training of SCC lay leaders/animators/facilitators/coordinators in animation, facilitation and coordination skills including collaborative ministry. Now we have to focus more on the "content" side: Ongoing formation and training of all SCC members on the meaning and importance of SCC, theological formation and pastoral formation on the specific SCC Model of Church, *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*, family catechesis, justice and peace issues, Jesus Christ’s methods of evangelizing and mission outreach.”

5. “This is a statement that must be echoed across the diverse sectors of our Catholic communities in order to build and grow evangelization in every heart of our people. However, until we consider building the capacity of the laity (the context upon which Small Christian Communities happens) as a matter of priority, the aspiration to motivate many more lay faithful to participate in the work of evangelization will remain an unachievable dream. As the main pilots of SCCs that we consider a valuable vehicle of parish and spiritual renewal, we must invest in building the capacity of the laity in order to equip them with skills and techniques so they can improve and expand the quality of the outcome of evangelization in an African context. This is a valuable conversation we must emphatically undertake because the future of our Church depends on it.”

6. “This is an excellent comment, but there is a disconnect here. When AMECEA talks about Capacity Building Workshops for laity, they usually mean training in skills in management, office procedures, financial planning, etc. This is important, but we need to emphasize "theological formation" of the laity (for example, how to do pastoral theological reflection, how to use the steps of the Pastoral Circle/Cycle/Spiral) if they are going to understand and carry out the Eastern African SCCs Model of Church in theory and practice.”

7. “Indeed! In the theological formation of the laity the content should consider the concrete spiritual and social conditions of the laity and must not be overcrowded with 'hard wired' theological perspectives out of reach for the ‘ordinary laity.’ The laity must be involved in designing such capacity building contents and processes. The time for this conversation is right now.”

8. “Yes, the African laity in SCCs on the ground/from below/from the grassroots should help design the specific content, not inherit a Western theological curriculum designed for seminarians.”

9. “A good example of the theological formation of lay people in Eastern Africa is the Prayer Intention of Pope Francis for March 2018: ‘Evangelization: Formation in Spiritual Discernment.’ That the Catholic Church may appreciate the urgency of formation in spiritual discernment, both on the personal and communitarian levels.

10. This is crucial to our SCCs being the pillar of the church that AMECEA emphasizes. This is why AMECEA came to form SCCs. We are much ahead today compared to Vatican I where lay people had no chance to do anything in the church. According to me, there should be the introduction of theological training for lay people for the betterment of our Catholic Church in Eastern Africa in the future.

11. What would a “Theology for the Laity” Course(s) in Africa look like from the perspective of the African SCCs Model of Church as the paradigm of the future. Three emphasizes:

1. Ecclesiology Especially from an African Perspective:

- a. Avery Dulles’ Models of Church.
- b. Vatican Two Communion Ecclesiology.
- c. First African Synod Family of God Ecclesiology.
- d. Father Robert Schreiter’s “local theologies constructed with the local community as theologian.”

2. African laity equipped with reflection tools to theologize on the SCCs Model of Church from the grassroots:

- a. Pastoral Theological Reflection Process.
- b. Pastoral Circle/Cycle/Spiral.
- c. “See,” “Judge” and “Act” Process.
- d. Basic theological reflection skills.
- e. Prayer Intention of Pope Francis for March 2018: “Evangelization: Formation in Spiritual Discernment.”

3. African SCCs theologizing:

- a. African SCCs Reading of the Bible.
- b. African SCCs reading “the signs of the times” and theologizing on them.
- c. St. John Paul II’s Apostolic Exhortation *The Church in Africa* under “Living (or Vital) Christian Communities”: “These small communities reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel.”
- d. Doing theology with African lay people on the ground.

First, how can our SCC members in Eastern Africa understand the meaning of formation in spiritual discernment, both on the personal and communitarian levels. Second, how can our SCC members concretely practice it. Perhaps one step is prayerful reflection and decision making in answering the weekly questions in the booklet of the 2018 Kenya Lenten Campaign on “Reconciliation.”

From Raphael Okusaga: “The Lagos, Nigeria Archdiocesan Workshop for all SCC/BCC leaders and facilitators took place on Saturday, 3 March, 2017. 60 parishes with over 500 participants were at the workshop. We discussed Child Protection/Human Trafficking and the roles of SCCs. We also discussed the legal implications of Human Trafficking. The participants agreed to stop all forms of child abuse and trafficking. All SCCs/BCCs will commence once in a month sharing on child abuses and protection.”



Discussing the importance of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection with students from Kenyatta University on the lawn at the Maryknoll Society House, Nairobi, Kenya.

From Edward Stephen Moku: "Today, the Small Christian Community of St. Joseph the Worker from St. Joseph Catholic Worker Parish in Kangemi visited with our Fr. Richard Quinn Early Childhood Centre located in Kangemi and celebrated Mass. They also donated to us some food stuff and clothing for the children. We are very grateful to their generosity and love especially this Lenten season. God bless."

From Father John Muriungi Njiru: "This updates you on what the office of SCCs is doing in Meru Diocese, Kenya. I am the Chaplain who was appointed by the Bishop after Fr. Lawrence went for studies. My main pastoral work has been to visit different parishes in our diocese and the move is amazing. I go around with my Training Team that I have formed. I have visited over 15 parishes and a number of YCS movements and also catechists. The Enthronement of the Bible is seriously taking roots. May I now request your team, if available, to come and share something with our Meru Diocese SCCs leaders between 2 to 6 April, 2018."

The following Teleconference Presentation had an interesting section on "Evolving the Small Christian Community Model of Church in North America and Europe:"

21 March, 2018

8:00 p.m. ET

Fr. Joseph Healey, MM

"Pastoral Responses to the Worldwide Eucharistic Famine"

The full spoken text can be found on the:

FutureChurch Website:

<https://www.futurechurch.org/.../FutureChurch%20Teleconferenc...>

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website:

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/futurechurchtelcon.pdf>

Announcement:

LIM 809, "The Inner Life of Small Christian Communities"

Online Course, May 28-August 1, 2018, Scholarships Available

Loyola Institute for Ministry, Loyola University New Orleans, LA, USA

Description

This graduate-level, online course examines Small Christian Communities (SCCs) with a focus on their inner life. Rooted in the example set by the earliest Christians, inspired by the commitment to SCCs in East Africa, energized by Pope Francis, and informed by the best in international research, this course considers all that goes into the establishment and flourishing of SCCs so that they can have an impact on individuals, communities, parishes, the church, and the world. A course on the Public Life of SCCs will be offered May-July 2019.

Features: In taking this course, you will:

- Discover SCC's potential for transformation and inspiration
- Learn about SCCs worldwide, including in the Global South.
- Engage with classmates from around the world

- Recognize the appeal of this way of being Church to youth, young adults, and campus ministries
- Study the role of prayer and the Bible in SCCs
- Understand the practical theology that animates SCCs
- Examine leadership dynamics in SCCs
- Earn 3 graduate or CEU credits

About the Loyola Institute for Ministry:

The Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) of Loyola University New Orleans, Louisiana, USA has been a leader in distance ministry education; its online programs serve students on six continents. Its master's degrees and certificates attend carefully to context and are Catholic, practical, transformative, and affordable. For more information, please see <http://gps.loyno.edu/lim>. Listen to LIM Director Tom Ryan's interview of Fr. Joe Healey, MM on SCCs. Fr. Healey is an author and leader in the promotion of SCCs and helped develop this course.

Small Christian Communities are not a movement within the Catholic Church but “the Church on the move.”

Scholarship Application

(The deadline to complete this Scholarship Application is April 13, 2018)

For more information, contact Alloys Nyakundi at amnyakun@my.loyno.edu

“Today we had our annual Jumuiya Mass (African Inculturated Small Christian Community Mass) at Hekima College (Riara Campus) in Nairobi. Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent. During the Shared Homily (Buzz Groups of two or three persons), it was pointed out that during a mass in the home or in the courtyard of the neighborhood, if the priest preaches in the normal way the lay people can sit back, not focus carefully on the readings and even switch off. But if they know they will share their reflections on the readings, the SCC members will be much more attentive to the scripture texts and their application to daily life.”

SCCs involvement in the outdoor Way of the Cross on Good Friday is one of the most creative examples of liturgical inculturation in Africa. Here are some examples in 2018:

1. Kisumu, Kenya: “We started at 7:30 a.m. in the morning with a short drama then walked across the entire parish praying for 14 sick people in 14 different homes in our SCCs in the four subparishes (the 14 Stations of the Cross). There were about 300 or more people during the walk.



2. Nairobi, Kenya: “I just finished my favorite apostolic activity (prayer service) of the year in Africa – our annual outdoor Way of the Cross on Good Friday in St. Austin Parish, Nairobi, Kenya. I left the Maryknoll Society House on foot at 7:50 a.m. and returned at 1:30 p.m., (a total of 5 hours and 40 minutes that would drive Americans who like 30 minutes masses crazy!). The service was coordinated by most of the 12 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the parish. About 200 people participated.

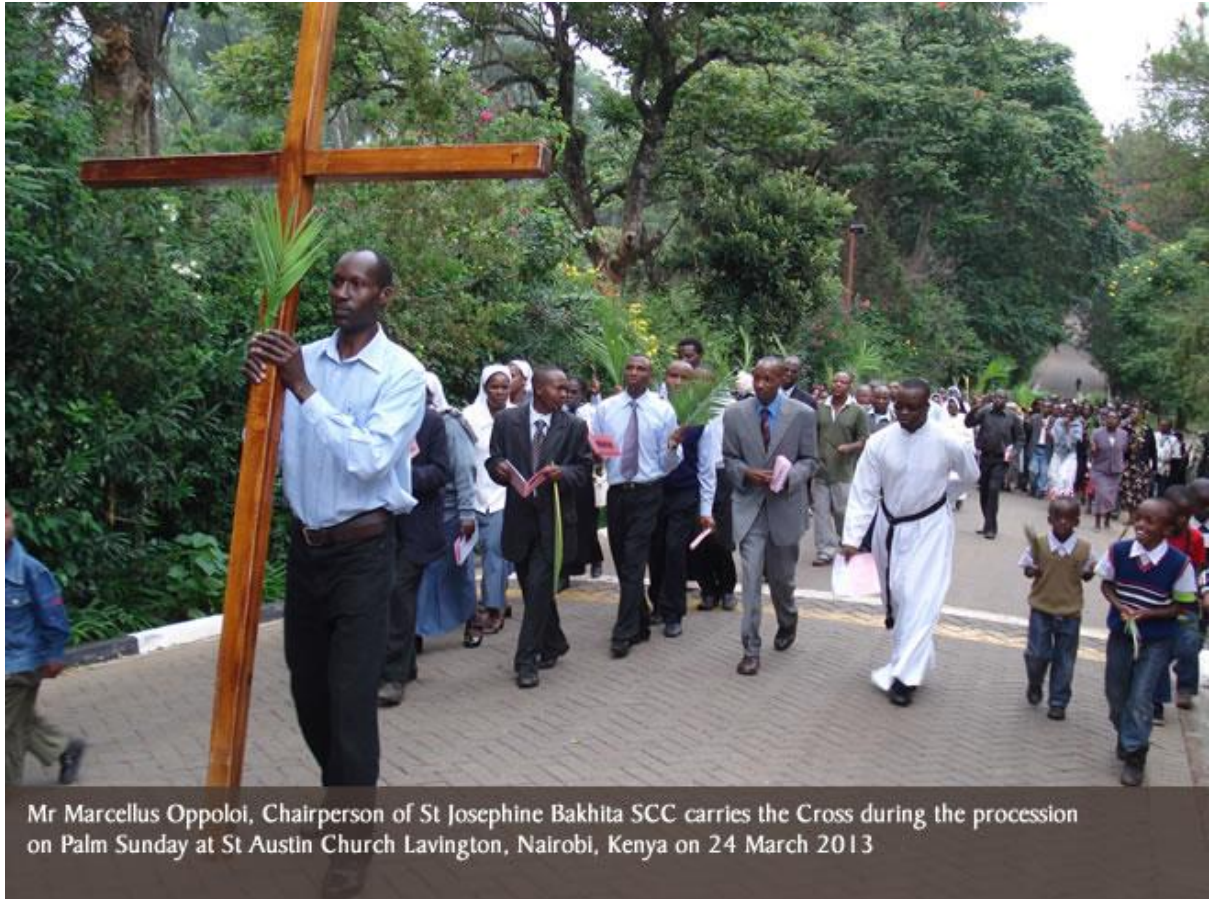
We members of St. Kizito SCC in Waruku, Nairobi Kenya started the 1st Station at the bridge at 8:30 a.m. We walked through the whole parish being joined by other Small Christian Communities such as St. Charles Lwanga, St. Bakhita, St. Petro Mwamba and St. John along the way.

Winding our way through the neighborhood, each station was animated by one SCC until we reached the parish church for the 15th Station (the Resurrection). Some priests and quite a few religious sisters joined us but the SCC lay leaders – men and women -- led almost everything. There was a rich combination of dramatization (acting out the individual stations), relevant scripture readings, reflections that connected Jesus’ Passion to our daily lives (like the crosses we carry – sickness, unemployment, even war and famine situations), songs and decades of the rosary. Yes, very long but very prayerful and very meaningful.”

For a video of our 2015 Stations of the Cross:

St Austin's Church Way of the Cross -- 2015 (By members of the Small Christian Communities)

Go to: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/videos/327-st-austins-church-way-of-the-cross-2015.html>



3.Nairobi Kenya: “We members of St. Kizito SCC in Waruku joined other parishioners at St. Austin's Catholic Church in Lavington to follow the main Way of the Cross lead by the Junior Youth after we have finished the Way of Cross of the *jumuiyas*.

St Austin's Church Way of the Cross -- 2015 (By the Junior Youth)

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/videos/328-st-austins-church-way-of-the-cross-2015-by-the-junior-youth.html>



Small Christian Community of some choir members of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Before choosing and practicing the songs of the Sunday Mass we reflect on the Word of God (the Sunday readings) so God may help us to practice in our daily life. what we heard from the Holy Scripture.

An interesting exchange occurred on the theme “Devolution and SCCs in the Catholic Church.”

1. Victor Mutobera: “I followed closely the video of the Way of the Cross that was posted on the *Jumuiya* Website. I witnessed how the Catholic Church is devolving her functions to a greater extent to lay people. During the 2018 Way of the Cross in St. Austin Parish, Lavington, Nairobi the priest gave the mandate to Christians who fully led the 14 Stations of Cross through the SCCs. He followed the lay people from behind like a good shepherd would do to his flock. Indeed, the SCC members led the sharing, reflections, songs and the rosary. It is now high time that the lay people are empowered to ensure full participation and commitment to the church. Some priests have overworked themselves. If they had devolved their pastoral functions, their life would not only be better and less stressful but also good for the faithful. Like Pope Francis, the priests and religious are meant to be with people, for people and alongside the people. Devolved leadership works very well, except when some pastoral roles are very specific. The church needs to involve more lay people in ensuring that they are part of the team and not just spectators.”

2. Small Christian Communities: "Devolved Leadership" is a good description of the SCCs Model of Church that begins from below, from the grassroots with lay people fully involved and in lay ministry leadership roles. It fits into Pope Francis' ideas on synodality and subsidiarity. To use one of the choices in the SCC Poll on our website: "Laity form the engine of SCCs" (<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>). It was the now retired Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki of Nairobi Archdiocese who first said: “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.”

3. Joseph Healey: “This exchange of ideas on devolution and the emphasis on leadership on the local level has interesting historical connections. Many years ago the Tanzanian Government developed the *Ujamaa* (Swahili for "familyhood") Philosophy that emphasized 10 cell units (*nyumba kumi kumi* in Swahili) especially in rural areas. This led to planning together for common services like education (primary schools) and health services (local clinics and dispensaries). The local leaders took more ownership, decision-making and responsibility. The Catholic Church built on this idea in developing SCCs of originally five to 12 families living in the same neighborhood. This was the church from below and encouraged local leadership and lay ministries.

Recently the Kenyan Government has encouraged the *nyumba kumi kumi* idea for security reasons. Houses/families in the same neighborhood communicate, plan and act together. This parallels the SCCs structure and activities on the local level – the church in the neighborhood. More and more activities take place in the SCCs rather than at the parish center. Lay leaders are more active and responsible.”

4. Francis Njuguna: “Congrats Mwanajumuiya Victor Mutobera. This is what Mwanajumuiya Padri Joseph Healey has been teaching all along -- that the Catholic Church is no longer just the Clergy and the Religious, but the entire church community, lay people included. *Tunafundishana kijumuiya* (Swahili for “we teach each other in community).”

5. Victor Mutobera: “I believe it is one way of keeping people committed to the Catholic faith.”

6. Michael Orondo: “Hongera Mwanajumuiya Victor. The church needs each one of us in order to grow well.”



Small Christian Communities are not a movement in the Catholic Church, but the "Church on the move." This photo was taken after the last lectures on Small Christian Communities at Tangaza University College. Asante sana Mwanajumuiya Joseph Healey and Mwanajumuiya Nicholas Obiero, both lecturers at Tangaza and Father Emmanuel Chimombo, AMECEA Pastoral Coordinator (on left). We are grateful that the summary and evaluation of our SCCs Course can be put in the context of SCCs being a key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa.



Many Faces, One Heart! At the end of our last class at Tangaza we sing "Bind Us Together, Lord" that worldwide is the unofficial theme song of SCCs.

“A recently completed 2018 Long Essay at Tangaza University College, Nairobi on ‘The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Catholic Church: A Study on Rumuruti Consolata Parish of the Diocese of Nyahururu, Kenya’ states: ‘The daily reading and sharing of the Bible, and the reading of the following Sunday’s texts should also be done in the family so as to empower and improve active family participation in St. Lucia SCC’s sharing. I suggest opening a What App account so every day SCC members can read the Word of God on their smartphones. and create a Facebook Account to train members in how to use online SCCs resources.’”

“Parish reorganizations are underway in many parts of Europe. Bishop Stephan Ackermann of Trier Diocese, Germany states: “While the parish has been integral to Western Christian civilization, it’s also faced profound and rapid change. This has necessitated new models and stronger network systems. We simply cannot continue as in the past.” These new

models and stronger network systems include the "SCCs Model of Church" and "SCCs Networking."

Mariam Leidinger writes from Aachen, Germany:

"The question of how parishes should look like in the future or if the concept should be re-worked completely is a big topic in the pastoral of Germany at the moment. The diocese of Trier has started its own strategy and path which is inspired by the concept of Small Christian Communities, e.g. by exposure trips to the Pastoral Institute Bukal ng Tipan on the Philippines. They have been doing a huge research talking many people from all milieus. As a matter of fact, Michael Meyer is involved in this as a priest. However, we still do not know where the processes are going and what will fill the "void" the fusion of parishes is leaving, too. Especially for a lot of the older ones.

The hardest question is how to create familiarity, feeling at home, as the church develops within bigger pastoral regions, less church staff within an increasing individualistic and agnostic society. Two protestant theologians from Tübingen (Reinhold Boschki and Friedrich Schweitzer) have recently done a survey within 7,000 young people which shows that many of them would call themselves believers (41%) but not religious (only 22 %). Believing is something private for them. They are critical concerning the Institutional Church, but nevertheless see the churches as important players in society. In general, between more girls would call themselves religious than boys.

It is really a hard and painful discernment process for everybody in the local church in Germany that has "grown its own structure" over the last years... It is necessary to find a way to "keep what is good" and to let go what does not bear any fruits anymore.

"As part of our ongoing SCCs research, we are asking bishops (about priests in their dioceses) and superiors (about priests in their congregations/societies) two questions:

1. How many of your priests belong to a one specific SCC in the neighborhood?
2. How many of your priests during a SCC Mass/Jumuiya Mass in the home of a SCC member after the reading of the Gospel introduce a Shared Homily rather than preach in the traditional way (as in a church)."

Collins Ongoma's reflections on the Catholic Church on the Synod Facebook Page during the Pre-Synod Meeting on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment" in Rome in March, 2018: "We in Kenya hope that young people develop the culture of praying together because it helps them bond in a special way. I highly recommend that young people join Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) that are Small Faith-sharing Groups (<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>). Through such platforms they are able to have *Bible* Sharing that focuses on the coming Sunday's Gospel and relates it to their day to day activities. These small communities also create a conducive environment where they can share common topics that pose challenges to them and seek their fellow peer support. If young people are denied a chance to interact in the church, they will find pleasure elsewhere.

Sharing my personal experience since I joined a Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC) on the campus of Kenyatta University in Nairobi has made me feel at home away from home. Through the YSCCs college students have learned to be one another's keeper and also developed the spirit of self-denial in order to extend their hands to share the little they have with the needy in society. For example, during the just concluded 2018 Lenten period we agreed to have "phone fasting" in order to save some cash meant for internet bundles and calls. We used the money for gifts for a Children's Home that turned out to be very successful.⁹³²

"'Go digital or die' is a popular universal saying. How is this influencing our SCCs ministry and evangelization?"

From Alice Alitsi: "We members of St. Kizito SCC in Waruku, Nairobi Kenya, on Sunday in our *Jumuiya* reflected on the Gospel of *John* 10:11-18. Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd" (Gospel of the 4th Sunday of Easter). Another member commented: "It is good to see how we SCC members read and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday. Do we remember the reading when we walk into church?"

From Mwanajumuiya Grace Njau: "Report on the Pontifical Mission Society (PMC) Prayer Community in Amani Street Children Primary School in Riruta, Nairobi, Kenya. Every day the children read a Bible verse with their teacher Mary. Then every Wednesday they read the Gospel of the following Sunday (unless it is too long and complicated) followed by the PMC Rosary using the World Mission Rosary. The goal is to develop young PMC members who can join others in the parish on Sunday."

Photos of the newly established PMC Prayer Community in Amani School. The Class Three community was formed in January, 2018 with a few members and now they have grown to 17 pupils. The group meets every Wednesday before they begin classes with Teacher Mary.

We have a new bookmark called: "Celebrating Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) in Eastern Africa." Many thanks to Mwanajumuiya Alloys Nyakundi for his hard work and many revisions until we got it right. We are using the name "young people" to cover both "youth" and "young adults." The bookmark has a map of Eastern Africa, two photos of the Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya and links to the SCCs Website and Facebook Page. These free bookmarks will be available at our SCCs Workshops and Meetings in the USA starting on 23 May, 2018 and later at the AMECEA Office in Nairobi. Please spread the word.

Some comments on part of Heidi Schlumpf's article in *NCR* on the CCMA Convention. See the full article below:

NCRONLINE.ORG

["Campus ministry group tries to balance different needs, agendas"](https://www.ncronline.org/.../campus-ministry-group-tries-bal...)
<https://www.ncronline.org/.../campus-ministry-group-tries-bal...>

⁹³² Collins Ongoma, "KENYA: Young People Talk Together and Walk Together," *AMECEA Online News*, 13 April, 2018, AMECEA Website, retrieved 16 April, 2018, <http://amecea.blogspot.co.ke/2018/04/kenya-young-people-talk-together-and.html>

This article presents two models/approaches to Catholic campus ministry in the USA:

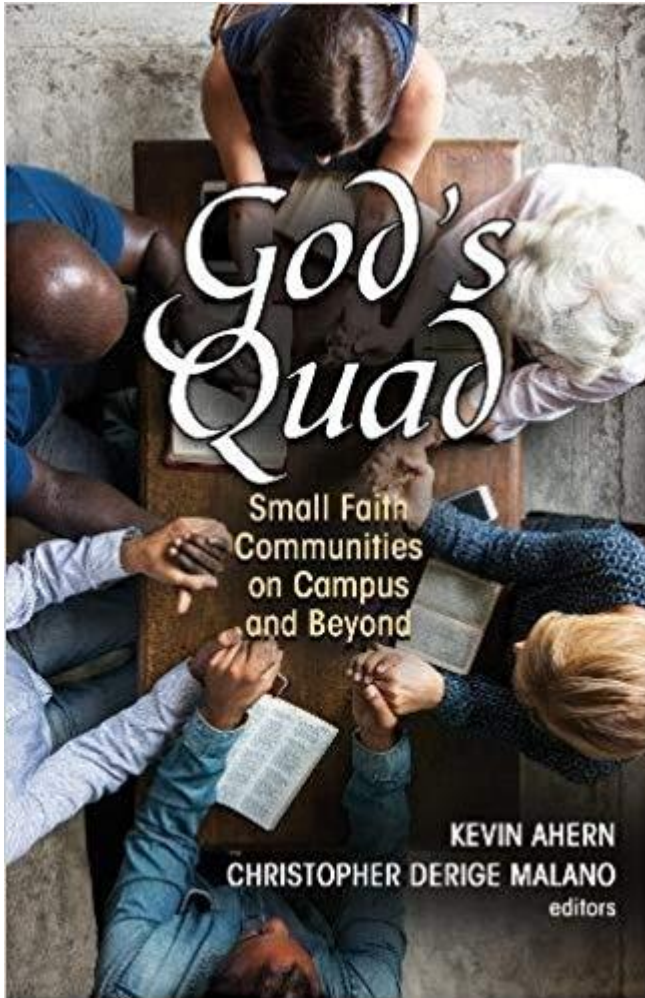
1. Evangelical Catholic/Evangelical Voice/Catholic Evangelization Model: More traditional Catholic starting with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. More narrowly focused. Mission to serve Catholic students. Influence of Evangelical Protestants. Small groups are popular.
2. Accompaniment Model: Catholic identity in a pluralistic society. More broadly focused. Mission to serve all students. Service or justice work as an on-ramp to bring students into campus ministry.

It is interesting to reflect on these two models in light of the content of the chapters in our new book *God's Quad: Small Faith-sharing Communities on Campus and Beyond*.

Mwanajumuiya Sister Esther Walioba, MM, a Maryknoll Sister from Tanzania will participate in a Mission Sending Ceremony at Maryknoll, New York, USA today 17 June, 2018. She is going as a missionary to China (Hong Kong). Prayers please. Oyee!!!

“In his speech at the AMECEA Plenary Meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Archbishop Telesphore George Mpundu, Archbishop Emeritus of Lusaka, in Zambia, recalled the role of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) that originated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and then developed in the countries of AMECEA. Mpundu encouraged unity and solidarity among the bishops, urging them to strengthen their solidarity, collaboration and spirit of faith especially in pastoral renewal at national, regional and global levels.”

Alloys Nyakundi: “The best homilist in the world cannot in 10 or 15 minutes make compelling correlations between the good news and the experience of hundreds of individuals. But a small group of people can grapple with the Word together, help each other name the experience that is accosted by the Word, agree to concrete responses to the Word, and even at times agree to be accountable to the community for responsiveness to the Word. This is the reason as to why we need SCCs in our Catholic Church.”



God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond

Paperback – September 20, 2018

by [Kevin Ahern](#) (Editor), [Christopher Derige Malano](#) (Editor)

Kindle:

\$16.50

Paperback:

\$20.00

Contributors from five continents offer case studies of best practices and practical tools for creating and maintaining Christian communities for young adults, both within and beyond academic settings. Reports from groups in Africa, Europe, and India complement U.S. case studies including the Christian Life Community Program at Boston College, Catholic Relief Services Student Ambassador program, and Leadership Labs at the University of Hawai'i. With an extensive list of additional resources, including a Small Groups Field Guide from the Catholic Campus Ministry Association, *God's Quad* offers students, youth ministers, and campus organizers insights and inspiration in equal measure.

Catholic Women Preach Series:

<http://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/07292018>

Afou Chantal Bengaly, a married lay woman from Mali, preaches for the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (29 July, 2018). Available as a Podcast and in Text. In the

Biography of the Preacher it mentions: “She contributed the chapter "From the Local to the Universal: Small Student Communities in Mali" to the forthcoming text *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* edited by Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano and published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.”

Under “Calendar of Events” for September to November, 2018:

Four Book Events to launch Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), *"God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond."* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. To be available on Amazon as an Ebook and paperback.

https://www.amazon.com/Gods-Quad-Communities-Campus-.../.../refvsr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1524187932&sr=1-2&keywords=God%E2%80%99s+Quad

Afternoon: Thursday, 27 September, 2018 at Hekima University College – Jesuit School of Theology, Nairobi, Kenya. NOTE: Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist," Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018 will be launched at the same time.

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.: Thursday, 27 September, 2018 at America Media House, New York, New York, USA.

9 a.m. – 3 p.m.: Monday, 1 October, 2018 at the Jesuit Curia Hall, Rome, Italy.

Morning: Saturday, 3 November, 2018: Loyola Institute of Pastoral Ministry, Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

The theme of the Book Events is: “Young Catholics and the Synod: Listening to Voices from Around the World.”

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[God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond](#)

Contributors from five continents offer case studies of best practices and practical tools for creating and maintaining Christian communities for young adults, both within and beyond academic settings. Reports from groups in East Africa, Europe, and India complement U.S. case studies.

From Mike St. Pierre: “I spent 12 days in Uganda with my daughter and a school group this past summer. I was blown away by the deep commitment to community there.⁹³³ It made American ‘community’ feel quite different and I’m hoping to take what I learned from the Ugandans back home to the USA.”

From Kim Smolik: “I am thrilled to see all of the SCCs activity in my home archdiocese of Minneapolis/St. Paul. I was nurtured as a young person by some of the groups you mentioned. Intentional faith communities, or small groups, have been and continue to be

⁹³³ Many visitors to Africa have commented on the deep African value of community. This highlights the African perspective on St Paul’s famous statement, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (*I Corinthians* 12:26). Whether it is suffering or joy African SCC members, as one example, have empathy, compassion, love, union, solidarity with other people.

the center of my faith journey. In particular, Catholic Youth Camp, a summer camp that merged faith and fun and that had a lot of people who were part of NET Ministries working at it, helped me develop my own personal faith life from age 8-18. Then NET itself, and the small communities that grew out of it were central to my high school and college years. I wonder what it is about the culture in Minnesota that has made small Christian community life so strong?

I am writing not just to share my personal anecdote, but to share this list of resources (attached) I only just started to compile related to the engagement of youth and young adults. We need to stay on top of the research and dialogue in advance of the Summit on 1 February 2019, not to mention, it is one of my greatest interests. You will find articles that discuss ‘creating community in new ways’ and ‘millennials seeking, creating alternative communities.’”

From Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI): “We believe the Catholic Church today and tomorrow is and will be small communities meeting in homes. The Spirit of Jesus Christ can once again survive in house churches. We can prove it at this moment by getting together with youngsters, neighbors, and strangers, finding each other in ecumenical house sessions where we listen to each other’s attempts to live evangelical love in the disturbing world of today. What would be a universal purpose of all small communities: living according to Gospel values; living the commandment of love; Jesus’ teaching of who is my neighbor; living the mission of Jesus to bring good news to the poor and to set captives free.”

We just completed our "SCCs Training the Trainers Workshop For Those Serving in Refugees Ministry, Lodongo Spiritual Center, Arua Diocese, Uganda in August, 2018. We are 44 participants: 38 refugees living in four Refugee Settlements (Adjumani, Bidi Bidi and Palorinya in Arua Diocese and Palabek in Gulu Archdiocese) and six facilitators coordinated by the AMECEA Small Christian Communities Training Team.

See the article "UGANDA: South Sudanese Refugees in Northern Uganda Receive Full Training in Small Christian Communities" by Pamela Adinda. On the AMECEA Website via the AMECEA Online News at: <http://amecea.blogspot.com> Also reprinted on the Zenit Website at: <https://zenit.org>

Saturday, 1 September, 2018

"One-day Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Pastoral Solutions Workshop"

Immaculate Conception Parish, Mavurunza

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Facilitated by Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH and Father Joseph Healey, MM, members of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team.

Research question: Today almost all our SCCs have a saint's name-- a patron or patroness saint. But this was not true in the late 1960s and early 1970s when SCCs started in Eastern Africa. More commonly the SCC was known by its geographical location -- the name of part of a village in rural areas and the name of part of a housing project or estate in urban area. When did the shift to saints' names occur? Please comment.

From Alloys Nyakundi: “On Friday I was invited by St. Paul Parish young adults in San Antonio, Texas to talk about my ministry on Young People Small Christian Communities

in Eastern Africa. I was really encouraged with the way young adults in this parish are committed to learn and listen to one another. They promised to call me for a Young People Small Christian Communities Workshop because they felt it's the best route to follow.”

“Greetings Father Healey and the Eastern African Team of SCCs. I am submitting this request on the behalf of beloved our member Alex Katana who is a single parent, homeless and living under the painful conditions. Please I am posting this fundraising request to support building a shelter for Alex because he is aged and has no close relatives. Thank you and God bless.”

John W. Mugoya
St. Monica SCC

May all our SCCs pray for this intention in preparation for the "Synod on Young People" to take place in October, 2018:

Prayer intention of Pope Francis for September 2018:

Universal: "Young People in Africa"

That young people in Africa may have access to education and work in their own countries.

This prayer focuses on a key point: that the African young people's education and work opportunities take place in their own African countries.

American Maryknoll Missionary Priest Rev. George G. Cotter, M.M. passed away on 6 September, 2018, at Mission St. Teresa's, Maryknoll, New York, USA. Father Cotter was 88 years old and a Maryknoll priest for 58 years. Here is what we wrote in our book on SCCs in Eastern Africa:

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. A key is that these Small Reflection Groups started with life (Sukuma proverbs) and then went to the *Bible*. This experience 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.”

Report from China on the rapid growth of "Home Churches:" “As the Chinese Communist Party keeps tightening the screws on religious freedom by banning minors from entering places of worship, Catholics in central Henan Province are fighting back by reinventing their homes as temporary ‘churches’ for services that can include the whole family. Catholics parents have responded to state pressure by tightening their communal bonds and organizing gatherings at one another's houses so they can worship with the whole family including their children. Each family is continuing its faith activities at home and maintaining their strong bonds with God. Priests also attend these ‘house meetings’ to explain church teachings to younger family members and further strengthen their faith.”

“How many people know that in the Catholic Church Sunday, 21 October, 2018 is World Mission Sunday? All Catholics, all laypeople and all SCCs members have the missionary obligation to go out to proclaim the good news starting with our own local neighborhoods. The missionary, the evangelist uses all doors, all means, all avenues of spreading the Gospel. For example, today we reach people with the Good News of Salvation

using many means of communication: traditional means, mass media, internet, social media, etc. Pope Francis encourages us to be “bold and creative.””

“Without taking anything away from the sacrament of Confirmation (ideally given as a Rite of Passage during the mid-teens), it is college or when, for whatever reason, a youth leaves home and starts her or his journey as an adult—that a young Catholic truly has to lay claim to her or his faith. Thus, the importance of Small Faith-sharing Communities during the college years.

NOTE: The transition from high school (when the student is probably living with his or her parents at home) to college (when if a boarding school is the first time that the student is on his or her own in a peer group setting) is huge. Here one’s faith and commitment are really tested.

“During our weekly (every Tuesday) meeting of our ST. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE INTERNATIONAL ONLINE SCC we reflected on how next Sunday we can focus on, and combine three important themes -- servant leadership, emerging paradigm of youth empowerment (a choice in our SCCs Poll this month) and mission. Our SCCs embrace servant leadership because of the mutuality among members where everyone's opinion counts in decision making. On the other hand, in some institutions the leaders feel threatened with servant leadership because they want to be seen as the bosses. How I wish that leaders would envision their mission and vision.”

From *America Magazine*:

“When asked what the church can do to reach out to young people, respondents told us that Faith-sharing groups and service opportunities should be priorities for the church. Marcus Mescher of Cincinnati, Ohio advocated for Faith-sharing groups. ‘Masses for young people divide the body of Christ. But Faith-sharing groups bring young people together to share their hopes and dreams, their questions and insights,’ wrote Mr. Mescher. ‘In Faith-sharing groups, young people can discover they are not alone in what they most deeply desire and find others to foster communities of agreement and accountability. They can be empowered to take responsibility for bringing others into the group and lead it forward in making connections with liturgy, service and other outreach efforts.’”

“Some respondents specified that they would like efforts directed at people in their 20s. ‘In my experience, if a parish has any sort of Faith-sharing or outreach that isn't geared toward people age 35 or older, it’s geared toward kids and teenagers,’ wrote Erik Raessler of Maybrook, N.Y. ‘There’s a gaping hole in the church where young adults should be. I’m 26, and there’s no one active in my parish near my age in either direction.’”

“Hannah Beeler of Eagle River, Wis., told *America* that her diocese’s Theology on Tap events had been a constructive space to build community. ‘I look forward to our Theology on Tap events every month. It is great to know there are others like me in the area who face similar challenges, and it’s nice to discuss the topics that we choose. I’ve met some wonderful people!’”

From Lawrence Murori: “I met a group of young people at Angela Merici parish in New Orleans aged between 16-25 years. They meet every Sunday afternoon for games and after games they share pizza together, pray and end back home. I played with them volleyball and they were very excited. They wanted me to join them again.”

From Clyde Christofferson on "The Wisdom of the Community":

How should we proceed with support for small communities – “wherever two or three are gathered ...”? Cultivation of the “collective wisdom” of the People of God is far more fundamental and important than distinctions (lay or cleric, free or slave, male or female). If those in a small group or “listening circle” listen so that their own contributions are informed by the lived experience of others, then a “collective wisdom” grounded in the Spirit can emerge. We need a strategy for a journey -- a virtual pilgrimage -- guided by this objective but whose concrete expression is open to the Spirit. The obvious starting point is "structured listening." That is what listening circles and other formats for prayerful small group discussion are about.

Mrs. Belza Ramos is an active member of our ST. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE INTERNATIONAL ONLINE SCC. She gives this "Touchdown" from the grassroots experience in San Antonio, Texas, USA: "This week I attended the Hispanic SCC meeting as well as the meeting after Mass on Sunday for reflection in Spanish on the Gospel. We are also doing a book study "The Catholic Warrior." It does not have a study guide, so I created one and emphasized the importance on having the prayerful atmosphere with the Cross, a candle. This topic is on spiritual warfare, so we need to arm ourselves."

As our SCC members around the world meet in the middle of the week let us remember

Sunday, 28 October, 2018

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Gospel reading is Mark 10:46-52 (“Cure of the Blind Man”)

An interesting saying: "We pray out of lived experience and into lived experience." Our lived experience can be seen on two levels:

1. Local, grassroots context (on the ground context or the concrete, local situation).
2. World context (wider, broader global picture). For example, next Sunday, 28 October is the Closing Mass in Rome for the synod on “Young People.”

Sister Rita Ishengoma reports that SCCs will be involved in the 150 years Celebration of Evangelization to take place in Bagamoyo, Tanzania next weekend. It is big historical event in the country. The history started in Zanzibar in 1868. On 4 March, 1868 the French Holy Ghost Fathers (now called Spiritans) arrived in Bagamoyo.

On our SCCs Facebook page we posed these questions: In both of our SCCs Classes at Hekima and Tangaza in Nairobi, we are having a interesting and lively discussion/debate/dialog on how the homily should be given in a SCCs Mass in a private home: should it be a Shared Homily in the spirit and practice of the SCCs Model of Church? Or should the priest give the homily in the same way as he does in the physical church?

This week a student asked about how homilies were given in "masses" in the 1st Century AD. We know that St. Paul founded the first Small Christian Communities as House Churches 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 of the Apostles* 2:46 describes a twofold dynamic: First, the early Christians continued to pray in the synagogues in the Jewish tradition. "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts." Second, the Eucharist was celebrated in private homes where the Christians gathered together in extended families. "They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."

After the Jewish Scriptures (what we call the *Old Testament*) were read in these Eucharistic Celebrations in the private homes did someone preach? Or were these early Christians invited by the leader to "break open" the Word of God (share their reflections on the scripture texts)

Please give your comments and thoughts. Some comments/responses in the "Forum" section of our SCCs Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>):

1. From Kenya: "A 'Critical Incident' was Catechist Samson's report on his visit to a friend in Thika Town in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya. He happened to participate in a Home Mass/House Mass of the Small Christian Community (SCC) of his friend. But this was not really a SCC Mass (Jumuiya Mass). The mass was exactly the same mass that the priest celebrates in the parish or outstation church. The priest preached and there was very little lay participation. In SCC classes, workshops, meetings and discussions this issue comes up again and again. There is a big difference between a SCC Mass (Jumuiya Mass) celebrated in a home or in the neighborhood and a regular mass celebrated in a home or in the neighborhood."

2. From Kenya: "My take, if it is a home Mass, a family has requested for a Mass in their home then the priest can preach. If it is a SCC Mass, celebrated for a SCC/s (the setting it is conducted is inconsequential), after the reading of the Scripture the members of the SCC/s are invited to share their thoughts on how the reading has inspired them and how they can relate it to their daily life."

3. From Kenya: "Home Masses are very popular in parts of Eastern Africa and have many meanings. Most often the host Catholics are celebrating a special family event -- wedding anniversary, birth of a child, graduation from the university, a sick person in the family, death of a relative or friend, anniversary of the death of a relative or friend, etc.

A Home Mass in the room of a sick family member who is lying in bed or sitting up has special rituals. This may be a Healing Mass. There may be a special blessing with everyone performing the laying on of hands. The Shared Homily fits the occasion so everyone can actively for and with the sick person.

At these Home Masses SCC members in the neighborhood may or may not be invited. All this affects how the mass is celebrated. When is the appropriate time for the "Guest of Honor" (for example, the university graduate) to speak -- at the beginning of mass, during the Shared Homily, at the end of mass?"

4. From Cameroon: "Wow this is great, I am following you directly in Cameroon. Pass my greetings to all who will be attending this open discussion."

5.From USA: Lawrence Murori, a diocesan priest from Meru Diocese, Kenya who is presently studying at Loyola University, New Orleans, USA says: "The word 'shared homily' is interesting in trying to know how SCC members understand it. Often basic catechesis has to be done. Personal experience has taught me that members keep quiet and only wait for the priest or a leader to do it. Perhaps a few SCCs might be advanced in sharing homilies during SCC mass because somebody might have taught them how to do it. I would hope that everyone in the SCC knows how to share the homily in the light of lived experience. So, I suggest the question: How can we stimulate the spirit of a shared homily in a SCC mass context?"

COMMENT: I agree catechesis is key. We call SCCs a “New Way of Being/Becoming Church” and a “New Pastoral Model of Church in Africa,” but priests, Sisters, Brothers, deacons, seminarians and especially lay people (99 % of the Catholic Church) have to be made aware of this new way of doing pastoral ministry. It is so, so hard for people to change their traditional way of doing things. That is why our training handbook is so important.

Chimombo, Emmanuel, Joseph G. Healey, Rita Ishengoma, Rose Musimba, Febian P. Mulenga and Alphonse C. L. Omolo, (eds.), *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators*, Nairobi: AMECEA Pastoral Department and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2017. Second Revised Edition, 2018. Paperback and Ebook available on Paulines Publications Africa. Ebook available through Paulines Publications Africa on Android Platforms only (smartphones, tablets, etc.) – not on Apple or Microsoft.

<http://e.paulinesafrica.org/index.php/book/bookDetails/1356>

Paperback (Print on Demand -- POD) and Ebook available on Amazon.

https://www.amazon.com/STRENGTHENING-GROWTH-CHRISTIAN-COMMUNITIES-AFRICA-ebook/dp/B07H2YRBTJ/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1536294296&sr=8-1&keywords=emmanuel+chimombo

I hope folks in the USA and Europe buy the Ebook version or the POD version.”

6.From Kenya: “It is more interesting when after the readings the priest sits down and gives members a chance to share on how the scriptures of the day have spoken to them as they point out what they learn from the scriptures of the day -- however not preaching, but pointing out their weaknesses and what Jesus is saying to them about their weaknesses. When members are honest in so doing, a new family of brothers and sisters is born.”

7.From Kenya: From Ephigenia Gachiri, Director of Lumko, Eastern Africa and based in Kenya: "The more lay people and priests the better who: Read the *Bible* personally every day. Spend time in prayer every day to know the Lord. Study other relevant issues in the Catholic Church.

Then they will be better equipped to share what the Lord means to them during homilies anywhere. IF not??? We shall just waste time sharing OUR OWN OPINIONS. The priest and the SCC members also listen to the Holy Spirit during each day to know what to do during homily time. No one can dictate for every occasion.”

8.From Kenya: “A homily should be informative, communicative, educative and transformative. I join Alphonse and Fr. Lawrence to say that our dear lay faithful at the SCC level have a lot to do. They need basic catechesis. Sometimes many of them do not even

know what the readings are. How do you expect them to share that Word of God or give a reflection? Because even a priest needs not less than three days to prepare a good homily.

Besides, a homily is only given by ordained ministers. Otherwise it is a reflection or sermon. So let us look at that phrase "shared homily". However, our Christians need to keep abreast of the Word of God. I was in Fr. Healey's class in Tangaza two years ago. It was so enriching especially when I went for practicals."

COMMENT: "Thank you for these insights. I know some lay SCC members who read the Gospel of the following Sunday before they go to the weekly gathering (*Bible Service*) of the SCC. This is the ideal."

9.From Kenya: One of the students at Hekima University College said this about the Shared Homily in our African Inculturated Small Christian Community (SCCs) Mass -- Jumuiya Mass: "I was in a small sharing group of three seminarians and was enriched by the insights of the other two people."

10.From USA: Belza Ramos in Texas states: "From scripture we see that the Apostles after Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit had interactive homilies, as people listened, believed, were called to action, asked what to do and responded. As many of them were Jews they knew they were called to change some beliefs and practices and were "dedicated to the Apostles' teachings. As they went "to all the nations" they met in homes (after preaching in the existing synagogues) and broke bread. It is not explicitly termed as a homily but we see that there are questions, confessions, desires to change voiced after the teachings of the apostles sunk in. We see that concerns were raised , for example of the "Hellenist community of orphans and widows not being taken care of in the allocations of community assets and sustenance" and solutions were decided in a group setting.

I believe that most SCCs and their members may not interpret the model of sharing in the SCC setting as involving "homily" when a priest is not present, and we need to do some more teaching on that. I would think that when a priest is invited to celebrate mass for an SCC in a home, he would see it as an opportunity to have an interactive homily as listening to the needs of his flock, and the members see it as an opportunity for expert spiritual guidance if they resist anything in the scripture, are not clear in what their take-away should be or resist the call they receive through the scripture.

It is a "teachable moment" and a "learning moment" or as the African saying goes not an and/or but an and/also opportunity."

COMMENT: Thanks for introducing the expression "interactive homily."

11.From Kenya: Indian Scripture scholar Father Johny Thachuparamban, who teaches at Hekima and Tangaza Colleges in Nairobi, comments on one verse in the "Acts of the Apostles: Chapter 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." He explains that these four aspects of the life and worship of the House Churches in the 1st century (what we now call SCCs Masses in the homes) reveal a deep spirit of sharing: Just as the first Christians shared fellowship (sisterhood and brotherhood), the Eucharist and joint prayers, we can assume they shared in the Apostles teaching and preaching, that is, if St. Paul comments on the Jewish scriptures during a religious service in the home, the other Christians also participate in this Shared Teaching/Shared Preaching, or to make a big jump, in the Shared Homily.

12.From Kenya: Sister Mary Nzilani states: "I tend to believe as per church documents that, the homily is given in the course of the celebration of Holy Mass and is a part of the liturgy itself. It should generally be given by the priest celebrant himself. He may entrust it to a concelebrating priest or occasionally, according to circumstances, to a deacon, but never to a layperson. At the same time prohibition of the admission of laypersons to preach within the mass applies also to seminarians, students of theological disciplines, and those who have assumed the function of those known as pastoral assistants; nor is there to be any exception for any other kind of layperson, or group, or community, or association. But in case a need arises for the gathered faithful to be given instruction or testimony by a layperson in a church concerning the Christian life, it is altogether preferable that this be done outside mass. For serious reasons, it is permissible that this type of instruction or testimony be given after the priest has proclaimed the Prayer after Communion. Therefore, my thinking is that, the priest should give the homily in the same way in a Home Mass (SCCs Mass) as he does in the physical church. This is because a mass in the SCCs remains the same as a mass in the physical church. At the same time, the faithful in the SCCs meets a priest in the SCCs one per month or even once a year during their feast days as majority say in our sharing. Thus, in such a case, they need to listen to their shepherd for spiritual nourishment. For their engagement, it should be done after mass. Therefore the priest should prepare to be with them and listen to them. More so, not all know how to share and so, it may be a kind of a destruction during mass for if some are not effective, others may take it as a laughing matter. A good example is our mass in Hekima last two weeks. I sat with a lady who just listened to me. When I gave her a chance to speak, she told me what I have said is enough. No word came from her mouth as an input. In case this is demanded on the higher side, then good preparation is needed on the side of the SCC members so as to be aware of what to do."

13.From Tanzania: A Maryknoll missionary priest in Musoma, Tanzania had doubts about the SCCs Model of Church. He felt that lay people in their weekly SCCs gatherings were not capable by themselves of reflecting on the *Bible*. They needed help from the outside.

These entries on our SCCs Facebook Page⁹³⁴ 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 conversation, discussion, exchange, important announcements, information, analysis, inspiring and challenging quotations, questions and answers 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/Commentary/Faith-sharing including Homilies and Sermons.
- Important "space" ("place") for spiritual, pastoral and theological conversation, questions, discussion and sharing.
 - Faith-sharing.

⁹³⁴ The same applies to What'sApp Groups and other social media.

- Discussion on the content (themes and topics) of articles, theses, booklets and books 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 (spiritual), 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.⁹³⁵ 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.

⁹³⁵ 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://cnblog.wordpress.com/2011/02/22/virtually-there-small-christian-communities-online-in-africa> on 3 March, 2013.

Skype⁹³⁶ 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 worldwide Marianist Cyber Community⁹³⁷ that has African members. They meet daily online for Faith-sharing and *Bible* reflection. Another example is the Emmanuel Community that holds weekly “household” meetings on Skype where community members, including priests, pray together and share their lives.

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. Please spread this message to others.

We chose St. Isidore of Seville as the Patron Saint of our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC. St. Isidore of Seville was born in 560 in Cartagena, Spain and died on 4 April 636 in Seville, Spain. He is the Patron Saint of the Internet and Technology.⁹³⁸ especially because he wrote the first encyclopedia – a 20-book opus called *Etymologia* after the subject title of one of the books. He was a scholar and is widely regarded as the last of the Fathers of the Church. For over three decades he was the Archbishop of Seville. His Feast Day is on 4 April.

⁹³⁶ “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/nafscs/documents/The%20Strong%20Challenge.pdf>

⁹³⁷ Information provided by Kenyan laywoman Lorna Mueni Kilonzo.

⁹³⁸ 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.” To summarize: Initially a poor student, he gave the problem over to God and become of the most learned men of his time. Daily Gospel Email and Website, retrieved on 4 April, 2013, <http://dailygospel.org/M/AM/>

It is suggested that we pray to St. Isidore before logging onto the internet. One prayer includes the line: "We beseech you that, through the intercession of Saint Isidore, bishop and doctor, during our journeys through the internet we will direct our hands and eyes only to that which is pleasing to you and treat with charity and patience all those souls whom we encounter."

Using Skype Video Conferencing we 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.

From the very beginning we have had 39 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 countries that have been represented are Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Swaziland. We met every Tuesday⁹³⁹ 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 having a “take way” (practical follow-up or follow-down) that we share at the end of our meeting.⁹⁴⁰ 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.⁹⁴¹

Over the last eight years a bonding and solidarity has developed among the members of our Online Skype SCC. We see ourselves as an online SCC prayer family following the adage *The family that prays together stays together*. 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 and prayer” to the online group when it meets.⁹⁴² Members who cannot join the online Skype session in person send an email message on the Gospel passage

⁹³⁹ 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-based Catholic. In additional I may join another SCC (a physical SCC) during the week to reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday.

⁹⁴⁰ As a concrete example: on Tuesday, 11 September, 2018 we reflected on the Gospel of the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B: *Mark* 8: 27-35. My mantra was Jesus’s question to his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” My take away was that in the next week I would ask young people in Nairobi: “You African young people, who do you say that I am?”

⁹⁴¹ Genevieve Nneoma Ihenacho, SHCJ, “Small Christian Community Practicum Write-up,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2013, p. 1.

⁹⁴² 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.

including the mantra of the week for other members to read ahead of time. These messages are also read during the weekly online sessions themselves. These messages are sometimes posted on the SCCs Facebook Page. These messages are sometimes used in the members' local SCCs.

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.⁹⁴³

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.
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. When the three moderators are all busy or traveling and there is no possibility of a live, online Skype Meeting that week, then this is a unique opportunity for our Skype SCC members to share their *Bible* Reflections by email or some other type of social media.

Video Conferencing can also be set up through Zoom, Cisco Webex, Facebook, Google Chat, Google Hang Outs, Go to Meeting and Yahoo Chat.

Kenyan Elizabeth Kiarie describes a new type of Phone SCC of Kenya Catholics living in the USA. Approximately 15 members meet on a free, online Conference Call. People from the Boston Area, Houston, Texas and other places dial into a special number at 8 p.m. on Fridays. During the 1 and ¼ hours audio session they read the Gospel of the following Sunday or a special Gospel requested by one of the members. They discuss their daily lives and common events. Right after the call as part of their outreach, several members may visit a sick person in a nearby hospital.

⁹⁴³ Jennifer Ehrentraut, email message to Skype SCC members, 1 November, 2015.

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>)

FaithND – an outreach of the University of Notre Dame Alumni Association, South Bend, Indiana, USA --is a particularly good example of daily lectionary-based faith sharing by an individual. The contributors are dedicated lay people connected to Notre Dame: alumni (men and women) from both undergraduate and graduate levels, current students, parents and friends. The reflections come from deep personal experience and connect the Gospel to our daily lives. Often the reflections gives a fresh perspective and insight on a Gospel passage. An example is 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) that was posted 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.

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>

Other examples are cited throughout this Ebook. FaithND Website Archives are available from 2015 to the present. Some people say that they have automatically downloaded the link to their smartphones so the Gospel passage and reflection is the first item they read when they wakes up – a kind of Morning Prayer. The website has a Forum Page where visitors can add their reflections and comments.

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,⁹⁴⁴ video conferencing, meetings, online chats⁹⁴⁵ 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) and through Skype.⁹⁴⁶

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

⁹⁴⁴ Marriage Counselors use Skype for the pastoral visit with couples connected to the Pre-Cana process.

⁹⁴⁵ 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).

⁹⁴⁶ 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")⁹⁴⁷ 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."⁹⁴⁸

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

⁹⁴⁷ 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.

⁹⁴⁸ Mary Tioko in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 1 November, 2013.

to the program while most of the faithful are presumably in church at the time 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.⁹⁴⁹

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.⁹⁵⁰

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*.⁹⁵¹

Residents of Southern Africa get a taste of small community Faith-sharing on a radio program broadcast twice a week on Radio Veritas, a Catholic broadcast station and website. The program is the brainchild of Duncan Hyam, coordinator of RENEW Africa and Why Catholic? in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa. The recorded one-hour programs, which Duncan produces and hosts, feature a pre-rehearsed small community Faith-sharing with one of the RENEW resources. Various language groups of South Africa participate. The program runs continuously rather than in seasons, and will eventually use

⁹⁴⁹ 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>

⁹⁵⁰ Father Peter Mkhwayi in a conversation with the author in Lilongwe, Malawi on 18 December, 2013.

⁹⁵¹ Mrs. Judith Phiri in a conversation with the author in Lusaka, Zambia on 6 December, 2013.

Lenten Longings, At Prayer with Mary, and ARISE. Listeners who own the RENEW Faith-sharing books will be invited to follow along.⁹⁵²

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 University College, Nairobi Archdiocese and Tangaza University College, Nairobi Archdiocese).⁹⁵³

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:

⁹⁵² “WORLD Renew” Email dated 28 April, 2017.

⁹⁵³ See Francis Njuguna, “SCCs...In Efforts to Honor Cardinal Otunga,” *National Mirror*, 1:4 (April, 2013), 18.

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?⁹⁵⁴

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 *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](#)⁹⁵⁵ has training materials and practical suggestions on *Bible Study*, community, leadership, ministry, mission, prayer and small-group retreats.

⁹⁵⁴ David Smith in an email message to the author dated 12 May, 2014.

⁹⁵⁵ 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.

[RENEW International](#) with wide experience throughout the world including Burundi and South Africa (Port Elizabeth Diocese and Johannesburg Archdiocese)⁹⁵⁶ has many Faith-sharing resources.⁹⁵⁷ “The World as Our Neighbor” is a six-part global justice 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 AND AIDS and Peacebuilding. The series is available for college and university students as “The World on Campus.”

[Presentation Ministries](#) (PM)⁹⁵⁸ 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.

⁹⁵⁶ 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>

⁹⁵⁷ 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 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 community 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>

⁹⁵⁸ 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."

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."⁹⁵⁹ 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 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."⁹⁶⁰

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

⁹⁵⁹ "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.

⁹⁶⁰ Alphonse Omolo, email message to the author, 28 April. 2013.

[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.⁹⁶¹

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.

⁹⁶¹ 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/uscatholicmission/files/Mission%20Updates/Mission_Update_v22-3_autumn_2013.pdf

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,⁹⁶² with India alone having a user base of more than 70 million.⁹⁶³ 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

⁹⁶² 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.

⁹⁶³ Wikipedia Website, retrieved on 16 April, 2015, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WhatsApp>

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 and announcement of SCC activities, notices of sicknesses and deaths, etc. A good example is the KUCC App.

10. Online Small Christian Communities

Mwanajumuiya Alphonse Omolo asked, “Who pulled the trigger, that is, who started our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC? Following further discussion I found the answer in our free, online Ebook:

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. Please spread this message to others.”

“Using Skype Video Conferencing we 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.”

I am copying Brenda to share the Maryknoll Lay Missioners connection.

Fascinating history. After further research I found that Maryknoll Seminarian John Siyumbu (then studying Philosophy at the Apostles of Jesus, Langata) and I started four Online SCCs through the Facebook Group Chat Feature on 30 October, 2010. We tested both public and private groups. We thought six members was the maximum for one Online SCC.

[1. St. Martin de Porres Online Small Christian Community](https://www.facebook.com/groups/134661419922238) (private group)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/134661419922238>
 SCC was created on November 27, 2010

Based on the outline of the SCCs Global Collaborative Website.

Group Type: General

2. [St. Monica Online Small Christian Community](https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_102666013137594&ap=1) (private group)
https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_102666013137594&ap=1

3. [St. Bakhita Online Small Christian Community](#) (not available)

4. [St. Michael the Archangel Online Small Christian Community](https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_166304546752337m) (public group)
https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_166304546752337m

We would share our reflections on the Gospel of the following Sunday by sending text messages on Facebook. Regular members in those days were Father Max Stetter, a diocesan priest in Germany and Alex Temple from Uganda. After several years these SCCs faded out as members went to other social media like Skype and WhatsApp.

A key to understanding the 50,000 SCCs in Kenya is that they are not a program or project in the parish or in the university/secondary school, but “a way of life.” SCC members’ use of the WhatsApp Platform on social media on the internet has expanded and transformed their communications and networking. Now thousands of SCCs are daily posts to share information, spiritual formation and plans as part of the daily life of the SCC. Some examples (alphabetically):

- Anniversaries.
- Announcements.
- Celebrations.
- Collections for deceased people (especially through MPESA).
- Daily mass readings and reflections especially the Sunday Gospel.
- Devotional sayings.
- Highlights of *Jumuiya* Masses.
- Holiday greetings.
- Photographs of SCC events.
- Practical action and service outreach projects.
- Public health information.
- Music/religious songs.
- Responsibility for coordinating a Sunday mass in the local parish.
- Rotating homes of SCC members for the daily evening prayers and the rosary.
- Social chit chat.
- Stories.
- Weekly online gatherings.

Many examples are documented on the [Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) Facebook Page](#).

The popular saying -- *When God closes a door, somewhere He opens a window* – provides a good metaphor for reading the signs of the times today. In Kenya in March, 2020 during the terrible Covid-19 pandemic crisis a door closed, namely the Kenyan Government wisely ordered that our Catholic Churches be closed and that our weekly Small Christian Communities (SCCs) physical meetings be suspended. But then a window opened, namely Online Small Christian Communities that are also called Virtual SCCs and Digital SCCs. SCC members in Kenya are using (alphabetically) Facebook, Facebook Live, Facetime, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Gumzo, Kinet, Microsoft Team, Skype, Vimeo, WhatsApp,

Webex, Zoom and other media platforms on the internet. SCC members send text messages, audio clips and video clips to their weekly online meetings. Our motto: *Go digital or die*.

Starting in April, 2020 a variety of Online Small Christian Communities gatherings emerged in Kenya such as:

Parish-based SCCs:

St. Kizito Online SCC, St. Austin Parish, Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday afternoon on the WhatsApp media platform.

St. Joseph Online SCC, St. Jude Parish, Donholm, Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday morning on the Google Meet and WhatsApp media platforms.

Holy Rosary Online SCC, St. Dominic Outstation, St. Christopher Parish, Kimbo, Nairobi, Kenya on Thursday evening on the Zoom and WhatsApp media platforms.

School-based SCCs:

St. Patrick Family Online SCC, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya on Monday evening on the WhatsApp media platform.

St. Francis Online SCC and St. Dominic Online SCC, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya on Wednesday evening on the WhatsApp media platform.

St. Augustine Graduate Fellowship Virtual SCC (graduate students and alumni), Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya on Sunday afternoon on the Zoom and WhatsApp media platforms.

Specialized SCCs:

St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC on Tuesday afternoon on the Skype media platform.

John Paul II Evangelizing Teams Formation Program Online SCC on last Sunday of the month on the Zoom and WhatsApp media platforms.

Malawian Catholics Living in Kenya Online SCC on Sunday afternoon on the Zoom media platform.

South Sudanese Refugees Living in Nairobi Online SCC on Wednesday afternoon on the Zoom media platform.

All these SCCs are Scripture based -- reading and reflecting on the Sunday Gospel. Some of these Online SCCs post the Daily Mass Readings of the Catholic Church's Lectionary Cycle and different spiritual reflections on their WhatsApp media platforms.

For 10 years we have been struggling with the "After College What" syndrome. What happens to university students (who have had a good SCC experience on campuses like KU, University of Nairobi and CUEA) after they graduate? St. Augustine SCC (graduate students and alumni living near KU in Nairobi) have been meeting physically on Sunday after the last

mass at the Christ the Teacher Parish, Chaplaincy Centre at Kenyatta University, Nairobi for years. Graduates of the University of Nairobi meet after mass in a Graduates SCC at St. Paul's Chapel, Nairobi.

Obstacles to forming additional Alumni SCCs have been:

1. Location (alumni are scattered around Nairobi; it is hard to find a central place to meet).
2. Age difference (different generations have different interests and expectations).
3. The Kenyatta University Catholic Alumni Association has the reputation of being mainly interested in fund raising.

But now with Online SCCs like the St. Augustine Graduate Fellowship Virtual SCC, a new normal has emerged that includes diaspora SCC alumni members. Alumni living in distant parts of the Nairobi Metropolitan, Kisumu or Mombasa can participate in this Online SCCs. Alumni living and studying in Italy, Germany and USA can participate in this Online SCCs.

With Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) (high school level), the situation is different. Kenya does not allow high school students in boarding schools to have smartphones. So they cannot join their parish --based Online YSCCs while in school.

After a great deal of research and consultation we have determined that the five essential characteristics or criteria of a physical, neighborhood SCC in the SCC Model of Church in Eastern Africa are:

1. Size: 15-20 members participate in the weekly physical gatherings. The total number of members may be much larger.
2. Weekly lectionary-based faith-sharing that connects the Gospel to daily life.
3. Structurally connected to the parish as a "community of communities" pastoral, ecclesial model of church.
4. Regular practical action and outreach.
5. Ongoing formation and training of SCC leaders and members.

All these essential characteristics are in the context that in Eastern Africa SCCs are a way of life, not just a program or project in the parish.

For Online SCCs we adjusted these five essential characteristics or criteria as follows:

1. Size: up to 50 members participate in the weekly online gatherings. The total number of members may be much larger.
2. Weekly lectionary-based faith-sharing that connects the Gospel to daily life. Remains the same.
3. Structurally connected to the parish as a "community of communities" pastoral, ecclesial model of church. Some of the Specialized Online SCCs and the free floating Online SCCs may not be connected to a parish.
4. Regular practical action and outreach. Carried out by individual members with less likelihood of small groups doing it *kijumuiya* (Swahili for "in community").

5. Ongoing formation and training of SCC leaders and members. More opportunities for online formation and training through webinars, online workshops and seminars, etc.

CASE STUDY OF ST. KIZITO ONLINE SCC

There is a popular saying in Spanish -- *We create the path by walking* – that encourages the growth of SCCs in their local context from the grassroots up. In light of today’s signs of the times a new path has developed in Kenya and in other countries: Weekly “Online Small Christian Communities.” St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC) is one of the 12 SCCs in St. Austin Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese. It is located in Waruku, an informal settlement area near Kangemi. This SCC has been having weekly physical gatherings in the members’ homes in their neighborhood since 2003.

But then everything changed with the coronavirus lockdown in Kenya in 2020. Our first St. Kizito Online SCC gathering was on Sunday, 5 April, 2020. We used the Gospel of the following Easter Sunday (*John 20:1-9*): The Gospel Sharing/Reflection Animator Mwanajumuiya Agnes Wanjala downloaded the audio version and sent the text version of this gospel to our St. Kizito SCC WhatsApp Platform the night before. At exactly 2 p.m. on Sunday we began the *Bible Service*. After the Opening Prayer we shared online through text messages in Swahili the verses that struck us the most. Then SCC members shared their reflections on the Gospel and how this passage applies to our daily lives here in Kenya. Many reflections referred to the challenge of the Covid-19 crisis in the world today. The reoccurring message was to depend on Jesus Christ. Then we had the “Prayer of the Faithful” and the final prayer and blessing. We ended with an audio clip of a rousing song provided by Mwanajumuiya Nicholas Mulei.

Our Moderator Mwanajumuiya Ben Wanjala counted 21 members who participated in this first weekly St. Kizito Online SCC gathering through text messages and two audio clips on our WhatsApp Platform. We overcame the problems of the lack of electricity and the lack of internet connectivity. Our Prayer Leader Mwanajumuiya Gabriel Mwatela did a great job.

To summarize: In the universal context the whole world is in the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the local Nairobi, Kenya context we are presently in a situation of partial lockdown, quarantine, night curfew and restricted travel. Ben Wanjala and Agnes Wanjala are now stuck in Kitale, Kenya and cannot travel. Our SCC Treasury is way down. SCC members struggle to find money for their internet bundles. But we meet faithfully online every Sunday afternoon. Our St. Kizito SCC members are active online on WhatsApp every day.

On Sunday afternoons in November, 2020 St. Kizito SCC members began meeting again physically in their homes in the Waruku neighborhood, but following strict Covid-19 pandemic guidelines including wearing masks and physical distancing.

In the 70th Round (November – December, 2020) of our SCCs Poll on “The best part of my Small Christian Community is:..” (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>), two choices were:

- * Adapts to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.
- * Responds creatively to the New Normal.

St. Kizito SCC members are challenged during these very difficult times of the coronavirus. They are trying to respond with prayer and creative action.



Members of St. Kizito SCC, Waruku, Nairobi pose for a photo on Sunday, 21 February 2021 while presenting a small token to Sister Yasinta of the Sacramentine Sisters who was one of us during her time when she was serving in Kenya.

CASE STUDY OF ST. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE INTERNATIONAL ONLINE SCC

Both Skype and Zoom social media platforms provide special online prayer and reflection visual (video) experiences. St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC has been meeting at 5 p.m. Kenya time on Tuesday afternoons since 2012. Dr. Alphonse Omolo who is the moderator explains that what is distinctive is that members of our Online SCC meet virtually (that is, via Skype) while the traditional SCCs meetings are face-to-face or physical. We carry out works of charity on the individual level. He states: “Online SCCs present an important opportunity for the members to attend the meetings even if they are traveling or when they have relocated. Online SCCs are certainly a sure way to keep SCCs alive for Catholic Christians and to give one another social and spiritual support especially during unprecedented times such as living during the Covid-19 pandemic.”

On Tuesday, 17 November 2020 eight members of St. Isidore of Seville SCC met online on Skype to read and reflect on the Gospel of St. *Matthew* 25:31-46 (for the following Sunday -- 22 November, Feast of Christ the King).

Ghana: one layman.

Kenya: one laywoman, two laymen.

Tanzania: one laywoman and one religious sister.

USA: one laywoman and one priest.

We reflected on the Gospel of the Last Judgment. We closed the Catholic Church's Liturgical Year and looked ahead to prepare for the Advent Season together as a St. Isidore of Seville family. We continued to pray for God's protection especially with the second spike of Covid-19 cases and the many deaths that we are currently experiencing in our communities.

In our digital world we create the path by walking. SCC members are always in need of renewal and updating. After our weekly gathering of our St. Online Isidore of Seville Online SCC on Tuesday, 27 January 2021, we had a short 40-minute webinar on Step 3 – “Brief Introduction of the Liturgical Theme” -- of the "13 Steps in the Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Daily Life Connections Service of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa." We discussed how the Liturgical Animator/Leader should prepare this step ahead of time through prayer, reading the Gospel, the other Scripture readings and liturgical commentaries, silence and reflection.

This step is very important in helping SCC members to understand the plan of the liturgical year and how to be Lectionary Catholics or Lectionary-based Catholics. Presently we are in Ordinary Time of Year B and week by week we are going through Chapter 1 of St. Mark's Gospel on Jesus Christ's Public Ministry.

We are leaders in the “train the trainers” model of SCC. We pass on our knowledge and experience to others. Otherwise SCC members can join the present/current meeting only focused on the Gospel of following Sunday – not aware of, and even oblivious of, previous Sundays and future Sundays in the Catholic Church's liturgical plan.

Some weekly Online SCCs in Kenya use Zoom that allows members to see each other on their laptop, tablet or smartphone. Members share their reflections on the Gospel of the following Sunday through an interactive process. Webinars and larger gatherings use the Small Breakout Communities feature of Zoom. Zoom Video conferencing (audio and video) and Zoom Teleconferencing (audio) are popular.

During this Covid-19 pandemic we have finished the months of April to October, 2020 with weekly Online SCCs using various social media platforms that focus on reading and reflecting on the Gospel of the following Sunday. Now our Online SCCs are reaching out to the hungry and the needy in our local neighborhoods.

The Catholic Church has many opportunities to use online learning. Right now our Catholic institutions are using Moodle, Blackboard, Google Classroom, Zoom, Canvas, and other platforms for online classes. Writing, editing and research websites abound. Interactive electronic libraries and databases are growing. There is a rich content of spiritual, prayer, biblical, catechetical, pastoral and evangelization resources and websites.

The School of Theology at the Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya has a core theology course PTC 418 on “Small Christian Communities as a New Model Of Church in Africa Today.” Normally the students join weekly physical SCCs in the Third Period using the Gospel of the following Sunday. If the course is taken online, these physical SCCs become Online SCCs using platforms such as Moodle and Zoom.

18 students participated in the Online SCC Course on “The Inner Life of Small Christian Communities” sponsored by the Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) at the University of Loyola, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA from June to August, 2020. Every Saturday the students participated in virtual SCC Bible Sharing meetings using the Gospel of the following Sunday using the ZOOM platform.

Digital platforms are filling a need, but they are also revealing how important our human interactions are and make us long for their return. Let us also reflect on the incarnational nature of Christianity. We experience God in and through human persons especially Jesus Christ. It is the human closeness that enables us to understand a “distant” or transcendent God.

The Digital Church or the Online Church or the Virtual Church is a new way of becoming Catholic Church. We have a new vocabulary (alphabetically): Digital Catholicism. DIY (Do It Yourself) materials. Inexpensive mobile phones/cell phones especially in rural areas. Interactive shared homilies. Live-stream mass. Mirror Server. The New Normal. Online editing and correcting of articles. Online E-Resources. Smartphone fast. Spiritual communion. Spirituality in a time of quarantine. Synodal Church. Virtual Community. Virtual reality (VR) headsets. Watch Party. Zoombombing.

We have a new kairos. We have a new online praxis. Let our Online SCCs in Eastern Africa seize this digital moment (*carpe diem*) to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people.

There are Virtual/Online/Digital SCCs in other parts of the Maryknoll world.

1. Sao Paulo, Brazil: **FIX**

Joanne Blaney, “Celebrating Holy Week 2020 in an Online Base Community in São Paulo, Brazil: A 2020 Holy Week Celebration With People Who Live or Lived on the Street Moves to Zoom This Year.”

Maryknoll Lay Missioners Website, retrieved on 14 October, 2020, <https://mklm.org/holy-week-in-sao-paulo-base-community>

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website retrieved on 26 April, 2020, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/celebrating-holy-week-2020-in-an-online-base-community-in-sao-paulo-brazil>

2. Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliates Chapter – a type of Online SCC. This is an unique chapter that is interfaith and ecumenical and includes members from Kenya, Germany and the USA. There are Muslims, Catholics and Pentecostals. It meets on Zoom every few months. It is a hybrid SCC. Marita Grudzen.

1. Maryknoll Affiliates Chapter in Guatemala -- a type of Online SCC. Due to the Covid-19, a physical chapter in Guatemala began meeting online. It is a hybrid SCC.
2. Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment Communities. Five SCCs located in five cities (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles (Spanish), San Francisco and Seattle). These young adults meet once a month on a Zoom Call and weekly on What's App. It is a hybrid SCC. Brenda Noriega.
3. DMM Virtual Communities. Brenda Noriega.

One of the choices in our SCC Poll is: "Hybrid Small Christian Community."
<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/> This means a combination of a physical SCC and an Online SCC. Please give other examples of the meaning of hybrid.”

1. An animal hybrid is a mule. The animal is produced by a cross between a horse and a donkey.
2. A plant resulting from a cross between genetically unlike individuals species.
3. A person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions.
4. An automobile that uses petrol and electricity.

RENEW International (<https://www.renewintl.org>) based in Plainfield, New Jersey, USA continues to creatively and dynamically put into action two of the choices in our current SCCs Poll:

"Adapts to the Covid-19 pandemic situation."
 "Responds creatively to the New Normal."

Vote at: <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/>

The latest RENEW program is "Small Groups Matter" that focuses on establishing virtual or online SCCs in parishes.

11. 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).⁹⁶⁴ 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).⁹⁶⁵ 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).⁹⁶⁶

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

⁹⁶⁴ December, 2015 is the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of this decree and a wonderful opportunity to promote the missionary outreach of SCCs.

⁹⁶⁵ This was the theme of 2011 World Mission Sunday on 23 October, 2011 in which SCC members actively participated in Africa.

⁹⁶⁶ 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."⁹⁶⁷ Henriot points out: "This statement formulates a permanent challenge to the church's self-understanding as a community in mission."⁹⁶⁸ 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 20 years of solid experience the new praxis reveals a double action. First, SCCs are essentially missionary⁹⁶⁹ and integrally involved in different forms of

⁹⁶⁷ 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."

⁹⁶⁸ Peter Henriot in Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, p. 239.

⁹⁶⁹ Marins identifies five features or components central to the Basic Christian Community (or CEBs) dynamic in Latin America: Prayer; Reflection on Reality; Discernment and Decision;

evangelization. Second, many missionary and evangelization activities pass through SCCs and are carried out by SCC members.⁹⁷⁰

No. 7 in the [Checklist of 16 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 AND 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 AND 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:

Action [Mission]; and Celebration. See José Marins, *Basic Ecclesial Community: Church from the Roots* (Quito: Colegio Tecnico Don Bosco, 1979), p. 18.

In his research Marins has the insight that you cannot compare and contrast the CEBs in Latin America country by country. The diversity is too great. You have to evaluate diocese by diocese, for example, Mexico.

⁹⁷⁰ 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.

- University Teaching Hospital (UTH) Children's Ward;
- UTH – E Wards;
- UTH – Maternity wards;
- 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.”⁹⁷¹

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*,⁹⁷² *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.

⁹⁷¹ Kelvin Lubinda Yeta, *The Involvement/Participation of Women*, pp. 65-66.

⁹⁷² 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.

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.⁹⁷³

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."⁹⁷⁴

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:

WEEK OF PRAYER	WEEK OF SUFFERING	WEEK OF SOLIDARITY	WEEK OF THANKSGIVING
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⁹⁷³ Healey, *Towards an African*, p. 371.

⁹⁷⁴ 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.

1 st – 6 th October	7 th - 13 th October	14 th – 20 th October	21 st - 27 th 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 Missionary Societies (PMS) – Kenya Website (<http://www.pmskenya.org> such as Pope Francis’ “Message for 2013 World Mission Sunday” 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.”⁹⁷⁵ 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.”⁹⁷⁶

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.”⁹⁷⁷

⁹⁷⁵ 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>

⁹⁷⁶ Peter Kiarie, **ADD**

⁹⁷⁷ “Report for the 12th 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.

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 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.”⁹⁷⁸

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.⁹⁷⁹

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. 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.⁹⁸⁰
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.
5. Feast of St. Thérèse of Lisieux (St. Theresa of the Child Jesus or St. Theresa the Little Flower), the Patroness of Mission, on 1 October.⁹⁸¹
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. This can be the annual celebration of the Pontifical Missionary Childhood Day.

⁹⁷⁸ Ndichia, “The Role of SCCs in Mission,” p. 55.

⁹⁷⁹ *Journey of 10 Years*, p. 10.

⁹⁸⁰ 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.

⁹⁸¹ The many SCCs in Eastern Africa named after St. Theresa emphasize the importance of prayer and contemplation, women saints and young Catholic Saints (she was 24 years old when she died).

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 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.⁹⁸²

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.”⁹⁸³

⁹⁸² See Laurenti Magesa, “Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission in Africa,” Maryknoll 100th Anniversary Symposium 2011, Nairobi, Kenya: Unpublished Paper, 12 pages.

⁹⁸³ John Baur, *2000 Years*, Second Edition, pp. 319-320.

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 part of the nature of the church as it is an appropriate response to the signs of the times.⁹⁸⁴

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.⁹⁸⁵

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 marginated. There are reflections from Kenya, Namibia, South

⁹⁸⁴ 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.

⁹⁸⁵ Laurenti Magesa, "The Joy of Community," p. 26.

Sudan,⁹⁸⁶ Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The examples, stories and applications can be 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 and very low key "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." The people respond with a lively "Thanks Be to God" and go out with energy, enthusiasm and on fire to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.⁹⁸⁷ Then the people process out clapping and singing missionary songs like *Go into the Whole World; Go, Tell It on a Mountain*; and *Alleluia, Alleluia Raise the Gospel Over the Earth*.

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.⁹⁸⁸

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

⁹⁸⁶ 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>

⁹⁸⁷ This rousing ending was successfully used in my 50th Jubilee Eucharistic Celebration of Maryknoll Missionary Priesthood in the USA in June and July, 2016.

⁹⁸⁸ Rita Ishengoma and Joseph Healey, "Re-energizing International SCC Twinning" in Healey and Hinton, *Small Christian Community Today*, pp. 157-158.

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:

4. Twinning between SCCs in two dioceses in the same state or region.
5. Twinning between SCCs in two neighboring dioceses.
6. 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.⁹⁸⁹

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

⁹⁸⁹ Jules Nugu Konza, “Creating a Youth SCC within the Main SCC,” **ADD**

was most impressed with the ministry with the SCCs and really enjoyed the visit to St. Kizito SCC.”⁹⁹⁰

SCCs are continually challenged to be missionary in responding to new signs of the 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 dialog and cooperation of all our Archdiocesan components.⁹⁹¹

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.⁹⁹²

This is connected to ceremonies of the renewal of marriage vows and celebrating wedding anniversaries.⁹⁹³ 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.⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁹⁰ 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_jGU9LERzXHI/edit?pli=1

⁹⁹¹ *Pastoral Guidelines*, page vi.

⁹⁹² Peter Kyalo, Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, retrieved on 5 April, 2013, <https://www.face-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

⁹⁹³ 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.

⁹⁹⁴ Summary of Peter Kihara, IMC’s comments during the National Missionary Council, Nairobi, Kenya. 19 February, 2013.

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.⁹⁹⁵ 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.”⁹⁹⁶ 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

⁹⁹⁵ 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 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).

⁹⁹⁶ 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>

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

Nominal Catholics

Non-practicing Catholics/Catholics who do not practice their faith⁹⁹⁷

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 margined” 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 peripheries⁹⁹⁸ of our world.”⁹⁹⁹ 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 margins¹⁰⁰⁰ 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

⁹⁹⁷ 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/ 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.”

⁹⁹⁸ These existential peripheries and margins are people and situations in pain and suffering.

⁹⁹⁹ 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>

¹⁰⁰⁰ Orbis Books is publishing various books on Pope Francis in 2014 and 2015.

the door in welcome, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people."¹⁰⁰¹ 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 SCCs in World Mission Sunday members emphasize the importance "to mobilize SCCs in remain in a state of mission."¹⁰⁰²

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.¹⁰⁰³

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.¹⁰⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰¹ "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

¹⁰⁰² Minutes 04/02/2013 of the National Missionary Council of the KCCB on 19 February, 2013.

¹⁰⁰³ 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>

¹⁰⁰⁴ Harvey Kwiyani, *Sent Forth*, p. 59.

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
- Community of proclaiming the Word of God
- Concern for others
- Evangelization means practical action and reaching out to 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.”¹⁰⁰⁵ 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.”¹⁰⁰⁶

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.

¹⁰⁰⁵ 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://www.notssofarafield.org)

¹⁰⁰⁶ 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>

We continue to get reports on how the annual World Mission Sunday is celebrated in SCCs in Eastern Africa. Our SCCs Facebook Page asks: How your SCC is celebrating/honoring/remembering this day? Some responses:

- “St. Kizito SCC is located in Waruku, an informal settlement area (lower class housing) in Nairobi, Kenya. It is one of the 12 neighborhood, parish-based SCCs in St. Austin’s Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese. During its meeting on Sunday, 22 October members identified and discussed the symbols in the 2017 World Mission Sunday Poster prepared by the Kenya PMS Office: Cross. Bible. Globe featuring the map of Africa. Rosary. Sweep of bright white light radiating outward that could represent the Holy Spirit or a dove of peace. Text from *Matthew* 28:19-20: ‘Go to the whole world and make disciples of all nations.’”
- At Mass today we used the Swahili saying *kuitwa ni kutumwa* ("to be called is to be sent") to emphasize that all Catholics are called to be missionary disciples. The "Message of Pope Francis for World Mission Sunday" (22 October, 2017) stresses "young people, the hope of mission" and states: "The next Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, to be held in 2018 on the theme "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment," represents a providential opportunity to involve young people in the shared missionary responsibility that needs their rich imagination and creativity."
- During today's meeting of our St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC Mwanajumuiya Alphonce Omolo and I came up with this idea. To celebrate World Mission Sunday (22 October, 2017) we should invite one person who is not a Catholic to our SCC Meeting this week.
- We are remembering this Sunday 22 October as a Missionary Sunday when we are called and sent We should accept the call. Again we realized the need to involve the young people in the missionary participation and need their voices to be heard. Wwe hear this call to reach out to our brothers and sisters in Burundi.
- Warm Greetings to you and the entire Eastern Africa Training Team of Small Christian Communities. As we celebrated yesterday Missionary Sunday we hear this call to be called and sent. Our contributions as budgeted are very little. We request you, as Bishop Antonie Kambanda suggested when you talked to him, to help us with US \$3,500 to carry our this missionary outreach in Burundi SCCs. We have also involved 10 youth -- together a total number of 20 including lay people, catechists and SCC Chairpersons. We have in our treasury US\$ 600. We have gone through the Ebook with the 25 online resource materials. We thank you so much and have a good day. I voted for "prayer, reflection and Faith-sharing grounds me." My secretary Grace Nyamukama voted for “empowerment of women.”
Chairman -- Joseph Serugendo
St. Kizito SCC
- MISSIONERS.
M -- Men who were not welcomed when their journeys first began have changed the world!
I -- In my years working here, I have seen many of them go back to the “Knoll.”
S -- Seeing the look of yearning to return to their simpler lives and the place they now call home.

S -- Seeing too the years of hardships they have endured etched on their faces.
 I -- I have watched them come and go throughout my years, grateful to be part of it.
 O -- Over time these men have become treasured friends to those they serve.
 N -- New hope has been brought to many nations because they went to “Fields Afar.”
 E -- Everywhere they roam they still spread His word and offer peace to those who listen.
 R -- Remembering the men who have come and gone has flooded my mind with memories.
 S -- So now these men who go “Afar” are welcomed where they weren’t before!

The missionary news agency *Fides* reports:

As it does every year, the missionary news agency *Fides* on Friday, 20 October, 2017 released a statistical overview of the world’s Catholic population in the run-up to today’s World Mission Sunday, which this year shows there are now almost 1.3 billion Catholics around the globe, representing almost 18 percent of the total human population and growing.

Drilling down, the data offer the latest confirmation of the emergence of the Global South (preferred to the term “developing world”) as the new center of gravity for Catholicism. According to Vatican population numbers released in April, the following are now the largest Catholic countries in the world, with their combined totals accounting for more than half of all Catholics on the planet:

1. Brazil (172.2 million)
2. Mexico (110.9)
3. Philippines (83.6)
4. United States (72.3)
5. Italy (58.0)
6. France (48.3)
7. Colombia (45.3)
8. Spain (43.3)
9. Democratic Republic of Congo (43.2)
10. Argentina (40.8)¹⁰⁰⁷

Another report:

Pope Francis announces that an “Extraordinary Missionary Month” will take place in October, 2019 in order to “nourish the ardor of the evangelizing activity of the Church “ad gentes,” or “to the nations.” In an October 22, 2017 letter marking the centenary anniversary of the publication of Pope Benedict XV’s 1919 apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* on Catholic missions after the first world war, Francis said the main aim for the missionary month is to foster “an increased awareness of the ‘missio ad gentes’ and to take up again with renewed fervor the missionary transformation of the Catholic Church’s life and pastoral activity...May it likewise advance the preaching of the

Gospel, biblical and theological reflection on the Catholic Church's mission, works of Christian charity, and practical works of cooperation and solidarity between churches, so that missionary zeal may revive and never be wanting among us."¹⁰⁰⁸

12. 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 postmodern¹⁰⁰⁹ 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.¹⁰¹⁰

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

¹⁰⁰⁹ 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.

¹⁰¹⁰ 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

include references to SCCs. Following the pattern of past synods, SCCs are mentioned in the *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):¹⁰¹¹

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.¹⁰¹² 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.

¹⁰¹¹ 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.

¹⁰¹² 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 50,000 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 parishes¹⁰¹³ 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

¹⁰¹³ 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.”¹⁰¹⁴

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.”¹⁰¹⁵

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.¹⁰¹⁶

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.

¹⁰¹⁴ Colon Davies, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop*, p. 114.

¹⁰¹⁵ Pius Rutechura, “The Pastoral Vision of Basic Christian Communities.” p. 1.

¹⁰¹⁶ 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.”¹⁰¹⁷

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

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.¹⁰¹⁸

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.

¹⁰¹⁷ *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.

¹⁰¹⁸ 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.¹⁰¹⁹

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 analyze the trends and patterns of what our visitors like and need especially the online

¹⁰¹⁹ 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.

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,¹⁰²⁰ 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”¹⁰²¹ 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.”¹⁰²²

The *Message to the People of God from the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* contains two references to SCCs:

Number 8 under “The Ecclesial Community and the Many Agents of Evangelization” states:

¹⁰²⁰ Small Faith Communities (SFCs) is a common name for SCCs in the USA. See Susan DeGuide 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.

¹⁰²¹ 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.

¹⁰²² 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

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 interventions¹⁰²³ 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/Movements 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. 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

¹⁰²³ 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.

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:¹⁰²⁴

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 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.

¹⁰²⁴ 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>

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,¹⁰²⁵ 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.¹⁰²⁶ 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 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.

¹⁰²⁵ 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.

¹⁰²⁶ 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.

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.¹⁰²⁷

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),¹⁰²⁸ 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”¹⁰²⁹).¹⁰³⁰

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

¹⁰²⁷ 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>

¹⁰²⁸ 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.’”

¹⁰²⁹ 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.

¹⁰³⁰ Robert Mickens, “Old Ways for the New World,” *Tablet*, 3 November, 2012, p. 6.

mantra: *Think outside the box*.¹⁰³¹ 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.”¹⁰³² I invite everyone to be bold¹⁰³³ 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.¹⁰³⁴

¹⁰³¹ 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*.

¹⁰³² 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.

¹⁰³³ 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.

¹⁰³⁴ 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,

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 74 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 have to revive it again all over the world if we want to remain a vibrant and witnessing Church today.¹⁰³⁵

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.

¹⁰³⁵ Paulino Mondo, in an email message to the author dated 12 December, 2012.

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 dialog, 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 dialog 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.

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 ¹⁰³⁶ such as Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation¹⁰³⁷ 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, dialog, 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 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.¹⁰³⁸

¹⁰³⁶ 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.

¹⁰³⁷ 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.

¹⁰³⁸ Hans Humer, “News-Nov-Dec-12” in email to the author dated 2 January, 2013.

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.¹⁰³⁹

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).¹⁰⁴⁰
- Encourage missionary vocations so that capable holy men and women take their faith beyond their lands of origin.¹⁰⁴¹

The “Prayer for the Year of Faith” says:

¹⁰³⁹ 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.

¹⁰⁴⁰ 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.

¹⁰⁴¹ Summarized from *Ibid.*, pages 14-15 and “KENYA: Be Agents of Evangelization, advises Cardinal,” *CISA*, 14 December, 2012.

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.¹⁰⁴²

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 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

¹⁰⁴² “Social Networks: Portals Of Truth and Faith: New Spaces for Evangelization,” *Vatican Information Service* in email dated 22:175 (1 October, 2012).

from this recognition, or she remains a Western Church and so in the final analysis betrays the meaning of Vatican II.¹⁰⁴³

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, 2014.¹⁰⁴⁴ 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."¹⁰⁴⁵

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 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.¹⁰⁴⁶

Rurinjah reported about the activities in Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania:

¹⁰⁴³ Karl Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies*, 40, 4 (December, 1979), pp. 718, 724.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Reports on this workshop can be found on the AMECEA Website (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."

¹⁰⁴⁵ Febian Pikiti's email message to the author dated 3 July, 2014.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Rita Ishengoma's email message to the author dated 18 August, 2014.

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.¹⁰⁴⁷

¹⁰⁴⁷ 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 7 June, 2020, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/photo-gallery-2/>

13. 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.¹⁰⁴⁸ 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 Contemporary¹⁰⁴⁹ 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.¹⁰⁵⁰

¹⁰⁴⁸ Appendix 22 lists 215 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."

¹⁰⁴⁹ 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*.

¹⁰⁵⁰ 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.¹⁰⁵¹

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,¹⁰⁵² 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.

¹⁰⁵¹ “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.

¹⁰⁵² 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 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 75 African family and marriages issues¹⁰⁵³ (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 *Come we try* common law unions. Also called trial marriages, domestic partnerships and consensual unions),
 communicating the faith to the next generation,
 couples living together before marriage to test female fertility,
 customary marriage,¹⁰⁵⁴
 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,¹⁰⁵⁵
 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,
 emotional abuse

¹⁰⁵³ 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.

¹⁰⁵⁴ 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.

¹⁰⁵⁵ 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.

enslavement and frequent abandonment of women,
 ethnic animosity and tribal discrimination,
 domination of one marriage partner over the other,
 families with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender members,
 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM),¹⁰⁵⁶
 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,¹⁰⁵⁷
 poverty,
 property grabbing after death of spouse,

¹⁰⁵⁶ 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.

¹⁰⁵⁷ 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?

reformulation of the very concept of family,
 refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs),
 rituals after death,
 same sex unions/homosexual unions and gay marriage,
 sexual abuse
 sexual dysfunctions,
 single parents (single mothers and single fathers),¹⁰⁵⁸
 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."¹⁰⁵⁹ 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.'"¹⁰⁶⁰

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

¹⁰⁵⁸ While we often refer to the reality of single mothers in Africa, the number of single fathers is increasing.

¹⁰⁵⁹ 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>

¹⁰⁶⁰ 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>

Ladislas 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.”¹⁰⁶¹

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

¹⁰⁶¹ 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 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.’” Ladislas 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 and the Small Christian Communities Model of Church.

insightfully how church leaders need to become more of a “Listening Church.”¹⁰⁶² 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 girls to older men, homosexuals (gays, lesbians); marriages with domestic abuse; marriages with sexual abuse; and economically poor single mothers?

In AMECEASmall 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.¹⁰⁶³ 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 Rome¹⁰⁶⁴ 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.

¹⁰⁶² See *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, Orbis Books, 1996, Wif & Stock Publishers, 2006.

¹⁰⁶³ 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.”

¹⁰⁶⁴ 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!”

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, polygamy,¹⁰⁶⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶⁶

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.¹⁰⁶⁷

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**

¹⁰⁶⁵ Laurenti Magesa presents some interesting and challenging pastoral questions and solutions on polygamy in “Reflections on Marriage in Africa,” Nairobi: Unpublished paper 2014.

¹⁰⁶⁶ 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>

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

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.¹⁰⁶⁸ “Family 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.”¹⁰⁶⁹

Using the “See,” “Judge”¹⁰⁷⁰ 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,¹⁰⁷¹ lack of communication, negative media influences, balance of work and family and materialism.¹⁰⁷²

¹⁰⁶⁸ 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 17th Century)'s instructions to the painter Sir. Peter Lely, when commissioning his portrait.

¹⁰⁶⁹ 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.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Calling the second step “discerning” or “interpreting” or “analysing” or “evaluating” is preferred by some because the English word “judge” is associated with the negative, critical meaning of the words “judgement” and “judgemental.” There is a positive side as in “making wise and honest judgements or decisions.”

¹⁰⁷¹ 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.

¹⁰⁷² Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *How Can We Be One?* p. 19.

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.¹⁰⁷³

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.¹⁰⁷⁴

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.”¹⁰⁷⁵

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

¹⁰⁷³ 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.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Christopher Cieslikiewicz, “Urban Small Christian Communities,” p. 92.

¹⁰⁷⁵ 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://cisaneWSafrica.com/vatican-violence-against-women-harms-society-pope-tells-african-bishops>

other; personality conflict; problem of mixed marriage; couples from different cultural backgrounds; and challenges of the extended family.¹⁰⁷⁶

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 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.¹⁰⁷⁷

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.¹⁰⁷⁸

Tanzanian Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH, a member of our Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team based in Dar es Salaam, 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.¹⁰⁷⁹

¹⁰⁷⁶ 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.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Rose Musimba, cellphone interview with the author, 29 January, 2014.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Simon Rurinjah, conversation with the author, 29 January, 2014.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Rita Ishengoma, "Three Challenges of SCCs in Tanzania," Bukoba: Unpublished Report, 1 page.

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) or *Come we try* (a more recent version) 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.”¹⁰⁸⁰ 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.

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.¹⁰⁸¹

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:

¹⁰⁸⁰ Kamau Gitau, “A Long Walk Down the Aisle,” *National Mirror*, 01:14 (January/February, 2014), p. 18.

¹⁰⁸¹ Reported by Simon Rurinjah.

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%¹⁰⁸²

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?¹⁰⁸³

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.¹⁰⁸⁴

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.”

¹⁰⁸²Univision 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>

¹⁰⁸³ “Cardinal Caffarra Expresses Serious Concerns about Family Synod Debates,” “ZENIT: The World Seen from Rome,” email message dated 24 March, 2014.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Clement Mulenga in a conversation with the author in Lusaka, Zambia on 4 December, 2013.

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 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.
3. **HIV and AIDS**:¹⁰⁸⁵ a disease which creates division in the family and

¹⁰⁸⁵ 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 and AIDS was not specifically mentioned in the 39 questions of the original questionnaire. Some African countries such as Kenya did not mention HIV and 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 and 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 and 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:

frequently divorce. Usually, both parents are affected and, sometimes both die, leaving children under the care of grandparents.¹⁰⁸⁶ **NOTE:** “71% of the 35 million people living with HIV and 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.”¹⁰⁸⁷

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.¹⁰⁸⁸

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>

¹⁰⁸⁶ 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

¹⁰⁸⁷ “Flexibility in Health Systems and Community Approach that Adapts to the Daily Realities of HIV-positive People,” *Fides News*, 29 November, 2014

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

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 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.¹⁰⁸⁹

¹⁰⁸⁹ See the section "Small Christian Communities: Ecclesiologies and Models of Church" in Kieran Flynn, *Communities for the Kingdom: A Handbook for Small Christian*

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.

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."¹⁰⁹⁰ 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."¹⁰⁹¹

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 families¹⁰⁹² of both husband and wife, the living dead and the yet unborn. The

Community Leaders, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* Nos. 181-182, 2007, pp. 67-81.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Bujo, Bénézet, *Plea for Change of Models of Marriage*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹¹ Flynn, *Communities*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁹² 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

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.¹⁰⁹³

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 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*.¹⁰⁹⁴ 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.

(called “the economy of affection”) can help needy members, but the more financially successful members can be constantly preyed upon by their “poor cousins.”

¹⁰⁹³ Bujo, Bénézet, *Plea for Change of Models of Marriage*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁹⁴ 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.

SCCs are involved in family ministry/family life apostolate/family evangelization¹⁰⁹⁵ that includes marriage ministry,¹⁰⁹⁶ 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.
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.¹⁰⁹⁷

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

¹⁰⁹⁵ These three expressions are used interchangeably.

¹⁰⁹⁶ 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.

¹⁰⁹⁷ The full Case Study is available on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/malawi/55-malawi.html>

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.¹⁰⁹⁸

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 “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.¹⁰⁹⁹

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.¹¹⁰⁰ “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.¹¹⁰¹ 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.¹¹⁰² 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.”¹¹⁰³

¹⁰⁹⁸ Musimba, *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁹ 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.”

¹¹⁰⁰ I personally experienced this reality. In Nairobi on 19 April, 2015 I celebrated a Sunday Mass for 101 people. 43 received communion.

¹¹⁰¹ 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.

¹¹⁰² See Henry Onyango and Stephen Mukhongi, “Tackling Pastoral Challenges Facing the Family,” *Seed*, Vol. 26, Nos. 8/9, p. 10.

¹¹⁰³ Sister Esther Ichugu, conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 14 April, 2014.

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 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.”¹¹⁰⁴ 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

¹¹⁰⁴ M. Cleary, *Church as Family: Dialogue between African Culture and the Church*, 948

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.¹¹⁰⁵

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.¹¹⁰⁶ Our research has gathered case studies of marriages that take place in 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?”¹¹⁰⁷

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 play¹¹⁰⁸ 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

¹¹⁰⁵ Boniface Tshosa, intervention at the 1994 First African Synod, “Fifth General Congregation,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 17, 1338 (27 April, 1994), p. 11.

¹¹⁰⁶ Servant of God Cardinal Maurice Michael Otunga liked to give the example of the SCC members in Nairobi Archdiocese who donated the bride’s wedding dress to a poor couple in their small community who had insufficient money for all their needs for their Marriage Ceremony in the Catholic Church.

¹¹⁰⁷ 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

¹¹⁰⁸ This should be used as a teaching video. A segment is shown and then discussed in small groups.

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 research¹¹⁰⁹ 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 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.¹¹¹⁰

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

¹¹⁰⁹ 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.

¹¹¹⁰ 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

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.¹¹¹¹

5. Other Challenges and Proposals in the Questionnaire/Survey of the *Lineamenta* of the 2014 Synod of Bishops

The final question in the survey/questionnaire on family and marriage – “What other challenges or proposals related to the topics in the above questions¹¹¹² 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 marriage¹¹¹³ 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)¹¹¹⁴ to the wife’s pregnancy to the birth of the first

¹¹¹¹ Isaiah Muthukumi, “Reflection on the Lack of Men and Youth in SCCs,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2014, p. 4.

¹¹¹² It is surprising that HIV AND 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.

¹¹¹³ 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.

¹¹¹⁴ 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.

child¹¹¹⁵ to the civil marriage to the Catholic Marriage Rite (that could be in a Catholic Church or in a SCC) to the wedding celebration.¹¹¹⁶

The couple usually live together during most of this process -- what is commonly called premarital cohabitation.¹¹¹⁷ 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.

¹¹¹⁵ 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>

¹¹¹⁶ 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 firstborn 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.

¹¹¹⁷ 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-nborn-next-synod-must-concentrate-realities-family-life#.VIdlZvVMc4k.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.”¹¹¹⁸

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 and 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.¹¹¹⁹

SCC members have a special opportunity to minister to families and couples affected by HIV and 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 is 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

¹¹¹⁸ Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, *The Tablet*, Vol. 268, No. 9069, 4 October, 2014, p. 1.

¹¹¹⁹ Nicholaus 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*.¹¹²⁰ A helpful online resource is the section on "African Wise Proverbs and Inspiring Quotes" on 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*¹¹²¹ (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.

¹¹²⁰ On the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/Build_new.pdf

¹¹²¹ 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*."¹¹²² 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,¹¹²³ 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).

¹¹²² Albert Obiefuna, "Fourth General Congregation," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17, 1338 (April 27, 1994), p. 9.

¹¹²³ 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*.¹¹²⁴ 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 responsibility¹¹²⁵ 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 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.

¹¹²⁴ 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>

¹¹²⁵ The plan of religious education in the USA uses the term "whole community catechesis."

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.¹¹²⁶

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.

There are many other connections of this proverb to African community values and the SCC model of church. In some places such as the Chagga people in Moshi, Tanzania, the geographical village is the center of communal activities and networking for celebrations (births, weddings, graduations, jubilees), feast days and funerals. In other places it is the clan or ethnic group. It can also be a school alumni network. SCC members can fit into all these levels.

- **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.*¹¹²⁷

¹¹²⁶ 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>

¹¹²⁷ "'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

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*.¹¹²⁸ 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:

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.

¹¹²⁸ 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>

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 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.¹¹²⁹

7. **Small Christian Communities in the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the 2014 Synod of Bishops**

The *Instrumentum Laboris* (Latin for “Working Document”)¹¹³⁰ for the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “The Pastoral Challenges of the

¹¹²⁹ 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>

¹¹³⁰ 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>

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 General. In addition, other responses — categorized as *observations* — were sent directly to the General Secretariat by a significant number of dioceses, parishes, movements, groups,¹¹³¹ 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

¹¹³¹ 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.

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.

No. 146 under “The Response of the Particular Churches”¹¹³² 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 basis 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

¹¹³² 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.

receiving a bookmark with the map of Eastern Africa that celebrates the 180,000 SCCs in the nine AMECEA countries.¹¹³³ The bookmark mentions the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page” (www.smallchristiancommunities.org) that has an Ebook on “SCCs in Eastern Africa” and many online SCCs resources.¹¹³⁴

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 Famine 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*.

¹¹³³ 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. 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.

¹¹³⁴ 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.

2. Each topic was introduced by an "auditor/auditrice" (mainly married couples) with focus on personal experiences,¹¹³⁵ then sharings by the bishops or any other 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 interventions¹¹³⁶ 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,¹¹³⁷ dialog, 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."¹¹³⁸ This process of synodality is a journeying together.¹¹³⁹ 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."¹¹⁴⁰

¹¹³⁵ 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.

¹¹³⁶ During this meeting Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel presented his important intervention on behalf of AMECEA that is referred to above.

¹¹³⁷ 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.

¹¹³⁸ 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>

¹¹³⁹ There are many relevant metaphors. The Story of "The Road to Emmaus" in *Luke 24*. The famous Burkina Faso proverb: *If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.*

¹¹⁴⁰ "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/>

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, change is possible in the context of a process of subsidiarity (decentralization) and collegiality.¹¹⁴¹

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

¹¹⁴¹ 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.

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:

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.¹¹⁴²

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 movements¹¹⁴³ and new communities.¹¹⁴⁴ Married couples need encouragement in a

¹¹⁴² 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>

¹¹⁴³ “Ecclesial movements” and “church movements” are used interchangeably.

¹¹⁴⁴ 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 Enrichment Clubs, 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

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 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.¹¹⁴⁵

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)

structure. So the best translation of *concorso* has the contextual meaning of cooperation/collaboration/involvement/assistance/a running along with/with the help of.

¹¹⁴⁵ *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.twoinoneflesh.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.

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 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.¹¹⁴⁶ 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 marginated 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*.

¹¹⁴⁶ 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.

- 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.

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 peripheries¹¹⁴⁷ of our world."¹¹⁴⁸ 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 Manilla 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

¹¹⁴⁷ These existential peripheries and margins are people and situations in pain and suffering.

¹¹⁴⁸ 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.¹¹⁴⁹

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.¹¹⁵⁰

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

¹¹⁴⁹Taken 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

¹¹⁵⁰ 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/xhtmll/-/g1lakl/-/index.html>

Episcopal Conferences, finding the means and the tools necessary to further involve also the different ecclesial bodies in the synodal reflection on the family."

Hopefully Eastern African SCCs will participate in this ongoing process of listening, discussion, debate, discernment and proposed pastoral responses.¹¹⁵¹ 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.¹¹⁵² An Editorial in *America Magazine* states:

This is a dialog 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.¹¹⁵³

John Allen adds:

¹¹⁵¹ 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>

¹¹⁵² 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>

¹¹⁵³ "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>

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 dialog 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 anything done in 21st century Catholicism, in other words, one great tip is to involve Africans early and often.¹¹⁵⁴

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.¹¹⁵⁵

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_201412_09_lineamenta-xiv-assembly_en.html) (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_201412_09_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.

¹¹⁵⁴ 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

¹¹⁵⁵ 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>

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, 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*.¹¹⁵⁶

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.¹¹⁵⁷ The synods emphasize the importance of the documents of the Second

¹¹⁵⁶ 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

¹¹⁵⁷ 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>

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 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] ¹¹⁵⁸

¹¹⁵⁸ 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 AND 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:

-
- 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)?¹¹⁵⁹ 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?¹¹⁶⁰ Based on the section “Pastoral Care of Couples Civilly Married, [Traditionally Married] or Living Together¹¹⁶¹ 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?¹¹⁶² 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

¹¹⁵⁹ Swahili: *Ni kwa namna gani wanajumuiya wanashauriana na kuaambatana na wanaochumbiana?*

¹¹⁶⁰ Swahili: *Ni kwa namna gani wanajumuiya wanashauriana na kuambatana na wanandoa na watoto wao ambao hawajaoana rasmi katika Kanisa Katoliki?”*

¹¹⁶¹ 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.

¹¹⁶² Swahili: *Ni kwa namna gani wanajumuiya wanaambatana na wanandoa katika ile miaka yao mitano ya kwanza?*

care for Catholic couples who are separated, divorced and happily remarried “outside” the church?

In answering these questions an on-going challenge is to track creatively the social, economic, political, cultural and religious changes in Africa today.¹¹⁶³

- 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.

¹¹⁶³ 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.

- *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.
- 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.¹¹⁶⁴

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

¹¹⁶⁴ 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>

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 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, 2015.¹¹⁶⁵

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.

9. 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.

¹¹⁶⁵ 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.

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 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.¹¹⁶⁶

10. 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 [one of the communities of Blessed Charles de Foucauld], as the first lay voting member¹¹⁶⁷ 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

¹¹⁶⁶ *The Future of the Family, Our Mission*, Accra: SECAM -- SCEAM PUBLICATIONS, 2015

¹¹⁶⁷ 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.

representatives of the episcopal conferences from the nine AMECEA countries. Pope Francis appointed 45 members to the Synod on his own authority (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 Menghsteab 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.”¹¹⁶⁸

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 could agree that at a certain point they would start living together as husband and wife, even

¹¹⁶⁸ 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

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.¹¹⁶⁹

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 (now Cardinal) 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.¹¹⁷⁰

¹¹⁶⁹ 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>

¹¹⁷⁰ 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.¹¹⁷¹

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 levels. Here is the perfect place for the doctrine of episcopal collegiality based on synodality

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>

¹¹⁷¹ 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

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.

11. 2014-2016 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: 2014-2016 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.¹¹⁷² 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.”¹¹⁷³ 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.

¹¹⁷² 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.

¹¹⁷³ *Journey of 10 Years Achievements. Catholic Diocese of Machakos. Bishop Martin Kivuva, Machakos: Privately Printed, 2014, p. 19.*

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."¹¹⁷⁴ This theme was also used in a Swahili program (called *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo, Oyee!*) and an English program on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC).

"Family Catechism" and "Family Catechesis" were two themes in Week Two on "Family and Faith" in the Kenyan Lenten Campaign 2014 booklet.¹¹⁷⁵ 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.**"¹¹⁷⁶

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.

¹¹⁷⁴ 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
SEPTEMBER	- building the family culture
OCTOBER	- celebrating marriages in church
NOVEMBER	- stock taking of what we have done since March

¹¹⁷⁵ 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").

¹¹⁷⁶ Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *How Can We Be One?* p. 21.

An interesting Case Study is the St. Andrew Kaggwa 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*.¹¹⁷⁷

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.¹¹⁷⁸

"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.*

¹¹⁷⁷ Based on the author's conversation with Kenyan diocesan priest Father Vincent Lumumba in Nairobi, Kenya, 18 June 2014.

¹¹⁷⁸ Based on the author's conversation with Ugandan diocesan priest Father Emmanuel Katongole in Nairobi, Kenya, 27 June 2014.

- *Jobs for Youth/Problem of Youth Unemployment*¹¹⁷⁹

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
- 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 Enrichment Clubs, 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 Kikristo*

¹¹⁷⁹ 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.

(“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.¹¹⁸⁰

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 should be encouraged to get married in the Catholic Church so they can receive communion.¹¹⁸¹

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 be 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.

¹¹⁸⁰ 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.

¹¹⁸¹ Information supplied by Simon Rurinjah

- “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 and helping to reconcile couples who are having difficulties in their marriages. Parish-based SCCs¹¹⁸² 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.

12. 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

¹¹⁸² 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.

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.¹¹⁸³

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 urgent 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 urgent pastoral issue, change is possible in the context of a process of synodality, subsidiarity (decentralization) and collegiality.¹¹⁸⁴

More specifically Pope Francis said: “We are on the way towards a deeper matrimonial pastoral care.”¹¹⁸⁵ 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

¹¹⁸³ 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.

¹¹⁸⁴ 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.

¹¹⁸⁵ Francis, *Vatican Information Service*, 31 July, 2013, p. 20.

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.¹¹⁸⁶

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:

Due to the lack of priests (and lack of sacramentalized marriages) on any given Sunday in Africa most Catholics (up to 60% in some surveys¹¹⁸⁷) 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. There are 36 sub-centers where a “Sunday Service Without a Priest”¹¹⁸⁸ 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.¹¹⁸⁹

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

¹¹⁸⁶ 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>

¹¹⁸⁷ More alarming statistics come from individual sources. Church historian Ugandan diocesan priest Father Joseph Ngulu says that in his home diocese of Jinja, Uganda the farthest outstations may get mass only once a year. Maryknoll missionary priest Father Dick Albertine, MM reports that the Vicar General of Windhoek, Namibia said that only 5% of the Catholics in the country have a mass on Sunday.

¹¹⁸⁸ There are many names: “Sunday Celebration in the Absence of a Priest,” “Celebration of the Word with Distribution of Communion,” “Liturgy of the Word,” “Paraliturgy” and “Paralitururgical Service.”

¹¹⁸⁹ 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>

total of six masses in the parish every Sunday. 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 center to the sub-centers. This happens mainly on Christmas and Easter. So many people go spiritually hungry.

Another Case Study comes from by Malawian diocese priest Father Henry Chinkanda. Building on an analysis of his parish in Blantyre Archdiocese, Malawi and other statistics he states: “On a given Sunday 80% of the Catholic Christians in Malawi participate in a “Sunday Service Without a Priest” due to the scarcity of ordained personnel. For these ‘Sunday Services Without a Priest,’ good preachers come from those SCCs that prepare together in their weekly gatherings and share the Word of God taken from the readings of the following Sunday.”¹¹⁹⁰

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.¹¹⁹¹

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 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,

¹¹⁹⁰ Henry Chinkanda, “Malawi Report” in Johannes Duwe, ed., *Network Small Christian Communities Africa: Small Christian Communities as Missionary Agents*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 12 September, 2019, pp. 42-43.

¹¹⁹¹ There are similar situations in Asia and Latin America. At the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October, 2018 a Brazilian Bishop said that in his diocese there are some rural villages that get a visit from a priest once a year. On that day he celebrates Mass, performs marriages, baptizes children and conducts the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He departs saying that he will return after a year.

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 Archbishop Rénatus Nkwande of Mwanza Archdiocese comments that the bishops themselves argue about the best pastoral solutions to this issue so consensus is very hard.¹¹⁹²

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.¹¹⁹³ 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.

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":

¹¹⁹² Rénatus Nkwande, conversation with the author, Maryknoll, New York, 14 May, 2015.

¹¹⁹³ 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 dialog and communications. Commentators have said that at various synods of bishops that without the help of theologians the African bishops' interventions are less theologically sound or astute.

Terminology is tricky. Rather than the common terms "conservative" and "liberal," I prefer "traditional"* and "progressive." I use the * (star) for "traditional"* (a person is a "traditionalist"*) to refer to a person who is orthodox. "Tradition" by itself is a positive word and important in the history of the Catholic Church as in the "Church Tradition."

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*,¹¹⁹⁴ 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,¹¹⁹⁵ dialog, 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 mature married men of proven leadership skills (*viri probati* in Latin). Then many more people would be able to receive communion and our SCCs would truly be Eucharistic Communities.

¹¹⁹⁴ 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>

¹¹⁹⁵ 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.

In another part of the Global South Bishop Erwin Kräutler, bishop of Xingu (pronounced Shin-goo) Diocese, Brazil has argued that the pastoral situation calls for drastic measures. His diocese in the region of Pará has 800 parishes or missions in a territory the size of Germany, but just 27 priests, meaning that more than two-thirds of the faithful take part in Sunday Mass just two or three times a year.

In April, 2014 he took his case to the Vatican where he met with Pope Francis. Recently, Kräutler 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 dialog on the issue and urged bishops at the national level to come up with "courageous" proposals to address the priest shortage.¹¹⁹⁶

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."¹¹⁹⁷ 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.¹¹⁹⁸

¹¹⁹⁶ 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 and *Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/25/brazilian-bishop-ordain-married-elders_n_6215286.html

¹¹⁹⁷ "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."

¹¹⁹⁸ 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), *Every Community Its Own Ordained Leaders* (Claretian Publications, Philippines, 2008) and *The Empty Altar: An Illustrated Book to Help Talk about the Lack of Parish Priests* (Crossroad Publishing Company, 2016).

He puts forward the case for ordaining married men ("locally ordained ministers") 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."¹¹⁹⁹ "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."¹²⁰⁰

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."¹²⁰¹ 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.¹²⁰²

There are innovative and exciting models for re-imagining parish leadership and ministry. The Lobinger Model is one of the creative models that has roots in the past and a sense of what is needed for the future:

The Lobinger Model is an innovative model rooted in the particular needs and talents of local communities. It addresses the theological conundrum presented by the priest shortage by expanding the role of lay leaders and ordaining them into service. The Lobinger model was developed by Bishop Fritz Lobinger who, early on, was instrumental in developing the pastoral model of the Small Christian Communities -- including a particular model of *Bible* study with central roles for lay leadership in liturgical services, catechesis and the social gospel. He ministered in regions of South Africa where there were few

¹¹⁹⁹ Fritz Lobinger, letter to the author dated 28 September, 2013.

¹²⁰⁰ Fritz Lobinger in Benjamin Soloway, "Brazilian Bishop," p. 1.

¹²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰² Fritz Lobinger, email message to author dated 31 January, 2015.

priests. He recognized the enormous faith and talents of lay people in the communities under his care and sought to empower them to carry out the fullness of sacramental life in their local community. You can learn more about his model by reading his interview at: <http://www.uscatholic.org/ordainelders>

In preparation for the 3rd international meeting of priest associations and reform groups in October, 2017 Father Wolfgang Gamer offers his view of the Lobinger model based on his experience as a priest in South America. His model is based on the one advanced by Bishop Fritz Lobinger and the Vienna pastoral theologian Paul Zulehner of “Paul priests (originating outside the community, i.e. ordained by the bishop)” and “Corinth priests (originating within the community—recognized and chosen from within the community).” Gamer notes that in *Romans* 16 and 1 *Corinthians* 16 the apostle Paul offers a variety of leadership roles that are exercised in Rome and Corinth.

To begin, each community opens itself to that Spirit, prayerfully reflects on its situation and sets priorities in order to live out their faith in today’s world. In order to be a community of mission, they spell out their activities under the guidelines of worship, service and witness. In this process, the community is accompanied and supported by “Paul priests” and full time lay people who assist in the discovery of charisms within the community. The aim of this process is to build a team of “Corinth priests” of at least three persons. Lobinger and Zulehner speak of *virii probati* and eventually also of *feminae probatae*. Women and men, both single or married and couples, like Prisca and Aquilla in *Acts of the Apostles*, provide a robust model for missionary outreach and community leadership and ministry. From this process emerges a team of leaders, accepted and supported by all members of a community, whatever their size or number. This team may well undergo formation and will eventually be ordained for service.¹²⁰³

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.”¹²⁰⁴

Bishop Colin Davies of Ngong Diocese, Kenya writes:

¹²⁰³ “The Lobinger Model,” retrieved on 30 December, 2016, <http://files.constantcontact.com/7f9bce08001/9ccb623b-3847-4f4b-8666-862ddaee84f3.pdf>. Source: https://www.amazon.com/Like-His-Brothers-SistersOrdaining/dp/0824518500/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8 Also available on the Future Church Website, <https://www.futurechurch.org>

¹²⁰⁴ Fritz Lobinger, email message to Ephigenia Gachiri, 2013.

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 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!!!¹²⁰⁵

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.

¹²⁰⁵ Colin Davies, email messages to the author, 21 April, 2014 and 22 April, 2014.

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 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.¹²⁰⁶

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.¹²⁰⁷

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.¹²⁰⁸

A related pastoral solution to the Eucharistic Famine is twofold:¹²⁰⁹

¹²⁰⁶ 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.

¹²⁰⁷ Colon Davies, email message to the author dated 26 June, 2015.

¹²⁰⁸ 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>

¹²⁰⁹ 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 Without 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 marriage¹²¹⁰ 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)¹²¹¹ to the wife’s pregnancy to the birth of the first

¹²¹⁰ 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.

¹²¹¹ 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.

child¹²¹² to the civil marriage to the Catholic Marriage Rite (that could be in a Catholic Church or in a SCC) to the wedding celebration.¹²¹³

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.¹²¹⁴ Magesa goes even further in

¹²¹² 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>

¹²¹³ 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 firstborn 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.

¹²¹⁴ 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.¹²¹⁵

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. He said, “Every bishop wants to be king in his own diocese.” Presently in Kenya there are 27 Catholic Dioceses and 44 to 71 ethnic groups (depending on how you count), each with its African traditional marriage customs and rites.¹²¹⁶

Today in Africa there are many John Paul II and Benedict-appointed bishops with their more orthodox, traditional, cautious pastoral style. Now Francis-appointed bishops are emerging who have simpler lifestyles and are closer to the people. Following the process of synodality, subsidiarity (decentralization) and collegiality, a big question is how a consensus on new pastoral solutions can evolve in national bishops conferences on the local level in Africa on the challenges such as liturgy, sacraments, marriage, family and young people?

An example of this diversity is the Catholic Bishops’ Conference in South Africa. South African Redemptorist Bishop Kevin Dowling, CSSR of Rustenburg Diocese points out that with the wide diversity of pastoral and cultural views it is very hard for the conference to agree on joint pastoral solutions.

13. Small Christian Communities in the Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of Love*¹²¹⁷

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.¹²¹⁸ The document uses the traditional language of “as the Synod

¹²¹⁵ Laurenti Magesa in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 March, 2007.

¹²¹⁶ Raphael Ndingi in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya in March, 2007.

¹²¹⁷ See Joseph G. Healey, “Small Christian Communities, The Joy of Love,” *The Catholic Mirror*, Issue No. 5/16 (May, 2006), p. 8.

¹²¹⁸ 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.

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.

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 Minister¹²¹⁹ goes by many names (alphabetically):

1. Marriage Pastoral Accompanier (before and after marriage). Also referred to as Marriage Mentor after marriage.¹²²⁰

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>

¹²¹⁹ This person/persons works closely with movements and organizations in Eastern Africa such as Couples for Christ, Family Enrichment Clubs, Focolare, Marriage Encounter, National and Diocesan Family Life Programs, Project Rachel and True Love Waits.

¹²²⁰ The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB)’s “Results of the Consultation in

2. Single Mother Pastoral Accompanier.
3. Marriage Animator (before marriage like a Formation Animator).
4. Marriage Counselor¹²²¹ (after marriage).

Taking a specific example, in No. 215 of *The Joy of Love* 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.”¹²²² 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.¹²²³

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 married couple to emphasize the balance.

Following the pastoral guidelines of *The Joy of Love*, the Pastoral Accompaniers in Eastern Africa walk with specific kinds of SCCs:

1. Teenagers.
2. College Students.
3. Young Adults.
4. Newly Married Couples.¹²²⁴

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.

¹²²¹ “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 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.

¹²²² 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*.

¹²²³ Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubii* (31 December 1930): AAS 22 (1930), 583.

¹²²⁴ 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

5. Young Married Couples Without Children.
6. Young Married Couples with Children.

In our SCCs we have the Ministry of Pastoral Accompaniment -- both for engaged couples and for newly married couples. We are trying to respond to Pope Francis's 2017 talk to priests in Rome:

Dear brothers, speaking recently at the Roman Rota I recommended carrying out a true catechumenate of future spouses, which includes all the stages of the sacramental journey: the times of preparation for marriage, of its celebration and of the immediate subsequent years. To you, parish priests, indispensable collaborators of the bishops, this catechumenate is primarily entrusted. I encourage you to implement it despite the difficulties you might meet. And I believe the greatest difficulty is to think or live marriage as a social event – “we must have this social event” – and not as a true Sacrament, which requires long, long preparation.”

14. We Go from Here?

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 and the *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*. 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.

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.

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.¹²²⁵

Responding to the call of Pope Francis and the recommendations of the two synods and the *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, 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.

After the October, 2015 Synod of Bishops itself there is an ongoing process involving collegiality and subsidiarity. There are meetings and various commissions related to pastoral solutions to the challenges of family and marriage. Ongoing discussion and decision-making is taking 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.

Creativity and new ideas is a good sign of the growth of the SCCs. Our SCC members are actively participate in the Kenya Lenten Campaign 2021. The theme: "Rebuilding our Nation through Inclusive and Accountable Governance."

Lenten 2021 English: [Lenten 2021 English Final final.indd \(kccb.or.ke\)](#) Final final.indd (kccb.or.ke)

Lenten 2021 Swahili: [Final-Lenten-Campaign-2021-Kiswahili.pdf \(kccb.or.ke\)](#)

In Week One on "Family" among the proposed actions are: 1. The SCC to identify a Mentor Family that journeys with families facing challenges. 2. Establish, promote and strengthen family life programs in the parish, prayer houses and SCCs. In our free, online Ebook the section on "Lay Ecclesial Ministries in Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa" includes different kinds of mentoring. Having a Mentor Family is new and creative idea. This is very valuable during this Covid-19 pandemic.

¹²²⁵ 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.

Our free, online Ebook (https://smallchristiancommunities.org/.../04/Build_new.pdf) has 210 African Proverbs and Sayings related to family and marriage: They are classified in the three categories in Chapter 12:

Family Life (99)

Raising Children (63)

Marriage Ministry/Marriage Preparation/Marriage Counseling (48)

It is interesting to analyze these African proverbs and sayings and understand their use in family gatherings and discussions, SCCs meetings, counseling sessions, etc. family life, raising children and marriage ministry/marriage preparation/marriage counseling. Some are universal proverbs applied to the African context and situation.

Let us try to choose one African proverb for each week of Lent: "Members of the same family are open to each other and can discuss anything" (Samburu, Kenya). "A family is like a forest. When you are outside it is dense. When you are inside each tree has its place" (Africa). "A united family eats from the same plate" (Ganda, Uganda).

14. Tracking the Growth of Young People¹²²⁶ Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs)

Two sayings – *There is no blueprint in building SCCs* and *We create the path by walking* – set the tone for the growth of Young People (Youth/Young Adults) Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) in Eastern Africa. A major finding is that there are four major types of YPSCCs:

1. Parish-based Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) that include Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and Young Adults Small Christian Communities (YASCCs). Besides meeting physically, they include online Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and online Young Adults Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) using What’sApp, Zoom, Skype, Facebook, Google Meet, etc.
2. School-based/campus-based/institution-based/center-based Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs). Besides meeting physically, they include online Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) and online Young Adults Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) using What’sApp, Zoom, Skype, Facebook, Google Meet, etc. This includes the growing number of Alumni Young Adults Small Christian Communities.
3. Specialized Young Adults Small Christian Communities (YASCCs). Also called Floating SCCs. These include Young Professionals Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) – teachers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, public relations, accountants, IT people, etc.). Besides meeting physically in different locations, they include online Young Adults Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) using What’sApp, Zoom, Skype, Facebook, Google Meet, etc.
4. Specifically online (virtual or digital) SCCs of young people¹²²⁷ are a growing fast and can cover the three types above.

We follow the general guideline in African society that young people are in the 15¹²²⁸ to 35 age group. We use the umbrella term Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) that covers:

1. Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs). 15 to 21 years old.
2. Young Adults Small Christian Communities (YASCCs). 21 to 35 old. These include specialized communities such as Young Professionals Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) – doctors, nurses, lawyers, public relations, accountants, IT people, etc.

If for various reasons these people cannot meet physically, they meet regularly, even weekly, on What’sApp, Zoom, Skype, Facebook, Google Meet, etc.

¹²²⁶ We continue to use “Youth” in the local context of Eastern Africa, but the terms “Young People” and “Young Adults” are becoming more common.

¹²²⁷ Not connected to a parish or school.

¹²²⁸ 15 years is the standard (“start”) age used in the African Youth Charter and in the Commonwealth documents.

This evaluation has studied carefully the important role of young people (youth/young Adults) in SCCs.¹²²⁹ Given the importance of youth in the demographics of both the general population and the Catholic population in Africa, the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the 2009 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 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,¹²³⁰ 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 Young People SCCs (YPSCCs in short) 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.

¹²²⁹ Our SCCs Website (<https://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>) has a user friendly Search Feature. A Search on 24 August, 2022 shows: If you search for “youth” you get 81 hits (visits). If you search for “young people” you get 27 hits (visits). If you search for “young adults” you get 6 hits (visits).

¹²³⁰ 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.”

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; a married young adult group; and an older adult group. At the end they come back together into the full SCC for announcements and closing prayers.

1. Surveys Among Young People

A survey among young people in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Mwanza, Tanzania, Lilongwe, Malawi, Lusaka, Zambia and Nairobi, Kenya and reinforced by interviews with young people in the USA revealed that their favorite discussion topics in their YSCCs meetings are:

- Topics clustered around boy-girl relationships, sex,¹²³¹ sexuality, peer pressure, dating, fashion, popular music, video games, social networks, information technology, sports and the use of leisure time. Kenyan layman Steven Juma says:

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.¹²³²

- Whole area of searching for one’s human and Christian identity and self-discovery in a faith-sharing context. What are youth’s aspirations and dreams?¹²³³ This includes vocational discernment (covering religious vocations and vocations in the secular

¹²³¹ In our SCCs Class at Tangaza in March, 2016 the students (mostly seminarians) were reluctant to mention sex as one of the African youth’s favorite topic (as though it was not proper to discuss sex in public). Finally the sole priest in the class said, “Let’s say it openly. Youth want to talk about sex.”

During research on university and college campuses in the USA, the topic “sex” was widened to include LGBTQ -- lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered, queer people.

¹²³² 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

¹²³³ At a workshop at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya on Saturday, 5 November, 2016 the title of my interactive presentation was: “Positive Use of the Social Media: Suggestions on How Students at Kenyatta University Can Use Their Leisure Time Better.” I began by asking the students in buzz groups of two each to discuss the question: “What gets me up in the morning?” “Why do I get up in the morning?” Then we shared our answers in the whole group of about 70 students.

world.) This touches career planning,¹²³⁴ job hunting and the challenges of employment/unemployment.

- Involvement in justice and peace issues including causes, protests, demonstrations, service and outreach opportunities. In his research American theologian Father Bernard Lee, SM makes a valuable distinction that applies to African YPSCCs 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.¹²³⁵

- 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 (money). This included emphasis on long range goals and achievements and how to be financially successful in life.

- Generation gap – communications problems between themselves and their parents.

- Politics – always a fascinating topic especially connected to election time in African countries.

- Culture including African ethnic group identity and challenges and pop culture especially in cities.

In 2016 Father Febian Piki, the AMECEA Pastoral Coordinator, conducted a survey about where you find Catholic youth, young people and young adults on Sunday morning in Nairobi, Kenya, the largest city in East Africa. The results: “You do not find them outside of the Catholic Church after mass. You find them on social media.”

2. Case Studies and Workshops of YPSCCs

¹²³⁴ Research in USA indicate that university and college students and graduates want to talk about how to pay off their student loans.

¹²³⁵ Bernard Lee, “Young Adults Gathered & Sent or Sent & Gathered,” in Moerschbacher, *Proceedings of the International Symposium*, pp. 2-3.

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 Blessed 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.

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 154 members as of 27 December, 2016: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gonzagagonzasccc#> = 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.¹²³⁶ 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."

¹²³⁶ Another approach is to mention one’s favorite verse(s) at different stages in one’s life.

- *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, the version in *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.’”¹²³⁷
- *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”.¹²³⁸
- *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 he will give to everyone who comes into his field the automatic one denarius.
- 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:

¹²³⁷ 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 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.

¹²³⁸ 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*.

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 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.¹²³⁹

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 Notre Dame de Namur 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 36 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.¹²⁴⁰

¹²³⁹ 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>

¹²⁴⁰ 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 in Kisumu, Kenya

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, WhatsApp and Zoom. 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.¹²⁴¹

Tanzanian Msgr. Deogratias Mbiku, the Catholic Chaplain at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania 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.¹²⁴²

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, boring and routine.¹²⁴³ They mentioned that many youths 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*¹²⁴⁴ 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.

¹²⁴¹ Based on an interview with Sister Rita Ishengoma, STH in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 19 April, 2012.

¹²⁴² Deogratias Mbiku, "Report on Campus Ministry and Chaplaincy," Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) Unpublished Report, 2014.

¹²⁴³ In meetings, workshops and seminars the young people designate one person as the "energizer." When he or she sees that the participants are sitting for too long or are distracted or are nodding off, this person gets the audience to stand up and wave their arms or do a special exercise or a role play or sing a song.

¹²⁴⁴ 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.

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*.

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 Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB) 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 2nd Sunday of Advent (*Matthew* 3: 1-12);
- Using the **SEE – DISCERN/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”¹²⁴⁵ including an online presentation of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page” (www.smallchristiancommunities.org) and participants demonstrating their own websites and Facebook Pages connected to youth in Zambia;¹²⁴⁶ and an African-based DVD, *The Church*

¹²⁴⁵ 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.

¹²⁴⁶ See Archdiocese of Lusaka Youth Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/groups/196941513776884/334481956689505/?notif_t=group_activity

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.”

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.”¹²⁴⁷

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 ZCCB (that includes Youth Ministry)

¹²⁴⁷ 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.

he feels that young people need their own SCCs separate from the Adult SCCs.¹²⁴⁸ This was reinforced by Chishimba Chishimba, the Vice Chairperson of the Zambia National Council 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¬if_t=like¹²⁴⁹

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.

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

¹²⁴⁸ Clement Mulenga in a conversation with the author in Monze, Zambia on 2 May, 2014.

¹²⁴⁹ Chishimba Chishimba in a conversation with the author in Lusaka, Zambia on 2 May, 2014.

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.¹²⁵⁰ The basic process/methodology of the workshop was "See," "Judge" and "Act" pioneered by youth around the world.

Highlights were:

- Presentation on the nine SCCs of university students¹²⁵¹ in Christ the Teacher Catholic Parish at Kenyatta University (KU)¹²⁵² in Nairobi, Kenya. Kenyatta University is the largest university in Kenya with over 80,000 students and over 20,000 members of staff. 25-30 % of the students are Catholic. 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

¹²⁵⁰ 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.

¹²⁵¹ 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.

¹²⁵² As an example, St. Dominic SCC has about 100 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 Monday evenings for prayer, Faith-sharing and *Bible Reflection*: Saints John, Jude, Maria Goretti and Patrick.

peace with each other. SCCs have also helped students to create an impact on the community through charity work services.¹²⁵³

- Presentation on the six Youth SCCs (YSCCs) in Holy Cross Parish, Dandora in Nairobi, Kenya.¹²⁵⁴ Kenyan youth leader Anthony Adoyo emphasized special YSCC 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.
 - 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 (Command f on an Apple Computer) was taught. Online demonstration of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and Facebook Page and other Youth Facebook Pages. The JP II 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*.

¹²⁵³ Kevin Arori, "Christ the Teacher Catholic Church Kenyatta University Small Christian Communities Report," Nairobi: Unpublished Report, 2014.

¹²⁵⁴ Described in other sections of this Ebook.

- 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.¹²⁵⁵

The “See,” “Judge/Discern” 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.”¹²⁵⁶ 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’.”¹²⁵⁷

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, St. “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.

¹²⁵⁵ 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.

¹²⁵⁶ KUCC Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC) Facebook Page, retrieved on 20 October, 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1549609615274202/>

¹²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

3. Case Study of the YSCCs at Kenyatta University Christ the Teacher Catholic Parish in Nairobi, Kenya

These are highlights of Alloys Nyakundi's 2016 report:¹²⁵⁸

Kenyatta University Catholic Church in Nairobi, Kenya has nine Small Christian Communities¹²⁵⁹ in which the students are the main stake holders followed by Kenyatta University staff. It is also an example of school-based or campus-based Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs). Our Chaplain is Father Lance Nadeau, MM who is an American Maryknoll priest. The nine Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) are:

1. St. Dominic
2. St. Patrick
3. St. Francis of Assisi
4. St. Catherine of Siena
5. St. Michael the Archangel
6. St. Augustine
7. Cardinal Maurice Otunga
8. St. Perpetual and Felicity
9. St. Anne

All the YSCCs meet weekly on Wednesday as from 6:45 pm to 8:45 pm inside the campus in various lecture halls that are booked at the start of the semester except St Ann's which meets on Thursday. St Dominic comprises students who stay outside the campus. St Patrick and St Ann comprise students who study at the Ruiru Campus which is a branch of Kenyatta University. St. Francis, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Perpetual and Felicity and St. Michael are for students who stay inside the campus. Cardinal Otunga is for the alumni. This includes KU graduates who have finished their BA and are continuing in Graduate School and Alumni living in the Nairobi Area. They met every week in one of their homes. They have a representative on the Parish Pastoral Council. Lastly, St Augustine is for those who are not students.

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

YSCC LEADERSHIP HIERACHY

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

¹²⁵⁸ Alloys Nyakundi, "Report on the Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) at Kenyatta University Christ the Teacher Catholic Parish in Nairobi, Kenya," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 26 December, 2016, http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/kucc_report_2016.pdf

¹²⁵⁹ See a write-up and photos of the activities of these nine YSCCs on the Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University Website, <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke>

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



St. Francis of Assisi YSCC at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya.

FAMILY LEADERSHIP HIERACHY

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

PROGRAM OF THE WEEKLY YSCCs

- 6:45 pm to 7:10 pm: Rosary prayer
- 7:10 pm to 7:20 pm: Song session
- 7:20 pm to 7:50 pm: Reading of the gospel of the coming Sunday
- 7:50 pm to 8:20 pm: Topic of discussion or a debate
- 8:20 pm to 8:30 pm: Announcements
- 8:30 pm to 8:45 pm: AOBs, final prayers and departure to our rooms

YSCCs ACTIVITIES

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

4. Charity work

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



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

5. Animation of mass

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

6. Fun day and end of semester bash

YSCCs organize get togethers which breaks the monotony of the status quo. Once or twice they organize for fun activities for example, dance, play football and have a meal together. They finally end the semester with a bash where they share about their challenges and their strengths. They also cook food which they eat together and even give some awards to their leaders.

7. Visiting and helping YSCCs members

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

COMMUNICATION

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

FINANCES

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

CHALLENGES FACING YSCCs

1. Mixing the YSCCs model of church and other small apostolic groups of the Catholic Church. Right now KUCC has 28 Volunteer Apostolic Groups (similar to Catholic Action Groups, some of which are movements in the Catholic Church).¹²⁶⁰ There is a sign up at the beginning of each semester and a small entrance/registration fee of 50 Kenyan Shillings (50 USA cents). Many use a small group model of prayer and reflection similar to a SCC. Some groups have lectionary-based Faith-sharing/Gospel-based Faith-sharing.¹²⁶¹ Some examples (in alphabetical order):

- a. Acolytes.
- b. Catholic Charismatics.
- c. Choir Alumni.
- d. Christian Life Community (CLC).
- e. Communion and Liberation.
- f. Dance Troop.
- g. Evangelizers of the Sick.
- h. Evangelizers of the Word.
- i. Guidance and Counseling.
- j. International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS).
- k. John Paul II Evangelizers.
- l. KUCC Choir.

¹²⁶⁰ Then there are the many other clubs and extra-curricular activities on the KU campus.

¹²⁶¹ A description of each group is found on the KUCC Website, accessed on 19 March, 2017, <http://www.kucatholic.or.ke>

- m. KU Post-Graduate Group.
- n. KU Young Christian Students (YSC).¹²⁶²
- o. Legion of Mary.
- p. Pro-Life.
- q. Reigniters of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) Team.
- r. Sant'Egidio.
- s. Sunday School.

Sometimes people confuse these small apostolic groups with YSCCs. Since they feel comfortable belonging to one of these small apostolic groups, they don't see the importance of the YSCCs. Also, the two models sometimes collide.

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

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

WHAT MOST YOUTH WANT ADDRESSED IN THE YSCCs

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

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

In April, 2017 (end of Second Semester) once again our St. Dominic SCC of Kenyatta University Catholic Church took position one out of the nine Small Christian Communities. We had the largest number of members pay a one semester subscription fee of 150/= Kenyan Shillings (\$1.50) to the parish (in addition we pay 20/= to our own SCC Fund). We have always worked as one team and this reminds me of the proverb *one hand washes another hand*. I am also sure that our saint is fighting for us and he is happy. St. Dominic, please continue praying for us.

¹²⁶² YCS is over 100 students so it is a "large" Christian community. Most were members of YCS in their secondary schools. They follow the international charter. The students meet weekly and use a variety of Scripture texts, not necessarily from the following Sunday.



Leaders of St. Dominic SCC with the 2017 trophy.

The “Minutes” of a meeting of the Kenyatta University Youth Small Christian Communities Team are:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Alloys M Nyakundi
2. Collins Ongoma
3. Edwin Wesonga
4. Nancy Njehia
5. John Mwaura

AGENDA

1. Proposal about communications in Radio Waumini and KU FM.
2. Having talks in various secondary schools.
3. Visiting the youth in the slums.
4. Organize a Youth SCCs Workshop.

We saw it wise to name our team and after detailed consultation we decided on “Reigniters of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) Team.”

We agreed to have a talk at the Chaplaincy Centre. about Youth Small Christian Communities (SCCs) and share the challenges that young people are facing. We tried to look

for possible ways of capturing the youth and we saw it better that we involve them through asking questions and giving some token (gift) to those who are able to answer correctly.

We also figured out on the possibility of visiting various Catholic Secondary Schools when we will be give talks about SCCs. Already we have an invitation to Mogoiri Secondary School in Muranga. We are requesting financial support from the Eastern Africa Small Christian Community Training Team.

On visiting the youth in slums we had an idea that we can visit the youths in the slums and encourage, enlighten and show love to them courtesy of the Kenyatta University Youth Small Christian Communities.

On the workshop we came with an idea to organize a University/College Youth Small Christian Community Workshop. Since majority of the youth who have gone to the university and college are seen as a mirror of the society, we need to ground them well with information about Small Christian Communities. The church should not take us for granted since we are the church of today and tomorrow.

We have prepared a budget for our presentation in KU FM Radio Station (9,000 Kenyan shillings or \$90 per month) and our visit to Mogoiri Secondary School (12,000 Kenyan shillings or \$120).



Meeting of the Reigniters of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) Team at Kenyatta University.

Nancy Njehia affirms their missionary spirit: “Yesterday we had a meeting with five *wanajumuiyas* from Kenyatta University where we deliberated on forming a group to reignite the YSCCs in high schools and dioceses where they have been dormant over time. Requesting your prayers so that all our plans will be successful.”

The newest project is to give talks every Sunday from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m at KU FM about SCCs and related topics. The coordinators give a small stipend to the presenters in the radio studio who have to wake up early in the morning.



Alloys Nyakundi presenting at KU FM about SCCs and talking about the 2017 Kenya Lenten Campaign.



A nice reminder of teaching on SCCs at Hekima University College in Nairobi. Interesting mixture of the Catholic Church: two laywomen, one layman, one seminarian, one sister, one priest.

The KU SCCs Team presented on school-based/campus-based YSCCs during the SCCS Class at Tangaza. Two representatives of the YSCCs in Dandora Parish, Nairobi presented on parish-based YSCCs.

The success of these all YSCCs follows a common pattern:

1. Continuity in youth leadership.
2. Self-reliance plan (good fund-raising). Example: The youth in Dandora raise 500,000/= Kenyan Shillings (\$5,000) a year in selling the weekly mass leaflet.
3. Priority in focus and strategic planning.



Presenting on YSCCs in the SCCs Class at Tangaza.

CHANGE NUMBERS

8. St. Augustine Hybrid Young People Small Christian Community

St. Augustine is a hybrid model of a Young People Small Christian Community because members meet in person both online and to read and reflect on the Gospel of the coming

Sunday. It comprises young people from Christ the Teacher Kenyatta University Parish who have completed their undergraduate studies at Kenyatta University (KU) and are now alumni of KU. Young people belong to Small Christian Communities when they are doing their undergraduate degrees and St. Augustine is meant to accommodate alumni so as to continue actively engaging one another even after college. For one to be a member of this community, he/she has to pay a registration fee and a subsequent monthly subscription, as well as be a committed member in terms of attendance and active participation.

6.

7. The leadership structure consists of the Moderator, the Vice Moderator, Treasurer, Organizing Secretary, Secretary, and the Parish Pastoral Council Representative (PPC). The PPC acts as an intermediary between the community and the Parish.

8.

9. They meet every Sunday afternoon from 3 p.m. to 5p.m at a member's house on a voluntary rotational basis. The gathering begins with the Rosary or the Chaplet of divine mercy and then the reading and reflection on the Gospel of the coming Sunday. Members take a minute of silence after reading the gospel and the latter relate it to what is happening in their lives. Members also use this opportunity to listen to one another and try to help solve the challenges they are facing as young people hence showing solidarity with one another.

10.

11. After the reading and sharing of the Gospel, members have different activities for example bible trivial, a topic of discussion raised by a member, or a song. The activity of the day is followed by prayers of the faithful majorly focusing on the intentions raised by members.

12. Apart from the weekly meetings, the community is involved with different activities throughout the year for example charity work, Retreat Day, Baby visits, St. Augustine anniversary day, and Fun day. All these activities are done as a way of giving back to the community and helping members bond.

13.

14. In summary, St. Augustine SCCs can be used as a case study by parishes that do not have an idea on how to actively keep young people engaged.

1.

4. African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Youth/Young People

Alone, a youth runs fast; with an elder slow, but together they go far (Luo, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda).

A child or youth who does not listen to an elder's advice gets his or her leg broken (Nyanja, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia). (Chewa, Malawi). (Bemba, Zambia).

A child or young person does not fear treading on dangerous ground until he or she gets hurt/stumbles (Bukusu, Kenya).

A child who is not taught by its mother will be taught by the world (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

An elder (or a parent) who won't sharply reprimand a child when young will be compelled to run helter skelter when the child is fully grown, and becomes grossly disobedient.

Even if your mother has a short leg she is still your mother (Malawi).

Good actions are nourishment for youth, much more than words (North Africa).

If a girl sits badly, it is up to her mother to cover her thighs (Orma, Kenya).

I'll teach the youth to fish, not just give them a fish (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

It is better to be poor when one is young rather than becoming poor at old age (Kuria, Kenya, Tanzania).

It is the boy who lifts up the fallen houses (ruins) (Havu, Democratic Republic of Congo).

It takes a whole village to raise a child (Igbo, Yoruba, Nigeria).

No matter how skinny, the son always belongs to his father (Kipsigis, Kenya and Galla, Ethiopia).

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, Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast).

One knee does not bring up a child (Sukuma, Tanzania).

One hand does not nurse a child. (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

The patience of a young girl brings joy to the parents; at the end, it brings celebration (Rundi, Burundi and Rwanda).

The person who has not traveled widely thinks his or her mother is the only cook (the best cook) (many African languages).

Preventing the conflicts of tomorrow means changing the mindset of youth today (Zimbabwe).

A soft tree is never broken by wind (Haya, Tanzania).

Spare the rod, spoil the child (Tugen, Kenya).

A stick is straightened while still young (Kiga, Ankole, Uganda and many African languages).

A village never lacks a beautiful young woman (Lingala, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of the Congo, Angola, Central African Republic).

When a leaf falls to the ground, the tree gets the blame/the shame goes to the tree (Nyanja, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe) (Chewa, Malawi).

Why do you behave like a woman whose son has just gotten married? Maasai (Kenya, Tanzania).

Young growing cuttings determine a good harvest of cassava (Tonga, Malawi).

5. Learning from Campus Ministry Programs in the USA

Eastern African universities can learn from the campus ministry programs¹²⁶³ and the rich variety of school-based SCCs and especially the Young Adult¹²⁶⁴ Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) on USA campuses.¹²⁶⁵

From 2014 to 2017 I had the opportunity to meet, and learn from, students, chaplains and campus ministers at the following 15 campuses in the USA (alphabetically): Boston College, DePaul, Drew, Duquesne, Fairleigh Dickerson, Georgetown, Loyola New Orleans, Morgan State, Notre Dame, Princeton, Rice, Santa Clara, Stanford, Williams and Yale. This research was published in Healey, Joseph, "What Catholic Young People Really Want to Talk About?" in Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. The chapter can be found online on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: http://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/what_catholic.pdf

¹²⁶³ 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.

¹²⁶⁴ 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.

¹²⁶⁵ During my research on US college campuses "I learned through my discussions that young people today are not necessarily angry with or opposed to the church. They simply feel it's not relevant to their lives. Instead, they're looking to share and express their Catholicism in a less institutionalized, more personalized setting, one that's more community-minded and service-minded. They're looking for more than traditional Sunday Mass to hone their faith."

Healey, Joseph, "When It Comes To Nurturing Faith, Smaller Is Often Better" and "When Smaller is Better: Small Faith Communities and the Future of the U.S. Church," *America*, 24 May 2016, *America Website*, retrieved on 25 May, 2016, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/when-smaller-better>.

This is confirmed by a statement from the "Joy of the Gospel in America" Convocation in Orlando, Florida, USA fro, 1-4 July, 2017:

The panel on young adults - specifically on the "nones" - was again sobering. 50% of baptized Catholics no longer identify themselves as Catholic. Of those, 79% leave the church before they are 23. And they are not angry. They are indifferent. They do not leave the church in a huff; they simply drift away.

US Catholic Mission Association Email Message, 4 July, 2017.

From 2018 to 2024 I visited the following campuses (alphabetical): Ave Maria, Duke, Loyola Marymount, San Diego.

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 Church 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 faith formation, providing opportunities for learning, prayer, mutual support, and the shared experience of Christian living and service to Church and society.”¹²⁶⁶ 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.

¹²⁶⁶ Saint Thomas More Website, retrieved on 22 October, 2012, <http://stm.yale.edu/FaithSharing.php>

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-sharing based on scripture, responding to individual and family needs, and socializing.¹²⁶⁷

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.¹²⁶⁸



Catholic CAFÉ at Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana, USA

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

¹²⁶⁷ Ibid., retrieved on 8 December, 2015, <http://stm.yale.edu/SmallChurchCommunities.php>

¹²⁶⁸ Notre Dame Website, retrieved on 8 December, 2015, <http://campusministry.nd.edu/undergraduate-resources/Faith-sharing-group>

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 Scripture and the Catholic Church's tradition as necessary to aid in the group's understanding.¹²⁶⁹

Catholic and Protestant graduate students participate in an Ecumenical Bible Study Group every Friday.

The Office of Campus Ministry at Notre Dame produced a *Spiritual Study 2015: Reshape. Reimagine. Rethink* to assess the evolving needs of Notre Dame students and to capture a qualitative glimpse of their interests, successes, challenges and desires. The 65-page booklet included reports on Benchmarking Visits to campus ministry programs including Boston College, Dayton, Texas A&M and Yale. The latter's Small Church Communities offer an incredible opportunity for faith-sharing. The weekly scripture reflection is an anchor-point for conversation. Vulnerable disclosure of self, faith/doubt, relationships, etc. only comes with time.

At Boston College¹²⁷⁰ in Boston, Massachusetts, USA Cura Christian Life 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.¹²⁷¹ 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,¹²⁷² praying with art,

¹²⁶⁹ Ibid., <https://campusministry.nd.edu/about-catholicism/sacramental-preparation/cross-examination-investigating-the-catholic-faith>

¹²⁷⁰ 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.

¹²⁷¹ Based on a conversation with American laywoman Ellen Modica, Assistant Campus Minister, Boston College, Boston Massachusetts, USA on 19 November, 2015.

¹²⁷² 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

centering prayer, meditation, etc.) that will serve to instill a habit of prayer and deepen your relationship with God.¹²⁷³

Cura members have the opportunity to attend retreats and other activities throughout the year.

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 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.¹²⁷⁴

Santa Clara University in Santa Clara, California, USA has 30 weekly 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.

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>

¹²⁷³ "Cura -- Christian Life Community," Boston College Website, retrieved on 21 September, 2014, <http://www.bc.edu/offices/ministry/faithcommunities/cura.html>

¹²⁷⁴ Based on a conversation with American student Chris Colgan, Boston College Senior, Boston Massachusetts, USA on 19 November, 2015.

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 weekly communities 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 to help her be “grounded” before her busy round of exams.

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.¹²⁷⁵

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.

¹²⁷⁵ Based on conversations with Vietnamese Jesuit Father Manh Tran, SJ and student leaders in Santa Clara, California on 29-30 November, 2015.

For a very good article on, and interview with, Tran see Thomas Reese, “Community, Spirituality and Service: Christianity for College Students,” *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, 27 October, 2016, *NCR Website*, retrieved on 29 October, 2016, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/community-spirituality-and-service-christianity-college-students>

1. But there are lots of communities [groups, clubs, student organizations, extra-curricular activities] available on college campuses — sports teams, fraternities, sororities, academic clubs, service projects, etc. So the question is what does CLC offer that's different? Here the second pillar, spirituality, is important. I would have to say that what's unique about CLC definitely has to do with faith. The faith in the God that we try to introduce to them is the God who is active and attractive. It's not just doctrine, but a God that is active in their lives. It is an open faith. We provide the space and opportunities for people to dare to ask questions. It definitely creates space for people to just explore their faith.

2. Small group experience — they just want to experience that. They hunger for those small group experiences and CLC provides that. How to start a CLC on their campuses: The best way is to just bring a group of friends, four or five friends, and get together once a week just to pray and talk about what's going on in your lives. Then after that first group, as you multiply, those students will become leaders and then they will go and form other small groups.

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) did 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 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.¹²⁷⁶

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."¹²⁷⁷ 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

¹²⁷⁶ RENEW International Website, retrieved on 21 September, 2014, <http://www.renewintl.org/Renew/Index.nsf/vpages/CampusRENEW?opendocument>

¹²⁷⁷ John DeGioia, letter to the author dated 26 July, 2013.

from their thoughts and reflections.¹²⁷⁸ Sometimes the Campus RENEW groups use the 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

¹²⁷⁸As 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.

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, booklets and online, web-based resources on the *Bible*, Faith-sharing, faith formation and other lectionary-based small community resources, etc. but research shows there are “relatively” few small communities of any kind in the Catholic Church using them on a regular basis.

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 2015.¹²⁷⁹

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.¹²⁸⁰ 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 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.¹²⁸¹

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.¹²⁸²

¹²⁷⁹See the Aquinas Institute Princeton University's Official Catholic Campus Ministry Website, retrieved on 30 May, 2015, <http://princetoncatholic.org>

¹²⁸⁰ Material provided by the former Catholic Chaplain Father Brian Page.

¹²⁸¹ Catholic Community @ Stanford Website, retrieved on 28 November, 2015 <http://catholic.stanford.edu/ministries-programs/small-groups>

¹²⁸² 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 (EC) 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.

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.¹²⁸³

Today many young people are searching for meaning in life. One college student told me she was a devout Catholic who went to a Catholic High School on the East Coast. Every Sunday she went to Mass with her parents. In her freshman year at Michigan State University she dutifully participated Sunday Mass on the campus. Then she began to “drift” and didn’t find mass that interesting. She joined an Evangelical Church on campus that had lively singing, a band and entertaining sermons. But after a few months she felt something was missing. She had an unfulfilled yearning, desire, hunger for something more. Finally, she discovered that she really missed the Eucharist at the Catholic Mass. So she returned to the Catholic Church on campus and now feels very nourished by receiving Jesus Christ every Sunday in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

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 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.¹²⁸⁴ 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.

Much of the above material was summarized in an article

“When Smaller is Better: Small Faith Communities and the Future of the U.S. Church,” *America*, 24 May 2016, *America* Website, retrieved on 25 May, 2016,

¹²⁸³ Based on a conversation with Carlyne Manion in Palo Alto, California, USA on 28 November, 2015.

¹²⁸⁴ 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>

<http://americamagazine.org/issue/when-smaller-better>. Also listed on the bottom of page 25 of the 20-27 June, 2016 paper edition of *America Magazine* under “Digital Highlights” as a WEB EXCLUSIVE: “Small Faith Communities and the future of the U.S. church,” <http://americamagazine.org/webfeatures>.



A small group meets with a seminarian at St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Florida, USA in 2015 -- during the seminary's annual retreat for young adults, attendees formed small groups led by seminarians, deacons, religious sisters and campus ministers.

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 YSCCs composed of the following specialized groups:

- Youth (Generation Y¹²⁸⁵ 18-22 year-olds)/Millennials
- Young Adults (Generation Y 23-35 year-olds)
- Engaged Couples
- Newly married Couples
- Married Couples with Little Children

¹²⁸⁵ 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.

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.¹²⁸⁶

As we read the “signs of the times,” new types of Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) emerge on college campuses. The Aquinas Institute, the Catholic Campus Ministry at Princeton University, New Jersey, USA has developed the Joan of Arc Ministry that is a welcoming and confidential space to openly discuss the intersections of Catholic faith, sexuality and gender identity. All are welcome!

A big question is: “After College What?”¹²⁸⁷ One solution is RENEW Theology on Tap that offers an innovative solution to one of today’s most pressing pastoral concerns: how to reach out to young Catholic adults.¹²⁸⁸ Young adults can sometimes be overlooked to the extent that even their absence goes unnoticed. RENEW Theology on Tap reaches young adults where they are, while inviting them to discover how faith can give sense to their everyday lives. It is a way for dioceses, parishes, alumni associations and young adult organizations to discover (or rediscover) these young adults in comfortable, relaxed settings.

There are four essential components for the most successful RENEW Theology on Tap program:

- building a strong core community
- invitation
- hospitality
- follow-up

Since its creation in the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1981, this program has proven to be a successful vehicle for reaching young adults interested in learning more about their faith, coming together to share community, and feeling welcomed and valued in the Catholic Church. In 2003, RENEW was entrusted to launch an initiative to bring Theology on Tap nationwide. To achieve that goal, we created an official registration process to license the RENEW Theology on Tap name to ensure quality of programming and a plethora of pastoral support.¹²⁸⁹

¹²⁸⁶ 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>

¹²⁸⁷ The more pertinent question is: “After Confirmation, What? Research in both Eastern Africa and USA found that after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation Catholic teenagers tend to disappear from Mass and Catholic Youth and Young Adults Groups. Irene Kessy, conversation with the author, Naivasha, Kenya, 29 April, 2018.

¹²⁸⁸ Another program is “Pizza Night With...” in which young Catholic adults informally meet with a Catholic Church leader or representative for dialog, discussion and discernment on a variety of topics and questions.

One challenge is that Theology on Tap does not become one way: that is, an adult speaker (like a bishop) “talks” to 30 or 50 or 75 youth adults in a bar or hall. Process is important. The young adults should be able to speak. The older people should listen. If during the session the young adults break out into small Faith-sharing communities, there can be more interaction and dialog.

Justice Café is a similar ministry.

6. YSCCs Activities in Eastern Africa

Pamela Ogoi writes:

I work in partnership with the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) Kisumu, Kenya Campus on training and building capacity of various people on Basic Counseling skills -- an initiative that will be picking up in the month of April, 2017. At the same time I had a discussion with the Vice Principal of the University Father Mvumbi about training leaders of Small Christian Communities, newly ordained priests in western Kenya and Catholic university students about SCCs. He was very happy about the whole issue and he thereby handed over this activity to be spearheaded by the University Chaplain Father George Omondi, a Consolata Missionary Priest who is based at CUEA Kisumu.¹²⁹⁰



¹²⁸⁹ See “What is RENEW Theology on Tap?”), RENEW International Website, retrieved on 10 June, 2017, <http://www.renewintl.org/renew/index.nsf/vPages/AboutToT?OpenDocument>

¹²⁹⁰ University and High School chaplains are key players in our SCCs Networking.

At Wamwangi Secondary School in Kenya we were invited to give a workshop about “*Jumuiya ya Vijana*” and to talk about and ignite the YSCCs. The students were very happy when we introduced to them a new name (*mwanajumuiya*). We explained to the students how to sit in circle in the *jumuiya* way when having a YSCC meeting and sharing the gospel. The Young Christian Students (YCS) apostolic group are about 200 students. They were very happy and promised to meet every Friday afternoon in their YSCCs. They all extended their gratitude to the Eastern African Small Christian Communities Training Team.

A model of a YSCCs Workshop at the parish level is our every six months formation sessions at the Consolata Shrine Community, Nairobi, Kenya coordinated by the Parish Apostolate Group. On Sunday, 28 May, 2017 we focused on starting a YSCC. Beginning with the many members of the Youth Group in the parish we invited 20 young people under 30 years old to the formation session. Then the nine most interested young adults formed a small community facilitated by Alloys Nyakundi. Now we want to do follow-up.

We also discussed with the adult members of the eight SCCs in the parish the growing importance of Children Small Christian Communities (CSCCs) commonly known as PMC SCCs.



Today 11 June 2017, I helped to start seven Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) at St. Teresa of Calcutta Secondary School in Machakos Diocese, Kenya. I showed the students how to sit in a *jumuiya* way (circle). This is a good start in AMECEA Region.

Brief report about Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) in St. Teresa of Calcutta Girls Secondary School, Makindu Parish, Machakos Diocese. There are seven YSCCs with a membership of 15 to 17 members each. They are St. Martin, St. Albanus, St. Michael, St. Teresa, St. Jude, St. Augustine and St. Dominic. All YSCCs meet every Sunday as from 2:50 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Update :

REPORT ON YOUTH SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN CALCUTTA GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL, MAKINDU PARISH, MACHAKOS DIOCESE

By Alloys Nyakundi

St. Teresa of Calcutta Girls' Secondary School, Makindu Parish, Machakos Diocese, Kenya has seven Youth Small Christian Communities in which the students are the main stakeholders followed by staff. It is also an example of school-based Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs). Our Chaplain is Father Mathew Yakan, who is an Apostles of Jesus priest.

The seven Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) are:

1. ST. MICHAEL
2. ST. PAUL
3. ST. MARTIN
4. ST. ANGELA
5. ST. AUGUSTINE
6. ST. TERESA
7. ST. JUDE

All the YSCCs meet weekly on Sunday afternoon as from 2:50 pm to 4:00 pm inside the school in various places e.g. dining hall and outside classes.

YSCC LEADERSHIP HIERARCHY

- 1: Coordinator
- 2: Vice Coordinator
- 3: Secretary

PROGRAM OF THE WEEKLY YSCCs

3:00 pm to 3:10 pm: Opening prayer and sharing of our past week experiences.

3:10 pm to 3:40 pm: Reading the gospel of the coming Sunday

3:40 pm to 4:00 pm: Topic of discussion and final prayers.

The topics and challenges that these teenage girls like to discuss are:

1. Sexuality.
2. Peer pressure.
3. Life after school.
4. Impact of social media on youth.
5. Unfaithfulness in many families.
6. Single families.

Today via Skype from New Jersey, USA I talked with members of St. Angela SCC in St. Teresa of Calcutta Girls Secondary School, Makindu Parish, Machakos Diocese, Kenya. If SCCs are a new model of church, then there is a SCC way of answering this questionnaire.

The SCC members discuss the questions together (*kijumuiya* in Swahili) and then answer the online questionnaire individually.

Today I got an opportunity to visit St. Martin, an outstation in Makindu Parish, Machakos Diocese. It was part of the follow up exercise on the YSCCs workshop that took place two months ago. I can confirm that YSCCs are picking up well, but the youth raised some concerns. One of the concerns they raised is that some of their parents do not go to *jumuiyas* and Sunday Mass. This discourages them since most of them said that their parents are their role models and they copy what their parents do. They have also started some projects which will increase the bond among the members and keep them together.



While the development of SCCs in Meru Diocese, Kenya are documented in Chapter Three, Pope Francis challenges us to listen closely to young people (youth and young adults) in and through our YSCCs. Here are some findings:

FINDINGS OF YSCC WORKSHOPS IN MERU DIOCESE, KENYA

- 1: Youth fear the adults.
- 2: They get bored in SCC meetings.
- 3: They don't know the meaning of prayers and the importance of SCCs.
- 4: Our adult behaviors as Christians discourage them.
- 5: Youth are not exposed to meeting many people and this makes them shy off.
- 6: They see the SCC to be for the adults.
- 7: In some of the SCCs women are the majority and this makes the youth not to be interested.
8. If there are no family prayers and religious activities in a family, then the youth don't see the importance of SCCs.

7. YSCCs in the Questionnaire/Survey of the Preparatory Document of the 2018 World Synod of Bishops

The Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops took place in Rome in October, 2018 on the theme: "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment." Many Catholic Church organizations and individuals are invited to send in answers to the questionnaire directly to the Synod Secretariat in Rome. It is important that Catholic Youth Organizations and YSCCs be directly involved in this process and get their voices heard.

The aim of the synod is to "accompany young people on their way of life towards maturity so that, through a process of discernment, they can discover their life project and realize it with joy, opening the encounter with God and with humans, and actively participating in the building up of the Church and society." The Church recognizes four vocations: married life, single life, religious life, and ordained life. This synod is in continuity with the findings of the two-fold synod on the family and Francis's post-synodal document *Amoris Laetitia*. The theme was chosen by the members on the Fourteenth Ordinary Council of the Synod of Bishops.

Some excerpts from the *Preparatory Document*:¹²⁹¹

In keeping with this mission and introducing a new approach through a Synod with the topic, "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment", the Church has decided to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, and to ask young people to help her in identifying the most effective ways to announce the Good News today. By listening to young people, the Church will once again hear the Lord speaking in today's world. As in the days of Samuel (cf. 1 *Samuel* 3:1-21) and Jeremiah (cf. *Jeremiah* 1:4-10), young people know how to discern the signs of our times, indicated by the Spirit. Listening to their aspirations, the Church can glimpse the world which lies ahead and the paths the Church is called to follow.

The consultation will also include all young people through a website with questions on their expectations and their lives. The answers to both series of questions will be the basis for drafting the "work-document" or *Instrumentum Laboris*, which will be the reference point in the discussion of the synod fathers.

"The Digital World:" Because of all that has been previously mentioned, the world of the new media deserves special attention, since, especially in the case of younger generations, it really occupies a major place in their lives. The new media offer many new opportunities, especially with regard to access to information and creating relations with those in distant places. However, they also pose risks (such as cyber-bullying, gambling, pornography, hidden dangers in chat rooms, ideological manipulation, etc.).

¹²⁹¹ *Preparatory Document* for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly. *Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2017. Vatican Website.

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2017/01/13/0021/00050.html#EN>

Despite the differences in this field among various regions, the Christian community is still developing her presence in this new Areopagus, where young people certainly have something to teach her...

Finally and most importantly, no discernment is possible without cultivating a familiarity with the Lord and a dialog with his Word. In particular, *Lectio Divina* is a valuable method, which Church tradition has always followed...

Specific Questions According to Geographic Areas:

AFRICA:

1. What plans and structures in pastoral vocational care for young people best respond to the needs of your continent?
2. What does “spiritual fatherhood” mean in places where a person grows without a father figure? What formation is offered?
3. How do you communicate to young people that they are needed to build the future of the Church?

In a separate letter released with the *Preparatory Document*, Pope Francis aimed to directly address the youth and young adults of the Global Church, saying that he wants them "to be the center of attention" for the entire process "because you are in my heart." He adds: "The Catholic Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith; even your doubts and your criticism. Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls."¹²⁹²

In another message Pope Francis emphasized that in this broad consultation he wants to reach out to all young people – not just committed Catholic young people (the “World Youth Day young Catholics,” the young Catholics “in the choir”/” the young Catholics in the pews,” so to speak). He wants to reach to young people who have drifted away from the Catholic Church, those who don’t go to mass any more or very irregularly, to agnostics, to atheists.

Then finally on 17 June, 2017 we posted this message on our SCCs Facebook Page:

“Let us hope that many YSCCs members vote in this online poll: The Synod Survey for Youth is finally out.

To involve young people in preparations for the Synod of Bishops on youth in 2018, the Vatican has released an online questionnaire to better

¹²⁹² Francis, “Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to Young People on the Occasion of the Presentation of the Preparatory Document,” *Preparatory Document* for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly. *Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2017, p. 6. Vatican Website.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2017/01/13/0021/00050.html#EN>

understand the lives, attitudes, and concerns of 16 to 29-year-olds around the world. The questionnaire — available in English, Spanish, French, and Italian — can be found on the synod's official website:

youth.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/it.html and is open to any young person, regardless of faith or religious belief.

The general secretariat of the synod launched the website 14 June 2017 to share information about the October, 2018 synod on "Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment" and to link to an online, anonymous survey asking young people about their lives and expectations.

Question: In our SCCs and YSCCs are we encouraging youth and young people to answer the online questionnaire for the October, 2018 World Synod of Bishops in Rome?¹²⁹³ Here in the USA my 17-year-old grandniece answered the questions and was struck by the wide range and variety of answers that could come from the 16-29 year-old audience: from teenagers to married young adults with children.

One learning for me here in the USA: One mistake is to mix up "youth" programs with "young adults" programs without recognizing the huge differences between them. College students say that the word "youth" refers to teenagers. One suggestion: In our Catholic parishes have a young adults "meet and greet" to get ideas for the programs they want — and then implement them.

Another learning: When asked what young people want from the Catholic Church, college students said that their generation desires a safe place to go to truly ask questions and feel validated in their concerns. This is why we are promoting small Faith-sharing communities for young people that are also called student small Faith-sharing communities.

Reports from around the world including England and France indicate that many committed Catholic young people have answered the survey, but relatively few who have drifted away from the institutional church. The survey was designed to be open to all young people irrespective of religion or geographic origin.

The survey closed on 31 December, 2017. The Synod's secretary general, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, revealed some interesting statistics:

There were about 221,000 participants in the Questionnaire. Of these, 100,500 answered all the questions: 58,000 girls and 42,500 boys. Almost 51,000 participants, corresponding to 50.6% of completed questionnaires, are young people between 16 and 19 years of age, demonstrating that the youngest have proved to be more sensitive to the initiative. The most represented continent is Europe, with 56.4%, followed by Central and Southern America with 19.8% and Africa with 18.1%. Among the participants who completed the Questionnaire, 73.9% declare themselves to be Catholics who consider religion important, while the remaining are Catholics who do not consider religion important (8.8%), non-Catholics who consider religion important

¹²⁹³ As an experiment I answered the questionnaire based on interviews with young people in Nairobi. I pretended that I was a "composite" 22-year-old Kenyan man who had just graduated from Kenyatta University. I did not have a steady full-time job, but several part time jobs in the Nairobi area. I was living with my girlfriend Virginia, but we were not married yet.

(6.1%) and non-Catholics who do not consider religion to be important (11.1%).¹²⁹⁴

However, some 3,000 respondents left their email addresses and said they wished to be kept informed of the survey's outcome.¹²⁹⁵

Given a global Catholic population of roughly 1.2 billion, a strong share of that total made of youth, especially in the Global South, the results were lower than many anticipated. The figures were also quite low for a worldwide survey, particularly if compared to the 2.5 million people who participated in the World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland during the summer, 2016.

Baldisseri noted various criticisms of the survey. For example, some respondents felt the questionnaire was too long, while others felt a number of important issues were hardly addressed or not tackled at all. These include problems linked to alcohol, drug and medicine consumption; sexuality and relationship issues; or even links with other religions.

Individual countries have had their own surveys. Three thousand 16 to 29-year olds replied to a questionnaire sent out by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The executive summary states that

the responses reveal two distinct groups: "a small but vocal group who want to draw the church back into an era that they have been told was far better than it is today and a much larger, though less evident group, who adhere to the predominant narratives within society, wanting the Church to follow suit. The first group asks for clarity, the second for authenticity." Young people, concludes the summary, are asking the Church in England and Wales for a "monumental change of attitude, orientation and practice... the young people were keen to bring a greater outward focus to the church and were concerned for the plight of the marginalised...the most popular events for young people don't take place in parishes."¹²⁹⁶

Twenty people under the age of 35, along with 70 theologians, priests and academics met 11-15 September, 2017 as part of the preparatory process for the 2018 Synod of Bishops. One report stated:

Several young people who attending the seminar urged the Vatican and the bishops themselves to be open to listening to youth talk and ask questions about love, sex and sexuality. A "big gap" exists between the concerns young people want to talk about and the issues most bishops are comfortable discussing, said Therese Hargot, who describes herself as a philosopher and sexologist.

¹²⁹⁴ Lorenzo Baldisseri,

¹²⁹⁵ These figures were reported in the 25 October, 2017 edition of the Vatican's daily newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

¹²⁹⁶ Bernadette Kehoe, "Young People Express Their Alienation from the Church," *The Tablet*, Volume 271, No. 9227 (25 November, 2107), *The Tablet Website*, retrieved 23 November, 2017, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/25117issue.pdf>

Baldisseri, secretary-general of the Synod of Bishops, said he wanted to hear from young adults and experts about the challenges young people are facing in the church and society. The cardinal's office planned a dozen long, formal talks on subjects including "the search for identity," political commitment, planning for the future, technology and transcendence. But Hargot, who leads sex education programs at Catholic schools in Paris, told the gathering, "it's surprising we are looking at politics, economics, etc., but not at sexuality and affectivity, which are very important topics for young people. Young people want to talk about sexuality and love, They love learning about the theology of the body, a term referring to St. John Paul II's approach to sex and sexuality. I don't know why no one here is speaking about love. It's amazing."

Ashleigh Green, an Australian delegate to the seminar, said that going around Australia in preparation for the synod she found that "a lot of young people feel like they cannot talk about issues that matter to them" in most church settings. It's important to open up and talk about sex, sexuality and sexual orientation. And it's central to vocation."¹²⁹⁷

American Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington DC wrote:

One of the most important elements of the preparation for this gathering was the call for listening sessions with young people throughout the world. "By listening to young people, the Church will once again hear the Lord speaking in today's world," explains the [Preparatory Document](#) for the Synod. "As in the days of Samuel (cf. 1 *Samuel* 3:1-21) and Jeremiah (cf. Jeremiah 1:4-10), young people know how to discern the signs of our times, indicated by the Spirit. Listening to their aspirations, the Church can glimpse the world which lies ahead and the paths the Church is called to follow."

In Washington Archdiocese, this took the form of listening sessions and an online survey. With this stage now completed, I want to express my gratitude for the more than 1,500 responses that were received in 40 parish listening sessions, with hundreds of young adults also participating online. The responses show some common areas of concern among young people.

1. Many young adults feel the pressures of a secularized world, particularly in the area of human sexuality, and a lack of community and authentic friendships in their lives.
2. Many young adults also feel the pressures of heavy debts and managing finances.

¹²⁹⁷ Cindy Wooden, "Don't Be Embarrassed to Talk About Sex, Youths Tell Vatican Officials," *Catholic News Service* (CNS), 13 September 2017. Reprinted on NCR Website and CANAA Website, retrieved on 14 September, 2107, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/dont-be-embarrassed-talk-about-sex-youths-tell-vatican-officials>

3. When asked to talk about where they find meaning in their lives, both Catholic and non-Catholics spoke of the importance of service experiences.

4. Among young people who make the Catholic Church a part of their life, they value the invitation and initiation into the experience of personal prayer and those adults who seem “authentic,” and also the opportunity they have for spiritual direction and help with discernment.¹²⁹⁸

Comments and feedback are slowly coming in on our "Listening Session"¹²⁹⁹ with college students at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, USA on 17 September, 2017. We are waiting for the students themselves to prepare a report/commentary, but for the moment:

1. There is a real disconnect. Through Campus Ministry and other activities a number of students find community at Georgetown, but then after graduation find nothing in their home parishes. So they leave the university and end up in a place where there is no community of other young people with similar concerns within the Catholic Church.

2. The strength of Catholic Social Teaching is undermined for young people by the Catholic Church’s intransigence on the issues of women and LGBTQ.

3. Many college students are more conservative and simply not concerned about justice issues in the Catholic Church.

4. Many ask whether the official Catholic Church (that is, the Vatican and the bishops) really wants to listen to the concerns of young people such as the areas of sexuality, affectivity and personal relationships.

5. For many young people the “Institutional Church” is not welcoming and nourishing.

6. Following the one hour listening session three Georgetown students (one woman, two men) participated in a fruitful 40-minute Zoom video conference call with young people from Mexico and India. The students related to one another and recognized common themes in their respective concerns about the strengths and weaknesses of the Catholic Church.

A survey of more than 4,000 Catholic campus ministers and students at U.S. colleges in 2017, commissioned by the U.S. Bishops’ Secretariat of Catholic Education, showed that both the ministers and the students generally like what’s happening in their campus ministry setting. Campus ministers reported that among personal activities, *Bible* study and reconciliation stand apart from other activities as contributing to students’ growth in faith. Mass, retreats, small groups [SCCs] and one-on-one mentoring are more significant than social events, catechesis and sacramental preparation, and men’s and women’s groups.

¹²⁹⁸ “A Listening Church and Helping Young People in Vocational Discernment,” -- A Blog by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, 10 June, 2017, retrieved on 20 September, 2017, <http://cardinalsblog.adw.org/2017/06/listening-church-helping-young-people-vocational-discernment>

¹²⁹⁹ After a lot of experience we feel the more accurate word is “listening circle” – where the small community sits in a circle and takes turns sharing experiences and views.

A majority of students do service or charitable work on at least a quarterly basis. Close to 40 percent are involved on a monthly basis in leadership development. Nearly half are involved weekly with social events or small groups [SCCs].

Students reported personal struggles over three broad categories. In the area of self-orientation, they included self-worth, mental health, lack of purpose, gender identity, divorce and blended families, and how to pray. In terms of social and moral issues, they reported living faithfully in “a hookup culture” and weighed in on such issues as pornography, abortion, racial and LGBTQ discrimination, sexual assault and the role of women in the church.

Pornography and mental health were the two areas where students said they were more likely to struggle a great deal. While a lower percentage of students mentioned porn, the overall percentage of those who said they struggled a great deal with it was 27 percent, highest of any issue. Male students struggle more with porn, while women struggle more in the broad categories of faith beliefs and self-orientation.¹³⁰⁰

It was nice to visit St. Dominic YSCC at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya yesterday. The YSCC members wore their orange shirts and coordinated the lively Farewell Mass say good bye to the Chaplain Father Lance Nadeau, MM. Collins Ongoma is a very active and effective leader with a good leadership team. Continuity is so important. That is why having new effective leaders of the YSCCs at KU is crucial. Also praise to Xanchez Brialawry for continuing to post the Daily Scripture Readings to the St. Dominic YSCC (Kenyatta University Catholic Community) Facebook Page.”

Slowly more and more people are realizing that young people/youth/young adults need their own small communities separate from the Adult SCCs. Nigerian layman Linus Unah writes:

But the Catholic Church is working hard to tend to young members. Father Ernest Makata pointed to the creation of what are known as known as Small Christian Communities, a movement encouraged by St. Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Africa*, his 1995 post-synodal exhortation on evangelization on the continent. The document states that these communities “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.”

Today, a SCC is usually a small, inclusive community that comprises anywhere from eight to over 40 parishioners who gather weekly in homes or on church grounds to discuss the Sunday readings, to help each other to make connections between everyday life and faith, and to reach out to brothers and sisters who are most in need. The hope among church leaders is that these

¹³⁰⁰ Summarized from Mark Pattison, “Porn, Mental Health are Top Challenges Faced by Collegians,” Catholic News Service, 10 November, 2017, Catholic Philly Website, retrieved on 12 November, 2017, <http://catholicphilly.com/2017/11/news/national-news/porn-mental-health-are-top-challenges-faced-by-collegians>

ecclesial units will provide new avenues for lay Catholics to explore spirituality, encounter Scripture and share their faith, even in the absence of a priest.

But many young Catholics do not belong to these units, Father Makata said. “Unfortunately, they are not effective because [young] people feel it is where fathers and mothers gather to discuss.”¹³⁰¹



A one hour “Listening Session” with 13 college students (six men, seven women)¹³⁰² took place at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA on 30 November, 2017.

¹³⁰¹ Linus Unah, “Young Nigerians Are Connecting with Pentecostal Churches. Will They Return to Catholicism?” *America Magazine*, 16 November, 2017, retrieved on 3 January, 2018, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/11/16/young-nigerians-are-connecting-pentecostal-churches-will-they-return-catholicism>

¹³⁰² It is noteworthy that five of these students belong to Christian Life Communities (CLCs) on campus.



In conjunction with the Listening Session, there was a fruitful 40-minute Zoom Video Conference Call with young people from India, Kenya and Pakistan.

The 2018 African Proverbs Calendar on the theme “Youth/Young People” is now posted on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website at:
<http://www.afriprov.org/images/afriprov/calendar/2018/2018cal-final-pub.pdf>

Design by African Proverbs Working Group (APWG):

Elias Bushiri Elie
Cephas Agbemenu
Charles Gikera
Joseph G. Healey

The calendar highlights the importance of young people in Africa as we prepare for the World Synod of Bishops on “Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment” in Rome in October, 2018. The monthly African proverbs and sayings related to young people come from 13 African countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Free download at: <http://www.afriprov.org>

Healthy exchange on the SCCs Website:

We hope that this SCCs Facebook Page can be a forum for conversation, discussion, exchange and sharing, that is, we want and need your comments, posts, messages. Just clicking “Like” is really not enough.

During a discussion at Tangaza University College in Nairobi it was pointed out that our Eastern Africa name/term/expression -- “Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs)” – may be hard for folks in Europe and North American to understand. Also there was a debate on whether the term “small groups” is useful – it can refer to some many different kinds of gatherings. We brainstormed on these names/terms/expressions:

1. Small Bible Study Group for Young People.
2. Young People Peer Group Small Faith-sharing Community (one of the five choices in our online Poll for January--February, 2018 at: <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>).
3. Bible Study Group for young adults in parishes.
4. Small Faith-sharing Community of Young People.

Please give your feedback/comments. Which name do you like? Is there a better name?
Thanks.

Feedback/comments:

1. Collins Ongoma: “I can go for option No. 4 -- Small Faith-sharing Community for Young People. It gives an elaboration of what the group entails.”

2. Frans Wijzen: Basic Human Communities for Young People. In the European (most secular) and Asian (most non-Christian, except Philippines) I would prefer “Basic Human Communities” (used by some theologians in the FABC context). Instead of adding “Christian” and/or “biblical” some speak about “inter-textual” (reading *Bible* (OT & NT) and Koran together) or inter-faith.”

3. Joe Healey: “On USA college campuses when Christian students and Muslim students share together, the name used is “Small Human Communities for Young People”/“Basic Human Communities for Young People”/“Student Small Human Communities.” NOTE from Frans Wijzen: examples from Indonesia: instead of adding

“Christian” and/or “Biblical” some speak about “inter-textual” (reading the *Bible* (OT & NT) and Koran together) or “inter-faith.”

Let us reflect on:

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.’”

that is very similar to

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.’”

When Ukweli Video in Nairobi, Kenya produced a DVD in 2004 on my 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 to Rulenge to Irimba 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 that are not geographical but situational. I used this passage in my homily at my 50th 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, Instagram, Skype, YouTube 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.

Another contemporary interpretation of “the other towns and places” is in terms of classes or groupings of people. Today’s Gospel calls us to reach out to young people and to listen to them. We want to reach out especially to you young people between the ages of 16 and 29. We encourage you to be missionary disciples to reach out to other young people who are not here today, who may not be going to a Catholic Church on Sundays, who may be searching for meaning and purpose in life.

One variety of YSCCs is the Aquinas Spring Small Groups at the Aquinas Institute that is the Catholic Chaplaincy at Princeton University, New Jersey, USA. Here is the Email Message:

“Sign Up for Aquinas Spring Small Groups! We are praying your spring semesters have started well. *Lectio Divina* is a Benedictine practice of reading, meditation, and prayer over Scripture. The Aquinas Institute began *Lectio Divina* small groups last semester and will continue throughout the spring. If you have never done *Lectio Divina*, we encourage you to try it out. It is a beautiful way to spend intimate time in the Word of God and grow in faith as a community.”

After our 8 February, 2018 SCCs Class at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya we had an interesting discussion about Pope Francis's challenge to young people to have a "Smartphone Fast" during Lent, 2018, for example, not to use your smartphone during

the 24-hour periods of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On our SCCs Facebook Page we asked: “What do you think? Please respond.” Here are some comments:

1. “I second this suggestion since its important day for prayer. We should disconnect ourselves with our surroundings and connect our souls to God.”
2. “The pope's message focuses on discipline, an evitable concept in one's life, religion included.”
3. “Smartphones have become a 'heartbeat' to many of us. If we can honestly 'smartphone fast' during Lent then we'd have conquered phone addiction to some extent. We also have to be creative in coming up with other new activities and engagements, both spiritual and social, that will help in managing our normal smartphone time. I have personally accepted this [#SmartphoneFasting](#) challenge.”
4. “I'll take the challenge though I know it's not easy.”
5. “What if I have an emergency?”
6. “Young people do spend a lot of money on bundles daily. If we embrace the idea, I think we can make a difference to our brothers and sisters in need and that could be a good reason for a great purpose. I'm in for this idea.”
7. “I will try starting with Ash Wednesday. Knowing that other SCC members are doing the same thing is a great small community support.”
8. “I am fully supporting this great idea! Now, I have to convince my five children!”
9. “Karibu sana” (Swahili for “You are very welcome”).
10. “I think it is a wonderful idea and hope to do it. It seems that checking that the phone all the time has become an addiction for some.”
11. “Sounds good, but I'm not young!”
12. Bishop John Oballa, the Bishop of Ngong Diocese, Kenya in a talk on “Five Guidelines to Successful Life Discernment for Young People Ahead of October, 2018 Bishop's Synod said: “If you want to cultivate this listening to God, learn something about self-denial and not only during Lent. First, you will not die, it is good for your spiritual life. We become more attentive when we are just a little hungry; deny yourselves, abstain. I am proposing another very concrete way of abstinence” choose to keep away from your smartphone, one day in a week. The phone has become a new drug; it is an addiction. Put it away. Just say that this one day that I am not going to make any calls or receive any calls. It is possible. Start with an hour, go to two, go to six hours, then go to 12 and you will find that it is a very easy exercise that enables you to listen to yourself and to listen to God.”¹³⁰³
13. “Hongera” (Swahili for “congratulations”).
14. “I'm with you but the next generation -- Graham and Margaret -- aren't.”
15. “Food for thought. We all understand that fasting should not be about just denying ourselves, but also sharing with our fellow humans what we gain or save from the fasting. You may want to have a look at what I say in today's *Saturday Nation* about the "oracy" and "inoracy" in our society. The time we save from the "smartphone fast" could be gainfully spent on talking to one another face-to-face, for a change. Best wishes for a fruitful Lent.”
16. “This is a good idea and I will give it a trial. Though most of our youth are addicted to their smartphones we will try to get their feedback.”
17. “I think it's a good idea, although my 16-year-old may not agree!”
18. “The money that we save in not buying bundles we can give to the poor.”

¹³⁰³ John Oballa, “Five Guidelines to Successful Life Discernment for Young People Ahead of October Bishop's Synod,” *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 221, 9 February, 2018, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 11 February, 2018, <https://amecea.blogspot.co.ke/2018/02/kenya-five-guidelines-to-successful.html>

19. “As we start Lent today, we are called upon to sacrifice what we love most (i.e, minimize the use of smartphones) and be our brothers and sisters’ keepers.”

Pope Francis invited Christian and non-Christian young people from around the world to a Pre-synod Meeting in preparation for the actual Synod of Bishops on Young People in October, 2018. He said the March, 2018 meeting in Rome will be an opportunity for the church to listen to the hopes and concerns of young men and women. “Through this journey, the church wants to listen to the voices, the sensibilities, the faith as well as the doubts and criticisms of young people. We must listen to young people.”¹³⁰⁴

So from 19 to 24 March 2018 the Holy Father met more than 300 young people from different continents in person in order to deliberate and come up with a document to be presented to the Synod of Bishops in October, 2018 on the theme “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.” Thousands of others joined on Facebook.

The Pre-synod team inaugurated its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages in multiple languages, where youth wanting to be a part of the conversation have a chance to be heard by using the official #Synod2018. To date, the Synod’s Twitter page has about 2,500 followers, more than 4,000 likes and follows on Facebook and a little over 1,200 followers on Instagram.

Kenyan college student Collins Ongoma states:

I followed the Pre-Synodal Meeting in Rome keenly through social media from 19 to 24 March 2018 and I can affirm that when young people are given a chance to speak their minds and be assured that their voices will be heard for real, they will open-up and raise issues of importance. Even though not everyone’s individual view was considered, the compilation committee produced an excellent document called “Final Document from the Pre-Synodal Meeting:”

<http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/news/final-document-from-the-pre-synodal-meeting.html>

The document summarizes the views from answers to the “Online Questionnaire,” feedback from Facebook (roughly 15,000 young people participated online) and a report on the meeting with the pope. At first I was disappointed that the voices of young people from Kenya were not directly heard in Rome since our delegate was not present because his travelling documents got mixed up, but when I listened and read the views from young people either present in the meeting or those who shared their views through social media, I felt happy because we share common worries and problems, which if addressed, bring hope for a better church tomorrow.

¹³⁰⁴ Francis in Junno Arocho Esteves, “Pope Announces Pre-Synod Meeting To Listen To Youths’ Hopes, Doubts,” *Crux*, 4 October, 2017, *Crux* Website, retrieved on 30 November, 2017, <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2017/10/04/pope-announces-pre-synod-meeting-listen-youths-hopes-doubts>

Ongoma later commented on his personal reflections on the topic “Catholic Church” on the Synod Facebook Page during the actual Pre-Synod Meeting:

We in Kenya hope that young people develop the culture of praying together because it helps them bond in a special way. I highly recommend that young people join Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) that are Small Faith-sharing Groups (<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>). Through such platforms they are able to have *Bible* Sharing that focuses on the coming Sunday’s Gospel and relates it to their day to day activities. These small communities also create a conducive environment where they can share common topics that pose challenges to them and seek their fellow peer support. If young people are denied a chance to interact in the church, they will find pleasure elsewhere.

Sharing my personal experience since I joined a Youth Small Christian Community (YSCC) on the campus of Kenyatta University in Nairobi has made me feel at home away from home. Through the YSCCs college students have learned to be one another’s keeper and also developed the spirit of self-denial in order to extend their hands to share the little they have with the needy in society. For example, during the just concluded 2018 Lenten period we agreed to have “phone fasting” in order to save some cash meant for internet bundles and calls. We used the money for gifts for a Children’s Home that turned out to be very successful.

We often use the proverb "we create the path by walking" in developing new expressions of this SCCs Model of Church. The Catholic young people in Dandora Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese are now distinguishing between:

1. Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) – ages 18 to 26.
2. Young Adult Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) – ages 27 up.

Kenyan diocesan priest Father Bonaventure Luchidio, the Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in Kenya is to promote Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) at all levels starting with PMC:

1. Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC): 0-13 years old (up to Class 8 pupils)
2. Junior Youth: 14-17 years old (Secondary School): Missionary Youth Movement (MYM)
3. Senior Youth: 18-23 years old (University and other choices): Called different names in different dioceses in Kenya: Youth Serving Christ (YSC); Youth Christian Workers, Youth of Light.
4. Young Adults Catholic Association (YACA): 24-40 years old

This includes promoting Online or Virtual SCCs using Skype, Zoom, What’sApp and other social media platforms.

On the SCCs Facebook Page Ongoma started an interest discussion and dialog by asking: “After College What? There are so many young people who are very active in SCCs while in the university or college, but what happens to them after their studies and how can we get them involved in the parish and other activities of the Catholic Church, etc.?” Here are some comments on our SCCs Facebook Page:

1. “This is a crucial question that needs more research. Where are the thousands of Catholic graduates of the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University? How are they involved in their parishes and apostolic organizations?”

2.”The young adult leaders of the various types of SCCs at Dandora Parish, Nairobi Archdiocese noticed that college graduates and others in their late 20s felt left out of the Dandora Parish Young People Plan so Young Adult Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) have started. We often use the proverb "we create the path by walking" in developing new expressions of this SCCs Model of Church. The Catholic young people in Dandora are now distinguishing between:

- a. Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) – ages 18 to 26.
- b. Young Adult Small Christian Communities (YASCCs) – ages 27 up.

3. Kenyan diocesan priest Father Charles Kyallo, the chaplain at CUEA, states:

The situation changes for many of these young people once they leave campus life adding that the majority of them only remain passive participants in liturgical celebrations as they rarely find a suitable spiritual group to belong once they go back to their home parishes. Either they often feel too old to be in the parish youth groups or Young Christian Students (YCS) movements which often comprise high school students; at the same time, they feel too young to fit in the Small Christian Communities where their fathers and mothers belong or in the Catholic Women Association or Catholic Men Associations for that matter, because their spiritual and social needs and those of their parents are totally different.

My interaction with young people who have graduated from colleges and are back in the communities has made me realise that there is usually a big gap in matters spiritual as far as the lives of these young people are concerned. Often times these young people have a lot going on in their lives: chasing careers, trying to establish families as well as investments for a secured future; it is usually at this stage that many of them fall out from the church. It is important to establish a spiritual support group and a forum for them to continue with spiritual formation and accompaniment based on their specific needs.

It is a good thing that almost all AMECEA Countries have a Catholic University, meaning that the students from such institutions are receiving strong spiritual formation which is crucial in their integral human development. Therefore there is a great need to continue nourishing their faith. Spiritually accompanying these young people when they get out of campus is very crucial.

8. YPSCCs in the Working Document/Instrumentum Laboris of the 2018 World Synod of Bishops

The Vatican published the *Working Document (Instrumentum Laboris)* for the 3-28 October, 2018 XVth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of

Bishops, on the theme “Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment,” on 19 June, 2018 with the Vatican’s official English translation, along with the other languages, a few days later.

*Working Document*¹³⁰⁵ for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly. *Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2018. Vatican Website.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20180508_instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html

The text takes up the themes in a “functional” way for the unfolding of the synod: “Recognizing” (five chapters), “Interpreting” (four chapters for four “reading keys”), “Choosing” (four chapters) “to help the Synod Fathers to take a stand on the directions and decisions to be taken.”

The specific names or terms “Small Christian Communities” and “Basic Ecclesial communities” are not in the *Working Document*, but similar names are used as follows:

16 times: Christian Communities
 7 times: Christian Community
 4 times: Ecclesial Community
 3 times: Ecclesial Communities
 2 times: Ecclesial Group/Groups
 1 time: Peer Groups
 1 time: Learning Communities

Commentators explain that the meaning of “Small Christian Communities” is contained within the meaning of “Ecclesial Communities.”¹³⁰⁶

Some special texts:

No. 106: “The Request for Discernment:” “Many young people do not know how to intentionally go about the process of discernment; this is an opportunity for the church to accompany them” (PM 9). Pope Francis realized it too: “We must say, on this point, that many ecclesial communities do not know how to do this or they lack the capacity for discernment. It is one of the problems we have, but we should not feel scared.” **NOTE:** “This is an opening for SCCs to be a vehicle for discernment skills.

¹³⁰⁵ The Vatican is still slow to “get it.” Young people have pleaded with Vatican officials to use English (or other vernacular languages) rather than Latin. Good news: The *Lineamenta* came as the *Preparatory Document*. Bad news: we are going backwards again with Latin (*Instrumentum Laboris*) used rather than English (*Working Document*) in the official document from Rome. The Daughters of St. Paul wisely shifted to English in their local publication.

It is ironic that in an African continental meeting on SCCs we went back to *Instrumentum Laboris* (known to the French speakers) rather than the English.

¹³⁰⁶ As a parallel example, DRC diocesan priest Father Edouard Mombili, the Assistant Secretary General of SECAM, said that in its “2018-2019 SECAM 50th Jubilee Calendar” the term “Jubilee Around Ecclesial Communities” refers to “Small Christian Communities” and “Basic Ecclesial Communities.” Conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 16 September, 2018.

No. 165: “Peer Accompaniment:” “It is important to recognize peer groups as instruments of emancipation from family contexts, for identity consolidation and for the development of relational skills... the success of peer education initiatives and the ‘learning communities’ they give rise to. In particular, they are useful when they relate to issues on which the words of adults could sound more distant and less credible (sexuality, addiction prevention, etc.) and, therefore, less effective in bringing about behavioral changes.”

No. 185: “At the School of the Word of God:” “The pastoral experiences with the greatest evangelizing and educational impact, presented by many BC, put at the center interaction with the power of the Word of God, in relation to vocational discernment: *Lectio divina*, schools of the Word, biblical catecheses, insight into the lives of the young people found in the *Bible*, using digital instruments to facilitate access to the Word of God: these are all successful practices with the young.”

No. 203: “Associations and Movements:” “Many young people live and rediscover their faith through their determined and active membership in movements and associations that provide them with an intense fraternal life, challenging journeys of spirituality, experiences of service, adequate space for accompaniment and competent people for discernment... Their communal style and spirit of prayer, the enhancement of the Word of God and the service to the poorest, their joyful membership and the re-evaluation of the bodily and emotional spheres, their active involvement and the push towards protagonism.”

9. Learnings from God’s Quad Book Events

The presentations and discussion during a series of **Book Events God’s Quad** emphasized the importance of

10. XVth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops from 3-28 October, 2018

Before the meeting itself, the 11 Bishop Delegates of the AMECEA countries prepared “Draft Interventions.” This material can be used as an actual spoken intervention on the synod floor, handed in as a written intervention, part of the contributions to the Small Working Groups and part of interviews.

Draft Interventions from Five of the 11 Bishop Delegates of the AMECEA countries for the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment”

1. Tarsizio Ziyaye (Archbishop of Lilongwe, Malawi): “I am speaking on behalf of the Malawi Episcopal Conference and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA). “In reference to No. 146 on “Accompaniment in Schools and Universities” we would like to emphasise the following from our experience in Malawi and the AMECEA Region:

We appeal for generous and competent chaplains to exercise this special ministry for a privileged section of our young people. It would be a bonus if this kind of pastoral accompaniment were also available for students in secondary schools. As a region, we request that conferences develop sound age-appropriate programmes, and commit to the training and appointment of chaplains. Within the chaplaincies, we appreciate the contribution of youth ministries such as the International Movement of Catholic Students, Young Christian Students, Small Christian Communities, Legion of Mary, and the Pontifical Missionary Society.”

2.Valentine Kalumba (Bishop of Livingstone, Zambia): “I am speaking on behalf of the Zambia Episcopal Conference and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA). In reference to Numbers 11, 16 to 19, and 127 on “The Role of Families, Life Choices” and a “Family, Formative and Social Accompaniment” we would like to emphasise the following from our experience in Zambia and the AMECEA Region:

We believe that the families are the first educators for our young people, and the role of the family cannot be substituted. In alliance with families, the church as a “family of families” is well placed to be more actively involved in accompanying young people as they make their transition into adulthood, and before, during and after their marriages. In this context, we reaffirm the importance of marriage and family catechesis as emphasised by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, *Amoris Laetitia*, No. 287.

The roles of peer support groups such as Engaged Encounter, Pre-Cana, Couples for Christ, Marriage Encounter, Christian Family Movement, and the Marriage Ministry in Small Christian Communities are to be emphasised here. We re-emphasise the importance of family, and appeal for the value and meaning of Christian marriage and family to be upheld in the face of many threats.”

3.Roberto Bergamaski (Bishop of Awasa [Hawassa], Ethiopia): “I am speaking on behalf of the Ethiopian Episcopal Conference and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA). In reference to Number 199 on “Young People as Protagonists,” we would like to emphasise the following from our experience in Ethiopia and the AMECEA Region.

In recent years, young people have always been delegates to the AMECEA plenary sessions, and they are given a platform to express their concerns and hopes for the Local Church. In our schools and universities we provide learning environments that prepare them to be protagonists in their societies. These institutions are invariably recognised to be of a high quality at national level. Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) prepare them to take leadership in church and society. The Salesian Youth Movement aims to give young people leadership roles among other young people.”

4.Cardinal John Njue (Archbishop of Nairobi, Kenya): “I speak on behalf of the Kenyan Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA). I wish to address a topic that is not covered in the

Instrumentum Laboris, but which is nevertheless a dimension of the experience of the young people of Kenya and the AMECEA Region. This concern was raised at the Consultative Pre-Synod Meeting with the Young People of the AMECEA Region held in Lusaka (Zambia) in August 2018. We recognise the presence of fundamentalist religious tendencies within our societies on the continent. These are found in non-Christian religions, as well as among Christian denominations.

At the consultative pre-synod meeting our young people appealed for chaplains and young people pastoral leaders who can deepen in them an age-appropriate understanding of their own Christian faith.

As experienced in youth ministry in some of the AMECEA countries like Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda young people are divided into three groups: Missionary Youth Movement (MYM) – teenagers, mostly high schoolers; Youth Serving Christ (YSC) or Young Christian Students (YCS) – young people aged 18-26 years; and Young Adults Catholic Association (YACA) or Young Christian Workers (YCW) – the final pastoral structure dedicated to young people aged 27-35 years. The main reason for these youth pastoral groups is indicated in the proceedings of the “Young People Symposium” held at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya in February, 2017 that emphasized the need to address each age group of young people by offering ongoing catechesis that makes each group feel comfortable and able to share similar experiences. This helps to create ongoing conscious awareness and increased levels of responsibility, maturity and social involvement in each age group of young people. Forming specific peer group Small Christian Communities in each age group is a priority.

5. Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel CM (Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia): “I speak on behalf of the Ethiopian Episcopal Conference and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA). In reference to Numbers 147-150 on the theme “Integral and Holistic Formation in Catholic Schools and Universities” we would like to emphasize the following from our experience in Ethiopia and the AMECEA Region.

In creating spaces for real research and debate we can use familiar methods and processes of analysis, evaluation and practical action such as the “See, Judge and Act Method” and the Pastoral Circle. The moral, spiritual and religious dimensions can be part of peer group Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) and Young Adult Small Christian Communities such as the Young Professional Small Christian Communities. Here they can share their faith and their spiritual journey in a safe and supportive space.

To get into the ongoing process of the synod certain documentation is helpful.

Reflections from the Four English-speaking Small Working Groups (Small Discussion Groups/Break-Out Groups)¹³⁰⁷ on Part I of the "Working Document" on "Young People:"

¹³⁰⁷ Those working groups technically are called *circoli minori*, or “small circles.”

1. Our communities must be sharing communities. Even material sharing, like in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Small Basic Communities are an opportunity for this mutual sharing of material and spiritual concerns.
2. Each major section of the "Apostolic Exhortation" should have some direct and open-ended questions that could help the youth in their reflections and could be used to promote personal sharing ideas in small groups. Also, at the end of each major section there might be a QR code (Bar Code) which takes young people to a special website which has a chatroom where the youth could meet and discuss the questions.
3. Christian communities can offer young people space to find meaning and purpose.
4. Friendship is yearned for by our young people. They find community through this and they find family in this way.

During the synod we posted many messages on our various Facebook Pages. Here are some examples:

- Emilie Callan is a Laywoman Auditor at the synod in Rome on "Young People." She is a producer for the Catholic television channel, Salt and Light, in her home country, Canada. She is an envoy of the Catholic movement, "Catholic Christian Outreach: Mission-Campus" at the University of Quebec. Inexhaustible when it comes to speaking about Christ, Callan describes connections made with students, Bible Study Groups that she runs with others, and on-campus evangelization.

She expects some "concrete action" from the Synod but also — and especially — a great boost of missionary enthusiasm. "Young people want to see the same fire in the bishops that they themselves have experienced." She is "rather regretful that the youth delegates at the Synod don't have voting rights and won't be part of the drafting committee of the final document."

Emilie will speak at 7 p.m., CDT on Friday, 2 November, 2018 at the University of Loyola New Orleans, Louisiana, USA at the Book Event -- "Listening to Young People Around the World: Report on the Synod and Book Release" of Ahern Kevin, and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), "God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond." Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. Available on Amazon as an Ebook and paperback, retrieved on 15 October, 2018,

https://www.amazon.com/Gods-Quad-Communities-Campus-.../.../refvvsr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1524187932&sr=1-2&keywords=God%E2%80%99s+Quad

The Book Event will be live streamed. Go to:

RSVP: <https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSfwlhWmWaug1N45yA.../viewform>

Check back for online log-in details

About this website

AMAZON.COM

[God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond](#)

Contributors from five continents offer case studies of best practices and practical tools for creating and maintaining Christian communities for young adults, both within and beyond

academic settings. Reports from groups in East Africa, Europe, and India complement U.S. case studies including

- Why the views of African Young People and the collective voice of Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) are important:

The Synod of Bishops is seeking to discern “the signs of the times” through “the eyes of young people” in order to “respond to the calls of the Holy Spirit at this historic change of epoch which humanity is living through,” Arturo Sosa, SJ, the superior general of the Jesuits, told a Vatican press briefing on 15 October. He identified three “signs of the times”: the universal process of secularization, the digital world and the multicultural face of the globalized world. When these are looked at from the perspective of young people, he said, the synod is able “to perceive the action of the Spirit.”

- A key challenge for the "Final Document" of the Synod of Bishops October, 2018 meeting in Rome is to provide concrete, practical, pastoral solutions and recommendations concerning young people. In light of the digital world, Archbishop Anthony Muheria of Nyeri Archdiocese, Kenya proposes a digital pastoral office, where the bishop is able to interact pastorally with the individuals. This includes a digital service where young people can actually reach the bishop via WhatsApp. From time to time, his office sends a message to all those who are on the service and then each of them can respond personally to the bishop through a direct line, not a public platform.

- One interesting comment on our new book *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond*: “After reading these interesting Case Studies of successful Campus Ministry Programs that involve say 2% of the Catholic students on campus, how do we reach the other 98%? While pondering this challenging question we salute 29-year-old Yadira Vieyra who is a lay auditor at the synod that is meeting from 3 to 28 October, 2018 in Rome to reflect on the theme “Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment.” She is a graduate of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago, Georgetown University and the Erikson Institute in Chicago. While a student at Georgetown Yadira was very active in Campus Ministry Programs.

- A report on "Catholic Campus Ministry in the USA" took note of divergent models of campus ministry, typified by professional campus ministers on one hand, and campus ministers with missionary groups like the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) on the other hand.

Both models emphasize Mass, retreats, Small Bible Sharing Groups and Small Faith-sharing Groups, discipleship/one-on-one mentoring, leadership development and immersion trips as significant activities for students' growth in their faith.

Missionary-trained campus ministers emphasize more those activities that "promote personal holiness," while degree-educated campus ministers emphasize more the importance of social/charitable work and social justice advocacy, the report said.

- Press conference of [#synod2018](#) on 5 October: "Youth is a place, where God is taking us with a new attitude."
- The words on this picture reminds me of the pope's message about taking care of the

environment. Applying to the young people's situation: If you do not take care of the young people today you will be destroying the future church. [#DoYouAgree?](#) [#Synod2018](#)

- The current society fights for gender equity as a way of empowering women. If you give a woman a house, she will turn it into a home therefore, I support women who see the need of inclusively in our church. [#Synod2018](#) [#WomenEmpowerment](#)
- Better accompaniment in life matters a lot because it helps one to discover his or her hidden potentials and also to try new things that bring change in one's life. Good guidance is what young people yearn to get at the end of the day. [#Synod2018](#)
- The power of listening is key in all aspects of our lives. I always hope that the feedback will be appealing to our ears. Listening is key because it will help the bishops and youth ministers to know what young people are going through before acting. If you don't listen, you may end up acting in the wrong way. [#Synod2018](#)
- This post is special to our Catholic women. Determination should be your trait. This inspiration from Sister Marie Louise should touch your heart and give you hope. [#Synod2018](#)
- Joseph from Vietnam, an auditor in [#synod](#) for the young people spoke about "getting a job and having many things. In my opinion, the challenge for the Catholic Church is to find a way to make the young people, especially the young Catholics to realize the beauty of the Church...in order to make their lives more meaningful." This truly connects with what the Holy Father said.
- This message is great to the [#synod](#) fathers. For centuries young people were silent in The church in pain and struggle. We believe that our voices will be heard and that the young people voices be made strong for the development of the church. We are able to give the best and we are rich in talents. My appeal is [#LISTENTOYOUNGSTRONGVOICES](#) [#SYNOD](#)
- Indeed the [#synod](#) is the hope of young people. We believe our fathers from the AMECEA region will voice the queries and recommendations that young people gave to be in the final deliberations.
- I hope that someday those who radicalize young people in Africa and turn them into fighters in wars (child soldiers) that's not theirs will realize the importance of nurturing talent and guiding them to accordingly so that they may make their own choices. [#Synod2018](#)
- Small Christian Communities meetings for young people provide the small circles described by Cardinal Archbishop Card. Lacroix and where there's a conducive climate for prayers. [#Synod2018](#)
- Consensus emerged quickly during during the presentations of reports from the 14 linguistic discussion groups on the "Second Part" of the Synod *Working Document* on discerning and accompanying vocations. Whereas the *Working Document* emphasized personal accompaniment, the synod workshop groups without exception all insisted on the necessarily communitarian dimension of the process. "As well as highlighting the importance of families, which should be the first place for encountering Christ, we would also like to emphasize the importance of Christian communities, including parishes, basic ecclesial communities, youth movements, school and university chaplaincies," one French-speaking

group reported, drawing largely on the testimony of a young auditor from the Scout movement.

- “Go Digital or Die” is an emphasis on the use of technology in Evangelisation. This an important proposal that need to be considered. [#Synod2018](#)
- Archbishop Muheria is convinced that beyond the normal Diocesan Pastoral Office, there is need for “a Digital Pastoral Office,” where the bishop is able to interact pastorally with the individuals. We have to go out there, meet with them. I’m not saying this as a theory, but as something we have done and that’s worked.” This message is powerful, we only need our [#bishops](#) to journey with us and listen to the rich voices of the young people.
- Responses on the family issues by young people in the African context:
 1. Early marriages in rural areas.
 2. Delayed marriages in urban areas.
 3. Inadequate discernment by the young people on the sacrament of marriage.
 4. Lack of commitment to the marriages. Young people do not want life time commitment.
 5. Issues raised on contraception.
 6. Lack of role models from the parents.
 7. Cultural diversity in families. Parents were raised in contexts that are different to the context they raise their children influenced by globalization.
 8. Young people are not inheriting from their families.
 9. Question raised on why one partner should be denied receiving Holy Communion after divorce and remarriage brought about the unfaithfulness of one partner.
 10. Marriages break ups due to divorce and separation. Young people do not know where to belong.
- The synod has reached the crucial stage: Reports of the 14 Minor Circles on the third part of the "Instrumentum Laboris" ("Choosing" or "Practical Action"). Some highlights:
 1. Active participation of youth in liturgy, in Associations, Movements, Basic Christian Communities and in all church activities, including in consultative and decision-making roles.
 2. We must encourage the insertion of young people into fraternal, joyful and radiant communities in which they meet witnesses of Christ, able to trust them. These communities include Basic Communities, Parishes, Movements, etc.).
 3. The ecclesial communities are first of all faith communities. This is why this welcoming of young people will give a great place to the sharing of faith experiences.
- Radio Interview on Vatican News with Emilie Callan on "Communities: the Strength of the Church:"

She believes that “communities” are the best tool the Church has to offer in order to transmit the message of the Gospel. “It’s within the community of the faith that people have the experience of Jesus as a body” she says, stressing that “young people can be encouraged especially when they see their peers or other members of the community live out the fullness of the Catholic faith.” She stressed the importance of "passing on the richness and fullness of

our Catholic faith in our parishes, in our Small Catholic Communities, wherever we find ourselves, on university campuses."

Go to: <https://www.vaticannews.va/.../synod-youth-2018-interview-you...>



About this website

VATICANNEWS.VA

[Young Canadian at Synod: Technology can be a tool but it's not everything - Vatican News](#)

Emilie Callan, a young Canadian auditor at the Synod of Bishops that young people are on social media and that the Church should be there too.

- Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster, England at the Synod in Rome said: "I was impressed by the testimony of one bishop who reported that every one or two years in his diocese they hold gatherings of thousands of young people at which they give out copies of the *Bible*, and then afterwards using social media they do a *Lectio Divina* (or prayerful reading of the scriptures) each week for all those young people, and they share their thoughts." Cardinal Nichols noted that "from a great gathering they try to build a digital network of discipleship." "I think I'd like to try that in England."

- Question for the young people in the nine countries of Eastern Africa: At a Press Briefing during the Synod of Bishops in Rome, Bishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya of Mamfe Diocese, Cameroon said, "If I come back to my country and tell 1,000 youth that we now have pastoral care for LGBTQ, they will raise their hands and ask, 'What's that?'"

What is the situation/response in your country? Kenya etc. What would you answer?
What is your experience?

Some answers/comments:

1. From an older man in Kenya: "The issue still enjoys a big NO across Africa. It is still seen as foreign and quite un-African and unwelcome to Africa too." **NOTE:** "Yes, but what do young Catholic Africans say?"

2. From a university student in Kenya: "I think LGBTQ focuses on addressing Pastoral Care for Homosexual Persons. Instructions are given on how the clergy should deal with, and respond to, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. They should be accepted, but their behavior needs to be worked on (changed)."

3. From a young man in Tanzania: "In Tanzania, the term LGBTQ is not famous nor in regular use. Even though Lesbians and Gays exist here, our culture, probably too in other African societies, look down on them. This has made difficulties for them to come out open into public and also gives difficulties to the Catholic Church to have ministries in our geographic area. I believe LGBTQ have a feeling of not being welcomed in the most churches around here."

4. From an older Ugandan woman: "This has been a very controversial and divisive issue in our country with much discrimination and bias."

5. From a young woman in Kenya: I think it's a lesbian movement across the world trying to find its roots. Pastoral care for LGBTQ will help out in that teachings will be of importance whereby these people will be taught that all sexual relations are sinful.

6. From middle aged man in Kenya: "Usual statement for me! Inspired by the usual assumption! The Archbishop is very convinced he knows what the youth knows and what they don't know. Goes with the question whether the Synod was 'for' the youth, 'of' the youth, 'because' of the youth, 'with' the youth - at best none of the above."

- For those who are following the progress of the Synod of Bishops in Rome on this Facebook Page: "The Synod Fathers are currently examining and debating the 'Final Document' of the Youth Synod, tabling amendments and propositions (*modi*) to the draft which will be voted on, paragraph by paragraph, on Saturday, 27 October. The draft consists of 173 paragraphs and covers topics ranging from accompaniment and discernment to synodality and formation. Perhaps the most significant element to the final document is that it will be the first of its kind to have the weight of the papal magisterium — a crucial move towards decentralization which significantly places more power into the hands of bishops. The approved text of the 'Final Document' is expected to be made public on Saturday evening."

- Sister Lucy Muthoni Nderi, FMA is Salesian Sister from Embu, Kenya who is a psychologist and educator. She is an auditor who represents the International Union of Superiors General at the Synod of Bishops. In her intervention she said:

Young people can be co-creators of caring and fraternal local communities. With the young we can promote nurturing, safeguarding and protective local Small Christian Communities who accompany vulnerable youth and their families in their daily lives before they opt for the streets or wind up in institutions...Empowering Small Fraternal Neighborhoods within the Small Faith Communities can be avenues where the young people can have deep Christian and vocational experiences in their everyday life.

Lucy's full intervention was reprinted in full on page 343 of the 25 October, 2018 issue of *Origins* -- *CNS Documentation Service* (part of the publications of the United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops). It is so important that the people of North America and elsewhere can hear the voices of Africa, especially the voices of African women.

- Young people can discover Jesus and find guidance more easily in Small Faith-based Communities and networks, several observers said at the Synod of Bishops in Rome. Young people need these small, nurturing networks to help them discern.
- From Bishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya, Bishop of Mamfe, Cameroon (English-speaking Cameroon) and one of the three representatives of Africa to be elected a member of the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops:

Question: "What aspects do you think that the West can learn from Africa, from the Church in Africa? What can young people in the West learn from young people in Africa?"

Answer: "I think there is a very strong solidarity, a movement, in Africa. The Africans still have this attitude of going together, of community. And this is what we find lacking in the West, that individualism is growing in the West more and more. And yet, in Africa, we are still maintaining the community aspect."

NOTE: This community aspect, this strong solidarity is one of the foundations of the SCCs Pastoral Priority and the SCCs Model of Church.

- People are asking for additional information on the recently completed Synod of Bishops in Rome. The implementation and follow-up of this synod consists of three interrelated documents:

1. Final Document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment" (October, 2018)
Consists of 3 parts, 12 chapters, 167 paragraphs, more than 30,000 words in length and 55 pages or 60 pages depending on the layout. Issued originally only in Italian. We are waiting for the English translation. One option is to use Google Translation. Various Catholic new agencies have provided good summaries and some initial interpretation.

The introduction to this final text offers an important interpretative key to reading this text. It explains that the Final Document and the Working Document, known as the *Instrumentum Laboris*, are to be seen as "complementary." They are to be read together because there is a continuous and intrinsic reference between the two. It is necessary to understand well this interpretative key because there are some things in the working document that are not found in the final document. Readers may criticize the final text for not having fully dealt with an issue, without taking into account what is also written in the Working Document. While the text seeks to be universal, it does not address in depth the issues of a given country or region. It is intended as a springboard or basis to be adapted at the national and local level in different countries.

The synod fathers emphasized that the synod did not end with the concluding mass in St. Peter's Basilica on 28 October. They envisage an important "implementation phase" in the local churches across the world in the coming months and years, and thus present the Final Document as a "map to guide the next steps that the church is called to take." The success or failure of the synod depends on this implementation phase.

2. Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document) for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly on "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment," Vatican: Liberia Editrice and Nairobi Paulines Publications Africa, 2018.

http://www.vatican.va/.../rc_synod_doc_20180508_instrumentum-...

3. "Letter from the Synod Fathers to Young People" (October 2018)

<https://zenit.org/.../letter-from-synod-fathers-to-young-peop...>

Of the sixteen bishops elected as members of the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, three represent Africa:

Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui, Central African Republic
 Archbishop Gabriel Mblingi, Archbishop of Lubango, Angola
 Bishop Andrew Nkea Fuanya, Bishop of Mamfe, Cameroon (English-speaking Cameroon)

11. Ongoing Research on Catholic Campus Ministry

During a visit to Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, USA in December, 2018, I learned about the campus ministry program at the Duke Catholic Center (DCC) and had a long conversation with American Franciscan Conventual priest Father Michael Martin, OFM Conv, the Catholic Chaplain/Director.¹³⁰⁸ The center has 17 Small Groups (their name for SCCs) – 13 for undergraduate students and four for graduate students. Their full name is Scripture-based Small Faith-sharing Groups. It is a key catechesis method on campus. There are 8-10 students in small group. They meet weekly and reflect on the Gospel of the following Sunday. Small Group leaders are the backbone of this ministry. Here is what the [center website](#) states:

It's Never Too Late to Join a Small Group!

Small groups are a great way to grow deeper in your relationship with God and with others who share your Catholic faith! Sometimes it's really hard to know how to live out your faith through college on an everyday basis. During small groups we explore, support, and challenge each other to grow as disciples to be the best version of ourselves.

Joining the small group was possibly the best decision I ever made during my first year at Duke. I engaged in some of the deepest discussions I have ever had about what it means to be a follower of Christ and the responsibilities and joys that go along with it.

– Thomas Palisi, T'18

¹³⁰⁸ Interview with Michael Martin in Durham, North Carolina, 1 December, 2018. See his chapter No. 10 called "Small Group Journey in Discipleship: Duke Catholic Center (DCC)" in Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018 and the 15-minute CCMA Leadership Podcast (audio interview) at <https://soundcloud.com/.../fr-michael-martin-duke-catholic-ce...>

I was never super religious before Duke. But I saw small groups as a way to meet others with the same hope of deepening faith and to open my mind to new ways of seeing God and my faith.

– Emily Brown, T’15

Students have four options for signing up for small groups: at Mass; at other church services; at a DCC event; and a personal invitation by a friend. An Announcement reads: “Whether you are a committed disciple of Jesus or are still figuring out “this whole faith thing,” small groups are best way to meet other students and explore and grow in your faith. This is a definite must.”

Martin hopes that this campus ministry program will equip the students with personal and pastoral tools to grow their faith life after college and to participate in future peer group Faith-sharing. Part of the Strategic Plan is that “20-25% of Catholic seniors participate in a program that facilitates faith life post-Duke by May, 2020.”

On 30 December, 2018 during a visit to Kenyatta University, the large public university of 75,000 students in Nairobi, Kenya, my hostess, a lecturer in the Education Department, showed me some of the many grassy places on the campus. A few were actually in the shape of a quadrangle (four buildings with grass in the middle). The university students would sit in a circle on the grass to chat, eat lunch or do homework on their computers or tablets. I said "Let's also make them ‘God’s Quad’” -- a place where the students can pray together, reflect on the *Bible* together, etc. More information can be found in our book *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. Available on Amazon as an Ebook and paperback, retrieved on 1 January, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/Gods-Quad-Communities-Campus.../ref...>

As I interview young people about voting in the SCC Poll September – October, 2019 (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>), most choose "Sharing life experiences." This is a learning experience for me. When they meet in small communities, many young people do not start with "Bible Sharing" or "Faith-sharing" that have a churchy/religious ring to them. They start by sharing experiences they have had since they last met -- concrete events of their daily life.

In Nairobi in September, 2019 we had a SCCs Workshop with 10 university students and their two advisors from Santa Clara University in California, USA. We discussed young people’s hunger for, and interest in, community, but realized that it means many different things to different people. The research study from the University of Notre Dame was cited on “An Analysis and Interpretation of 5,500 Different Names, Titles, Terms, Expressions, Descriptions and Meanings for and about Small Christian Communities/Basic Christian Communities in the World from Six Continents.”

We asked: “As you start your Immersion Trip in East Africa share one experience you have had of being in a small community of any kind (6-18 people).” There was a wide variety of answers ranging from the camaraderie of a college rugby team to the friendship in an extended family. It was mentioned that relatively few college students join a Small Faith Community on campus.

The challenge is to tap into college students’ felt needs and desire for “searching” and use the right language. When the Campus Ministry staff at Villanova University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA organized a workshop for college students, the notice for a

“Centering Prayer Workshop” got eight sign-ups, the notice for a “*Lectio Divina* Workshop” got eight sign-ups, but the notice for a “Mindfulness Workshop” got 50 sign-ups.

As we promote Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs), I am inspired by Greta Thunberg, the sixteen-year-old Swedish climate justice activist. The Greta Thunberg phenomenon conforms to a well-known pattern: one highly motivated individual, present at the right place and time in history, ignites a movement and becomes its public face. The kindling was ready—mounting concern about the environment and ecology, and a growing sense of the need for change—and she struck the match. The timing is what matters. I am reminded of the Gikuyu, Kenya Proverb: *You must treat the earth well, It was not given to you by your parents, It is loaned to you by your children.*

Pope Francis challenges young people to read the *Bible* on their smartphones for just two minutes every day. In a story from Transfiguration Parish in Mwanza, Tanzania, Father John Eybel, MM give a little Tanzanian girl Modesta an award for being her Small Christian Community's best young *Bible* reader.

Father Markus Wasserfuhr, a parish priest from Cologne Archdiocese, Germany who is interested in SCCs and I visited the St. Paul's Catholic University Chapel Chaplaincy and Parish in Nairobi on Tuesday, 28 January, 2020. We had informal conversations with some of the students and alumni. Here are our learnings:

1. The University of Nairobi has 10 Small Bible Study Groups of 15-20 university students that meet in the Resident Halls from 7:30 p.m. to 9: 30 p.m. on Sunday nights. Father Peter Kaigua, the Chaplain, said that they are really Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).
2. An evening session consists of reflecting on the *Bible* Readings of that particular Sunday; reflecting on a particular topic chosen for that day (alphabetically: chastity, corruption, Marian devotions, personal relationships, prayer, service, etc.); and occasional intercultural dances.
3. One Sunday a month is Eucharistic Adoration in the chapel.
4. Some graduates return to the parish for Alumni Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).

12. YSCCs in the Apostolic Exhortation ADD

13. Ongoing Research with Young People

In our weekly Online YPSCCs we share our reflections on the Gospel of the following Sunday. For example on Sunday, 23 August, 2020 (21st Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A) the Gospel was *Matthew* 16:13-20. My mantra (special verse from the Gospel) was “who do you say that I am?” My takeaway from our Skype Online SCC was to ask young people who is Jesus Christ to them? To young people in Africa I asked to them to look at their African identity. To young people in America I said inculturation is just as important in the USA as it is in Africa or in Latin America.

Some answers:

1. Jesus is my Path Creator.
2. Jesus is My Everything...Alpha and Omega.
3. Jesus is My BEST FRIEND.
4. Jesus is the One I can communicate with about what is in my heart without fear.
5. Jesus is my Lord, my Provider and my Protector.
6. Jesus is my Brother/Sister.
7. Jesus is my All in All.¹³⁰⁹

15. Case Study of a Young People SCC in Eldoret, Kenya¹³¹⁰

In the Mother of Apostles Matunda Catholic Church in the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, Kenya I observed that other church associations meet, but not the youth. Since a good number of young people participate in Sunday Mass, this motivated me to meet them and have a conversation with them. After discussion we formed a Young People Small Christian Community. The first meeting was well attended. We now meet every Sunday after the 9 am Mass. The SCC has 36 members (male and female). It is a large group, but its size will be regulated with time. Their age ranges between 12 and 25. This SCC has many ethnic groups: Kalenjin, Luhya, Kikuyu, Luo and Kisii. Through this SCC, prayer and other needs of the youth will be addressed. The majority are in secondary schools and soon returning to school.

The reasons they gave for not actively participating in the existing SCCs and in the Catholic Church were:

1. Technological advancement: youth prefer to keep busy with their smartphones and TV rather than go to *Jumuyia*.
2. Being students, so often they are in school.
3. Shyness to speak in front of their elders.
4. Age: they feel SCCs are for the elderly – their time will come.
5. There are fees/levies in SCCs, yet the youth do not have money, so they keep off.
6. They just ignore the invitation. Perhaps the SCC does not interest them and they find it boring.
7. Laziness.
8. Language: they may participate using English/Sheng and the elderly will not understand. They prefer their own SCC where they can express themselves freely.
9. Feeling of shame: youth tend to compare. Hence they may see another smartly dressed young person and they are not. So they keep off.

They expressed the following needs:

1. Need to have a youth project that will be supported by the parish.
2. Would like to animate liturgy on Sundays, though one quipped saying that they the youth are never available when given this opportunity.

¹³⁰⁹ My personal answer was based on meeting Jesus on the Road to Emmaus: Companion/Accompanier; Guide/Teacher; Example/Challenger. My African cultural answer was the Sukuma, Tanzania name for Jesus Christ: Eldest Brother/Chief Intercessor.

¹³¹⁰ Jane Francisca Mulomgo in an email message to the author, 8 October, 2020.

3. The church leadership should address youth requests. The church has not been meeting their requests.
4. We agreed to have our own SCCs of the youth and give it a name. One suggested St. John Bosco (a good choice because he is the Patron Saint of Young People), but there was no consensus. We keep discussing. It is very important that the youth themselves choose the patron saint name so as to take more ownership and responsibility. This is part of the reason why SCCs are a new way of being church, a new model of church.
5. We agreed to meet every Sunday after Mass.
6. We do have take away homework.

This helpful evaluation shows the importance of the local context.

16. Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment (YAE) Communities

Job Description of the Chaplain in the Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment (YAE) Community in the San Francisco/Bay Area

This is a two year commitment through June, 2022 to the following activities:

1. We meet for two hours in a Zoom Call every month, for example, on Thursday, 15 October, 2020. The facilitator is Stephanie Luna, a member of the Maryknoll Young Adult Outreach Team. These young adults in their 20s and early 30s reflect on mission/service altogether and then in Small Breakout Groups. They share their faith (faith sharing) and desire/hunger for community experiences. It is an interactive experience that uses the SEE-DISCERN-ACT process. Each month I share a mission story of something that I learned from the people that I serve in Eastern Africa. This is an opportunity for the young adult community to get to know me and the Maryknoll charism. We can have good conversations from this process.
2. Sharing during the week in the Maryknoll YA Bay Area What'sApp Community. This Christmas Week we shared our "Prayer Intentions."
3. Annual online retreat.
4. We will explore an online/virtual immersion experience in East Africa.
5. We will explore Advocacy Training and the young adults' discernment about their outreach role in society.

I have prayed over, and reflected, on the overall role of the Chaplain of a Young Adult Empowerment (YAE) Community? My initial thought is that it is a "new way of being chaplain." Following on Pope Francis, it would include:

1. Listening.
2. Accompanying.
3. Guiding (the hardest to clarify).

Internet Resources

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (Maryknoll Missionary Disciples)

<https://www.maryknoll.us>

Maryknoll Young Adults Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/MaryknollYA>

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (Maryknoll Missionary Disciples)

<https://www.maryknoll.us>

Maryknoll Young Adults Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/MaryknollYA>

Unique: The "Unity with Kenya" action project: Partnership of the Fish Group Small Christian Communities in Kisumu, Kenya and the Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment Communities in the USA. Early in 2021 we are planning Zoom Calls of young adults in Kenya directly with young adults in USA.

THE SEE-JUDGE/DISCERN-ACT method that underpins *Let Us Dream* has long been used by the Latin American Church and in Pope Francis' pontificate – in *Laudato Si'*, for example – to reflect the process of conversion itself. In opening up to reality, to let it speak to us, we **contemplate** our world; we **discern** by uncovering what is of God and what undermines it, choosing the first; and then we **propose bold plans and decisions** based on that discernment. Hence the three “Times” of *Let Us Dream*: To See, To Choose, and To Act.

Different words can be used for the process, for example: THE CONTEMPLATE--
DISCERN-- PROPOSE BOLD PLANS AND DECISIONS method

- Please help lead us through an interactive experience which will help us go through the SEE-DISCERN-ACT process around climate justice. We think you both are particularly well suited for this conversation, since you know realities both in Kenya and the US, and know the differences and similarities.
- SEE: What are the **climate change** impacts you have witnessed? How have they impacted your communities? Why should climate justice be important for us in the US?
- DISCERN: Bring the current realities you are experiencing to

Zoom Webinar on Thursday, 19 November, 2020 at 1 PM USA Eastern time / 9 PM Kenya time on the topic “Climate Justice in Kenya.”

Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment Community is a type of Online SCC. Five SCCs located in five cities in the USA (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles (Spanish), San Francisco and Seattle). These young adults meet once a month on a Zoom Call and weekly on What's App. It is a hybrid SCC. As Chaplain I participated in the San Francisco SCC that met for two hours in a Zoom Call on Thursday, 15 October, 2020. These young adults in their 20s and early 30s reflected on mission/service altogether and then in Small Breakout Groups. They shared their faith (faith sharing) and desire/hunger for community experiences.

Thanks for sending the following donations to my Mission Account for the “Unity with Kenya” Project:

352.00 Stephanie Luna
 1,200.00 Anna Clarke
 1,552.00 TOTAL

We will follow up right away.

Would you like to share a story of when you learned something from the people you were/are with during mission as an example? This would be a great opportunity for the community to get to know you AND the Maryknoll charism. I think we can have great conversations just from this process! Let me know what you think.

Fine. I will share a story on our Maryknoll YAE SF/Bay Area Zoom Call tonight.

It is related to one of the choices in our SCC Poll (<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>) Seventieth Round: “The best part of my Small Christian Community is:..” The choice is: “Adapts to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.”

Have you started our What’sApp Community?

Yes, feel free to find us at the link below. I’m not sure how to add someone without having their contact.

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/DuySSUqKSSaD4mTYqNMBKs>

Thanks again for your willingness to be Chaplain of the San Francisco/Bay Area Young Adult Community. I think it would be great for you to join the call for opening prayer and introductions today at 6pm. After that, you can choose whether you stay on the call or not. We will be talking about politics, learning from each other, bringing it to Christ-wisdom in Scripture, and discerning what our roles are in the political realm. I think your wisdom and participation would be very valuable for the group, but again, it will be optional for you to stay for the discussion.

We will begin at 6pm tonight and end at 8pm. There will be a 10 minute break before beginning our discussion on politics. Let me know if you have any questions or comments. It is well planned and goes through to June 2022. I look forward to being a part of the group.

I have prayed over, and reflected, upon your question. What is the role of the Chaplain of a Young Adult Empowerment (YAE) Community? My initial thought is that it is a “new way of being chaplain.” Following on Pope Francis, it would include:

4. Listening.
5. Accompanying.
6. Guiding (the hardest to clarify).

I’m very excited to connect the two of you – Luna, Joe has agreed to be your Bay Area chaplain for your YA community! This is GREAT news! I know you’re on vacation right

now, but when you're back, please send him your schedule and the two of you can set up a time to connect by phone to talk about it!

In interviewing students who participate in university and college Small Faith Communities¹³¹¹ -- 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 Communities and Small *Bible* Study Communities, how can young adults find a similar experience in their parishes and 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.¹³¹² Parish-based SCCs especially for young adults are few and far between. Some graduates continue in Alumni SCCs of different kinds. Some graduates connect with the various new ecclesial movements in the Catholic Church. Some graduates gravitate to Small *Bible* Study Groups in Protestant Churches.

As we read the signs of the times in the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Zoom and other social media platforms offer new opportunities for online/virtual/digital faith sharing. Here are two Case Studies:

1. Katie Maransky (Georgetown University, Washington DC, USA, Class of 2019):

During our time at Georgetown, two of my friends Kevin and Mary Joy started a Small Faith Sharing Community in January, 2018. In this community, I was an active member. We read Matthew Kelly's *Choosing Happiness* together and our conversations circled around the chapters we read every week. This was a group of 10 students, all in the sophomore -- senior age range. Kevin and Mary Joy are both very involved in the Catholic community today -- Kevin works for *America* Media and Mary Joy works for Matthew Kelly.

After our first small community went from January, 2018 to May, 2018, we broke for the summer. Upon returning to Georgetown in the Fall, 2018 Kevin and Mary Joy started to grow more Catholic Faith Communities in conjunction with the Campus Ministry Program to

¹³¹¹ See Joseph Healey, "What Catholic Young People Really Want to Talk About?" in Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018). The chapter can also be found online on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: http://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/what_catholic.pdf

¹³¹² 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. It is hoped that clusters of ESTEEM graduates can meet together physically. Zoom and other social media platforms offer new opportunities for online/virtual/digital faith sharing. <https://www.faithandleadership.com/esteem-prepares-catholic-college-students-church-leadership-now>

reach more young people. They asked if I was interested in leading a group starting in August, 2018. I agreed to lead with my friend Dan who was part of our first Small Faith Sharing Community. Dan and I wanted to cater our conversations to the interests of the group. We were lucky enough to have a community of ten seniors (six young women, four young men). In our first meeting our small community discussed key topics we were interested in learning more about such as: joining the corporate world and living a Christian life; evil; grace; combining discipline and happiness; and others. Dan and I typically would meet three days prior to our community session to find a reading or an article to give to the group on the topic we planned to discuss. We came up with various “prompts” we thought would spark conversation in our upcoming small community session.

Our Fall, 2018 small community continued through the Spring Semester, 2019 consisting of a similar core group of members, while gaining a few and losing a few who were lacking commitment at the time. We conducted our small community in the same manner, collecting topics of interest and diving into the topics week by week. We stopped meeting before graduation in May, 2019.

Now fast forward. We were eight Georgetown Alumnae who got together over the 2021 Lenten Season to continue our spiritual journey together online. It started when my friend Mary Joy and another Georgetown alumna Emma reached out to me to see if I was interested in joining a Zoom-based Small Faith Community. We were all in various parts of the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic so it worked well to hold a Zoom session every week. The group consisted of these young alumnae from Georgetown and one from Villanova, my roommate in New York City, where we met from 9--9:45 pm on a weekly basis (typically Mondays or Tuesdays). During this season, we followed Matthew Kelly's *Best Lent Ever Journal* as the basis for our weekly discussions. We watched his two minute videos on a daily basis that mostly focused on prayer. Through discussion we found we all were struggling to watch the videos on a daily basis and usually had to binge watch all of the videos prior to our weekly meetings in order to properly participate in the discussion. We combatted this by rotating through a daily schedule where one person would send a small reflection about the daily video and the link to the video in our Small Faith Community text box. This was a helpful way to keep up with the videos on a daily basis. We eventually concluded these gatherings of our Zoom Small Faith Community at the end of the Lenten, 2021 season.

2. Stephanie Luna (California State University, East Bay, Oakland, California, USA, Class of 2017):

This is great! I graduated about four years ago and I was so afraid of losing touch with my faith and my campus Catholic Club Community. Some of our community members were still connected locally, but most moved out of state and out of country for grad school and jobs. The pandemic gave us the opportunity to reconnect and get everyone back together virtually. We were 13 alumni (10 young women, there young men) who met once a week for about six months. At the beginning of the Zoom gathering we would give everyone the chance to check in (or touchdown) about anything that was going on in their lives. For most of us, the pandemic created a lot of anxiety and grief and we were having a hard time coping. Luckily we had this weekly commitment to lay down our crosses and share our suffering.

After the initial check-ins, our California State University Campus Minister would open up the Zoom gathering for faith discussion. She gave us the autonomy to bring up any topic. We talked about racism, political polarization and the climate crisis -- all through the

lens of our Catholic faith. A burning question now is how many Catholics, especially young adults, will return to participate in physical masses in our parishes? We still connect once a month, and it has been a great joy to come together and share a piece of ourselves and to hold each other in prayer. I'm so glad that Georgetown University alumni are also doing the same, and I hope our sharing can inspire others to build communities of loving relationship within their own university alumni.

On our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website
<https://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

we have an interactive Poll (changes every two months) that states: “The best part of my Small Christian Community is ...”¹³¹³ followed by six choices. In the past two years some of the choices (alphabetically) have been:

- Adapts to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.
- Alumni Online Small Christian Community.
- Digital SCC.
- Gathering online to celebrate our faith together.
- Going digital during Covid-19.
- Hybrid Small Christian Community.
- Online faith sharing.
- Online Small Christian Community Ministry.
- Virtual SCC.
- WhatsApp SCC.
- WhatsApp social media exchange.
- Young Adults Small Empowerment Community.
- Young People Small Searching Community.
- Zoom and other online platforms for Gospel Sharing and Reflection.
- Zoom Small Christian Community.

The top vote getters have been “Online faith sharing” (167 votes) and “Zoom and other online platforms for Gospel Sharing and Reflection” (140 votes).

Two other important resources on University/College Small Faith Communities are:

1. Kevin Ahern, “Young People Are Leading a New Approach To Campus Ministry,” *U.S. Catholic*, September, 2021. *U.S. Catholic* Website, retrieved on 11 September, 2021. <https://uscatholic.org/articles/202108/young-people-are-leading-a-new-approach-to-campus-ministry/> This article can jumpstart a new appreciation of our Orbis Book [*God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond*](#).

Kevin insightfully describes the challenges to campus ministry with practical examples, in particular: the explanation of the Small Faith Communities (SFCs) Model of Church; how in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, student faith groups are demonstrating a dynamic sense of resiliency; and Pope Francis’s call for synodal models in youth and young adult ministry (so relevant as the worldwide Synodal Process begins in October, 2021).

¹³¹³ We could just as easily have asked: “The best part of our Small Christian Community is:...” Both statements can have different answers. Using “we” and “us” expresses better the spirit and practice of the SCCs Model of Church.

3. Another important book on campus ministry is Randy Young, *Catholic Campus Ministry: Fifteen Profiles in Achievement*, New Jersey, 2020. Ebook and paperback, Amazon Website, retrieved on 11 September, 2021. [Catholic Campus Ministry: Fifteen Profiles in Achievement - Kindle edition by Young, Randy. Religion & Spirituality Kindle eBooks @ Amazon.com.](#) It documents a wide variety of Small Group Ministries/Small Faith Communities Ministries on college campuses such as Faith Sharing, *Bible* Study and Lectionary-based Reflections.

Case Study of Promoting Online Young People Seekers Small Christian Communities

Having realized that many young people are drifting away from the Catholic Church, Pope Francis has been calling on church leaders to walk the extra mile to reach out to young people where they are and not wait for them. The Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) responded to this call by appreciating the importance of reaching out to young people by financing the Online Young People Seekers Small Christian Communities that offer young people a safe place to share their concerns and find support for the challenges they face.

This virtual community of about 15 people meet twice a month on Zoom. It's also an international and diverse group that comprises young people from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Pakistan, and the USA. They are not limited only to the above countries but they welcome young people from other parts of the world who want to journey with them. This community is committed to growing together and seeking to find its rightful place within the Catholic community.

Through our encounters, the young people have been able to speak on different issues like:

1. They feel disconnected from the church because they no longer feel welcome and are discouraged by the church because of the silence when injustices are perpetuated in front of their eyes and no one speaks against them.
2. Young people want to be included in the leadership of the church and they don't want to be mere spectators. They want to be part of the decision-makers.
3. Young people want accompaniment and help in understanding issues like: sexuality, drug and substance abuse, depression and transitions in life.
4. Injustices to the environment.
5. Some said that there is a lot of criticism in church and they avoid going to church because they don't want to be criticized.
6. The impact of social media on their lives.

In one of our encounters, Meg McCarthy from the USA highlighted how she felt disconnected from the church in one of the Synodal Gatherings that had been organized by the Albany Diocese. She said, "what stood out from the discussion is that young people feel disconnected from the church they love. For instance, I shared my feeling of being disconnected in the presence of 40 young people who had attended that session of the Synodal Process. I didn't connect at all with the young man who said that the Catholic Church has to return to being the backbone of Western civilization."

Collins Ongoma from Kenya shared about a friend who was very active in Christ the Teacher Catholic Parish in Kenyatta University in Nairobi including being an acolyte. But on going back to her home parish she felt out of place and ended up joining a Pentecostal denomination where she felt her expectations were being met.

Stacy Wandiemba from Kenya gave a testimony on how the online encounter with other young people has transformed her life. She said, "I knew I wanted to belong. I was looking for a family, a place to call home, and people who understand me. I'm glad that I found it in my online Small Christian Community. I saw people who looked like me and had an idea of the common issues affecting us in general. There was no problem that was overlooked and everything was anchored in Christ. My faith in Christ grew, and I had the

confidence to let the past go and accept God. I am looking at my life right now. Without my family, I feel I am incomplete. These are people whom I look up to and they also look up to me. We nurture each other, and we have made a lifelong friendship. Above all we let Christ be the anchor of every situation.”

Jenipher Tumuhaise from Uganda said, “some young people feel demotivated when their parents are not committed to attending mass. This also discourages them because they don’t have someone to accompany them nor have a role model. These online encounters with other young people is my new motivation because of the encouragement I get from other young people.”

They also engage in different activities that expand their understanding of the church's teachings. For example, in one of their encounters, the facilitator asked the young people to come up with an image of Jesus that comes to their mind or reflects the work that they do. Everyone was given two minutes to interpret the image and how it reflects on them. It was exciting to see the different types of images young people have about Jesus Christ. Some of the images they gave are: Jesus as a donkey, friend, safari park guide, eldest brother chief intercessor and a farmer.

In summary, our online Young People Seekers Small Christian Community meet young people where they are. They meet globally hence giving them a global view of life. Young people also get an opportunity to discuss with other young people from different parts of the world the kind of projects they are doing with their local communities.

People who want to learn more about the Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs) ministry can get free, online materials by visiting the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website [GO»](#)

In addition, two Facebook Pages offer more information:

Small Christian Communities [GO»](#)

Young People Small Christian Communities [GO»](#)

For more information and if you want to join a Online Young People Seekers Small Christian Community please contact the Facilitator:

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Member of Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI)

15. 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?¹³¹⁴ What do you do during a SCC gathering? 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 ecclesial, pastoral and social identity. Many members' lives revolve in and around their SCCs as the "Church in the Neighborhood."¹³¹⁵

¹³¹⁴ 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. This is the best way to experience the life and activities of a SCC that is much more than a *Bible* Study Group or a weekly Prayer Group.

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. 9 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). **CHECK**

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. 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\[0\]=626](http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-stories.html?task=display2&cid[0]=626) and African Story No. 489 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."

¹³¹⁵ 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," "Discern" 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,” especially the Local 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).

1. The International Young Catholic Students (IYCS) use “Recognize,” “Interpret” and “Choose.”
2. The Salesians Religious Congregation in Africa call this method/process “Community Discernment” that is carried out in three steps: “Listening,” “Interpreting” and “Way Forward.” “Interpreting” (“discern” or “test” or “analyse” or “evaluate” or “assess”) is preferred by some because the English word “judge” is associated with the words “judgement” and “judgemental.” that reflect criticism of others.
3. The Holy Cross Sisters, an international congregation of religious sisters, who serve in Fort Diocese, Uganda call the process ERCA: “Experience,” “Reflection,” “Choice” and “Action.”
4. Formation houses in Eastern Africa use the reflection method of “Inform,” “Form” and “Transform.”
5. The Maryknoll missionaries in Latin America use “Listen,” “Learn” and “Announce.”
6. The Loyola Institute of Ministry at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana uses “Identify” rather than “See” as the first step and “Test” rather than “Judge” as the second step.
7. College immersion programs in the USA use “Witness,” “Reflect” and “Respond.”

The text of the Working Document (*Instrumentum Laboris*) for the Synod on Young People from 3-28 October, 2018 takes up the themes in a “functional” way in three parts:

1. “Recognize” (five chapters),
2. “Interpret” (four chapters for four “reading keys”),
3. “Choose” (four chapters “to help the Synod Fathers to take a stand on the directions and decisions to be taken”).

American San Diego Diocese Bishop Robert McElroy reminds us that the organizing principles — see, judge and act — that have inspired Catholic action groups around the world are “a powerful pathway for those who seek to renew the temporal order in the light of the Gospel and justice.” The bywords for today's Catholic community must be “see,” “judge” and “act.” They will give us direction for the journey. If adverbs are attached, we would suggest “see clearly,” “discern compassionately” and “act together.”

NCR Editorial Staff, "See, Judge and Act: Direction for Catholics," National Catholic Reporter (NCR), 1 November, 2017, NCR Website, retrieved 2 November, 2017, https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/see-judge-and-act-direction-catholics?utm_source=NOV_1_D%27ANTONIO_EDITORIAL&utm_campaign=cc_110117&utm_medium=email

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*.¹³¹⁶ 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.”¹³¹⁷

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

Catholic Charities USA explains how ministry responds through the theological methodology of “seeing, judging and acting”: in other words, considering the social context of the particular historical moment, discerning the meaning with the guidance offers by Catholic Church teaching and deciding on the appropriate response.

Some add the words “Review” and “Readjust” as a fourth step.

¹³¹⁶ *Spearhead* No. 60 (February, 1985).

¹³¹⁷ 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

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.”^{1318 1319}

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.”¹³²⁰ SCCs are always evolving, in process.

This also 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 neighborhood¹³²¹ 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.¹³²²

¹³¹⁸ John Heaps, *A Love That Dares to Question: A Bishop Challenges His Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans 1998.

¹³¹⁹ Laurenti Magesa, “Expanding Horizons, p. 39.

¹³²⁰ Emmanuel Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way, p. 125.

¹³²¹ 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.

¹³²² *Ibid*, pp. 123-124.

A Case Study is Youth SCCs, or YSCC for short. 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."¹³²³ 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. The workshop is described in the article "Zambia Hosts National Youth SCCs Workshop on the Theme ['Youth SCCs Embrace the Word of God'](#)".

Our understanding of the meaning of "a new way of being/becoming church" develops/evolves in new situations, contexts and time periods. English Dominican theologian and writer Timothy Radcliff, OP summarizes Pope Francis' interpretation in an essay entitled "Pope Francis Encourages Us to Be Comfortable with Uncertainty."

Pope Francis says that "the structural and organizational reforms are secondary—that is, they come afterwards. The first reform must be the attitude." Structural change to the government of the church is vital, but it must follow from a new way of *being* church, in which we get out of the sacristy, engage with people, know their suffering and their puzzlement from within. At this stage, the pope is showing the way forward by what he does. He has a capacity to make expansive gestures that open up new perspectives. His first trip outside Rome was a visit to Lampedusa, where so many immigrants have died trying to enter Europe. Or think of his visit to the *favella* in Rio de Janeiro. Christianity is a religion of sacramental gestures, the pouring of water and the breaking of bread, and Francis' gestures are powerful in opening up the future.

This new way of being church will eventually have to find structural form. Pope Francis says: "The dicasteries of the Roman Curia are at the service of the pope and the bishops" ...So this papacy could mark the most

¹³²³ Peter Kyalo in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 13 March, 2012.

fundamental change in the governance of the church in centuries, from monarchy to collegiality. Much of Pope Emeritus Benedict's theology of the church implied shift. Francis wishes to *do* it. He insists on the return to models of synodal government and on real consultation. Lay people will have a voice, as they often did in the early church. We must have patience as the form of this new structure and dynamic unfolds.¹³²⁴

Orobator adds:

For Francis synodality is the way of being church, that is, a collaborative search or discernment of the divine path for God's people, by God's people. Thus, "a synodal church is a church that listens, that realizes that listening is more than simple hearing. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn."¹³²⁵

¹³²⁴ Timothy Radcliff, "A New Way of Being Church: Pope Francis Encourages Us to Be Comfortable with Uncertainty," *America Magazine*, 30 September, 2016, America Website, retrieved 21 July, 2016, <http://americamagazine.org/new-way-being-church>. Reprinted in *A Big Heart Open to God: A Conversation with Pope Francis*, America Press and HarperOne, 2013.

¹³²⁵ Orobator, Agbonkhanmeghe E. (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2016, p. xvi.

16. How SCCs Are a New Pastoral Ecclesial Model of Church in Eastern Africa

Other questions are: Exactly how are SCCs a new pastoral ecclesial model of church in Eastern Africa today?¹³²⁶ 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 five different pastoral ecclesial models¹³²⁷ of church in the Catholic Church today especially from an African and from a small community perspective. It is presumed that the celebration of the sacraments is an important part of all five pastoral ecclesial models:

1. Small Christian Communities Model of Church. This has a very specific meaning and context in Eastern Africa. Although the term “Small Christian Communities” is used in many different ways,¹³²⁸ as a “new pastoral ecclesial 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 in the parish church, for example, the celebration of the sacraments, religious education, catechesis and other ministerial and service activities.

¹³²⁶ 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.

¹³²⁷ This is an ecclesiological model as distinguished from a sociological or theoretical structural model. This a pastoral model as distinguished from a theological model (see Avery Dulles’ models).

¹³²⁸ 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.

Tanzanian diocesan priest, Anthony Makunde, Secretary General of AMECEA, states:

As AMECEA reflects on ways to revitalize, strengthen and cultivate the spirit of solidarity, collegiality and synodality, the Small Christian Communities has become an Ecclesial Model in Eastern Africa that people from other regions and continents are borrowing heavily from AMECEA, people from other continents are coming to AMECEA to learn about this Ecclesial Model. “India has borrowed a lot from us to build their Small Christian Communities, and today Europe, which evangelized Africa, is also coming to learn from us. Those from Tanzania will remember that three or four years ago, a group from Germany came to Bagamoyo to learn about Small Christian Communities. In Kenya people from Europe have come several times and even stayed in parishes to learn about the model. Currently the Coordinator of the AMECEA Pastoral Department is organizing another trip for a group of Germans who will be coming to Kenya in February, 2020 to stay for almost a month for the same purpose.¹³²⁹

Central to this SCCs model are weekly lectionary-based Faith-sharing and regular practical action and outreach.

2. Small Apostolic Group 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 and fully integrated into the structure and leadership of the parish. Often they are voluntary apostolic programs, services and activities in the parish. They are represented on the Parish Pastoral Council.

3. Ministries/Services/Activities/Outreaches Model of Church. This is a different model where the ministry or services or activities or outreaches 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 and fully 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.¹³³⁰ They are represented on the Parish Pastoral Council.

4. Devotions Model of Church. Arising out of popular religiosity this model focuses

¹³²⁹ Anthony Makunde, *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, 7 June, 2019, (<https://amecea.blogspot.com/.../kenya-ameceas-ecclesial-model>)

¹³³⁰ 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 also be provided by a local Community Center, Senior Citizens Center and Retirement Home. They are part of what is called “the busy (or ‘humming’) parish plant.”

on popular devotions such as Eucharistic Adoration, novenas, rosary, singing songs and Stations of the Cross. Here the traditional lay Pious Associations/Christian Associations/Sodalities/Guilds/Devotional Groups/Societies/Clubs are the main Model of Church in the parish. Some examples: Christian Mothers Association (CMA), 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, other associations of Knights and Dames and various Small Prayer Groups. Members often have a special identity like a uniform. They are represented on the Parish Pastoral Council. Saying the Rosary and devotional prayers are very important.

This Small Christian Associations Model of Church is particularly strong in Nigeria and Ghana and a main reason that SCCs have not developed in these two countries.¹³³¹

In a very interesting conversation in Nairobi, Kenya on 16 September, 2018 with two leading pastoral specialists from the Democratic Republic of the Congo -- Sister José Ngalula and diocesan priest Father Edouard Mombili -- they emphasized that the spirituality of the Small Christian Community Model of Church is communion, sharing and solidarity in the Local Church. But the various Pious Associations/Christian Associations/Sodalities/Guilds/Devotional Groups have a different spirituality based on the charism of their associations. It was pointed out that one reason that SCCs never developed in the 1960s to 1990s in English-speaking West Africa was historical: the expatriate Irish missionaries introduced a strong **Devotions Model of Church** into countries like Nigeria and Ghana that became the operative pastoral style in parishes.

5. New Ecclesial Movements Model of Church. A phenomenon of the past 75 years is the new ecclesial movements that have seen rapid growth and influence worldwide. Some examples (alphabetically): Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Communion and Liberation, Focolare, Neo-catechumenal Way, Opus Dei, Sant'Egidio and Schönstatt. They have energized many dying and inactive parishes, pastoral situations and Christian communities. They have successfully taken responsibility for running parishes (especially in Europe). Many of these movements use a "controlled" small group formation and reflection model.

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 these new ecclesial movements with, and within, parish life. Other features of these new ecclesial movements: They appeal more to elite Catholics in terms of wealth and education. They have a more top-down, inductive style, style of leadership and formation. They do not see social action and social justice as a priority.¹³³²

Many parishes are a combination of these five models or at least some of them.

¹³³¹ See Emmanuel Dassah, Ghanaian theologian and lay minister, in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 22 July, 2022.

¹³³² Some of these ideas developed in a very interesting conversation with Father Marcos Muino, SJ, an Argentinian Jesuit priest who is presently doing research on SCCs in Eastern Africa. Nairobi, Kenya, 10 January, 2017.

This new **Small Christian Communities Pastoral Ecclesial Model of Church** has a “newness” and a “differentness” from the other four models explained above. The terms “new way of being church” (also called “new way of becoming church”) and “new model (or paradigm) of church”¹³³³ 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 New **Small Christian Communities New Pastoral Ecclesial Model of Church** are:

1. **Leadership Structures.**¹³³⁴ In this model of neighborhood, parish-based SCCs, the SCCs officially participate in the parish leadership structures. The SCC is an official pastoral ecclesial structure in the parish. This is key. 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.¹³³⁵

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

¹³³³ 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.

¹³³⁴ 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.

¹³³⁵ 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 pastoral 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.

rights and obligations. Members of the Small Christian Community must be united in mind and activities.¹³³⁶

This resolution also states: “New arrivals in the diocese (priests, sisters and laity) need some orientation with regard to Small Christian Communities.”

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. This covers SCCs in both urban and rural areas.

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 through 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.¹³³⁷

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 the main, central section of the subparish/village. It so happened that the Iramba Subparish Council members had to investigate a marriage case in a distant geographical 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 local 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 geographical section. This was a *critical incident* in the pastoral life of the Iramba Subparish Council that led to

¹³³⁶ Felix Mkhori, *My 7 Years in the Diocese of Lilongwe 2001-2007*, Balaka, Malawi: Montfort Media, 2007.

¹³³⁷ Rita Ishengoma, Email File Attachment to the author dated 29 January, 2014.

a new praxis¹³³⁸ of having the geographically-based SCC representatives form the council.¹³³⁹

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.

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.”¹³⁴⁰ 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.”¹³⁴¹

¹³³⁸ Many times a new praxis evolves out of evaluation. American Maryknoll missionary priest John Casey, MM pointed out that the SCCs in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania were labor-intensive, that is, they needed a lot of time, support and help from the priests and other pastoral workers. He joked that the Pius Associations and Sodality like the Sacred Heart ran on their own, while the SCCs always seemed to need blood transfusions.

¹³³⁹ Radoli, *How Local is the Local Church*, p. 64 and Healey, *Towards an African*, p. 144.

¹³⁴⁰ American lay theologian Lisa Cahill comments: “The primary meaning of ‘church’ is not the Vatican, ecclesial structures or a body of teaching and doctrine, but the community in which the Risen Christ lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.” “Concluding Remarks: AIDs, Evil and Salvation: African Light on Faith in Jesus Christ” in Azetsop, Jacquineau (ed.), *HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016.

¹³⁴¹ Raphael Ndingi Mwana a’Nzeki, “Talk at the Book Launch of *Small Christian*

This can be illustrated in these two stories:

1. 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.¹³⁴²

2. Traveling around the world I'm sure that I surprise many priests, deacons and catechists (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" in preparing homilies. During the week the priest (or any homilist/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 homilist/teacher) 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.^{1343 1344}

Communities: Capturing the New Moment," Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2007, p. 1.

¹³⁴² "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)

¹³⁴³ Reflection on "The Small Christian Communities Way of Being Church in Preaching" adapted from Joseph Healey, "Small is Beautiful," *Tablet*, 4 November, 2004.

¹³⁴⁴ 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 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."

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 (pioneered by Lumko, South Africa) to prepare their Sunday homilies together.¹³⁴⁵ 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."^{1346 1347}

¹³⁴⁵ 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, what I call the "SCC process or method" in preparing homilies.

¹³⁴⁶ 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.

¹³⁴⁷ Some USA examples:

1. 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.

2. An American diocesan priest in Paterson Diocese, USA uses a different method. From time to time he invites a Catholic couple that he knows well to invite six or seven other couples that he does not know well to a roundtable discussion and dialog in the parish rectory living room. As they reflect on their daily lives in the parish – their hopes, the dreams, their

Kenyan Mariannahill seminarian Benedict Kimutai reports:

The Small Christian Communities can use WhatsApp to pass information and engage themselves. For example, in St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish in Kericho, Kenya Father John Paul Cheruiyot has empowered the Christians to interact through WhatsApp and Twitter. Every week in the

challenges, their problems – the priest learns a lot and gets valuable ideas, examples and stories that he can use in his weekly Sunday homilies.

3. 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 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.

4. American laywoman Kerry Robinson gives three examples:

a. A few of my favorite diocesan pastors formed a priest support group shortly after they were ordained. They meet faithfully throughout the year and always dedicate some time to a prayerful discussion of the coming Sunday's readings and ways to apply the Gospel to current concerns weighing on their parishioners' hearts and minds.

b. One of these pastors established "homily duty" in his parish. Modeled after jury duty, it was understood as a civic responsibility conferred upon all registered members of the parish. Juries consist of 12 parishioners who meet with the pastor to discuss the readings and offer insight connecting the passages with the concerns and topics of the day. One's obligation does not end with that, however. The group meets with the pastor once more, the following week, to critique the homily including delivery, intonation, word choice, quality of exegesis, length and acuity.

c. Another pastor introduced a Small Church Community structure within the wider parish assembly, encouraging small groups of parishioners to meet weekly to pray, be challenged by the readings, and enter more deeply into Christian life. Commentaries and historical background on the readings are provided and members of the Small Church Communities are encouraged to discuss the readings in the context of their lives. Key perceptions as well as unresolved questions are recorded and when the pastor prepares his homily, he takes cues and inspiration from these accounts. As he notes, the quality of the liturgy is significantly enhanced when a sizeable percentage of the community has already read, prayed with and wrestled with the readings. They are eager to learn more and often hear their own insights woven into the homily.

Kerry Robinson, *Chicago Catholic*, 22 November, 2017, *Chicago Catholic Website*, retrieved on 12 December, 2017, <https://www.chicagocatholic.com/kerry-robinson/-/article/2017/11/22/the-ineestimable-blessing-of-excellent-preaching>

SCCs WhatsApp Groups he poses a question for the Christians to reflect on. On Saturday evening he concludes with his contribution and the topic forms the basis of his homily on Sunday.

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.¹³⁴⁸ A good preparation for the Sunday Eucharist is to reflect on the readings ahead of time especially in the 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?”¹³⁴⁹

The SCC leaders have special names or terms 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 from *kukolea* – to stir (a cooking term). Similarly, in Zambia SCCs use the Bemba (the largest ethnic group in the country) name or 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. Consolata Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya uses the name or term “convenor.” The various convenors are part of the Apostolate Committee of the Parish.

¹³⁴⁸ “Evelyn, a lay parishioner on Kenya, said: ‘When I go to the Catholic Church on Sunday 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.

¹³⁴⁹ 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).

Many parishes in Kenya now use the name or term “Moderator” for the leader of the SCC. In Nairobi Archdiocese it was decided that the Parish Priest should be the Chairperson of all the SCCs in the parish. Only he should use this name. He should be above, or in charge of, all the individual leaders of the neighborhood SCCs who are called Moderators. He is called *Baba Paroko* that means Father Parish Priest/Father Pastor. Unfortunately both in titles and structures the clerical, patriarchal, hierarchical, exclusive Catholic Church is dying very slowly in Africa.

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 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.¹³⁵⁰ 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.¹³⁵¹

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

¹³⁵⁰ 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.

¹³⁵¹ Paul Njuki, Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, retrieved 17 April, 2013. <https://www.face-book.com/pages/Small-Christian-Communities/279921983315>

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 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 gatherings 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.¹³⁵²

“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

¹³⁵² “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)

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.¹³⁵³

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

¹³⁵³ 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>

relevant advice. The local community is no longer passive witnesses or spectators but active players.¹³⁵⁴

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.

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.¹³⁵⁵

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.

¹³⁵⁴ 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>

¹³⁵⁵ Colon Davies, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop*, p. 113.

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 paraliturgies, paraliturgical 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 just 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.”¹³⁵⁶

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 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 member 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 paraliturgical 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.¹³⁵⁷

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:

¹³⁵⁶ J. J. Carney, interview with SCC leaders, Our Lady of Fatima Queen of Peace Cathedral Parish, Diocese of Kasana-Luweero, Uganda, January, 2013.

¹³⁵⁷ Segeja, “Small Christian Community A Vital Icon,” p. 32.

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.¹³⁵⁸

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 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 and additions. Creative, inculturated para-liturgical services seem to come and go, often based on the interest of the changing local leadership.¹³⁵⁹ These services do not become a part of the official diocesan and parish pastoral plans.

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

¹³⁵⁸ Koutandji Wayéname, “SCCs Course Paper No. 1,” Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2015, pp. 1-2.

¹³⁵⁹ See views of Michael Kirwen on his pastoral and missionary examples and experiences in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania.

Diocese.¹³⁶⁰ 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. A wheelchair for an old man who was attacked by lion and broke his leg and became paralyzed on his left side. 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. Help to build 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. Help for a SCC member in Kariobangi whose one son died and the other son got in a broken leg when their flat was destroyed when the building in Huruma, Nairobi collapsed. The family is now homeless. Food for a very poor family. Medical expenses for a teenage boy whose leg was amputated after been bitten by a poisonous snake.

This 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 AMECEASmall 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 following specific “Guidelines.” 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

¹³⁶⁰ Joseph Ngala in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya, 9 April, 2013.

(*Mfuko wa Jumuiya* in Swahili) started by members of the AMECEA SCCs Training Team makes a small contribution. We try to make this collaboration, teamwork and mutual help “teaching moments.” We use the Ugandan proverb *one hand washes the other*.

Often this process includes an official request for help that is posted on the SCCs Facebook Page. Various announcements and information updates are posted on the page, for example, when the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya* is active or inactive. Also the SCC leader votes in the Poll on SCC Website. A new challenge is that the traditional SCCs (often composed only of adults) have to encourage young people to join the SCCs who are conversant with the internet and posting messages. These young people can help with the online communications.

Another challenge is that needy SCC members in rural areas or in the slums may not have the access to the internet to post their requests. This reflects the gap between the economically richer and the poorer SCCs members as well.

Then follows a lengthy phone 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 sometimes consult the SCCs Coordinator in the diocese that the request is coming from and get his/her recommendation. This insures that the financial contribution is coordinated within the diocesan and parish pastoral plan.

When a SCC representative comes to receive the small contribution from the special SCCs 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. Part of the “Guidelines” is that this representative is an active member of the SCC, not just a young person who happens to be doing private business in Nairobi on that day. This is a time for prayer and a discussion on the meaning of SCCs, the activities of SCCs, helping the needy and self-reliance. The list of contributors from the SCC itself is examined and discussed.¹³⁶¹ 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. Another example: 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

¹³⁶¹ Sometimes this list is scanned and sent by email.

just a small grant for a needy cause, but developing the overall life and activities of outreaching and mission service SCCs.

The SCCs are encouraged to send a thank you message as a text message or a comment on our SCCs Facebook Page. A recent development is that the SCC leader reports on the use of the money by posting a message on the SCCs Facebook Page or by a phone call.

We have expanded the use of this *Mfuko wa Jumuiya* 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. Books and DVDs for the Meru Diocese SCCs Library.
4. Production of six copies of theses and long essays on SCCs for libraries in Nairobi.
5. Travel expenses for journalists writing on SCCs.
6. Repair of houses of SCCs members burnt down by thieves.
7. Help a needy SCC member to build a house.
8. Help to buy county council shoe shining stalls as a self-reliance project for SCCs handicapped members rather than their begging in the streets.
9. Buying a keyboard for a SCC Choir.
10. Build an outdoor toilet for a needy SCC member.
11. Buy a wheel chair for a Kenyan soldier was fighting in the Peacekeeping Force in South Somalia, was injured and had his two legs amputated.
12. Hospital bill for a burn victim.
13. Towards expenses of printing *SCCs Formation Manual* for Meru Diocese, Kenya.
14. Producing radio programs on SCCs for Kenyatta University KU FM.
15. Recovery of two members attacked by bandits and seriously injured and their livestock taken in Isiolo, a drought area in Northern Kenya.
16. Food, water and other basic necessities in Marsabit, a drought area in Northern Kenya.
17. T Shirts for the Reigners of YSCCs Team at Kenyatta University.
18. Grinding Machine (*posho* mill) in drought area of Lodwar Diocese.
19. Assistance to over 100 displaced people living in the compound at St. Vincent Catholic Church Parish in Baringo County in Eldoret Diocese after the local cattle rustling and tribal fighting.
20. Assistance to Kenyan refugees in Moroto Diocese, Uganda who have fled from their homes in Baringo County due to cattle rustling.
21. Assistance to a Ugandan woman in Nairobi with a spinal disability. Now a widow and with no money for rent, we are giving travel expenses for her and her five children to return to their original home in Uganda. This is in the practice of almsgiving during this Lenten season.
22. Contribute to the outstanding bill of a SCC member who is patient in a hospital and waiting to be discharged.
23. Contribute to the outstanding hospital bill of a SCC member (father of 6 children) who was shot in the stomach by a stray bullet during the post-election violence in August, 2017.
24. Contribute to the outstanding hospital bill of a SCC member who was knocked down by a vehicle and broken her leg while she tried to run away from tear gas during the 2017 post-election violence in the city center in Nairobi.
25. Help refugees from the neighboring country of South Sudan who are pouring into Northern Uganda.
26. Support a poultry project for 30 widows in Moroto, Uganda to curb out poverty among them

and provide self-employment for their members.

27. Help one of the refugees from the neighboring country of South Sudan who has to undergo an urgent medical operation in Kotido, Uganda remove a bullet in her body after local violence.
 28. Help women with fistula problems and albino girls who have fled their homes for fear of being sacrificed and their body parts used for rituals.
 29. Help SCC members in the Kawangware Area of Nairobi, Kenya whose houses were set on fire in the riots between Jubilee and NASA supporters in the post-election violence in October, 2017.
 30. Help a SCC youth leader to help pay the bail to release his father from jail.
 31. Ongoing help for “the neediest cases” – people who have one bad incident after another such as sickness, injury, robbery, unemployment, etc.
 32. Help St. Charles Lwanga SCC in St John the Baptist Catholic Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese to contribute \$100 to a Rwandese widow with two grandchildren who is an illegal refugee in Kenya and is being deported back to her home country and wants to buy iron sheets for her new house in Rwanda.
 33. Help St. Monica SCC in Nakuru Diocese to contribute \$100 to an elderly homeless Ugandan refugee/widower to build a shelter.
 34. Assist the Young Adult SCC at Dandora Parish to prepared lunch for visitors from the Fifth Missio-sponsored Network Small Christian Communities Africa Workshop.
 35. Assist the treasury of Pax Romana Kenya that goes by the name Kenya Movement of Catholic Professionals.
 36. Assist long time SCC member with school fees for her granddaughter.
 37. Assist SCC member with research grant for his Diploma Paper on “Lack of Young People in SCCs.”
 38. Buying 35 plastic chairs for a weekly Alcoholic Anonymous Meeting in a parish in Nairobi.
 39. Rebuild homes destroyed in a fire in Nairobi.
 40. Help buy a computer to spread teachings on SCCs and Pontifical Missionary Childhood in Uganda.
 41. Complete building a library to enable our members of our parish, especially the youth, to access reading materials as a way of evangelization in Muranga Diocese.
 42. Build house for retired widower in Moroto, Uganda.
 43. A Fish Breeding Project in Lodwar Diocese, Kenya.
 44. Mosquito nets to combat the terrible disease of malaria in Homa Bay Diocese, Kenya.
- NOTE:** On 15 September, 2019 the Kenya Government launched the test malaria vaccine called RTS,S or Mosquirix in Homa Bay, Kenya. It is being administered on children at the ages of six, seven, nine and 24 months. The vaccine, the first of its type, is also being used in Ghana and Malawi.
45. Relocate families whose homes we destroyed in the mud slides due to heavy rains in Kahuhoini, Muranga Diocese, Kenya in November, 2019.
 46. Assist a four-year-old girl sexually abused by her Father in Nairobi to relocate to her grandparents’ home in Kakamega.
 47. Assist the volunteer catechist serving four Small Christian Communities of South Sudanese refugees living in Nairobi.
 48. Help a little girl with a kidney infection to vacate Mbagathi County Hospital in Nairobi before it is turned into a hospital exclusively for patients with coronavirus.
 49. Money to help a student at Tangaza for internet bundles to do online research for a paper on “Online Small Christian Communities.”
 50. Money to help a YPSCC animator for internet bundles to post the daily Scripture readings on different SCC Facebook Pages.
 51. Money for internet bundles to coordinate “Online Small Christian Communities” during the pandemic.

52. Ecumenical outreach: helping a member of a Pentecostal Church in Karen with many debts and family problems.
53. During the lockdown sending money to needy families in Lugazi Diocese, Uganda through mobile money vendors.
54. During the pandemic helping starving people in Malindi Diocese.
55. During the pandemic paying the rent of a poor refugee catechist from South Sudan living in Nairobi.
56. Used clothes to the refugees in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya.
57. Diabetic medicine for diabetic Suzanna in Tanzania.

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.

The dioceses are helped on a strict rotational basis without favoritism and discrimination. After a complete round of all the dioceses, we start a second round. When there are multiple requests from the same diocese we follow the principle of *first come, first serve*. A second or third request from the same diocese is put on the waiting list.

In February, 2016 the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya* helped the Kenyan dioceses of Nairobi, Kitale, Nakuru, Machakos, Murang'a, Embu, Kisumu (twice), Ngong (three times), 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.

In September and October, 2017 the *Mfuko wa Jumuiya* helped 77 specific SCCs in Catholic dioceses in Eastern Africa as follows:

Kenyan dioceses of Bungoma, Eldoret, Embu, Garissa, Homa Bay, Isiolo, Kakamega, Kericho, Kisumu, Kitale, Kisii, Kitui, Lodwar, Machakos, Malindi, Maralal, Marsabit, Meru, Military Ordinand, Mombasa, Muranga, Nairobi (3 -- St. John the Baptist, Riruta (2), St. Peter Claver), Nakuru, Ngong (2), Nyahururu and Nyeri.

26/29

Ugandan dioceses of **Arua, Fort Portal, Gulu, Hoima, Jinja, Kabale, Kampala, Kasana-Luwero, Kotido, Kyinda-Mityana, Lira, Lugazi, Moroto, Nebbi, Soroti, Tororo** 16 19 missing Kasese, Masaka, Mbarara

Tanzanian dioceses of **Arusha, Bukoba, Bunda, Dar es Saalam, Dodoma, Geita, Ifakara, Iringa, Kahama, Kayanga** (separately a special dam project), **Kigoma, Lindi, Mahenge, Mbeya, Mbinga** (special cattle dip project), **Mbulu**, Morogoro, Moshi, **Mpanda**, Mtwara, **Musoma** (bado: 10 fistula women and four albino girls), **Mwanza, Njombe, Rulenge-Ngara, Same, Shinyanga, Singida, Sumbawanga, Tabora, Tanga, Tunduru Masasi** 27 32

South Sudan dioceses of **Rumbek** 1 1

Rwandese dioceses of **Butare, Gikongoro, Kabganyi, Kibungo** Ruhengeri (parish hall) 4 5

During 2016 the focus was 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!!!¹³⁶²

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.¹³⁶³ 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.

¹³⁶² Michael Kyenze, Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, 15 May, 2013.

¹³⁶³ 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 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:

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.¹³⁶⁴

Makusanya report that tithing is already used in Arusha Archdiocese, Bukoba Diocese and Dar es Salaam Archdiocese in Tanzania.¹³⁶⁵

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

¹³⁶⁴ Edwin Makusanya, *Efficient Financial Management*, p. 118.

¹³⁶⁵ Edwin Makusanya in a conversation with the author in Nairobi, Kenya on 13 May, 2014.

then sent to the dioceses.¹³⁶⁶

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."

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.¹³⁶⁷

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

¹³⁶⁶ "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

¹³⁶⁷ Based on a conversation with Tanzanian diocesan priest Father Augustino Mapambano at Kowak parish on 9 July, 2014.

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.

17. The Role of SCCs in the Synodal Church in Africa

The 2021 – 2024 Synodal Process in the Catholic Church introduced a new chapter in the history of SCCs in Eastern Africa.

Synodality: Pope Francis emphasizes the theme of synodality that is embodied in the SCCs. He has given impetus to the synodality that was introduced in Vatican II -- the entire Catholic Church walking, discerning and evangelizing together. This is an on-going process of listening, discussion, dialog, debate, discernment and proposed pastoral responses that builds on collegiality and subsidiarity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. 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.” This process of synodality is a journeying together. There are many relevant metaphors. One is the process in the Story of “The Road to Emmaus” in *Luke 24*. Another is the famous African proverb: *If you want to walk fast walk alone. If you want to walk far walk together*. SCC members participate in this journeying together through the use of the “See,” “Discern” and “Act” method or process and various forms of pastoral theological reflection and decision-making that start with our life experiences.

Some synodal moments in the *New Testament*:

1. The two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

Council of Jerusalem: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements,” *Acts 15:28*

“The community of believers was of one mind and heart” (*Acts of the Apostles 4:32*)

Seven Steps in a Synodal Process Gathering

One hour if there are ten participants. **NOTE:** If participants share for less than three minutes/two minutes each, the total time will be less.

1. Opening Prayer: “We stand before you, Holy Spirit.”
2. The facilitator gives some background to the Synodal Process. Then the facilitator invites participants during this gathering to speak about/reflect on the theme or topic of _____. Share your personal response and a community response. What have you encountered in journeying together/walking together?
3. Participants reflect silently for three minutes preparing their input. Open oneself to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is one reason why the synodal process is different and can be very creative.
4. Each person speaks for a maximum of three minutes. There is no cross talk.
5. Three more minutes of silent reflection. Each person takes private notes.
6. After re-reading their notes, each person shares for a further two minutes whatever has enlightened or resonated with them from the sharing of the other members. The participants are invited to consider what the Holy Spirit seemed to be calling them to, what paths are being opened.
7. Free-form time for “discerning and elaborating the synthesis.”

18. 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.”¹³⁶⁸ 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.”¹³⁶⁹

Here are 21 future challenges, priorities ¹³⁷⁰ and actions for SCCs in Eastern Africa based on our in-depth critical evaluation/assessment, ongoing research/surveys 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. Choose good leaders in SCCs in Eastern Africa.^{1371 1372}

¹³⁶⁸ “Mission of AMECEA,” AMECEA Website, retrieved on 11 March, 2012, <http://www.amecea.org/index.php/component/content/article/2-amecea/2-vision>

¹³⁶⁹ Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way,” p. 125.

¹³⁷⁰ These are closely linked. A challenge becomes a priority for concrete action. A challenge or problem or difficulty can also become a new opportunity. Pope Francis specifically says, “if you have a problem turn it into a challenge and then turn that challenge into an opportunity.”

¹³⁷¹ 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.

¹³⁷² As I traveled around Eastern Africa doing research, it was lay people (99% of the SCC members) who especially complained about bad leaders. The topic of “How to choose good leaders in SCCs” is discussed and discerned regularly. Some challenging questions:

This is within the context of committed, ongoing leadership of priests, religious and laypeople within a pastoral plan.

1. 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 lay pastoral agents as part of lay ecclesial ministry.¹³⁷³

1. “Do we choose charismatic leaders (good talkers, good presenters, showy people), who then do nothing?

2. Do we favor men over women?

3. Do we choose a leader because of his or her finances?

4. Do we choose a leader because of his or her ethnicity. Ugandan Comboni missionary priest Father Raphael Wokorach, MCCJ puts it bluntly: “Many SCCs are dysfunctional due to poor leadership because of tribalism.” Conversation with the author, Nairobi, Kenya, 14 April, 2018.

5. How seriously are a candidate’s personal qualities considered?

6. Can Christians who cannot receive communion be elected leaders?

¹³⁷³ 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.

Although academic formation is indispensable to lay ecclesial ministry formation, human, spiritual and pastoral formation are also essential components of formation for ministry.

2. Train SCC leaders¹³⁷⁴/animators/facilitators/coordinators in animation, facilitation¹³⁷⁵ and coordination skills including collaborative ministry.¹³⁷⁶ Set up Mobile SCC

¹³⁷⁴ 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_tracking_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

¹³⁷⁵ Two concrete examples of Life Experiences or Case Studies of facilitation skills in SCCs:

1. Every year on the Saturday before Ash Wednesday representatives of the 74 SCCs in Holy Trinity Parish in Kariobangi North, Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya have an all day SCCs Facilitation Skills Workshop to learn how to use the booklet in the annual Kenya Lenten Campaign coordinated by the KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. For their weekly meetings of the SCCs during five weeks of Lent these representatives develop skills in facilitating the three step reflection process or method of: “See” (concrete story); “Judge” (situational analysis including the Sunday scripture readings); and “Act” (reflection questions). These SCC meetings during Lent start with daily life and then go to the *Bible*.

2. Priests, seminarians, religious, catechists and lay leaders learn facilitation skills to conduct the elections of new leaders in the SCCs in Eastern Africa that occur every three years. Using prayer, a review of the leadership history in the SCC, a discussion of the different gifts of leadership and a democratic process, SCC members elect a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer as well as the leaders of specialized lay ministries. Attention is given to gender balance, leaders from different ethnic groups and rotational leadership. This is not like a political election, but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

¹³⁷⁶ 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

Training Teams on the Eastern Africa, national, diocesan, deanery, parish and outstation levels.¹³⁷⁷ Use the mass media and the social media like the internet, radio,¹³⁷⁸ and TV for these SCCs training programs.

3. A newer priority is training of SCC members in computer and internet skills for evangelization that includes: writing for the internet;¹³⁷⁹ preparing Powerpoint Presentations on SCCs; the use of online “Search” features especially Google and searching within documents;¹³⁸⁰ and the use of social media. “Go digital or die” is a popular universal saying. How is this influencing our SCCs ministry and evangelization?
4. Ongoing formation and training of all SCC members with special focus on the meaning and importance of SCC, theological formation and pastoral formation on the specific SCC Model of Church, collaborative ministry, *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection*, family catechesis, justice and peace, social awareness, inclusiveness and equality, Jesus Christ’s methods of evangelizing¹³⁸¹ and mission outreach.
5. Encourage more courses and workshops on SCCs in the normal curriculum of the major seminaries, theological institutes,¹³⁸² universities¹³⁸³ and houses of formation of

¹³⁷⁷ 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.

¹³⁷⁸ 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).”

¹³⁷⁹ This includes basic writing, editing and proofreading skills.

¹³⁸⁰ Many people do not know basic Search methods and techniques such as CTRL + F for finding data.

¹³⁸¹ 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>

¹³⁸² Sister Josée Ngalula, RSA teaches dogmatic/systematic theology at Le Théologat Institut Saint Eugen de Nazenod in Kinshasa, DRC. Of the 44 hours in her course on Ecclesiology, eight hours (four two hour periods) are on SCCs.

¹³⁸³ 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

both men and women that include some kind of planned practical action and social outreach.¹³⁸⁴ There should be a focus on Pastoral Theology.¹³⁸⁵ 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, Bishop 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.¹³⁸⁶

A new strategy is proposed for courses in the Pastoral (Practical) Theology Department. These courses can be Cycle Courses that are offered every two years¹³⁸⁷ 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 Seminar¹³⁸⁸ 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.¹³⁸⁹

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

¹³⁸⁴ Sometimes the starting point is a single talk or presentation to get the process started.

¹³⁸⁵ Pope Francis stresses 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.

¹³⁸⁶ 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.

¹³⁸⁷ 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).

¹³⁸⁸ As an example, Hekima University 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.

¹³⁸⁹ 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 Community Ministries (Lumko). Its purpose is to build up SCCs, develop parish groups, improve collaborative ministry and empower groups for action.

- d. Some can be two, three or four day workshops: a single workshop¹³⁹⁰ or a series of workshops.¹³⁹¹
- 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 priest¹³⁹²) 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.”
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¹³⁹⁰ 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.

¹³⁹¹ 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 Kuezea 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.

¹³⁹² 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.

¹³⁹³ 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.

“[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

6. Encourage more support and commitment from bishops and other ecclesial leadership across the board.
7. Encourage more quality participation of priests in animating, facilitating and coordinating SCCs.
8. Promote the use of the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” (Pastoral Spiral) process/ methodology in SCCs (including Bible sharing/Bible reflection and social/cultural analysis) to reflect on the deeper issues of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa leading to concrete action so that this process becomes a central part of the life and ministry of SCCs. A key part is implementing the recommendations of *Africa’s Commitment*, the Apostolic Exhortation on the Second African Synod. This includes increasing the involvement (responsibility and duty) of SCC coordinators/ animators/leaders in issues of civic education,¹³⁹⁴ advocacy and good governance. This also includes specifically and concretely to connect, relate and apply the *Bible* (Gospel) to our daily lives and experience in Africa.

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.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).

¹³⁹⁴ 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 civique dans RD Congo” (“The Role of Basic Living Ecclesial Communities [SCCs] in Civic Education in DRC”).

9. Challenge SCC members on the grassroots to face the “diseases” of tribalism, negative ethnicity, nepotism, excessive nationalism, classism (prejudice or discrimination on the basis of social class), sexism and excessive individualism/privacy in their SCCs. This includes facilitating healing and reconciliation services, rituals and ceremonies that are integrated into SCC masses, *Bible Services* and meetings.
10. Encourage young adults, youth (including college and high school students) and children to form their own inculturated SCCs. This is closely connected to pastoral youth ministry.¹³⁹⁵
11. Promote strategies of self-reliance and sustainability in SCCs. This includes financial support of SCC activities and parish activities and developing self-reliance projects.
12. Encourage SCC members to be more active in the New Evangelization and deeper-evangelization following the contemporary signs of the times in Africa.
13. Use the social media/new media more to promote SCCs especially in involving youth. Encourage SCC members to use the 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. “Go digital or die” is a popular universal saying. How is this influencing our SCCs ministry and evangelization?
14. Continue to explore in depth how the praxis and theology of SCCs are an integral part of a relevant and credible African Ecclesiology based on the Church as Family of God. This is within the context of the AMECEA priority of developing a theological framework of addressing key issues and challenges of ‘New Evangelization in Solidarity in the AMECEA countries.’”
15. Produce and circulate more relevant, African-related resource materials (print, audio-visual and online)¹³⁹⁶ for SCC members including simple booklets and leaflets on the

¹³⁹⁵ 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). This includes SCCs of youth in colleges and high schools (YSCCs).

¹³⁹⁶ Vincent Mwakhwawa 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 Mwakhwawa, “Learning More about Small Christian Communities in Westminster Archdiocese, London, England,” SCCs Website, retrieved on 14 August, 2012, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/europe/england/206-learning-more-about-small-christian-communities-in-westminster-archdiocese-london-england.html>

Bible (including lectionary-based Faith-sharing/faith reflection resources¹³⁹⁷), Small Apostolic Group Faith-sharing/faith reflection, the Catholic Church's social teaching and new ministries. These materials should be produced in Swahili¹³⁹⁸ and other local languages in Eastern Africa.¹³⁹⁹

16. Promote better communications and sharing of SCC experiences, information and resources within the AMECEA Region, that is, within the nine countries in Eastern Africa.¹⁴⁰⁰

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>

¹³⁹⁷ 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* (Agency for Evangelization, Westminster Archdiocese, England); *Give Us This Day: Daily Prayer for Today's Catholic; Magnificat; Living with Christ; Sunday By Sunday; Celebration; Faith Circles*, *Explore, PrayerTime* and *The Word Among Us*, – 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.

¹³⁹⁸ In production is a simple, how to-do SCC booklet tentatively called *Mwongozo wa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo*.

¹³⁹⁹ 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.

¹⁴⁰⁰ At the AMECEA Plenary Assembly in Nairobi in July, 2011, Pengo pointed out that one of the drawbacks for the solidarity of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa is that many Catholics on the grassroots do not easily see the link between AMECEA (that comes across as a big organization of Catholic bishops at the top) and their SCCs on the local level. He

17. Promote better communications and sharing of SCC experiences, information and resources¹⁴⁰¹ 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).
18. 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.
19. 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 2017 or 2018 to bring people together, share their SCCs experiences and improve networks.
20. Emphasize ongoing evaluation and revitalization¹⁴⁰² of the life and activities of SCCs that includes realistic assessment, honest self-criticism, critical reflection and openness

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.

¹⁴⁰¹ 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.

¹⁴⁰² 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.

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,

to new actions especially in applying the last step (“Pastoral Planning”) of the Pastoral Spiral. This is linked to the implementation/follow-up/follow down.

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.”¹⁴⁰³ 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.¹⁴⁰⁴

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,¹⁴⁰⁵ while, at the same time, developing a distinctively African model of Small Christian Communities as a new way of becoming church.¹⁴⁰⁶

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.

¹⁴⁰³ Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesigenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (Maryknoll, N. Y. Orbis Books, 1986), p. 2.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way, pp. 124-125.

¹⁴⁰⁵ See Fritz Lobinger, “What SCCs and CEBs,” p. 287-297.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way,” p. 125.

19. 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 61 years of AMECEA (1961-2022). 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 especially the first generation pioneer bishops such as Kalilombe and Mwoleka. “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/becoming 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. At the end of this year 2022 we continue to celebrate the 60-year Anniversary of opening 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 has analyzed and reflected on many aspects of SCCs that are not a movement in the Catholic Church, but the church on the move. We are preparing to celebrate the Golden Jubilee (1973-2023) of SCCs in AMECEA Region in December, 2023.

Some highlights: Moving from inwardly looking prayer groups to authentic SCCs that are outwardly looking. Eastern Africa SCCs that are a pastoral, ecclesial 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 (YSCCs) and Young People SCCs (YPSCCs). Using the Pastoral Spiral (“See,” “Discern” 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 contextualized, 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*. Now it is no longer just the Catholic Church scrutinizing the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel. It is also the signs of the times scrutinizing the Catholic Church in the light of the Gospel.

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 pastoral model of church, SCCs can emphasize deeper biblical reflection and more regular use of the Pastoral Spiral to engage effectively in 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 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 was 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 newer priorities were participating in the continent-wide 2015-2016 African Year of Reconciliation (ATR) and the 2015-2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy. A recent priority is participating in the 2018 Synod of Bishops on Young People and its follow-up.

SCCs constantly read the "signs of the times" and respond according.¹⁴⁰⁷ So SCCs in Africa evolved during the Cov-19 pandemic from March, 2020 to the present. 1000s of online/virtual/digital SCCs began using Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype, Google Meet and other social media platforms. Now hybrid SCCs are more common. SCCs involvement in digital evangelization include online/virtual/digital meetings, seminars, workshops and webinars using Zoom and other social media platforms.

Now our SCCs are involved in Synodality and the Synodal Church in Africa from 2021 to 2024. "Synod" is from Greek word meaning "assembly." In the Catholic Church today it refers to a series of gatherings of bishops that have been extended to all the People of God (including laywomen and laymen). Pope Francis describes it a "walking together, a journeying together." Everyone participates – young and old, women and men, lay people, priests, Sisters, Brothers, Bishops. Everyone has a voice. The theme of these meetings is "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission." The purpose is to listen to peoples' concerns, questions and recommendations for changes and then to renew and reinvigorate the Catholic Church around the world.

We are now celebrating the Golden Jubilee (1973-2023) of SCCs in the AMECEA Region. Officially it is December, 2023.

¹⁴⁰⁷ This is documented in our online SCC Poll whose "Introduction" states:

Welcome to a popular section of our website — SCC POLLS — that encourages participation and interaction. We have done careful research on, and analyzed feedback from surveys, questionnaires, workshops, courses, interviews, personal conversations, articles, books, email messages, Facebook Pages, Zoom Faith Sharing and Gospel Sharing, visits to SCCs and conferences on SCCs. We have studied carefully the contemporary signs of the times such as the Covid-19 pandemic and pastoral changes in our parishes and dioceses such as the 2021-2024 Synodal Process. We have identified 1635 important characteristics or features of SCCs around the world mainly provided by Small Christian Community (SCCs) members themselves: 809 on the dynamics/process/principles/classifications of SCCs and 826 on the activities/content/outreach/practical action of SCCs. The poll uses the statement — "The best part of my Small Christian Community is..." followed by six choices that are taken from these 1635 important characteristics or features of SCCs. These six choices reflect both the inner life and the public life of our SCC Model of Church. We change the poll every two months.

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 Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and former 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 families, Small Christian Communities, outstations/mission stations, parishes, deaneries, dioceses, and on the national level.”¹⁴⁰⁸ With the help of the Holy Spirit let us response boldly and creatively.

“*Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo, oyee!*” “Small Christian Communities, hurray!”

¹⁴⁰⁸ “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-theafrican-union-among-priorities-of-ethio-cardinal-designate>

APPENDIX: 28 Online E-Resource Materials¹⁴⁰⁹ on the On-going Formation and Training of Small Christian Community (SCC) Leaders and 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 28 basic printed SCCs E-Resource materials that are available free online on the SCCs Website:

1. **Checklist of 16 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today**
2. **32 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. **Utaratibu 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,” “Discern,” 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 Communities (SCCs) Priority in a Parish or Diocese in Eastern Africa**
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)**

¹⁴⁰⁹ 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.

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**
24. **Constitution of St. John the Evangelist Small Christian Community (Nairobi, Kenya)**
25. **Constitution of St. Joseph Small Christian Community (Nairobi, Kenya)**
26. **Facilitation Skills in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) (to be added)**
27. **Leadership Skills in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) (to be added)**
28. **We Create the Path by Walking: Online Spiritual Retreat for Young Adult Seekers on "Go Apart with Jesus Christ"**

1. Checklist of 16 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 16 Common Activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today." In SCC meetings, courses, workshops and seminars we ask: How many of the following activities¹⁴¹⁰ 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.¹⁴¹¹ Starting with the *Bible*. Can be part of a physical meeting of a SCC or an online SCC or a hybrid gathering.¹⁴¹² Normally it is weekly lectionary-based faith-sharing that connects the Gospel to daily life.
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," "Discern" and "Act."
5. SCC as a Special Group for Faith-sharing, Formation, Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR), Study (*Bible*, Creed, the Sacraments, Mysteries of the Rosary,¹⁴¹³ a Catholic

¹⁴¹⁰ 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.

¹⁴¹¹ 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.

¹⁴¹² Some SCCs have the Enthronement of the *Bible*. This service can take place in the home of one of the members of the SCC or during a specific event: a retreat, a Recollection Day, a workshop.

¹⁴¹³ In some SCCs the Religious Education Animator/Catechesis Animator teaches the meaning of the 20 mysteries of the rosary (the five JOYFUL MYSTERIES, the five

Church Document, *Constitutions* of a Religious Community, Religious Book, Film/Movie, DVD, Video, Audio Tape, etc.),¹⁴¹⁴ Counseling, etc.

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. Or the opposite: actions and situations of alienation, corruption, discrimination, division, effects of illiteracy, exclusion, favoritism, inequality, injustice, marginalization, negative ethnicity and tribalism.¹⁴¹⁵
8. Projects of a SCC such as self-reliance projects (self-generating activities)¹⁴¹⁶ 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. Sometimes the SCC members sit together in church. 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, songs and liturgical dancing. Specific SCCs are responsible for the “Prayer of the Faithful” (“Petitions or “General

LUMINOUS MYSTERIES, the five SORROWFUL MYSTERIES, and the five GLORIOUS MYSTERIES) especially during the months of May and October.

¹⁴¹⁴ 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.

¹⁴¹⁵ One student at Tangaza University College in Nairobi wrote his 2017 SCCs Practicum and Course Paper on “Negative Ethnicity in St. Albert the Great SCC, Matunda Parish, Kakamega Diocese, Kenya. He applied the three steps of “See,” “Judge” and “Act” to the fighting between the members of the Nandi and Kikuyu Ethnic Groups in the SCC after the 2008 Post-Election Violence and their reconciliation through table fellowship.

¹⁴¹⁶ 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.

Intercessions” or “Bidding Prayers” or “Universal Prayers”).¹⁴¹⁷ 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 and even deposit the money in the bank on Mondays or Tuesdays.

10. Sacraments such as Eucharist¹⁴¹⁸ (including first Communion), Baptism, Reconciliation, Marriage and Anointing of the Sick celebrated in a SCC. The SCC Mass (*Jumuiya* Mass)¹⁴¹⁹ includes a Shared Homily.¹⁴²⁰ Sometimes the *Jumuiya* members write out the petitions in advance and read them out loud. Communion (a designated Eucharist Minister covers a group of SCCs) is brought to sick members in the SCC. In dioceses like Moshi, Tanzania the SCCs are deeply involved in the bereavement rites and funerals of SCC members.

¹⁴¹⁷ 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.

¹⁴¹⁸ “Eucharist” is a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving” or “gratitude.” Daily Mass (and especially Sunday Mass – “the Lord’s Day”) is a “Thanksgiving Memorial” of Jesus Christ instituting the sacrament of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Catholics thank God for what has been done for them in Christ, God's saving activity. Research indicates that 95 % of the Catholics in Eastern Africa do not know the meaning of “Eucharist.”

There is a story called *I’ll Never Forget Again*. In a mass at the Daughters of St. Paul in Nairobi, Kenya, I explained the meaning of “Eucharist” and stressed that only 5% know this. After Mass, a devout Indian Catholic woman came up to me and said, “Father, all my life I have been in the 95%. Starting today I am in the 5%. I’ll Never Forget Again.”

¹⁴¹⁹ 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.

¹⁴²⁰ The ideal in an interactive Shared Homily is not that each person just gives his or her personal reflection in turn. Rather, in the whole interactive experience, there is a genuine sharing and ongoing enrichment where each new reflection builds on and deepens the earlier reflections. This is part of the Synodal Process.

Another style is the Dialog Homily when the homilist/ animator/facilitator promotes interaction with the congregation participants. He or she invites them to make comments on the Scripture readings and uses questions, proverbs and sayings (first and second parts) and open discussion. This is a conversational style, not a strict preaching style.

Sometimes the dialog involves silence. In a homily on “The Importance of the Catholic Saints in Our Lives,” the homilist can mention different types of saints and leave a minute of silence for the congregation/participants to silently reflect on their own examples: Saint of one’s birthday; name saint, patron or patroness of one’s SCC or apostolic association or parish church; patron saint and patroness saint of mission; patron saint or patroness saint/founder of a religious congregation or society.

11. Celebrations in a SCC (food and drink, meals, entertainment, singing, dancing, storytelling, plays and other cultural activities, etc.). Some parishes and individual have an Annual SCCs Day. Some have festivals centered around a specific theme like the “Year of Mercy.”
12. Regular meetings of SCC leaders, coordinators and animators.¹⁴²¹
13. Ongoing formation and training workshops/seminars of SCC leaders, animators, facilitators and members.¹⁴²²
14. Retreats/Recollection Days¹⁴²³/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.
16. Installation or induction of new leaders. Done in a variety of ways. These leaders are usually installed or commissioned in an official church ceremony presided over by the pastor or the bishop. Sometimes a letter from the bishop is read.

More information is available on the:

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “SCCs Facebook Page”
www.smallchristiancommunities.org

Updated: 12 December, 2023

¹⁴²¹ Many parishes have monthly meetings of SCC leaders, coordinators and animators.

¹⁴²² 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.

¹⁴²³ There is a “SCC way” of having a Recollection Day. The emphasis is on praying, listening, reflecting and sharing together in a small community context or setting. Ideally there should be *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection* (for example, the Gospel of the following Sunday) in small communities. The priest should not preach/give a homily during mass, but inviting Faith-sharing from the participants. This is the difference between a teaching church and a listening church.

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 1973-2022 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) at the weekly physical gatherings.¹⁴²⁴ Some SCCs are larger depending on whether they are located in the rural or urban centers. The Online SCCs can have more members.
2. The SCC usually meets every week.¹⁴²⁵ Some SCCs meet every two weeks.
3. The SCC meets during the week outside of the Sunday Eucharist/"Sunday Service Without a Priest."

¹⁴²⁴ Mwoleka describes SCCs as "communities with a human face," that is, members sit around in a small enough circle that they can see one another and share together.

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.

¹⁴²⁵ 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.

4. The SCC meets in the home of one of its members usually on a rotation basis.
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. Each SCC tries “to live into” the name and meaning 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.¹⁴²⁶ 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 Sunday¹⁴²⁷ is chosen (becoming a

¹⁴²⁶ 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.

¹⁴²⁷ Perhaps 80% of the SCCs in Eastern Africa use this method.

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 24th 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.

We emphasize that in our weekly Lectionary-based Faith Sharing in our Small Christian Communities (SCCs) we connect/relate/apply the Gospel to our daily lives. A perfect example is the "Parable of the Lost Coin" (*Luke* 15) that was the Gospel (15 September, 2019 -- 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C) and this true story. A mother in

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.

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,¹⁴²⁸ sick people, needy and poor people, people with HIV AND 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.

Detroit, Michigan, USA had 10 children -- girls and boys -- who had finished school and lived on their own. Her husband died. The widow keep the tradition alive of once a year having a big family reunion when all 10 children would return to the family home for a festive meal. One daughter drifted away from the family and stopped communicating. So only nine children came back home for their yearly family reunion. Years passed. Then two days before their annual reunion the mother gets a phone call from her "lost" daughter. "I am coming home tomorrow, Mom," she says. The mother is overjoyed and says, "We have found our lost daughter (parallel to finding the lost coin). Let us rejoice and celebrate."

Some SCCs begin their weekly meeting by summarizing the reflections on the previous Sunday and end their meeting by reflecting on the following Sunday.

Some SCCs use the Gospel of the day.

Some SCCs take one book of the *Bible* like *St. Luke's Gospel* or the *Acts of the Apostles* and reflect on one chapter per week.

Perhaps 20% of the SCCs in Eastern Africa uses one of these last methods.

¹⁴²⁸ 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 (*sadaka ya rambirambi* in Swahili). But it was the eldest brother (firstborn) 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.

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 (the collection is called *sadaka ya rambirambi* in Swahili) 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.
- The SCC is responsible for assisting in the Sunday Mass in the parish, subparish or outstation on a rotation basis.¹⁴²⁹ 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, songs and liturgical dancing. Specific SCCs are responsible for the “Prayer of the Faithful” (“General Intercessions”).¹⁴³⁰ Specific SCCs encourage the youth participate in the small plays or dramas/role plays that take place during mass.
18. The SCC has various pastoral responsibilities, decisions, and activities in the parish and in the SCC especially related to its members’ religious education and preparation for receiving the sacraments.
 19. The SCC analyzes justice and peace issues with concrete follow-up on the SCC, parish, deanery and diocesan levels.
 20. The SCC has opportunities for Special Study/Instruction (on the *Bible*, the Creed, the Sacraments, Mysteries of the Rosary, a Catholic Church Document, a Religious Book, a Devotional Book, etc.), Counseling, etc.
 21. The SCC has opportunities for Retreats/Spiritual Renewal and Recollection Days/ Pilgrimages.
 22. There is an annual SCC Day on the parish, sub parish or outstation levels. This includes the Eucharist, a meal and sharing SCC activities.

¹⁴²⁹ In parishes in Malawi this is called the “Week of Service” and covers all the masses and responsibilities of the week.

¹⁴³⁰ Zambian diocesan priest Father Febian Pikitani 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 Pikitani in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 August, 2012.

23. The SCC help to promote and nurture vocations and ministries at various levels of the life of the church.
24. The SCC elects its own leaders in a democratic process of the church from below.
25. These leaders are installed or commissioned in an official church ceremony presided over by the pastor or the bishop. Sometimes a letter from the bishop is read.
26. The SCC officially participates in the parish structures as a “communion of communities” (or “community of communities” or “network of communities”) pastoral, ecclesial 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 ongoing formation and training sessions (workshops and seminars) of the SCC leaders animators and facilitators, and sometimes of all the SCCs members.
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.

More information is available on the:

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page”
www.smallchristiancommunities.org

Updated: 12 December, 2022

3. Lay Ecclesial Ministries in Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa

Over the years 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 was 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 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 or induction.

There are various leadership models, types and styles of lay ministry. In the spirit of being a new way of being and becoming church, the emphasis is on service rather than authority, especially servant leadership. A lay minister is a servant of the servants. A lay minister is not a boss. There are two distinct roles. Sometimes this lay ministry is to animate, facilitate and coordinate activities within the SCC. Sometimes this lay ministry represents the SCC at the outstation, sub-parish and parish levels.

It is common for a SCC to have a Chairperson,¹⁴³¹ 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. To have all six positions in one SCC can be overly bureaucratic.

Specific lay ecclesial ministries go by many different names, types and responsibilities.¹⁴³² One SCC member may be responsible for more than one ministry. They cover the following:

1. Liturgy or Liturgical Animator/Leader or Prayer Animator/Leader with specific responsibility for leading, facilitating and animating the weekly *Bible Service* and various prayers. Also called the “Minister of the Word” (*Mwalimu wa Neno* in Swahili), “Bible Animator,” Bible Leader” and the “Bible Coordinator.”¹⁴³³
2. Religious Education Animator/Catechesis Animator.
3. Family Life Animator.
4. Family Mentor. **NOTE:** The SCC should identify a mentor family that journeys with families facing challenges.
5. Adult Catechumenate (RCIA) Pastoral Accompanier.
6. Song/Music. Also called the Choir Animator and Choir Master.
7. Justice and Peace Animator.

¹⁴³¹ Called by many names as explained throughout this book. Some examples: *Mhudumu wa Wahudumu*.

¹⁴³² Particular countries and dioceses have particular ministries in the SCCs.

¹⁴³³ Many of these Liturgy or Liturgical Animator/Prayer Animators 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.

8. Marriage Ministers¹⁴³⁴ that goes by many names. Ideally includes a committed, experienced Catholic couple (alphabetically):
 1. Single Mother Pastoral Accompanier.
 2. Marriage Animators (before and after marriage like a Formation Animator). Includes Marriage Pastoral Accompaniers (before and after marriage). Also referred to as Marriage Mentors after marriage.¹⁴³⁵
 3. Marriage Counselor¹⁴³⁶ (after marriage).
9. Children Animator/Coordinator/Guardian.
10. Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) Coordinator (with focus on PMC SCCs).
11. Child Protection and Child Safeguarding Coordinator.
12. Young People (Youth/Young Adult) Animator/Facilitator. Ideally two people: A young adult and an older mentor.¹⁴³⁷
13. Matron and Patron of the YPSCCs/YSCCs/YASCCs and Children SCCs – adults from the Adult or Parent SCC (or *Mama Jumuyia*) who serve as the link persons, mentors and advisors to the young people small communities and children small communities.
14. University/College/Institute/High School Campus Minister Responsible for SCCs. Both chaplains and young people leaders.
15. Catholic Women’s Association (CWA) Representative.
16. Catholic Men’s Association (CMA) Representative.
17. Good Neighbor/Good Samaritan/Promoter of Community Spirit.¹⁴³⁸

¹⁴³⁴ This person works closely with movements and organizations such as (alphabetically) Couples for Christ, Family Enrichment Clubs, Marriage Encounter, Project Rachel and True Love Waits.

¹⁴³⁵ 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.

¹⁴³⁶ “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.

¹⁴³⁷ 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 Confirmation preparation process. It is hoped that the official sponsors continue this accompaniment after the reception of the sacrament.

¹⁴³⁸ 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 clean the street where they live, enjoy watching a big football (soccer) game together, having a street party with food, drinks, etc.

18. Servant of the Poor/Helper of the Needy/Coordinator of Charitable Works/CARITAS Representative/ St. Vincent de Paul Coordinator.
19. Health Servant/Volunteer Community Healthcare (CHC) Worker or Minister.¹⁴³⁹
20. Pro-Life Coordinator.
21. Projects/Development Coordinator.
22. Eucharistic Minister.¹⁴⁴⁰
23. Healing Minister.¹⁴⁴¹
24. Representative on the Web Team.
25. Representative(s) on the Parish Pastoral Council.
26. Overall SCC Animator/Coordinator. In some places still called Chairperson. Newer name is Moderator. Active SCC member chosen to represent the SCC on the Outstation, Sub-parish and Parish Coordination (and Training) Teams.

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. A special challenge is that the leadership pool can be small (those who are married in church and can receive communion). 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/Coordinator of Charitable Works/CARITAS Representative
- Health Servant/Volunteer Community Healthcare Worker (CHW) 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. From 1977 to 1983 Mwoleka, the founder of SCCs in Tanzania, began a “Seven-Year Plan to Train Leaders of the Small Christian 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.¹⁴⁴² Such training remains arduous, but crucial, work even up to today.

¹⁴³⁹ This ministry is described at length in “Case Study of Volunteer Community Healthcare Workers (CHWs) in the SCCs in Kenya” in Joseph Healey, “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Agents of Change in the Fight against HIV AND 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.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Although not common, in some parishes a group of neighboring SCCs choose one designated person who is commissioned to bring communion to the sick, etc.

¹⁴⁴¹ Although not common, some SCCs choose one designated person to pray over and lay hands on the sick, etc.

¹⁴⁴² 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.

In choosing lay ecclesial ministers Bishop Christopher Mwoleka, the bishop founder of SCCs in Tanzania, established the principle that a Catholic has to receive communion in the church (this assumes that the person is sacramentally married in the church) to qualify for the official church-related leadership positions such as Chairperson, Liturgy or Liturgical Animator/ Leader or Prayer Animator, Religious Education Animator, Catechesis Animator, Marriage Minister and Eucharistic Minister. But for other general positions such as Treasurer, Projects/Development Coordinator, Health Servant/Volunteer Community Healthcare (CHC) Worker or Minister and Justice and Peace Animator any interested person can be chosen – even if that person cannot receive communion because he/she has not married sacramentally, has a second wife, etc.

Updated: 12 December, 2022

4. 13 Steps in the Weekly Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible—Daily Life Connections Service¹⁴⁴³ of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa¹⁴⁴⁴

NOTE: SCC members in Africa normally meet every week in one of their homes¹⁴⁴⁵ as part of the church in the neighborhood (neighborhood church).¹⁴⁴⁶ Usually it is a *Bible Service*. Ideally this prayer experience is lectionary-based, faith-sharing/gospel-based that connects the Gospel of the following Sunday to our daily lives. It is 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.¹⁴⁴⁷ 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.¹⁴⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴³ We have discovered that we need an “Explanation of Terms” for each local context/situation.

¹⁴⁴⁴ 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?”

¹⁴⁴⁵ There are many other models. For example, campus-based YPSCCs meet in their residence halls or dormitories.

¹⁴⁴⁶ 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. The same can be said at the end of the weekly session – wherever and whenever it is. Pause for three minutes and offer a prayer of gratitude. Reflect on the fruit of the gathering, for example, what is your take away or practical action during the next week -- before rushing to your next activity.

¹⁴⁴⁷ In a rural area where a number of the SCC members do not read, the steps should be fewer and simpler.

¹⁴⁴⁸ The lyrics (words) of the songs are very important and can be a “teaching moment,” an opportunity for prayer and formation.

2. Brief reports on the SCC members' lives during the past week. Here SCC members share their recent life experiences good and bad. It is called a "touchdown period"¹⁴⁴⁹ or "catch-up time" that can also serve as an "icebreaker" for the gathering. Some SCCs call it "God moments" when each member tells of a time he or she experienced God during the week. Includes a report on the SCC's actions/tasks (community response) carried out during the previous week. **NOTE:** This step can also take place at the end of the meeting when it can serve to answer the questions: What have I learned from this meeting? What is my take away? What is a point or action to take or to carry home? What is my follow-up/follow-down?

3. Brief introduction of the liturgical theme. This can also be Step 2 of the gathering. Gives the theme/themes of the Scripture readings and the liturgical season in the context of our life situation and local reality.¹⁴⁵⁰ The Liturgical Animator/Leader should prepare this step ahead of time through prayer, reading the Gospel, the other Scripture readings and liturgical commentaries, silence and reflection.

4. Read the Gospel¹⁴⁵¹ of the following Sunday (first time).¹⁴⁵² 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.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Some SCCs call this Step 2 "the Catch-Up" (from the previous week) or "the Update" (on the events in the SCC members lives since the last meeting). The 14 SCCs at Yale University, USA call this step the "Check-In" or the "Roses and Thorns" -- the ups and downs of the past week. SCC members share the feelings 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?"

¹⁴⁵⁰ Our SCCs live within the context of the ideal and the real. Some SCCs skip this step. In other SCCs this step is passed over or shortened. Sometimes the Liturgical Animator/Leader does not prepare ahead of time. But this step is very important in helping SCC members to understand the plan of the liturgical year and how to be Lectionary Catholics or Lectionary-based Catholics. Otherwise SCC members can join the present/current meeting only focused on the Gospel of following Sunday -- not aware of, and even oblivious of, previous Sundays and future Sundays in the Catholic Church's liturgical plan.

¹⁴⁵¹ 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.

¹⁴⁵² The *Bible* passage is read, and ideally proclaimed, slowly, prayerfully and reflectively. Sometimes the SCC members pass the *Bible* around the circle and each person reads one verse. Just like the Lector/Reader 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 50 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

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 in this Gospel passage.. This period of silence is not wasted time or empty time. It can be a time of deeper listening and deeper reflection.¹⁴⁵³

8. *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection/Bible*—Daily Life Connections. Connect, relate and apply the *Bible* (Gospel) to our daily lives¹⁴⁵⁴ and experience (on both personal and society-wide

outstations and subparishes I remind them that “even the pope prepares the *Bible* reading ahead of time.”

A new way of preparation is to listen to the “Daily Reading Podcast” from an App such as *Laudate* or a website such as the USCCB. The clarity, expression and intonation of a professional reader can help improve one’s own reading and also help one appreciate the content more.

¹⁴⁵³ During the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “*Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*” in Rome in October, 2018 after every set of five interventions there was a period of three minutes of silence for the participants to reflect privately on the content and application of the interventions. All the bishop delegates and other participants said that this silence was very helpful and meaningful. One of the Kenyan Bishop delegates said that it the best part of the synod for him. It set a tone of discernment rather than discussion in the assembly. It is a good model for our SCC gatherings.

In the steps for a “Synodal Process” gathering there are two periods of silence for deeper listening:

1.Participants reflect silently for three minutes preparing their input. Open oneself to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is one reason why the synodal process is different and can be very creative.

2.Three more minutes of silent reflection. Each person takes private notes. After re-reading their notes, each person shares for a further two minutes whatever has enlightened or resonated with them from the sharing of the other members. The participants are invited to consider what the Holy Spirit seemed to be calling them to, what paths are being opened.

¹⁴⁵⁴ 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.

levels).¹⁴⁵⁵ This is lectionary-based faith-sharing/gospel-based faith-sharing. SCC members share their reflections sitting together in a circle and for a maximum of five minutes.¹⁴⁵⁶ This is the most important part of the weekly meeting of the SCC.

Sometimes the SCC uses a Daily Life-*Bible* Connections method. Start with special themes and topics as well as our experiences and events of daily life and then go to the *Bible*. Use the “See,” “Judge” and “Act” process of the Pastoral Spiral/Circle/Cycle.

Both ways are an experience of faith-sharing.

9. Prayer of the Faithful (Petitions or General Intercessions or Intercessory Prayers or Bidding Prayers).¹⁴⁵⁷ Usually spontaneous in the SCC.¹⁴⁵⁸ Connects to our daily lives: specific, practical and from our grassroots experience. Sometimes the *jumuiya* members speak in their home (heart) languages. Sometimes the *jumuiya* members write out the petitions in advance and read them out loud.

10. Collection.

11. Choose a concrete practical action/task¹⁴⁵⁹ (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

¹⁴⁵⁵ 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 happenings in the local community, in the Catholic Church and in the world.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Usually SCC members share their reflections in a random order and sometimes not related to the biblical theme or content. This includes the reflections that they have prepared ahead of time. One SCC leader calls this “sharing” the Word of God “together” but “separately.” I know one faithful SCC member who interprets every Gospel passage, regardless of the context, in relation to love.

It is better to focus on the specific gospel of the Sunday and build on the themes and content of the previous reflections shared on the gospel text in the SCC gathering. 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. We are challenged in this reflection process to learn from the popular saying: *The biggest communications problem is we don’t listen to understand. We listen to reply.* It is important that the leader (whatever name is used) of the weekly meeting of the SCC facilitates this process well.

¹⁴⁵⁷ 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.

¹⁴⁵⁸ As contrasted to Mass where the prayers are read from a book or follow a specific structure or are written out ahead of time. Also different from “spontaneous prayer.”

¹⁴⁵⁹ 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

related to the pastoral priorities and activities of the parish or local community. Examples: deepening my relationship with Jesus Christ, praying more, reading the *Bible* more, special Advent and Lenten spiritual practices, spend more time in contemplative prayer, 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, advocacy, self-reliance, action of solidarity, etc.¹⁴⁶⁰

This is called the take-away.” It can also be some kind of follow-up/follow-down like a learning or a lesson to take home from the gathering. It serves to answer the questions: What have I learned from this SCC gathering/*Bible* Sharing/*Bible* Reflection? What is my take away? What is a point or action to take home? What is my follow-up/follow-down? Some SCCs include an opportunity for members to express some idea or insight or action that

“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 time -- slowly 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 20th and 21st century American alternatives to various old sayings which 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.

¹⁴⁶⁰ 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.

they have learned during the gathering that they will use as their take away or follow up/down in their ongoing actions.

12. Closing prayer or song.

13. Exchange a Sign of Peace.¹⁴⁶¹ This can be a handshake, hugging or using one of the many African symbols and signs of peace that are referred to in other parts of this Ebook.

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 University 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.

More information is available on the:

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page”
www.smallchristiancommunities.org

Updated: 12 December 2022

¹⁴⁶¹ 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.

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 litakalo adhimishwa 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.
- We share our lives as each person shares with the small community members something good or bad that happened to him or her during the previous week.

2. WE READ THE TEXT

- Let us open to chapter...
- Will someone, please read verses... (1st Time).
- Will someone read the same text from a different version or language, if possible! (2nd Time).

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. (3rd Time).

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 (SCC members discuss what the Lord wants them to do as the "Church in the Neighborhood")

- Report on previous task
- Which new task has to be done?

7. WE PRAY SPONTANEOUSLY

- All are invited to pray from the heart. Prayer of the Faithful (General Intercessions).
- (Afterwards) We end with a prayer/hymn that 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.¹⁴⁶²

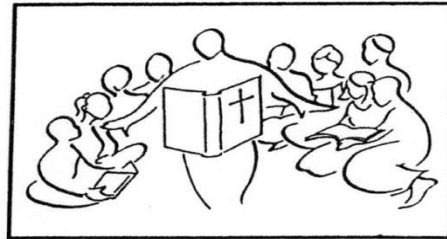
¹⁴⁶² See *Safari Yetu Pamoja*.

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*¹⁴⁶³

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

¹⁴⁶³ *Visio Divina* (Latin for “Divine Seeing”) is similar but uses visual materials for the reflection such as video, photos, paintings, etc.

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 dialog 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 Bible¹⁴⁶⁴

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.

¹⁴⁶⁴ 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.

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.
- 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 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 outline 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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2015

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.¹⁴⁶⁵

2. Visiting St. Charles Lwanga SCC

¹⁴⁶⁵ 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.

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." See *James* 2:14-17. Different translations use "action," "works" and "deeds."

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 in 2004 was the oldest of the 38 active SCCs in St. Peter's Parish,¹⁴⁶⁶ 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-based¹⁴⁶⁷ 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.¹⁴⁶⁸

¹⁴⁶⁶ By 2016 St. Peter's had 60 SCCs.

¹⁴⁶⁷ 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.

¹⁴⁶⁸ 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 the 14th century spiritual writer Meister Eckhart who said: The last word of history will be "compassion."¹⁴⁶⁹ Jim added two other words: "forgiving love -- as in the example of today's gospel about the Prodigal Father."

¹⁴⁶⁹ 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 human time, at the end of the Last Judgment, what will God finally say? Over the ages spiritual writers and theologians have

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 St. "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 St. "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?"¹⁴⁷⁰

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."

¹⁴⁷⁰ 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 in: pages 67-68 in *Once Upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy*; pages 14-15 in *African Stories for Preachers and Teachers*; and pages 84-88 in Joseph Healey, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Agents of Change in the Fight Against HIV AND AIDS in Eastern Africa," African Jesuit AIDS Network, Nairobi: Published Paper, 17 pages, 2015 and Jacqueline Azetsop, *HIV and AIDS in Africa: Theological Reflection, Public Health Crises, and Social Transformation*, Orbis Books, 2016.

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.¹⁴⁷¹

¹⁴⁷¹ 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

The SCCs Poll is found on the SCC Website on the top right side of the Home Page at: <https://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>. We have done careful research on, and analyzed feedback from, surveys, questionnaires, workshops, courses, interviews, personal conversations, articles, books, email messages, Facebook Pages, Zoom Faith Sharing and Gospel Sharing, visits to SCCs and conferences on SCCs. We have studied carefully the contemporary signs of the times such as the Covid-19 pandemic and pastoral changes in our parishes and dioceses such as during the 2021-2024 Synodal Process. We have identified 1705 important characteristics or features of SCCs around the world mainly provided by Small Christian Community (SCCs) members themselves: 826 on the dynamics/process/principles/classifications of SCCs and 879 on the activities/content/outreach/practical action of SCCs. These choices reflect both the inner life and the public life of our SCC Model of Church.

The poll uses the statement — **The best part of my Small Christian Community is...** — followed by six choices that are taken from these 1705 important characteristics or features of SCCs listed below alphabetically. We change the poll every two months. The results of the First Round to the Eighty-Seventh round is listed below and on the SCC Poll/SCC Poll Archives Pages.

The best part of my Small Christian Community is...

Absolutely essential in carrying out the mission of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Achieves enormous strides in the evangelization of society. **Round A**
 Accompanying college age students on the path of missionary discipleship. **Round A**
 Accompanying young adults on the path of missionary discipleship. **Round A**
 Action oriented. **Round ten A**
 Active agent of the Word of God. **A**
 Active participation. **Round one D**
 Active participation by all in the community. **Round D**
 Active participation of young people in Small Christian Communities (SCCs). **Round A**
 Active small group community of disciples. **Round one D**
 Acts as a counterbalance to the culture of “individualism.” **A**
 Acts of the Apostles lifestyle. **Round A**
 Actualize the church as a family that is found among the neighbors. **Round A**
 Actualize communion Ecclesiology at the grassroots. **Round A**
 Adapts to the Covid-19 pandemic context. **A**
 Adapts to the local context. **A**
 Adult *Bible* Fellowship. **Round D**
 Adult faith formation. **Round thirty-five A**
 Advocate for family catechesis. **Round A**
 Advocate for family ministry. **Round A**
 Affinity Group. **Round twenty-nine D**
 Affinity Groups as SCCs. **D**
 Agent for mission and the new evangelization in church and society. **Round D**
 Agents of evangelization. **Round A**

Agents of new evangelization for the renewal of humanity. **Round D**
 Aimed at consciousness-raising. **Round twenty-one A**
 All the services/ministries of the sacraments pass through the SCCs. **Round A**
 Alternative way of meeting some basic needs. A
 Alumni CLCs. D
 Alumni Small Christian Communities. D
 Alumni Online CLCs. D
 Alumni Online Small Christian Communities. D
 AMECEA SCCs Pastoral Model of Church. **Round D**
 Anchor of family life. **Round D**
 Anchored on the Word of God. A
 Anchored in the real. A
 Animated by the Gospel spirit. **Round D**
 Answer to the great spiritual crisis in the Catholic Church. D
 Applies the biblical message to our life situation. **Round A**
 Applies the Gospel to our daily/everyday life. **Round thirty-four A**
 Approach to New Evangelization. **Round D**
 Apt for the synodal journey. A
 At the heart of evangelization. **Round D**
 At the heart of pastoral ministry. D
 Are here to stay. D
 Authentic experience of synodality. D
 Authentic school of the Gospel. **Round D**
 Authentic way of evangelization. D
 Avenue for communication and communion among members. D
 Avenue for God to reveal himself/herself anew to people in a more personal way. **Round D**
 Avenue for the revitalization of the Christian Faith. **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**
 Avenue through which communal solidarity is experienced. **Round D**
 Backbone and launching pad of the Catholic Church, its ministry and its mission. D
 Backbone of all we do in our evangelization. D
 Backbone of the Catholic Church in Africa. D
 Backbone of the RCIA. **Round D**
 Base for restoring hope. **Round D**
 Base of our Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Base of our Christian life. **Round D**
 Baseline is sharing. A
 Basic building block of the church. **Round eleven D**
 Basic cell of the church. **Round D**
 Basic Christianity. **Round D**
 Basic community for prayer, support and consolation. A
 Basic family. **Round D**
 Basic Human Community (BHC). Round forty D
 Basic and indispensable unit for catechesis. A
 Basic means of evangelization. **Round A**
 Basic space where I live my faith. A
 Basic unit of the parish. D
 Basis and foundation of the faith in the Catholic Church in Africa. **Round D**
 Basis for *Bible* Sharing, Prayer and Deep Spirituality. **Round A**
 A basis for the synodal journey. D

Basis of the Church of God. **Round D**
 Beacon of hope. **Round twenty-nine D**
 Beacon of hope to the local community. **Round D**
 Bedrock of the Christian faith. **Round D**
 Bedrock of the church. **Round twenty-fifth D**
 Began to form organically out of the Synodal Process. A
 Begin encountering Jesus in Scripture. A
 Begins with a focus on the “Signs of the Times.” A
 Being Comfortable in a Zoom Church. A
 Being in community is constitutive to our faith. D
 Being mutual and sharing our gifts. A
 Benefits of SCCs to be treasured. D
 Best and most effective means of evangelization. **Round D**
 Best blessing to have happened to the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. D
 Best expression of the church of the poor. **Round D**
 Best physical way to foster and sustain the growth of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Best placed Catholic Church organ to preach and promote peace. **Round A**
 Best platform of forming the faith. **Round A**
 Best practices of SCCs. Round A
 Best structure for the New Evangelization. **Round D**
 Best thing that has happened in my life in the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Best thing that has happened in the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Best tool for evangelization here in the university. **Round A**
 Best unity in the Catholic Church. D
 Best way for parish to breathe. **Round A**
 Best way of being church today. A
 Best way of enhancing community spirit. **Round A**
 Best way of evangelization. D
 Best way of evangelizing and accompanying young people. D
 Best way of expressing love. **Round A**
 Best way of fostering reconciliation. **Round A**
 Best way of helping us gain intimacy with God. **Round A**
 Best way of nurturing the Catholic Church in the neighborhood. **Round D**
 Best way of reaching out to people’s lives. D
 Best way to go. **Round D**
 Best way to respond to Pope Francis’ emphasis on evangelization and reaching out to the
 Peripheries. A
 Best way to share the Word of God. **Round D**
 Best way to smell the sheep. **Round A**
 Better social mechanism in the Catholic Church. D
Bible as wellspring of constant renewal. **Round A**
Bible as basis of members’ spiritual lives. **Round A**
Bible as the Center of Faith Formation. **Round A**
Bible-based. **Round A**
Bible-based Faith-sharing small community. **Round A**
Bible is the center of our life. **Round D**
Bible Sharing/*Bible* Reflection. **Round one A**
Bible sharing by members and further discussions about daily life is what interests me.
 Round A
Bible sharing gathering. A
Bible sharing in a circle. **Round A**

Bible study group. **Round seventeen A**
 Biblically-based. **Round A**
 Biblically-based Faith-sharing small community. **Round A**
 Biblically based Small Communities. **Round D**
 Big instrument of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Blog Discussion Group. **Round A**
 Bonding community. D
 Book Discussion Group/Club. **Round A**
 Bones and flesh of the parish. **Round D**
 Both the foundation and the goal of Christian life. **Round D**
 Both a place and a path for pastoral care and evangelization of families and marriages.
Round D
 Breaking open the Word of God. **Round thirty-five A**
 Brings Christians together. A
 Brings the faith to the home. A
 Brings the faithful together to share the Word of God and prayers from the grassroots. A
 Brings fruits to every walk of our apostolate. A
 Brings parishioners closer in their neighborhood. A
 Brings together the people of God to be useful to one another. A
 Brings together the people of God to share the good news. A
 Brings unity and love to the members of the community. A
 Broad spectrum of youth ministry through SCCs. **Round D**
 Build close and lasting friendships. **Round A**
 Building a living church through SCCs. D
 Building the church *up* out of SCCs. A
 Builds the church from the grassroots. A
 Build family church through SCCs. A
 Builds SCC Model of Parish. 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**
 Campus Small Groups. **Round A**
 Carry the voice of faith during daily life struggles. A
 Carrying the flame of SCCs. **Round A**
 Catalyst for effective *Bible* Sharing. **Round A**
 Catholic Church built up daily through SCCs. **Round D**
 Catholic Church on the move. D
 Catholic family fellowship. **Round A**
 Catholic SCC “support group.” **Round A**
 Catholic small family community. D
 Celebrations (meals, entertainment, etc.). **Round four A**
 Cell based movement. **Round D**
 Cell-based (SCCs) student movement. **Round D**
 Cell Groups. **Round D**
 Cell of the village church. **Round D**
 Cells injecting life into the organism of the church. **Round A**
 Center of the church. **Round D**
 Center of charity. D
 Center of Christian witness. D
 Center of communion and formation. **Round D**
 Center of communion and outreach. **Round twenty-nine D**

Center of constant missionary outreach. **Round A**
Center of evangelization to the family and youth. **D**
Center of interest in the Catholic media. **A**
Center of my faith journey. **D**
Center of prayer and worship. **Round D**
Center of renewal program. **Round D**
Centers of community enterprise and holistic transformation. **Round A**
Centers of deepening the Word of God and cohesive Faith-sharing. **A**
Centers of inculturation in the Catholic Church. **Round A**
Centering prayer. **Round A**
Central facet of the parish. **D**
Central in the life of the church. **Round D**
Central to the growth of the church. **Round D**
Centrality of the Word of God. **Round thirty-four D**
Channel of community sensitization. **D**
Channel of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine D**
Channel of social solidarity. **D**
Channel where the Word of God is studied and meditated on. **A**
Child protection as a component of the training we give to the trainers on SCCs. **Round D**
Child protection component in our SCCs training for facilitators. **Round D**
Children friendly. **Round A**
Christ-centered small community. **Round A**
Christians bond and support each other. **A**
Church as Family of God built around SCCs. **Round D**
Church as the house of God. **D**
Church at the grassroots. **Round D**
Church belongs to me, not to the priest. **Round A**
Church from below. **D**
Church from the grassroots. **D**
Church from the roots. **D**
Church going to the people. **Round A**
Churchhood. **Round D**
Church centered on small groups as the way of doing life and ministry. **Round D**
Church of the home. **Round twenty-one D**
Church of the laity. **Round D**
Church on the ground. **Round D**
Church on the move. **D**
Church in miniature (“Church miniature”). **Round D**
Church in the locality. **Round D**
Church in the neighborhood. **Round thirty-three D**
Church in the village. **D**
Church of small communities. **D**
Church of participation. **Round D**
Church on the move. **Round D**
Church Small Group. **Round D**
Church of tomorrow. **Round twenty-nine D**
Circle, not pyramid. **Round D**
Clearly articulates its charism, spirituality, purpose or mission. **A**
Close-knit community. **D**
Cohousing community. **Round A**
Collaborative effort that very much reflects the spirit of BCCs and our Christian faith. **Round**

D

- Collection/donation to upkeep of parish. **Round twenty-two** A
- College-based small communities. **Round D**
- Combination of compatibility and diversity. **Round A**
- Combines Bible Sharing and Faith-sharing. A
- Commitment to being a parish that GATHERS, SHARES AND PRAYS. **Round A**
- Commitment is to foster Small Christian Communities. D
- Communal discernment from below. A
- Communal listening to the Word of God. A
- Communal Reading of Scripture (Public Reading). A
- Communion of Communities Model. **Round eighteen** D
- Communion of Communities Model of Church. **Round D**
- Communion of families. **Round twenty-seven** D
- Communion of extended families in the same neighborhood. **Round D**
- Communitarian ethic. **Round A**
- Community-based ecclesial model. D
- Community-based, not priest-based. **Round D**
- Community of believers sharing life. **Round thirty-four** A
- Community *Bible* sharing. **Round D**
- Community discipleship. **Round A**
- Community experience. **Round twelve** D
- Community of communities for youth ministry. **Round 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** A
- Community spirituality. A
- Concern for others. **Round six** A
- Concrete expression of communion in Christ. **Round A**
- Concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic. A
- Confirmation small group. **Round D**.
- Connected to alternative communities. A
- Connected to alternative faith communities. A
- Connected to my parish. **Round three** D
- Connecting *Bible* to life. **Round thirty-two** A
- Connecting faith to life. **Round thirty-one** A
- Connecting life and faith regularly. **Round A**
- Connecting with other young people. A
- Connects God's Word to daily life. **Round A**.
- Connecting households and families. A
- Connects people to one another. **Round thirty** A
- Connects the Scripture to our everyday life every week. A
- Constitutive structure of the Local Church. **Round D**
- Consultative structure of the Local Church. **Round D**
- Contemplative dialog in small groups. **Round A**
- Contemplative dialog process. **Round A**
- Contemplative group. **Round twenty-three** A
- Contemplative prayer group for young adults. A
- Context-based. D
- Continue the evangelization mission. **Round D**

Contribute to social transformation. **Round A**
 Contribution of SCCs to faith formation. **Round A**
 Conversation as a root metaphor for SCC life. A
 Conversion of Catholic Church structures that enhances the sense of belonging and ownership. A
 Core business is the Word of God. D
 Core ministry of the Catholic Church. D
 Core of ecclesial life. D
 Core of our ministry and the way we develop disciples. **Round D**
 Core of parish life in African dioceses. **Round D**
 Core of the church. D
 Core of our church, not just another ministry. D
 Core space for the faithful gathering in the neighborhoods. **Round D**
 Co-responsibility in leadership. **Round D**
 Cornerstone of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Give me courage in overcoming obstacles during Covid-19 pandemic. A
 Creates a Small Christian Community Culture. **Round A**
 Creating many new paths by walking according to the local context. A
 Creating space for young people. A
 Creativity and Flexibility of Hybrid SCC. A
 Critical opportunity for spiritual development. **Round D**
 Critical way to move the Catholic Church forward. D
 Culture of evangelization that launches and expands small groups. D
 Customized strategy for our SCC context. D
 Daily contact in the neighborhood. **Round A**
 Daily experiences sharing. A
 Daily Gospel-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**
 Daily lectionary-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**
 Daily prayer in SCC gatherings plays a key role during the Synodal Process. A
 Daily readings act like an engine to my life. A
 Daily readings always reminds me to be faithful in my Christian journey. A
 Daily scripture-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**
 Daily scripture mantra. **Round A**
 Deepening faith in one's local environment. **Round A**
 Deepening personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A
 Deepens my faith and prayer life. A
 Deep SCC spirituality. **Round A**
 Deepens our Gospel understanding. A
 Demonstrates the love of Christ and maturity in faith. **Round D**
 Depth in the Eucharist. A
 Development indigenous to the several continents. **Round A**
 Development projects. **Round eleven A**
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 Dialogical. **Round twenty-two D**
 Dialog of action. **Round A**
 Dialog of life. **Round thirty-eight A**
 Dialog of interfaith religious experiences. **Round A**
 Dialog table for family disputes/problems. A
 Diaspora Online SCCs. D
 Different pastoral model of church. **Round D**
 Digital network of discipleship. D

Digital/online/virtual evangelization. D
 Digital Small Community. D
 Digital SCCs Webinars. A
 Digital SCCs Workshops. A
 Digital Small Community. D
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 Discerning personal and collective action in small group settings. A
 Discernment Circle. A
 Discipleship begins in God's Word. D
 Discipleship path for students to grow and deepen their relationship with Christ. **Round D**
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 Doing life and faith in small communities. A
 Doing things differently in my parish. **Round six** A
 Do It Yourself (DIY) Small Communities. D
 Domestic communities of faith. **Round thirty** A
 Door of entry. **Round D**
 Door to get in the church. **Round D**
 Dream of local community priests. D
 Drivers of our own vehicle. **Round A**
 Dynamic church in the midst of the people. **Round D**
 Dynamic, not static -- subject to changes and new ideas. A
 Dynamic -- subject to changes that we may experience around us. A
 Dynamics of the Small Christian Community Model of Church. D
 Essence connected to recognizing the presence of Christ in community. D
 Echo the community spirit of the new South Sudan. A
 Ecclesial structure in the parish. **Round twenty-nine** D
 Ecclesiastical extension of the African extended family or clan. D
 Ecclesiological model to strongly use for effective evangelization. **Round D**
 Ecumenical activities. **Round twenty-two** A
 Effective channel for reconciliation. **Round A**
 Effective method for church renewal. **Round thirty-five** A
 Effective method or style of evangelization. **Round A**
 Effective platform of catechesis. **Round A**
 Effective way to plant the seed of Gospel values in the Christian faithful. **Round A**
 Elders take responsibility for reconciliation and peace in the community. **Round A**
 Emerging paradigm of young adult empowerment in Africa. **Round D**
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 Emphasis on faith formation. A
 Empowering the church at the grassroots/in the neighborhood. A
 Empowerment from below. **Round D**
 Empowerment of women. **Round D**
 Empowers the church in the neighborhood. A
 Empowers laypeople to take more responsibility for their church. A
 Empowers us all. A
 Enables each member be recognized and heard. A
 Enables members to go forth and proclaim the Gospel. A Enables us to grow spiritually.
Round A
 Encourages Lectionary-based Catholics. A
 Encourages prayer methodologies/methods that connect faith and life. **Round A**
 Energy of young people. A

Enhances grassroots evangelization. **Round D**

Enlivens young adult parish participation. D

Entry point for new church. **Round D**

Entry point for new ideas, trends and priorities in Eastern Africa. **Round D**

Entry point to campus ministry program. **Round D**

Environment for an encounter with Jesus Christ. **Round D**

Equality between women and men, poor and rich, different ethnic groups. **Round D**

Essence of the Catholic Church. D

Essential component of the parish's structure and ministry. **Round D**

Essential ingredient of our Catholic campus ministry program. D

Essential and life-giving antidote for much of what ails us. D

Essential part of any Christian life. **Round A**

Essential part of the structure of the parish. **Round D**

Essentially a spirituality. **Round A**

Estate-based *jumuiyas* that meet in members' homes. A

Eucharistic adoration. **Round twenty-four A**

Eucharistic-centered community. **Round A**

Eucharistic Church. D

Evangelization. **Round A**

Evangelization means practical action and reaching out to others. A

Evangelization means service to other people. A

Evangelizers in our neighborhood. **Round thirty-seven A**

Evangelizing families rooted in SCCs. **Round A**

Evangelizing the grassroots. A

Evangelizing the neighborhood. A

Evangelizing through digital platforms. **Round A**

Evangelizing through smartphones. **Round A**

Evangelizing tool. **Round A**

Every member has an equal amount of air time. D

Everyone in a Small Christian Community is equal. D

Everyone is given a chance to contribute regardless of rank, position, or educational status. A

Experience-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**

Experience-based Faith-sharing questions. **Round A**

Experience of small church. D

Experience of synodality. A

Experience with SCCs has informed my understanding of synodality. A

Experience/experiences sharing. A

Experiencing biblical community. Round A

Experiencing life together. A

Experiencing our Christian call in the neighborhood. Round A

Experiential church. **Round A**

Expresses the Christian faith in the typical setting of a traditional African community. A

Expression of a renewed church. D

Extended Christian families. Round eighteen D

Extension of the church. **Round D**

Extension of the nuclear and even the extended family. **Round D**

Extension of good neighborliness. Round forty A

Facilitating the information and enhancement of weak SCCs. **Round A**

Faith-based small community. **Round D**

Faith community of peers. **Round D**

Faith formation in SCCs. **Round D**

Faith in action activity. D
 Faith-sharing. **Round thirty-three A**
 Faith-sharing dimension. Round A
 Faith-sharing grounded in Scripture. **Round twenty-nine A**
 Faith-sharing in small community group settings. A
 Faith-sharing resources. **Round D**
 Faith-sharing spirituality. Round A
 Faith-sharing webinars. A
 Faith-sharing within Sunday readings. **Round A**
 Familial model. **Round D**
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 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 as basic of SCC. D
 Family-centered parish. **Round D**
 Family-centered parish through SCCs. D
 Family Church. **Round twenty-two D**
 Family communities. **Round seventeen D**
 Family Enrichment Club. **Round A**
 Family-friendly SCC. D
 Family of believers. **Round D**
 Family of families. **Round D**
 Family-like communities. **Round D**
 Family-like evangelization. **Round A**
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 Family SCC. **Round D**
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 Feel at home in my SCC. **Round one D**
 Fellowship in smaller sub groups within a parish community. **Round A**
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 Find support in one another A
 First agents for the initiation of their children into the Word of God. **Round D**
 First level of the church structure. **Round D**
 FISH Group Family. **Round D**
 Fixed time each week **Round twenty D**
 Flesh and blood of the church. **Round D**
 Flexibility in digital communications and connections. A
 Focal point for evangelization. D
 Focus on Young Adult Small Christian Communities (YASCCs). D
 Focus on the Word of God (*Bible*). D
 Focus questions relating everyday life to scripture. **Round A**
 Focus questions relating scripture to everyday life. **Round A**
 Following Patron/Patroness Saint of my SCC. **Round eight A**
 Follows the example of Christ the Healer. A
 Fonts of community life. **Round A**
 Foretaste of the Kingdom of God. **Round D**
 For our integral development. **Round D**
 Formation component. D
 Form of adult faith formation. **Round D**

Forms a strong foundation of a Catholic Parish. A
 Forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences of SCCs. A
 Forum for participants to habituate themselves to living, thinking, and acting eucharistically. A
 Forum to think about and work on all the dimensions of life. A
 Forms solid ecclesial communion with a small geographical location. **Round A**
 Forum in which adult catechumens listen to Jesus Christ. **Round A**
 Forum to think about and work on all the dimensions of life. A
 Fosters the faith of individuals. **Round A**
 Fosters Faith-Shaping Friendships. A
 Foundation of the Catholic Church. D
 Frontier of evangelization in the AMECEA Region for the laity. **Round D**
 Force to help renew our faith. **Round twenty-nine A**
 Functional SCCs. A
 Functional SCCs in the parish -- with members knowing what they need to do in the SCCs. A
 Functioning structure. D
 Future of the Church in Africa. D
 Foundation of the Catholic Church. Round D
 Foundation of the church. **Round D**
 Foundation of good Christian life. D
 Foundation stones upon which parishes are built. D
 Foundational pillar of the church. D
 Foundational to the Catholic Church in Africa today. D
 Freedom to share my deep feelings. **Round five A**
 Friendliness of members. **Round three D**
 Friends Model of Church. D
 From the grassroots up. **Round twenty-one D**
 Fruits of the new mode of ecclesiological thinking, especially in Africa. **Round D**
 Functional SCCs as a gift to the Catholic Church
 Fundamental model for being church. Round D
 Fundamental paradigm of the church. **Round D**
 Future of the African Church is at stake. **Round D**
 Future of the church. **Round twenty-seven D**
 Garden of growth. **Round D**
 Gateway networks. **Round A**
 Gathering of families. **Round A**
 Gathering online to celebrate our faith together. A
 Gathering together listen to one another. A
 Gathers in public spaces. A
 Genuine family of God. **Round D**
 Getting together in small groups to listen to one another. A
 Getting together to listen to one another. A
 Gift of the African Church to the Universal Church. D
 Gift of online SCC. D
 Give community members an opportunity to exercise and practice Christian values. **Round A**
 Gives life in the neighborhood. A
 Gives life to the Catholic Church. A
 Gives me the freedom to be myself. A
 Gives a new flavor to the African Church. **Round A**
 Gives opportunity to know the parishioners living in our area. A
 Gives many young people space to raise their concerns/grievances. A

Global moment of renewal. **Round D**
 Glue of a campus ministry program. **Round D**
 Glue of our ministry. **Round D**
 Glue to assist young adults to transition from college to parish life. **Round D**
 Go a long way in advancing the work of evangelization. A
 Goes to the heart of what the Catholic Church must be. **Round D**
 Going digital during Covid-19. A
 Good head space for faith formation. A
 Good leadership and coordination. **Round two D**
 Good mixture of people. **Round four D**
 Gospel-based Catholic. **Round D**
 Gospel-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**
 Gospel-based living. **Round D**
 Gospel-centered church. **Round D**
 Gospel-centered faith. **Round eighteen D**
 Gospel-centered programs for young adults. **Round A**
 Gospel-centered SCC. **Round D**
 Gospel Houses where we meet around the Word of God. D
 Gospel is our DNA. D
 Gospel sharing. **Round A**
 Grassroots base of SCCs. **Round D**
 Grassroots evangelization. **Round A**
 Grassroots level of Catholic apostolate. D
 Grassroots synodal best practices. A
 Great avenue for evangelization. D
 Great boon to the Catholic Church. D
 Great platform that really enriches the church. Round D
 Great source for the voice of the laity. D
 Great way for families to grow together in their faith. D
 Greatest part of a SCC is to be member. **Round D**
 Greatly strengthens the unity and faith of parishioners. Round A
 Greenhouse of evangelization. D
 Grounds me. **Round A**
 Groundwork for a Synodal Parish. D
 Group *Bible* study. **Round A.**
 Group discipleship. **Round A**
 Group Prayer. **Round A**
 Group Response Method of Gospel Sharing/Reflection and *Bible* Sharing/Reflection. **D**
 Group Spiritual Direction. **Round A**
 Growing closer to Christ through Scripture. A
 Growing faith in a circle. **Round thirty-one A**
 Growing faith AND applying faith. A
 Growing in every part of the world. A
 Growing SCCs. A
 Growing small groups. D
 Growing the church. A
 Growing YPSCCs. A
 Growth Groups. **Round D**
 Hallmark of the Catholic Church in Africa. D
 Harnesses youth power. **Round A**
 Has become part of us in the AMECEA Region. A.

Has a rightful place in the Catholic Church. A
 Has a synodal identity. D
 Has systems of how to live as a church. A
 Have helped me grow. **Round A**
 Haven for the broken. **Round A**
 Healing prayers for members. **Round three A**
 Hearing and then absorbing the Word of God. **Round A**
 Heart of renewal in the Catholic Church today. **Round D**
 Heart of the church. **Round D**
 Heart of this new pastoral model of church. **Round D**
 Heartbeat of the Catholic Church. D
 Help each other to grow in faith. **Round A**
 Help each other to grow in the social, family, and most importantly, spiritual life. **Round A**
 Help local Catholics feel that they are the church and more responsible for the church life and decision making. **Round A**
 Help the whole church to do its mission. **Round A**
 Helps Catholics cross the aisle of race and culture. **Round A**
 Helps Christians to deepen their relationship among themselves and their relationship with God. **Round A**
 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 grow in faith. 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 needy in our neighborhood. A
 Helps the needy during Covid-19 **Round A**
 Helps needy people in our neighborhood. A
 Helps the neighborhood to grow as a family. **Round A**
 Helps others. A
 Helps our perseverance during Covid-19. A
 Helps our spiritual life. A
 Helps participants to recall, honor, and reify their baptismal promise and its priestly function. A
 Helps to grow SCCs around the world. D
 Helps to grow the spirituality of Catholic young adults. A
 Helps us connect and grow in our biblical community. A
 Helps us discover what Christianity in the Catholic tradition is all about and how it can be truly lived. A
 Helps us know that no one is alone. A
 Helps us to grow in our faith in SCCs. D
 Helps us to grow our Christian conscience. A
 Helps us to grow our faith in SCCs. D
 Helps us to grow in our faith. D
 Helps us to help each other to connect everyday life and faith. **Round A**
 Helps us to live the SCCs Model of Church. A
 Helps us to persevere during this Covid-19 crisis. A
 Helps the young generation to strengthen our faith in Catholic Church. **Round D**
 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 cell in dialogue. A
 Home Churches. D
 Home-based community. **Round twenty-seven** D
 Home blessings. **Round A**
 Home cell in dialogue. A
 Home eucharistic gathering. A
 Home for everyone. **Round eighteen** D
 Home for faith formation. **Round A**
 Home to everyone. D
 Home Groups. **Round D**
 Home of communion for the 21st century. **Round twenty-nine** D
 Home of compassion. **Round A**
 Home-made church. D
 Home mass. Round A
 Home Small Groups. **Round A**
 Home to all Christians. **Round D**
 Homily preparation session. **Round A**
 Horizontal communities on the grassroots. D
 Hospitable. **Round A**
 House cell fellowships. **Round seventeen** A
 House Church Ministry. **Round A**
 House Church Movement. D
 House Eucharists. A
 House mass. **A**
 Household Church. D
 Household Church Communities. D¹⁴⁷²
 Household of faith. D
 Household of God. **Round twenty-fifth** D
 Hub of communion and edification in the Christian life. D
 Hybrid SCC gatherings. D
 Hybrid SCC webinars. D
 Hybrid SCC workshops. D
 Hybrid Small Christian Community. D
 Hybrid Small Christian Communities are the future. D
 Ideal church as community. **Round D**
 Ideal model of the church as a family. **Round D**
 Ideal place for Adult Catechumens. **Round twenty-three** D
 Implementing best SCC practices increases parish vitality. A
 Importance of the Eucharist as the real celebration of our faith that is shared in the SCCs.

¹⁴⁷² Google Chrome Search says: “What is the Small Christian Community? Answer: “Household Church Communities: Families and individuals willingly choose to be part of a Small Christian Community. This SCC is a group of three to five households of varying sizes and make-ups, approximately 20 people (adults, youth, and children).” Microsoft Bing Website, retrieved on 24 June, 2022,
<https://www.bing.com/search?q=small+christian+communities&q=small+christian+communities&qs=n&form=QBRE&sp=1&pg=small+christian+communities&sc=9-27&sk=&cvid=B573652701A04A99977E8554BCE5186F&ghsh=0&ghacc=0>

Round D

Importance of group prayer. **Round D**
 Importance of SCCs in the Catholic Church today. D
 Importance of small group ministry. **Round D**
 Important anchor point as a response to the challenges of evangelization. Round D
 Important formation in our spiritual and social life. **Round D**
 Important resource for church renewal. A
 Important way of being church in Africa. **Round D**
 Inclusive. **Round seventeen D**
 Inclusive small community. **Round D**
 Incarnated in local cultures. **D**
 Incarnating SCCs. **Round D**
 In contact with the realities and lives of people on the grassroots. **Round A**
 Indigenous to each continent. D
 Influences seminary formation. A
 In service to the Catholic Church as a Field Hospital. **Round A.**
 Individual and group response in action. **Round A**
 Inspires better pastoral solutions for the young people. A
 Instrument in adult faith formation. **Round A**
 Instrument of formation and evangelization. **Round eighteen A**
 Instrument of true love to one another. D
 Instruments of genuine conversion. **Round A**
 Instruments of God's love and mercy. **Round D**
 Integral dimension of parish life. D
 Integral part of our church culture. **Round D**
 Intentional community. D
 Intentional efforts to reclaim spirituality as a means to liberation, justice and flourishing.

Round D

Intentional faith community. D
 Interactive homilies. A
 Interactive experience. A
 Interactive small community experience. A
 Interconnectedness. **Round seventeen D**
 Interdenominational. **Round twenty-four D**
 Interfaith listening circle. **Round D**
 Interfaith small communities. **Round D**
 Intergenerational. **Round fifteen D**
 Intergenerational church. D
 Intergenerational dialogue. **Round D**
 Intergenerational mass. A
 Internationalization of the SCCs Model. D
 Internet enables us YSCC members to grow spiritually. **Round A**
 Internet ministry. A
 Interparish singing competition. **Round A**
 Interprets the Gospel from below. **Round A**
 Integrating prayer and daily life. **Round fourteen D**
 In solidarity with Covid-19 sufferers and their care givers. A
 In touch with the daily realities. A
 In touch with the reality on the ground. A
 Involved in pastoral animation in parishes. A
 I prepare my Sunday homily by listening to lay people's reflections. **Round A**

It is a vocation. **Round D**
 Its online faith sharing component. A
 Its synodal spirit. A
 Joining hands in promoting YPSCCs in Eastern Africa. A
 Joint decision making. **Round A**
 Jumuiya process in writing a homily. A
 Jumuiya shared homily. A
 Justice and peace concerns. **Round two A**
Kairos time for SCC Priorities. **Round D**
 Keepers of our brothers and sisters. **Round A**
 Keeps people connected to the Catholic Church. D
 Kernel of the church in Africa. **Round D**
 Key catechesis method. D
 Key for developing Catholic leadership. D
 Key pastoral priority in the church. **Round ten D**
 Key place where we experience the love and mercy of God. A
 A key to creating vibrant parishes. A
 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**
 Lay a strong base for our Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Lay people are the heart of SCCs. D
 Leadership structure from below. D
 Leadership training. **Round A**
 Learning about other SCCs. **Round ten A**
 Learning from peers how to grow as a disciple. A
 Learning moment. **Round A**
Lectio Divina. **Round A**
 Lectionary-based. **Round eleven D**
 Lectionary-based Catholics. **Round A**
 Lectionary-based Catholics can change the world. **Round A**
 Lectionary-based faith-sharing. **Round twenty-six A**
 Lectionary-based faith sharing in a synodal style. A
 Lectionary-based faith sharing on a daily basis. A
 Lectionary-based faith-sharing small community. **Round A**
 Lectionary-based SCCs. **Round A**
 Lectionary *Jumuiya*. **Round A**
 Lectionary way of life. D
 Lens through which we see the world. A
 Lever of Integral Human Development. D
 Liberation focus. **Round twelve D**
 Lifeblood of the church. **Round D**
 Lifeblood of the larger church. **Round thirty-seven D**
 Life-changing small group. **Round D**
 Life-giving, liberative force for the African continent. **Round D**
 Life-giving small community. D
 Life Groups. **Round D**
 Life of the Catholic Church of today. D
 Life well lived (based on the *Bible*).
 Lifeline of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Lights candles of the faith. A

Listening circle. D
 “Listening circle” format. D
 “Listening circle” methodology. D
 Listening to young people. A
 Little Faith-sharing Community. **Round D**
 Liturgical preparation for Sunday celebration. A
 Live the closeness of the day-to-day around the Word of God and the Eucharist. A
 Lives synodality in concrete pastoral life. A
 Living branches in the parish. A
 Living cells of the church. **Round A**
 Living cells that build up the Body of Christ. **Round A**
 Living center of evangelization. **Round thirty A**
 Living and growing in our faith is best done as part of a small community. A
 Living the mission *ad gentes*. **Round A**
 Living synodality. A
 Local center of ecclesial reflection. D
 Local church that feels at home. **Round D**
 Local context is king (and queen!). D
 Local family unit. **Round twenty-nine D**
 Local home church group. **Round twenty-four D**
 Local and smaller communities have a greater sense of participation. **Round A**
 Local voluntary leadership. **Round A**
 Localized church in the universal church structure. **Round D**
 Locus for the formation of conscience. **Round D**
 Looks after its members. A
 Loving small faith community. **D**
 LUMKO approach sustains SCCs. A
 Lumko Method. **Round thirty-three A**
 Lungs of the parish. **Round D**
 Major catalyst for sharing grassroots experiences. **Round A**
 Major way of real active participation of the laity. A
 Makes the church close to Christians. **Round D**
 Makes college feel smaller. **Round A**
 Makes a difference in emerging formation of adults. A
 Makes for familiarization of one another. A
 Makes young people feel welcomed and appreciated. A
 Main cell of evangelization. **Round D**
 Mainstream of African Catholic life. **Round D**
 Maintains the bonds of solidarity and communion among Catholics. A
 Making SCC organic cells in the Catholic Church wherever we go. **Round A**
 Makes parish life very intense and present everywhere. **Round A**
 Makes us more resilient for the future. **A**
 Manageable Group. **Round D**
 Manifestation of the Catholic Church in Africa. A
 Maryknoll Young Adult Community. D
 Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment Community. D
 Mass in my SCC. **Round seven A**
 Mass in the home. **A**
 Mass in the neighborhood. A
 Meal sharing in the context of a SCC. A
 Meaningful prayer — time spent connecting with God? A

Meeting in homes. **Round twenty A**
 Meets the human need to be known, heard, listened to, appreciated and socialize. A
 Meets weekly. A
 Member of a SCC Commune. D
 Members affirm and support one another. A
 Members exercise their priestly capacity to shape shared moments of illumination. A
 Ministering to emerging adults/adulthood. D
 Ministry of like to like. D
 Ministry to the SCCs family. **Round A**
 Mirror of African household. **Round twenty-four D**
 Mirrors the ongoing Synod of Bishops on Synodality to ensure that no one is left behind. A
 Missional community. **Round A**
 Missional small group. **Round twenty-four A**
 Missionary discipleship journey. **Round A**
 Missionary outreach. **Round eighteen A**
 Missionary spirit. **Round five D**
 Mission-minded. **Round twenty-two A**
 Model of building community among students. **Round D**
 Model for change in the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Model of church life. D
 Model of evangelization. D
 Model of evangelization at the grassroots level. **Round D**
 Model of the church we want. **Round D**
 Model of SCCs in the church of the future. D
 Model of SCCs is a gift of the African Church to the Universal Church. D
 Model the life of Christians. A
 Models the Synodal Process. A
 Modern *Acts of the Apostles*. D
 Mold young generations through YSCCs. **Round A**
 Moral agency of SCCs. **Round D**
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Supportive faith sharing. A

Sure vehicle to true Christianity. **Round twenty-nine D**

Sure way of evangelization.

Sure way of making the best out of Pope Francis' Synodal Process. A

Symbol of unity. **Round D**

Synod theme aligns seamlessly with the essence of SCCs. D

Synodal SCCs Model of Church on the local level. D

Synodality experience. A

Synodality is the true spirit of a SCC. D

TABLET Reading Group. **Round A**

Takes a step ahead in terms of building the Catholic Church through encouraging people to prioritize SCCs. **Round D.**

Talk about real life in a peer group. **Round A**

Teaching moment. **Round A**

Team or community approach in preparing a homily. A

Technology tools that enhance the small group experience. A

Thanking God and celebrating our 50 Year SCCs Anniversary in Eastern Africa. A

Theological expressions of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. **Round D.**

Theological importance of the local Christian community in its basic form. D

Theological mainstay of the model of church as Family of God. D

Through interpersonal relationships it offers a pastoral model of the church. **Round D.**

Through sharing I continue to love God and others. A

To follow Jesus Christ in community. A

Togetherness. **Round D.**

Tool for effective ministry and evangelization. **Round A**

Tool for evangelization today. A

Tool of attracting more people to the Catholic faith. A

Tool of evangelization. **Round twenty-seven A**

Tool of living African values on communal living. A

Tool that brings the bond of unity to all Catholic Church members. **Round A**

Tool to serve evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**

Tools in the vineyard. **Round A**

Train the Trainers (TOT) Method. **Round A**

Training for SCC leaders. **Round twenty-five A**

Training students to be leaders. A

Training Tools for SCCs. Round A

Training workshops and seminars. **Round four A**

Transform society on the local level. Round A

Transformational outlook. **Round D**

Transformation of society. **Round eleven A**

Translates Gospel values into real Christian life situations. A

Treasure in the AMECEA Region. A

Treasure of the Catholic Church in Africa. **Round D**

Troubleshoot and learn together. A

True authentic Catholic DNA. D

True church in the neighborhood. **Round D**

True experience of communion and collaboration. D

True experience of Synodality in Africa. D

True face of the Catholic Church. D

True family of God. **Round D**
 True way of being the living church. **Round D**
 Truest local vehicle for evangelization. **D**
 Truly places of study, meditation and sharing of the Word of God. **A**
 Turns rows into circles. **A**
 Twinning between Main Adult SCC and Youth SCC. **Round A**
 Ultimate Support System. **Round D**
 Unique opportunity in preparation for the Synod of Bishops. **A**
 Unique opportunity to engage with the Word of God in a non-intimidating environment. **A**
 Universal church for small families. **D**
 Unleashes each Catholic's gifts. **Round D**
 Unlocks the power of the laity. **A**
 Uses the internet and social media. **A**
 Using the new social media resources to promote faith life. **Round A**
 Using the "See," "Judge" and "Act" Process. **Round seven A**
 Usual and real way of being Church. **D**
 Valuable space and path upon which we can help nurture Child Protection practices in our society. **Round D**
 Value of the lectionary or Scripture to SCCs. **Round D**
 Value of listening to the Gospel in our current Synodal process. **A**
 Vehicle for discernment skills. **D**
 Vehicle for spiritual renewal. **Round thirty-two D**
 Vehicle to empower lay people. **Round D**
 Vehicle to generate grassroots movements. **D**
 Vehicle to make the church feel small. **Round D**
 Vehicle towards total human development. **Round D**
 Very good at reading, and responding to, the new signs of the times. **A**
 Very important part of our faith life. **A**
 Very incredible life changers. **A**
 Very vital in the Catholic Church. **D**
 Vibrancy. **Round A**
 Vibrant communities of faith and service. **Round thirty-two A**
 Vibrant small communities ministries. **A**
 Video-linked Small Prayer Communities. **D**
 Virtual evangelization. **D**
 Virtual intentional small community. **Round D**
 Virtual small communities. **Round D**
 Virtual faith sharing. **A**
 Virtual faith sharing session. **A**
 Virtual or Online SCCs is the new way for the church to go. **D**
 Virtual Young People Small Christian Communities. **D**
 Virtues of the Pope Francis Church made concrete in the African Church within SCCs.
Round D
 Visible sign of the living church. **Round D**
 Visiting parish-based SCCs on the ground. **Round A**
 Visiting the sick. **Round twenty A**
 Vital icon for New Evangelization. **Round D**
 Vital way of being church. **A**
 Vital way to be church. **A**
 Voice of the Local Church. **Round D**
 Voice of the people. **Round D**

Walking together with Jesus. A
 Warm ground of formation. **Round D**
 Way for the church to grow. **Round D**
 Way for people to be church to one another. D
 Way of being church. **Round D**
 Way of being church and pastoral priority. **Round D**
 Way of cementing Christians' life. D
 Way of doing theology. **Round D**
 Way of evangelization in the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. A
 Way of growing. **Round D**
 Way of life. D
 Way of life, not just a program or project in the parish. **Round D**
 Way of making the church more active among the Christian faithful. **Round D**
 Way of sharing leadership with young people. D
 Way that the Christian message can reach people. A
 Way to go in today's modern church. D
 Way to life in Christ Jesus. D
 Way to reach out to the suffering Christ. **Round A**
 Way to the development and transformation of the faithful. **Round D**
 We are the church. **Round D**
 Way we are church. **Round D**
 We actually have relevant experience in getting together. A
 We assure one another that no one is alone. A
 We embrace God's love and salvation. A
 We gather in small groups to pray and socialize together. A
 We share our life experiences. A
 Weekly gathering is a treasure trove of spiritual and social inspirations. A
 Weekly gospel-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**
 Weekly "household" meetings on Skype. **Round D**
 Weekly lectionary-based small faith-sharing community. **Round A**
 Weekly lectionary-based faith sharing is the preferred methodology. A
 Weekly prayer group in the residence hall/dorm. **Round D**
 Weekly scripture mantra. **Round A**
 Weekly spiritual recharge. A
 Welcoming friendship. A
 Welcoming people in the SCC. A
 Welcoming. **Round A**
 Well-coordinated. **Round A**
 Well-defined strategy for small community ministry. D
 Well fitted to provide solutions to the many challenges facing Catholic Church in Africa. A
 What "being church" means. D
 What it means to be church at the grassroots level. **Round D**
 WhatsApp social media exchange. A
 WhatsApp SCC. D
 WhatsApp SCC as a support group. **Round A**
 Where the church starts/begins. **Round A**
 Where the faithful experience and live Synodality as mission, communion and participation.
 A
 Where the Holy Spirit works. A
 Where one finds harmony, love, brotherhood, and forgiveness. A
 Where the Small Church begins. **Round A**

Where we refuel every week. A
 Will always continue. A
 Wisdom circles. D
 Wisdom Small Communities. D
 Without borders or boundaries. **Round sixteen D**
 Without SCCs the Catholic Church will fall. **D**
 Women as equal partners in SCCs. Round D
 Women's equal participation. **Round D**
 Wonderful vibrancy in the YSCCs at Kenyatta University. **Round A**
 Word of God as the adhesive on which (SCCs) is centered. A
 Word of God as soul of the SCC. **Round A**
 Word of God is mutually shared among God's people. A
 Word of God Sharing. **Round A**
 Working through SCCs for change. **Round A**
 Working together to build community. **Round thirteen A**
 Work in progress. **Round thirty-two D**
 Works for social progress. A
 Work of the Spirit. **Round D**
 Young Adult Digital Prayer Community. D.
 Young Adult Virtual Communities. D.
 Young Adults Peer Group SCC. **Round D**
 Young Adults Peer Group Small Faith-sharing community. **Round D**
 Young Adults Peer group Small Faith-sharing Group. **Round fourteen D**
 Young Adults Small Christian Community. D
 Young Adults Small Empowerment Community. D
 Young Adults. **Round fourteen D**
 Young Adults SCC. **Round D**
 Young Married Couples Small Christian Community. **Round fifteen D**
 Young Married Families Small Christian Community. **Round thirteen D**
 Young People Online Small Searching (Seekers) Community. A
 Young People Peer Group Small Faith-sharing Community. D
 Young People -- pillar of the Catholic Church today. **D**
 Young People SCC. D
 Young People Small Searching (Seekers) Community. A
 Young Professionals Small Christian Community. **Round D**
 Youth and children activities. **Round twelve D**
 Youth faith formation. **Round A**
 Youth Peer Group Small Faith-sharing community. **Round D**
 Youth process adapted to the anxieties and needs of young people. **Round A**
 Youth SCC. **Round D**
 Youth and young adult ministry. **Round D**
 Youth are leaders of internet development. **Round D**
 YSCCs are necessary and vital. D
 YSCCs as a bridge from Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) Programs. **Round D**
 YSCCs Model of Church. **Round D**
 YSCCs open up spaces for young adults. **Round A**
 Zoom Bible Sharing. A
 Zoom gatherings. A
 Zoom Gospel Sharing and Reflection. A
 Zoom Small Breakout Room. D
 Zoom Small Christian Community. D

Zoom Small Faith Community. D

Total Choices: 1705

826: Dynamics

879: Activities

The question -- The best part of my Small Christian Community is... followed by six 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 1st 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 the 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 celebrated in the SCC. **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 A**
 Multigenerational small community. **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**
 Applies the Gospel to our daily/everyday life. **Round thirty-four A**

The leading vote getter was: “Applies the Gospel to our daily/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 getters were: “Community of missionary disciples” and “Sharing the Word of God.” 75

Thirty-seventh Round (May, 2015-June, 2015):

Lifblood of the larger church. **Round thirty-seven D**
 Evangelizers in our neighborhood. **Round thirty-seven A**
 SCCs networking. **Round thirty-seven A**
 “See,” “Discern” and “Act” Process/Method. **Round thirty-seven A**
 Online House Churches. **Round thirty-seven D**

The leading vote getter was: “See,” “Discern” 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. 26

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. 24

Forty-first Round (January, 2016-February, 2016):

Authentic school of the Gospel. **Round D**
 Dialog 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. 59

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**

The leading vote getter was: Small faith-based community. 75

Forty-fourth Round (July, 2016-August, 2016):

Powerful means of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**
 Small group dynamic. **Round twenty-nine D**
Bible-based. **Round A**
 Pillar of our church. **Round D**
 Local family unit. **Round twenty-nine D**

The leading vote getter was: *Bible*-based. 49

Forty-fifth Round (September, 2016-October, 2016):

Best way to smell the sheep. **Round A**
 Parish-based Small Faith-sharing Group. **Round D**
 Cell-based (SCCs) student movement. **Round D**
 Young adult peer group Small Faith-sharing Group. **Round D**
 Lectionary-based Catholics. **Round A**

The leading vote getters were: Best way to smell the sheep and Lectionary-based Catholic. 50

Forty-sixth Round (November, 2016-December, 2016):

Tool to serve evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**
 Communion of families in the neighborhood. **Round D**
 Expression of the *sensus fidelium*. **Round A**
 Most important lifeline of the parish. **Round thirty-four D**
 Supported by the leaders of the church in Eastern Africa. **Round A**

The leading vote getters were: Tool to serve evangelization and Supported by the leaders of the church in Eastern Africa. 49

Forty-seventh Round (January, 2017-February, 2017):

SCCs Facebook Nation. **Round D**

Multigenerational small community. **Round thirty-one D**

Using the new social media resources to promote faith life. **Round A**

Youth peer group small Faith-sharing community. **Round D**

Gospel-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**

The leading vote getter was: Gospel-based Faith-sharing. 108

Forty-eighth Round (March, 2017-April, 2017):

“Communion of Communities” Model of Church. **Round D**

Prayer, reflection and Faith-sharing grounds me. **Round A**

Key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa. **Round D**

Campus small communities. **Round A**

Place of evangelization. **Round twenty-nine A**

The leading vote getter was: Prayer, reflection and Faith-sharing grounds me. 105

Forty-ninth Round (May, 2017-June, 2017):

Church on the ground.

Interfaith small communities.

Best and most effective means of evangelization.

Strength of our parish community.

Weekly Gospel-based Faith-sharing.

The leading vote getter was: Weekly Gospel-based Faith-sharing. 85

Fiftieth Round (July, 2017-August, 2017):

Daily Scripture-based Faith-sharing.

Church in the neighborhood.

Best thing that has happened in my life in the Catholic Church.

Empowerment of women.

Online small community.

The leading vote getter was: Empowerment of women. 98

Special Round of top voter getters of the first 50 rounds (September, 2016-October, 2016):

Prayer, reflection and Faith-sharing grounds me.

Key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa.
 Youth peer group small Faith-sharing community.
 Empowerment of women.
 Gospel-based Faith-sharing.

The leading vote getter was: Prayer, reflection and Faith-sharing grounds me. 125

Fifty-second Round (November, 2017-- December, 2017):

WhatsApp SCC as a support group.
 Church on the move.
 Neighborhood evangelism.
 Church of the laity.
 Reaches out to the marginated and those on the periphery of society.

The leading vote getter was: Reaches out to the marginated and those on the periphery of society. 105

Fifty-third Round (January, 2018-- February, 2018):

Multi-ethnic small community. Round D
 Home blessings. Round A
 Peer group small Faith-sharing community. Round A
 Basic means of evangelization. Round A
 Personal spiritual growth. Round D

The leading vote getter was: Peer group small Faith-sharing community. 486 (high number resulted from Chinese hacking)

Fifty-fourth Round (March, 2018-- April, 2018):

No Poll. Technical glitch in migrating from Joomla to Word Press.

Fifty-fifth Round (May, 2018-- June, 2018):

Evangelizing through smartphones. Round A
 Anchor of family life. Round D
 Laity form the engine of SCCs. Round D
 Young Professionals Small Christian Community. D
 Mass in the neighborhood. A

The leading vote getter was: Mass in the neighborhood. 52

Fifty-sixth Round (July, 2018-- August, 2018):

Agent of evangelization. **Round A**

Safe place for sharing. **Round D**
 Lectionary-based Catholics can change the world. **Round A**
 Glue of a campus ministry program. **Round D**
 Adapts to the local context. **A**

The leading vote getter was: Lectionary-based Catholics can change the world. 50

Fifty-seventh Round (September, 2018-- October, 2018):

Lectio Divina. **Round A**
 Growing SCCs. **A**
 Home mass. **Round A**
 Emerging paradigm of youth empowerment in Africa. **Round D**
 Affinity Group. **Round twenty-nine D**

The leading vote getter was: Emerging paradigm of youth empowerment in Africa. 107

Fifty-eighth Round (November, 2018-- December, 2018):

Listening circle. **D**
 Deepens my faith and prayer life. **A**
 Seven steps method of Gospel sharing. **A**
 SCC trainers without borders. **D**
 Outreach evangelization. **A**

The leading vote getter was: Outreach evangelization. 74

Fifty-ninth Round (January, 2019 – February, 2019):

Weekly lectionary-based Faith-sharing. **A**
 Small Multicultural Faith Community. **D**
 Local context is king (and queen!). **D**
 Safe place for people to share and grow. **A**
 Reawakens the missionary spirit in the laity. **A**
 The leading vote getter was: Safe place for people to share and grow. 108

Sixtieth Round (March, 2019 – April, 2019):

Small Peer Group Faith-sharing Community. **A**
 Every member has an equal amount of air time. **D**
 New way of evangelization. **Round D**
 Online small community. **Round D**
 Connecting with other young people. **A**

The leading vote getter was: New way of evangelization. 98

Sixty-first Round (May, 2019 – June, 2019):

Pillar that supports the whole Catholic Church structure. D
 Expression of the *sensus fidelium*. A
 Small Young People Peer Group Faith-sharing Community. A
 Evangelization means practical action and reaching out to others. A
 Foundational to the Catholic Church in Africa today. D

The leading vote getter was: Small Young People Peer Group Faith-sharing Community. 69

Sixty-second Round (July, 2019 – August, 2019):

Evangelization means service to other people. A
 Meets weekly. A
 Foundation stones upon which parishes are built. D
 Structurally connected to the parish. D
 Combines Bible Sharing and Faith-sharing. A

The leading vote getter was: Combines Bible Sharing and Faith-sharing. 101

Sixty-third Round (September, 2019 – October, 2019):

Tool for evangelization today. D
 Parish-based Small Christian Community. D
 Sharing life experiences. A
 Church from the grassroots. D
 Joining hands in promoting YPSCCs. A

The leading vote getter was: Sharing life experiences. 133

Sixty-fourth Round (November, 2019 – December, 2019):

Online SCC. Round A
 Personal encounter with Jesus Christ through SCC. A
 Model of evangelization. D
 SCCs model -- gift of the African Church to the Universal Church. D
 Intergenerational mass. A

The leading vote getter was: Personal encounter with Jesus Christ through SCC. 134

Sixty-fifth Round (January, 2020 – February, 2020):

Parish is communion of communities model with SCCs structurally connected. D
 Empowers laypeople to take more responsibility for their church. A
 Ongoing formation of SCC members. A
 Regular practical action and outreach. A
 Way of life, not just a program or project in the parish. D

The leading vote getter was: Way of life, not just a program or project in the parish.
104

Sixty-sixth Round (March, 2020 – April, 2020):

Pastoral tool of evangelization today. D
WhatsApp social media exchange. A
Interactive shared homilies. A
Authentic experience of synodality. D
“Must” hour every week. A

The leading vote getter was: Interactive shared homilies. 90

Sixty-seventh Round (May, 2020 – June, 2020):

Young People Small Searching (Seekers) Community. A
Helps deepen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A
Core of our church, not just another ministry. D
Special prayers for people with Covid-19. A
Virtual SCC. D

The leading vote getters were: Helps deepen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ and Special prayers for people with Covid-19. 153

Sixty-eighth Round (July, 2020 – August, 2020):

Digital SCC. D
Sitting around in a circle. D
Online faith sharing. A
Evangelizing the grassroots. A
Helps the needy during Covid-19. A

The leading vote getters were: Helps the needy during Covid-19 and Online faith sharing. 167.

Sixty-ninth Round (September, 2020 – October, 2020):

WhatsApp SCC. D
Building a living church through SCCs. D
Concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic. A
Multigenerational mass. A
Sharing daily experiences. A

The leading vote getters were: “Concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic” and “Sharing daily experiences.” 153

Seventieth Round (November, 2020 – December, 2020):

Helps needy people in our neighborhood. A
 Responds creatively to the New Normal. A
 Adapts to the Covid-19 pandemic situation. A
 Catholic Church from the grassroots. D
 Hybrid Small Christian Community. D

The leading vote getter was: Adapts to the Covid-19 pandemic situation. 124

Seventy-first Round (January, 2021 – February, 2021):

Responds to Pope Francis' emphasis on reaching out to the marginalized. A
 Richness of small community Gospel reflection and faith sharing. A
 Going digital during Covid-19. A
 Catholic Church on the move. D
 Zoom Small Christian Community. D
 Expressing fraternity and solidarity amid the Covid-19 situation. A

The leading vote getter was: Richness of small community Gospel reflection and faith sharing. 166

Seventy-second Round (March, 2021 – April, 2021):

Helps the needy during Covid-19. A
 Opportunity to thank God for all he has done for us. A
 Gathering online to celebrate our faith together. A
 Focus questions that relate scripture to our daily life. Round A
 Young Adults Small Empowerment Community. D
 Integral dimension of parish life. D

The leading vote getter was: Opportunity to thank God for all he has done for us. 142

Seventy-third Round (May, 2021 – June, 2021):

Way of evangelization in the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. A
 Basic unit of the parish. D
 Responds to Pope Francis' emphasis on reaching out to those on the peripheries. A
 Zoom and other online platforms for Gospel Sharing and Reflection. A
 Alumni Online Small Christian Community. D
 Our DNA as Christians. Round D.

The leading vote getter was: Zoom and other online platforms for Gospel Sharing and Reflection. 140

Seventy-fourth Round (July, 2021 – August, 2021):

Online Small Christian Community Ministry. Round A
 Creativity and Flexibility of Hybrid SCC. A

Helps me persevere through Covid-19 pandemic. A
 Privileged place of faith formation. A
 Central in the life of the church. Round D
 Element or Feature in the Synodal Church D

The leading vote getter was: Privileged place of faith formation. 135.

Seventy-fifth Round (September, 2021 – October, 2021):

We share faith and hope with one another. A
 Support for our spiritual life. A
 Experience of synodality. A
 Permanent influence in the worldwide Catholic Church. D
 Give us courage to overcome obstacles during Covid-19 pandemic. A
 Gospel is our DNA. D

The leading vote getters were: “Experience of synodality,” “We share faith and hope with one another” “ Give us courage to overcome obstacles during Covid-19 pandemic.” 103

Seventy-sixth Round (November, 2021 – December, 2021):

Platform and context to deepen the issue of synodality. D
 Helps us learn from the Covid-19 pandemic. A
 Helps our spiritual life. A
 Participative homily sharing. A
 Essence of the Catholic Church. D

The leading vote getter was: Helps us learn from the Covid-19 pandemic. 105

Seventy-seventh Round (January, 2022 – February, 2022):

A basis for the Synodal journey. D
 Spiritual support community. A
 Helps us persevere during Covid-19. A
 Sharing faith and hope with one another. A
 Online *jumuiya* (Swahili for “community”). D
 Follows the example of Christ the Healer. A

The leading vote getter was: A basis for the Synodal journey. 95

Seventy-eighth Round (March, 2022 – April 2022):

Powerful way to accompany one another as pilgrims on the journey. A
 Helps other people. A
 True experience of Synodality in Africa. D
 Zoom Small Faith Community. D
 In solidarity with Covid-19 sufferers and their care givers. A
 Empowers the church in the neighborhood. A

The leading vote getter was: Powerful way to accompany one another as pilgrims on the journey. 91

Seventy-ninth Round (May, 2022 – June, 2022):

Focus on the Word of God (*Bible*). D
 Thanksgiving for getting back to nearer normal. A
 Online practice of our faith. A
 Unique opportunity to use the Synodal Process. A
 Praying together for peace in the world. A
 Source of comfort to the lay faithful. D

The leading vote getter was: Praying together for peace in the world. 170

Eightieth Round (July, 2022 – August, 2022):

From viewpoint of young people/young adults:

Uses the internet and social media. A
 Networking of young people through SCCs. A
 Flexibility in digital communications and connections. A
 Prayer solidarity with refugees crossing borders. A
 Hybrid SCC Webinars. D
 Digital/online/virtual evangelization. D

The leading vote getter was: Prayer solidarity with refugees crossing borders. 135

Eighty-first Round (September – October, 2022):

Sure way of making the best out of Pope Francis' Synodal Process. A
 Helps to grow the spirituality of young adults. A
 Communal listening to the Word of God. A
 Being comfortable in a Zoom Church. A
 Primary faith community in self-organized small communities of people D
 Functioning structure. D

The leading vote getter was: Communal listening to the Word of God. 157

Eighty-second Round (November – December, 2022):

Discernment Circle. A
 Operates in a synodal style or way. A
 Safe space to discern God's call for each of us. A
 Lectionary-based faith sharing in a synodal style. D
 Strong foundation of a Catholic Parish. D
 Spreads the Gospel. A

The leading vote getter was: Spreads the Gospel. 123

Eighty-third Round (January – February, 2023):

Strong unity/communion allows people to participate fully in the Synodal Process. A
 Offers many faith formation opportunities. A
 Zoom Bible Sharing. A
 Online mission of SCCs. A
 Hybrid Small Christian Communities are the future. D
 Essential unit of parish life. D

The leading vote getter was: Strong unity/communion allows people to participate fully in the Synodal Process. 125

Eighty-fourth Round (March – April, 2023):

Communal discernment from below. A
 Reignites our faith through reading and reflecting on the Gospel. A
 Clearly articulates its charism, spirituality, purpose and mission. A
 Praying together for special intentions. A
 Online Campus SCCs. D
 Synodality is the true spirit of a SCC. D

The leading vote getter was: Praying together for special intentions. 114

Eighty-fifth Round (May – June, 2023):

Daily prayer in gatherings plays a key role during the Synodal Process. A
 Value of listening to the Gospel in our current Synodal Process. A
 Silent periods in our gatherings. A.
 Thanking God and celebrating our 50 Year SCCs Anniversary in Eastern Africa. A
 Critical way to move the Catholic Church forward. D
 Privileged place to experience family spirit, Synodality and outreach to others. D

The leading vote getter was: Daily prayer in gatherings plays a key role during the Synodal Process. 90

Eighty-sixth Round (July – August, 2023):

Lens through which we see the world. A
 Where the Holy Spirit works. A
 Reinvigorated SCCs as a fruit of Synodality.
 Weekly lectionary-based faith sharing leading to practical action. A
 Most complete Synodal Process in the parish. D
 Backbone of the Catholic Church in Africa. D

The leading vote getter was: Where the Holy Spirit works. 122

Eighty-seventh Round (September -- October, 2023):

Weekly lectionary-based faith sharing is the preferred methodology. A
 Praying together for the Golden Jubilee of SCCs in Eastern Africa. A
 Where the faithful experience and live Synodality as mission, participation and communion. A
 Praying together for the Synod to take place in Rome in October, 2023. A
 Pray for and assist people living on the margins of society. A
 Center of evangelization to the family and youth. D

The leading vote getter was: Praying together for the Synod to take place in Rome in October, 2023. 174

Eighty-eighth Round (November -- December, 2023):

Praying together for peace in war-torn areas. A
 Everyone is given a chance to contribute regardless of rank, position, or educational status. A
 Mirror the ongoing Synod to ensure that no one is left behind. A
 Small Christian Support Community in our daily lives. A
 Synodal SCCs Model of Church on the local level. D
 Christ-centered Small Community. D

The leading vote getter was: Christ-centered Small Community. 110

Eighty-ninth Round (January -- February, 2024):

Functional SCCs as a gift to the Catholic Church. A
 SCCs mutual networking. A
 Began to form organically out of the Synodal Process. A
SCCs provides the groundwork for a Synodal Parish. A
 Experience with SCCs has informed my understanding of synodality. A
 Synod theme aligns seamlessly with the essence of SCCs. A
 Sacred space to unburden ourselves. A
 Basic space where I live my faith. A
 Being comfortable in a Zoom Church. A
 Very incredible life changer. A
 Manifestation of the Catholic Church in Africa. A
 Very important part of our faith life. A
 Vital way to be church. A
Anchored on the Word of God. A
Word of God as the adhesive on which (SCCs) is centered. A
 Begins with a focus on the "Signs of the Times." A
Praying together for the victims of natural disasters. A
 Living cell that builds up the Body of Christ. A
 Walking together with Jesus Christ. A

Recognizing the presence of Jesus Christ in our small community. A

Place to encounter Jesus Christ. A

Demonstrates the love of Jesus Christ and maturity in faith. A

Call to respond to the suffering Christ. A

Live the closeness of the day-to-day around the Word of God and the Eucharist. A

Privileged place where the experience of walking together is practiced. A

SCCs are my first introduction to a synodal church. D

Hallmark of the Catholic Church in Africa. D

Structure of fraternity and support. D

Groundwork for a Synodal Parish. D

CHECK and REVISESchool of communion for the 21st century. **Round twenty-nine D**Society in miniature. **Round twenty-nine D**SCCs processes/methodologies. **Round twenty-nine A**Sure vehicle to true Christianity. **Round twenty-nine D**Home of communion for the 21st century. **Round twenty-nine D**Heart of the church. **Round D**New way of evangelization. **Round D**Hinge on which pastoral work evolves. **Round A**New expression of faith and community. **Round D**Sure way of evangelization. **Round D**Our way of being church. **Round D**

Tools in the vineyard. A

Evangelizing families rooted in SCCs. **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 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 community 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 community. **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 A**
 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**
 Dialog of action. **Round A**
 Dialog 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**

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**
 On-campus evangelization small groups. **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**

Base of our Catholic Church. **Round D**

Christ-centered community. **Round A**

New paradigm of the Family of God. **Round D**

New way of being local church. **Round D**

Skype Faith-sharing. **Round A**

Foretaste of the Kingdom of God. **Round D**

Global moment of renewal. **Round D**

Heart of renewal in the church today. **Round D**

New way of life that is to be understood and lived. **Round D**

Small group process of evangelization. **Round D**

Help each other to grow in faith. **Round A**

Platform that allows people in the same neighborhood to share practical experiences.

Round A

Small community of shared faith. **Round A**

Strong community of believers. **Round A**

Vehicle towards total human development. **Round D**

FISH Group Family. **Round D**

Localized church in the universal church structure. **Round D**

Seedbed where faith formation takes place. **Round A**

Soul of the church. **Round D**

Working through SCCs for change. **Round A**

Bedrock of the Christian faith. **Round D**

New pastoral model of being Church. **Round D**

Our baptismal brotherhood and sisterhood lived out practically with a few people.

Round A

Sharing our daily life. **Round A**

Word of God as soul of the SCC. **Round A**

Church belongs to me, not to the priest. **Round A**

Essentially a spirituality. **Round A**

Online SCC. **Round A**

Root from which the wider church emerges. **Round D**

Social media makes evangelization easy. **Round A.**

Centering prayer. **Round A**

Mainstream of African Catholic life. **Round D**

Pastoral lifeblood of the Christian community. **Round D**

Small Faith-sharing Community. **Round A**

Small group ministry team. **Round A**

Combination of compatibility and diversity. **Round A**

Essential part of any Christian life. **Round A**

Experienced-based Faith-sharing questions. **Round A**

Small Faith-sharing Group. **Round A**

Smaller is better. **Round D**

Multicultural mass. **Round A**

Powerful force of renewal of the parish structures. **Round A**

Familial model. **Round D**

Familial relationships. **Round D**

Faith-sharing dimension. **Round A**

Grounds me. **Round A**

Nourished by the Gospel. **Round A**

Post-RCIA Group. **Round A**

SCCs-related Apps. **Round A**

At the heart of evangelization. **Round D**

Church as Family of God built around SCCs. **Round D**

Group *Bible* study. **Round A.**

Reflecting together in a personal way. **Round A**

Small group life. **Round A**

Active small group community of disciples. **Round one D**

Cell based movement. **Round D**

Cell-based (SCCs) student movement. **Round D**

Small Faith-sharing Group experience. **Round A**

Small group discipleship. **Round D**

Active participation by all in the community. **Round D**

Model for change in the Catholic Church. **Round D**

Most effective ministerial technique with Millennials. **Round D**

Small group communities. **Round D**

Help us help each other to connect everyday life and faith. **Round A**

Reading Group. **Round D**

Small group management platform. **Round D**

Small Study Group. **Round A**

Weekly “household” meetings on Skype. **Round D**

Basic family. **Round D**

Family of believers. **Round D**

Small Parish Book Club. **Round A**

Small Parish Reading Group. **Round A**

Spirit of the family. **Round D**

Blog Discussion Group. **Round A**

Eucharistic-centered community. **Round A**

Grassroots base of SCCs. **Round D**

Local and smaller communities have a greater sense of participation. **Round A**

Sermon-based small group. **Round A**

Kairos time for SCC Priorities. **Round D**

Online Skype SCCs Workshop. **Round A**

Small Community Leader Training Webinar. **Round A**

Solution to fulfill the “Joy of the Gospel.” **Round D**

Weekly prayer group in the residence hall/dorm. **Round D**

Faith community of peers. **Round D**

Foster the faith of individuals. **Round D**

Small group parish session. **Round A**

Social Inquiry Method. **Round D**

Youth and young adult ministry. **Round D**

Evangelization. **Round A**

Key Pastoral priority in Eastern Africa. **Round D**

Preferred method of evangelization. **Round A**

Seminarians take up the work of animation of SCCs.

Small groups as a model for change in the Catholic Church. **Round D**

Campus Small Communities. **Round A**

CLCs/BCCs are the revitalizing force in the Catholic Church. **Round D**

Harnesses youth power. **Round A**

Priority of the New Evangelization. **Round D**

Small Neighborhood Group. **Round D**

Carrying the flame of SCCs. **Round A**

Community of communities for youth ministry. **Round D**

Confirmation Small Group. **Round D**

Scripture-based reflection booklet. **Round A**

Small group discipleship is the most effective ministerial technique with Millennials.

Round D

Concrete expression of communion in Christ. **Round A**

Incarnating SCCs. **Round D**

Small groups during retreat. **Round A**
 True church in the neighborhood. **Round D**
 New pastoral model of church. **Round D**

Experiential church. **Round A**
 Heart of this new pastoral model of church. **Round D**
 Leadership training. **Round A**
 Small Discipleship Group. **Round D**
 Solution to parish life. **Round D**

Prayerful group engagement with Scripture. **Round A**
 Churchhood. **Round D**
 Peer ministry in a new way. **Round A**
 Small Faithful Community. **Round D**
 Small Faith-sharing community building. **Round A**

Gospel-based living. **Round D**
 Opportunity for spiritual nourishment. **Round A**
 Youth process adapted to the anxieties and needs of young people. **Round A**
 SCCs networks. **Round A**
 Youth faith formation. **Round A**
 Accompanying college age students on the path of missionary discipleship. **Round A**
 Accompanying young adults on the path of missionary discipleship. **Round A**
 Children friendly. **Round A**
 Hospitable. **Round A**
 Welcoming. **Round A**

Gospel-centered church. **Round D**
 Group Spiritual Direction. **Round A**
 Parish-based Small Faith-sharing Community. **Round D**
 Promote the culture of encounter. **Round A**
 Young adult peer group small Faith-sharing community. **Round D**

Development indigenous to the several continents. **Round A**
 New beginning in the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Power of Student Small Christian Communities. **Round A**
 "Regular" structure of parish life. **Round D**
 Social exchange as a medium of evangelism. **Round A**

Door to get in the church. **Round D**
 Helps Catholics cross the aisle of race and culture. **Round A**
 Practical ministerial tools. **Round A**
 Prayer Circle. **Round A**
 Promoting Young Adults SCCs through YCW. **Round D**

Different pastoral model of church. **Round D**
 Future of the African Church is at stake. **Round D**
 Parish-based SCC. **Round D**
 SCCs in the context of Catholic campus ministry. **Round D**
 Young adult peer group SCC. **Round D**

Basis of the Church of God. **Round D**
 Scripture-based faith formation. **Round A**
 New model of being church. **Round D**
 Permanent and ongoing force and influence in the worldwide Catholic Church.

Round D

Well-coordinated. **Round A**

Critical opportunity for spiritual development. **Round D**
 Online conversations. **Round A**
 Principal tool for belonging. **Round D**
 AMECEA SCCs Pastoral Model of Church. **Round D**

Gateway networks. **Round A**
 Seedbeds of a different Africa. **Round D**
 Young Adults SCC. **Round D**
 Youth SCC. **Round D**

Basic Christianity. **Round D**
 Essential part of the structure of the parish. **Round D**
 Family Enrichment Club. **Round A**
 For our integral development. **Round D**
 Network of SCCs in Africa. **Round D**

Best practices of SCCs. **Round A**
 Book Discussion Group/Club. **Round A**
 Family SCC. **Round D**
 Small group experience. **Round D**
 Best expression of the church of the poor. **Round D**

First level of the church structure. **Round D**
 Interparish singing competition. **Round A**
 Pastoral mission of the church. **Round D**
 Virtual communities. **Round D**
 TABLET Reading Group. **Round A**

Best tool for evangelization here in the university. **Round A**
 Biblically based. **Round A**
 Home to all Christians. **Round D**
 Spiritual disciplines in a small group setting. **Round A**
 Visible sign of the living church. **Round D**

Great platform that really enriches the church. **Round D**
 Patrimony of the Catholic Church in Africa. **Round D**
 Place of initial catechesis. **Round A**
 Constitutive structure of the Local Church. **Round D**.
 Consultative structure of the Local Church. **Round D**

Center of the Church. **Round D**

Collaborative effort that very much reflects the spirit of BCCs and our Christian faith.

Round D

Fruit of the new mode of ecclesiological thinking. **Round D**

New way for the evangelization of the church in Africa. **Round D**
 Power of faith communities to make a real difference. **Round D**

Cells injecting life into the organism of the church. **Round A**
 Lectionary Catholic. **Round A**
 Lectionary *Jumuiya*. **Round A**
 Twinning between Main Adult SCC and Youth SCC. **Round A**
 Warm ground of formation. **Round D**

Give community members an opportunity to exercise and practice Christian values.
Round A

Major catalyst for sharing grassroots experiences. **Round A**
 Small Christian Community Process. **Round D**
 Strength of the church in a new way. **Round D**
 Tool for effective ministry and evangelization. **Round A**

Empowerment from below. **Round D**
 Have helped me grow. **Round A**
 Importance of small group ministry. **Round D**
 Offer a way for young adults as well as older adults to more actively engage in the
 Catholic Church. **Round A**
 Recognition of certain lay associations as SCCs. **Round D**

Contemplative dialog in small groups. **Round A**
 Contemplative dialog process. **Round A**
 Evangelizing tool. **Round A**
 Small Christian Communities without boundaries. **Round D**
 Church going to the people. **Round A**

Connecting life and faith regularly. **Round A**
 Experiencing our Christian call in the neighborhood. **Round A**
 Gospel-based Catholic. **Round D**
 Schools for discipleship. **Round D**
 Sunday scripture-based reflections. **Round A**

Acts of the Apostles lifestyle. **Round A**
Bible Sharing in a circle. **Round A**
 Daily contact in the neighborhood. **Round A**
 Deepening faith in one's local environment. **Round A**

New way of being Christian in the church. **Round D**
 Circle, not pyramid. **Round D**
 Parish-based neighborhood communities. **Round D**
 Shared Homily. **Round A**
 Way of life, not just a program or project in the parish. **Round D**

Continue the evangelization mission. **Round D**
 Drivers of our own vehicle. **Round A**
 Facilitating the information and enhancement of weak SCCs. **Round A**
 Faith-sharing resources. **Round D**

Both foundation and goal of Christian life. **Round D**
 Extension of the nuclear and even the extended family. **Round D**
 Instruments of God's love and mercy. **Round D**
 Roots the Catholic Church in people's daily lives. **Round D**
 Theological expressions of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. **Round D.**

Help each other to grow in the social, family, and most importantly, spiritual life.

Round A

Ideal model of the church as a family. **Round D**
 Important formation in our spiritual and social life. **Round D**
 Perfect platform for Christians to share and grow. **Round D**
 Super support for spiritual and social life. **Round D**

Helps the young generation to strengthen our faith in Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Internet enables us YSCC members to grow spiritually. **Round D**
 It is a vocation. **Round D**
 Small Church where people can make decisions on certain issues concerning them.

Round D

Virtues of the Pope Francis Church made concrete in the African Church within
 SCCs. **Round D**

Play a key role in the growth of the Catholic Church in Africa. **Round A**
 Real experience of the Catholic Church is lived in the SCCs. **Round D**
 Way of being church. **Round D**
 Way of doing theology. **Round D**
 Wonderful vibrancy in the YSCCs at Kenyatta University. **Round A**

Avenue for God to reveal himself/herself anew to people in a more personal way.

Round D

Enables us grow spiritually. **Round A**
 Greatest part of a SCC is to be member. **Round D**
 Place to build relationships and have meaningful conversations about faith. **Round A**
 Place where the different ethnic groups meet together. **Round A**

Best way to go. **Round D**

Help local Catholics feel that they are the church and more responsible for the church
 life and decision making. **Round A**
 Lay a strong base for our Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Pastoral model of the Catholic Church integrally connected to the structures,
 ministries and activities of the parish. **Round D**
 Powerful vehicles for youth faith formation. **Round A**

Best thing that has happened in the Catholic Church. **Round D**

Life well lived (based on the *Bible*).
 Ministry to the SCCs family. **Round A**
 Shows that the Catholic Church is not foreign in Africa. **Round A**
 Way of growing. **Round D**

Central to the growth of the church. **Round D**

Only hope of the Catholic Church in Africa. **Round D.**

Readings of the coming Sunday: one is able to internalise the message before further

elaboration by the priest on Sunday. **Round A**
 Really changed the Catholic Church. **Round A**
 Starts with the family. **Round D**
 Importance of the Eucharist as the real celebration of our faith that is shared in the
 SCCs. **Round D**
 Model of the church we want. **Round D**
 Really a blessed and sacred space for the Christians. **Round D**
 Small Christian Communities apostolate. **Round A**
 Strong places where respect for human dignity, defence of rights, acceptance and
 tolerance should be considered. **Round D**

Best structure for the New Evangelization. **Round D**
 Best way to share the Word of God. **Round D**
 Broad spectrum of youth ministry through SCCs. **Round D**
 Participation of the faithful in the life of the church. **Round D**
 Takes a step ahead in terms of building the Catholic Church through encouraging
 people to prioritize SCCs. **Round D.**
Bible sharing by members and further discussions about daily life is what interests
 me. **Round A**
 Foundation of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Through interpersonal relationships it offers a pastoral model of the church. **Round**

D.

Where the Small Church begins. **Round D**
 Youth are leaders of internet development. **Round D**

Best way for parish to breathe. **Round A**
 Participatory church firmly anchored at the grassroots level by SCCs. **Round D**
 Presence of SCCs for evangelization at the grassroots level. **Round D**
 SCC is the sure way. **Round D**

Best way of expressing love. **Round A**
 Best way of fostering reconciliation. **Round A**
 Mold young generations through YSCCs. **Round A**
 Small communities of faith and practice. **Round A**
 Vibrancy. **Round A**

Empowerment of women. **Round D**
 Joint decision making. **Round A**
 Patron and Patroness saints. **Round D**
 Train the Trainers (TOT) Method. **Round A**
 We are the church. **Round D**

Big instrument of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Both a place and a path for pastoral care and evangelization of families and marriages.
Round D
 Making SCC organic cells in the Catholic Church wherever we go. **Round A**
 Our Christian clan. **Round D**
 Place to form our faith. **Round A**

Best placed Catholic Church organ to preach and promote peace. **Round A**
 Elders take responsibility for reconciliation and peace in the community. **Round A**

Fellowship in smaller sub groups within a parish community. **Round A**
 Intentional efforts to reclaim spirituality as a means to liberation, justice and
 flourishing. **Round D**
 Spirit of togetherness. **Round D**

Best and most effective means of evangelization. **Round D**
 Best physical way to foster and sustain the growth of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Church on the ground. **Round D**
 Most effective way of evangelization. **Round D**
 Way to the development and transformation of the faithful. **Round D**

Best thing that has happened in my life in the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Cell of the village church. **Round D**
 Nursery bed for good marriages and good families in the Catholic Church. **Round A**
 Practical way of evangelization. **Round D**
 Relational aspect that members have for each other. **Round D**

Agents of New Evangelization for the renewal of humanity. **Round D**
 Most effective agent for foster God's goodness in Africa. **Round A**
 Place of care and compassion. **Round A**
 Place of reconciliation. **Round A**
 Way to reach out to the suffering Christ. **Round A**

Help the whole church to do its mission. **Round A**
 Interfaith small communities. **Round D**
 Parish Discussion Group. **Round A**
 Place for members to share what is good for their global life. **Round D**
 SCCs can ease work of the priests and religious. **Round A**

Equality between women and men, poor and rich, different ethnic groups. **Round D**
 Helps Christians to deepen their relationship among themselves and their relationship
 with God. **Round A**
 Makes the church close to Christians. **Round D**
 SCCs model of evangelization at the grassroots. **Round D**
 Women's equal participation. **Round D**

Effective way to plant the seed of Gospel values in the Christian faithful. **Round A**
 Emerging paradigm of youth empowerment in Africa. **Round D**
 Locus for the formation of conscience. **Round D**
 Tool that brings the bond of unity to all Catholic Church members. **Round D**
 Weekly gospel-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**

Avenue for the revitalization of the Christian faith. **Round D**
 Effective channel for reconciliation. **Round A**
 Effective method or style of evangelization. **Round A**
 Lifeblood of the church. **Round D**
 PMC small community. **Round D**

Agent for mission and the new evangelization in church and society. **Round D**
 Missional community. **Round A**
 Scripture is the heart of Faith-sharing. **Round A**

Small community discipleship. **Round D**
 Transformational outlook. **Round D**

Lectionary-based SCCs. **Round A**
 Place/space to nurture vocations. **Round A**
 Roots of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Support group in the city. **Round A**
 Support group model. **Round D**

Daily Gospel-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**
 Daily lectionary-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**
 Daily Scripture-based Faith-sharing. **Round A**
 Church. **Round D**
 WhatsApp SCC as a support group. **Round A**

Catholic SCC “support group.” **Round A**
 Centers of community enterprise and holistic transformation. **Round A**
 Core of parish life in African dioceses. **Round D**
 Core space for the faithful gathering in the neighborhoods. **Round D**
 Phone SCC Conference Call. **Round A**
Bible-based Faith-sharing small community. **Round A**
 Homily preparation session. **Round A**
 Online Skype prayer family. **Round D**
 Online Skype SCC family. **Round D**
 SCCs spirituality. **Round D**

Applies the biblical message to our life situation. **Round A**
 Biblically-based Faith-sharing small community. **Round A**
 College-based small communities. **Round D**
 Interprets the Gospel from below. **Round A**
 Teaching moment. **Round A**

Community discipleship. **Round A**
 Group discipleship. **Round A**
 Lectionary-based Faith-sharing small community. **Round A**
 Networking SCCs within Africa. **Round A**
 Student small Faith-sharing communities. **Round A**

Co-responsibility in leadership. **Round D**
 Glue of our ministry. **Round D**
 Recognizes and promotes the specific role of lay people. **Round D**
 Small Christian Communities spirituality. **Round A**
 Unleashes each Catholic's gifts. **Round D**

Church centered on small groups as the way of doing life and ministry. **Round D**
 Core of our ministry and the way we develop disciples. **Round D**
 More focused, holistic approach to small-group ministry. **Round D**
 Pastoral structure to empower lay people. **Round D**
 Vehicle to empower lay people. **Round D**

Actualize the church as a family that is found among the neighbors. **Round A**

Goes to the heart of what the Catholic Church must be. **Round D**
 Home Small Groups. **Round A**
 SCCs *Bible* sharing and prayer. **Round A**
 Small communities as the core of your church, not just another ministry. **Round D**

Gospel-centred programs for young adults. **Round A**
 Interfaith listening circle. **Round D**
 Model of building community among students. **Round D**
 Raises understanding about inter-religious dialog. **Round D**

Creates a Small Christian Community Culture. **Round A**
 Environment for an encounter with Jesus Christ. **Round D**
 Form of adult faith formation. **Round D**
 Integral part of our church culture. **Round D**
 YSCCs open up spaces for young adults. **Round A**

Avenue through which communal solidarity is experienced. **Round D**
 Backbone of the RCIA. **Round D**
 Beacon of hope to the local community. **Round D**
Bible is the center of our life. **Round D**
 Hearing and then absorbing the Word of God. **Round A**

Center of renewal program. **Round D**
 Enhances grassroots evangelization. **Round D**
 New way of our Church Communion Community. **Round D**
 Offer psychological and social support to the members. **Round A**
 Rallying point of support during funerals as well as weddings. **Round D**

Base for restoring hope. **Round D**
 Place where I have met real family. **Round A**
 Platform that provide spiritual nourishment to college and university students. **Round**

A

Small communities at the center of diocesan and parish renewal. **Round D**
 Virtual SCC. **Round D**

Basis and foundation of the faith in the Catholic Church in Africa. **Round D**
 Cohousing community. **Round A**
 Inclusive small community. **Round D**
 Missionary discipleship journey. **Round A**
 Residence community. **Round A**

Active participation of young people in Small Christian Communities (SCCs). **Round**

A

Gospel-centered SCC. **Round D**
 Discipleship path for students to grow and deepen their relationship with Christ.

Round D

Important anchor point as a response to the challenges of evangelization. **Round D**
 Spaces for reconciliation, humility and unconditional love. **Round D**

Pastoral priority for our diocese. **Round D**
 Pastoral priority for our parish. **Round D**

SCCs drive the Catholic Church's response to change. **Round D**
 Source of renewal for the Global Church. **Round D**
 Women as equal partners in SCCs. **Round D**

Absolutely essential in carrying out the mission of the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Daily scripture mantra. **Round A**
 Glue to assist young adults to transition from college to parish life. **Round D**
 SCCs energize larger parish worship on Sundays. **Round A**
 Weekly scripture mantra. **Round A**

Achieves enormous strides in the evangelization of society. **Round A**
 Best way of nurturing the Catholic Church in the neighborhood. **Round D**
 Commitment to being a parish that GATHERS, SHARES AND PRAYS. **Round A**
 Faith formation in SCCs. **Round D**
 Occupy an essential place in the life of the Catholic Church. **Round D**

Church in miniature ("Church miniature"). **Round D**
 Grassroots evangelization. **Round A**
 Our wedding garment in the Catholic Church. **Round D**
 Praying as a community. **Round A**.
 Refugees as perfect target population. **Round D**

Evangelizing through digital platforms. **Round A**
 Evangelizing through smartphones. **Round A**
 Family-like evangelization. **Round A**
 Home blessings. **Round A**
 Playground of saving one another. **Round A**

Child protection as a component of the training we give to the trainers on SCCs.
Round D

Reaches out to motivate the wider society to protect children. **Round A**
 Reading and reflecting on the Gospel of the following Sunday ahead of time. **Round A**

Valuable space and path upon which we can help nurture Child Protection practices in our society. **Round D**

YSCCs as a bridge from Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) Programs. **Round D**

Advocate for family catechesis. **Round A**
 Advocate for family ministry. **Round A**
 Child protection component in our SCCs training for facilitators. **Round D**
 Prime way that people learn about God. **Round A**
 Value of the lectionary or Scripture to SCCs. **Round D**

Lectionary-based Catholics can change the world. **Round A**
 New way of participating in our church. **Round D**
 Online liturgical readings. **Round D**
 Prime way that people experience life transformation. **Round A**
 Prime way that people grow in their relationship with God and others. **Round A**

Ecclesiological model to strongly use for effective evangelization. **Round D**
 Life-giving, liberative force for the African continent. **Round D**

Safe place for sharing. **Round D**
 SCCs for the Pontifical Missionary Children (PMC). **Round D**
 What it means to be church at the grassroots level. **Round D**

Bible as the Center of Faith Formation. **Round A**
 Entry point to campus ministry program. **Round D**
 Makes college feel smaller. **Round A**
 Original manner of being church. **Round D**
 Provide a discipleship path for students. **Round D**
 Catholic Church built up daily through SCCs. **Round D**
 Family-centered parish. **Round D**
 Vehicle to make the church feel small. **Round D**
 Visiting parish-based SCCs on the ground. **Round A**

Encourages prayer methodologies/methods that connect faith and life. **Round A**
 I prepare my Sunday homily by listening to lay people's reflections. **Round A**
 Animated by the Gospel spirit. **Round D**
 Local church that feels at home. **Round D**
 My spiritual health. **Round A**

Lectio Divina. **Round A**
 Mass in the home. **A**
 Neighborhood mass. **A**
 Talk about real life in a peer group. **Round A**
 Offer authentic hope for the entire Catholic church. **D**

Christians bond and support each other. **A**
 Family-centered parish through SCCs. **D**
 House mass. **A**
 SCC (*Jumuiya*) Mass in the home. **A**
 Without SCCs the Catholic Church will fall. **D**

Deepens my faith and prayer life. **A**
 Enlivens young adult parish participation. **D**
 First agents for the initiation of their children into the Word of God. **Round D**
 Small group ministries for youth. **A**
 Major way of real active participation of the laity. **A**

Adapts to the local context. **A**
 Focus on Young Adult Small Christian Communities (YASCCs). **D**
 Forms solid ecclesial communion with a small geographical location. **Round A**
 Promotes child protection in the neighborhood. **A**
 Provides an atmosphere to share family values. **Round D**

Answer to the great spiritual crisis in the Catholic Church. **D**
 Center of charity. **D**
 Modern *Acts of the Apostles*. **D**
 New way of being family. **D**
 Post-*Alpha* resource. **D**

Avenue for communication and communion among members. **D**

Church in the village. D
 New way of building God's Kingdom. D
 Place and path for pastoral care and evangelization of families and marriages. A
 Very vital in the Catholic Church. **D**

Benefits of SCCs to be treasured. D
 Best blessing to have happened to the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. D
 Backbone and launching pad of the Catholic Church, its ministry and its mission. D
 Channel of social solidarity. D
 Essential and life-giving antidote for much of what ails us. D

Heartbeat of the Catholic Church. D
 Source of new ministries. D
 Stones of the church. D
 True face of the Catholic Church. D
 YSCCs are necessary and vital. D

At the heart of pastoral ministry. D
 Faith in action activity. D
 Home to everyone. D
 One of the most profound pastoral ministries in the Catholic Church today D
 Opportunity to hear Christians offer a reflection on next Sunday's Gospel. A

Only forum where Christians can easily share their faith experiences. A
 Place to teach good morals and proper handling of technology. A
 Platform for uniting different ethnic groups. D
 Way to go in today's modern church. D
 Welcoming people in the SCC. A

Family Masses. A
 Life-giving small community. D
 New way of enlivening the church in the neighborhood. D
 Small Christian Community that prays together stays together. A

Friends Model of Church. D
 New way of being church for young people. D
 Phone fast during Lent. A
 SCCs Capacity Building Workshops. **Round A**
 Source of vocations. D

Daily readings act like an engine to my life. A
 Dynamics of the Small Christian Community Model of Church. D
 New shape of the future church. **Round D**
 On-going theological formation of SCCs leaders. A
 Young People Pillar of the Catholic Church Today. **D**

Anchored in the real. D
 Daily readings always reminds me to be faithful in my Christian journey. A
 Incarnated in local cultures. **D**
 Networks of SCCs. D
 Outreach evangelization. A

Growing SCCs. A
 Growing small groups. D
 Growing the church. A
 Household of faith. D
 To follow Christ in community. A

Church of small communities. D
 Experience of small church. D
 Lectionary way of life. D
 Ministering to emerging adults/adulthood. D
 Path to move closer to Jesus Christ. A

Core of the church. D
 Foundational pillar of the church. D
 Living branches in the parish. D
 Makes a difference in emerging formation of adults. A
 Soup for the soul. D

Affinity Groups as SCCs. D
 Building the church *up* out of SCCs. A
 Growing YPSCCs. A
 Pastoral power. D
 Way of sharing leadership with young people. D

Connected to alternative communities. A
 Connected to alternative faith communities. A
 Model the life of Christians. A
 Place to grow in our faith journey. A
 Vehicle to generate grassroots movements. D

Bonding community. D
 Center of my faith journey. D
 Intentional faith community. D
 SCC trainers without borders. D
 Small group prayer. A

Great boon to the Catholic Church. D
 Model of church life. D
 Safe place for sharing. D
 Small Multicultural Faith Community. **D**

Estate-based *jumuiyas* that meet in members' homes. A
 Home Churches. D
 Place where life's issues can be discussed, shared, and reflected on. A
 Small Reflection Group. **Round A**
 Source of spiritual inspiration, works of mercy and pastoral care. D

Context-based. D
 Encourages Lectionary-based Catholics. A
 "Listening circle" methodology. D

Ministry of like to like. D
Safe place to listen to each other and hear the voice of God. D

Distinct peer group. D
Emerging paradigm of young adult empowerment in Africa. **Round D**
Emerging paradigm of young people empowerment in Africa. **Round D**
Grassroots level of Catholic apostolate. D
Remembering the fathers of the early Jumuiya Church, Kalilombe, Mwoleka. A

Better social mechanism in the Catholic Church. D
Creating many new paths by walking according to the local context. A
Energy of young people. A
Forum to think about and work on all the dimensions of life. A
Key for developing Catholic leadership. D

Family-friendly SCC. D
Inspires better pastoral solutions for the young people. A
Interactive small group experience. D
Universal church for small families. **D**
Vehicle for discernment skills. D
Growing closer to Christ through scripture. A
Growing YPSCCs. A
Small, graced, sacramental communities. D
Supportive faith community. D
Training students to be leaders. A

Community-based ecclesial model. D
Digital network of discipleship. D
Doing life and faith in small communities. A
Post-Alpha style small group resource. D
Small Fraternal Neighborhoods within SCCs. D

Best way of evangelizing and accompanying young people. D
Helps to grow SCCs around the world. D
Keeps people connected to the Catholic Church. D
“Listening circle” format. D

Commitment is to foster Small Christian Communities. D
Empowering the church at the grassroots/in the neighborhood. A
Key catechesis method. D
Most important aspect of pastoral life. D
Small Faith Community. **Round D**

Best unity in the Catholic Church. D
Develops its own leaders. A
Helps us to grow in our faith. D
Model of SCCs in the church of the future. D
Reflecting on Gospel from a SCC perspective. A

Authentic way of evangelization. D
Internationalization of the SCCs Model. D

Paradigm for a participation of listening and diversity. D
 Personal experiences shared by members. A
 Works for social progress. A

Contemplative prayer group for young adults. A
 Horizontal communities on the grassroots. D
 Liturgical preparation for Sunday celebration. A
 Safe haven. D
 Solidarity in prayer. D

Echo the community spirit of the new South Sudan. A
 Family as basis of SCC. D
 Place where we share our different talents. D
 Shines the spirit of sharing. A

Core business is the Word of God. D
 Peer accompaniment. A
 Student activism. A
 Welcoming friendship. A

Discipleship begins in God's Word. D
 Essential ingredient of our Catholic campus ministry program. D
 Home eucharistic gathering. A
 In touch with the reality on the ground. A
 Opportunity for deep listening. D

Culture of evangelization that launches and expands small groups. D
 Indigenous to each continent. D
 Members affirm and support one another. A
 New arena for campus Faith-sharing. A
 Promotes integral development for all. A

Building a living church through SCCs. D
 Foundational to the Catholic Church in Africa today. D
 Sharing life experiences. A
 Tool for evangelization today. A
 Promotion of a Small Church Community vision for parish. D

Gives life in the neighborhood. A
 Communal Reading of Scripture (Public Reading). A
 Strengthens the Local Church. A
 LUMKO approach sustains SCCs. A
 New theology of the church. **Round D**

Faith-sharing in small community group settings. A
 Great source for the voice of the laity. D
 Builds the church from the grassroots. A
 Most basic unit of the Church. D
 Center of interest in the Catholic media. A

Usual and real way of being Church. D

Well fitted to provide solutions to the many challenges facing Catholic Church in Africa. A

Church on the move. D

SCC Strategy (marriage in the home). A

Only way to make the Catholic Church grow stronger. A

Everyone in a Small Christian Community is equal. D

Small communities of young people. D

Joining hands in promoting YPSCCs in Eastern Africa. A

Well-defined strategy for small community ministry. D

Customized strategy for our SCC context. D

Young People SCC. D

Expression of a renewed church. D

Primary place for the New Evangelization. D

Place to share faith. A

Simplest and basic unit of the Catholic Church. D

Meal sharing in the context of a SCC. A

Sharing of daily experiences. A

Church from below. D

Creating space for young people. A

Gift of the African Church to the Universal Church. D

Neighborhood Catholics come together. A

Share pastoral experiences. A

Key place where we experience the love and mercy of God. A

New way of being local church among our young people. D

Truest local vehicle for evangelization. D

Reliable way of Christian Community in Africa. D

Home-made church. D

Intergenerational church. D

New Catholic Church space. D

Wisdom circles. D

Wisdom Small Communities. D

Experiencing life together. A

Bring Christians together. A

Setting in which we can fulfil our missionary duties. D

Centers of deepening the Word of God and cohesive Faith-sharing. A

Poor use the *Bible* to liberate themselves from the violence of poverty. A

Way to life in Christ Jesus. D

Participatory church in action. D

Connects the Scripture to our everyday life every week. A

Where we refuel every week. A

Helps us to grow our faith in SCCs. D

Formation component. D

Motive of hope for the Catholic Church and for humanity today. D
 Influences seminary formation. A
 Shares the life of lay people from below, from the grassroots. A
 Place to explore faith in a casual environment. **Round A**
 Begin encountering Jesus in Scripture. A

Learning from peers how to grow as a disciple. A
 Promotes social justice. A
 Structurally linked to the parish. D
 Ongoing formation and training of SCC leaders and members. A
 Only sure way for sustainability of our Catholic Church. D

Serve God through SCCs. A
 Opportunities for theological formation and training. A
 Spirit of ecclesial synodality. D
 Growing in every part of the world. A
 SCCs style of mass. D

Great avenue for evangelization. D
 Lever of Integral Human Development. D
 Reinvent the SCCs/BCCs/CEBs. D
 Discerning personal and collective action in small group settings. A
 Searching (Seekers) small community. A

Place of hospitality. A
 Life of the Catholic Church of today. D
 Local center of ecclesial reflection. D
 Greenhouse of evangelization. D
 Hub of communion and edification in the Christian life. D

No strong SCCs, no transfiguration/conversion/change. D
 Active agent of the Word of God. A
 Meaningful prayer -- time spent connecting with God? A
 Jumuiya shared homily. A
 SCC shared homily. A

Way that the Christian message can reach people. A
 What "being church" means. D
 Helps us know that no one is alone. A
 Theological mainstay of the model of church as Family of God. D
 Ecclesiastical extension of the African extended family or clan. D

Virtual faith sharing. A
 Online Small Group Faith Sharing. A
 Virtual or Online SCCs is the new way for the church to go. D
 Young People Online Small Searching Community. **A**
 Virtual faith sharing session. A

Way of cementing Christians' life. D
 Brings parishioners closer in their neighborhood. A
 Looks after its members. A

Brings parishioners closer in their neighborhood. A
 Brings together the people of God to be useful to one another. A

Foundation of good Christian life. D
 Instrument of true love to one another. D
 Enables each member be recognized and heard. A
 Brings unity and love to the members of the community. A
 Makes for familiarization of one another. A

Represent an extraordinary social and pastoral lifeline.
 A must if we are to grow the church. D
 In touch with the daily realities. A
 Fosters Faith-Shaping Friendships. A
 Online SCCs as ways of life and hope. A

Alumni Online Small Christian Communities. D
 Lights candles of the faith. A
 Young Adult Virtual Communities. D.
 Technology tools that enhance the small group experience. A
 Conversation as a root metaphor for SCC life. A
 Lay people are the heart of SCCs. D
 Responsible for its members' concrete needs. A
 Gives opportunity to know the parishioners living in our area. A
 Dynamic, not static -- subject to changes and new ideas. A
 Very good at reading, and responding to, the new signs of the times.

Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment Community. D
 Digital Small Community. D
 Virtual Young People Small Christian Communities. D
 Diaspora Online SCCs. D
 Community spirituality. A

Baseline is sharing. A
 Being in community is constitutive to our faith. D
 Video-linked Small Prayer Communities. D
 Implementing best SCC practices increases parish vitality. A
 Smaller gatherings (in homes or elsewhere). A

Church as the house of God. D
 Young Adult Digital Prayer Community. D.
 Gathers in public spaces. A
 Offer a meaningful way to gather. D
 Research as central in the life of our SCCs. A

House Eucharists. A
 Emphasis on faith formation. A
 Basic community for prayer, support and consolation. A
 Home cell in dialogue. A
 Dynamic -- subject to changes that we may experience around us. A

Spirit of development. D

Gift of online SCC. D
 Channel of community sensitization. D
 Gives me the freedom to be myself. A
 Connects households and families. A

Word of God is mutually shared among God's people. A
 Dialog table for family disputes/problems. A
 Online community of faith. D
 Dream of local community priests. D
 Focal point for evangelization. D

Bible sharing gathering. A
 Safe place for young people to accompany one another. D
 Vibrant small communities ministries. A
 Small communities of young seekers. D
 Gives many young people space to raise their concerns/grievances. A

Makes young people feel welcomed and appreciated. A
 Staying connected through online sharing. A
 Online sharing. A
 New way of gospel proclamation. A

Empowers us all. A
 Seeker-Friendly Small Communities. D
 Great way for families to grow together in their faith. D
 Solve problems through the inspiration of the Gospel. A

Jumuiya process in writing a homily. A
 Team or community approach in preparing a homily. A
 Troubleshoot and learn together. A
 Internet ministry. A
 House Church Movement. D

Source of spiritual energy. D
 We assure one another that no one is alone. A
 School of empowerment. A
 Online livestreamed mass. A

Sharing faith and hope with one another. A
 Nourishing our faith. A
 Small Breakout Rooms on Zoom. D
 SCCs leaders have the right sets of skills to help them to strengthen their
 communities. A
 Small community of faith-sharing. A

Evangelizing the neighborhood. A
 Build family church through SCCs. A
 Basic and indispensable unit for catechesis. A
 Multi-model SCC. D
 Synodality experience. A

Unlocks the power of the laity. A
 Gives life to the Catholic Church. A
 New way of life. D
 Involved in pastoral animation in parishes. A
 On-the-job training. A

Online learning. A
 Sense of belonging. A
 Reflects on the experience of an SCC. A
 Go a long way in advancing the work of evangelization. A

SCCs style webinar. D
 Member of a SCC Commune. D
 School of discipleship. A
 Way for people to be church to one another. D
 Starts at the grassroots. A

SCCs model of homily and sermon preparation. A
 Revitalization and promotion of the SCCs across the world. A
 Enables members to go forth and proclaim the Gospel. A
 Small enough to allow for closer human relationships. A
 Path of evangelization at the grassroots level. D

Sign of vitality within the Catholic Church. A
 Growing faith AND applying faith. A
 Central facet of the parish. D
 Empowers the church in the neighborhood. A
 Helps me to grow in faith. A

Through sharing I continue to love God and others. A
 Helps us to grow our Christian conscience. A
 Helps to grow the spirituality of Catholic young adults. A
 Helps us to live the SCCs Model of Church. A
 Has a synodal identity. D

Grassroots synodal best practices. A
 True authentic Catholic DNA. D
 Spreads the Gospel. A
 Has a rightful place in the Catholic Church. A
 Shaped by the Gospel. A

Role in official structure of the Catholic Church. D
 Place where each person can grow in their faith journey. A
 True experience of communion and collaboration. D
 Interactive experience. A
 Synodal model in youth and young adult ministry. D

Eucharistic Church. D
 Depth in the Eucharist. A
 Good head space for faith formation. A
 People gather at the local level and express their opinions. A

Truly places of study, meditation and sharing of the Word of God. A

Promotes grassroots evangelization. A

Expresses the Christian faith in the typical setting of a traditional African community.

A

Walking together with Jesus. A

Way we are church. Round D

Privilege in our Local Churches in the AMECEA Region. A

Provides SCC members a unique opportunity for discernment. D

Apt for the synodal journey. A

SCCs are a blessing. D

Much needed option in the church and world today. D

Nourishment from the shared Word of God. A

Meets the human need to be known, heard, listened to, appreciated and socialize. A

Weekly gathering is a treasure trove of spiritual and social inspirations. A

Opportunity to discuss synodality in SCCs. A

Lectionary based faith sharing on a daily basis. A

Forms a strong foundation of a Catholic Parish. A

Treasure in the AMECEA Region. A

Has become part of us in the AMECEA Region. A

New way of thinking and listening. A

Vital way of being church. A

Important resource for church renewal. A

Has systems of how to live as a church. A

Makes us more resilient for the future. A

Backbone of all we do in our evangelization. D

Brings fruits to every walk of our apostolate. A

Gathering together listen to one another. A

Getting together to listen to one another. A

We actually have relevant experience in getting together. A

We gather in small groups to pray and socialize together. A

Helps us discover what Christianity in the Catholic tradition is all about and how it can be truly lived. A

Core ministry of the Catholic Church. D

Sermon illustrations based on a shared small community experience. D

Provides a trusting space where we feel comfortable to share our more personal musing. A

Channel where the Word of God is studied and meditated on. A

Getting together in small groups to listen to one another. A

Helps us connect and grow in our biblical community. A

Tool of attracting more people to the Catholic faith. A

Center of Christian witness. D

Gospel Houses where we meet around the Word of God. D

Sharing our faith with others. A

Online SCCs Webinars. D
 Online SCCs Workshops. D
 Digital SCCs Webinars. D
 Digital SCCs Workshops. D

Spaces where members share celebrations, events, experiences, ideas and reflections.

A

Digital evangelization. D
 Virtual evangelization. D
 Online evangelization. D
 Hybrid SCC gatherings. D

Hybrid SCC webinars. D
 Hybrid SCC workshops. D
 Small Christian Communities online forum on Facebook. D
 Forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences of SCCs. A
 Strong and mutual inner life. D

Functional SCCs in the parish -- with members knowing what they need to do in the SCCs. A

Orbis Book Club. D
 Catholic small family community. D
 Future of the Church in Africa. D
 Translates Gospel values into real Christian life situations. A

Close-knit community. D
 Small Discernment Breakout Group. D
 SCC Book Club. D
 Networking. A
 Strengthening standards to set up successful SCCs. A

Unique opportunity to engage with the Word of God in a non-intimidating environment.

A

Entry point for new ideas, trends and priorities in Eastern Africa. **Round D**
 Models the Synodal Process. A
 Zoom Small Breakout Room. D
 Deepens our Gospel understanding. A

Builds SCC Model of Parish. A
 Small Intentional Mission Communities (SIMCs). D
 Young People Seekers Small Christian Community. A **add**
 Young People Seekers Faith Sharing Small Christian Community

Virtual intentional small community. **Round D**
 Online Lectionary Based Faith Sharing SCC. A
 Online Small Christian Community. A
 New open space for online faith communities and worship. A
 Listening to young people. A

Household Church Communities. D

Turns rows into circles. A

Living and growing in our faith is best done as part of a small community. A

Importance of SCCs in the Catholic Church today. D

SCC is our second home. D

Place of refuge and comfort. A

Theological importance of the local Christian community in its basic form. D

Household Church. D

Way of life. D

Relevant to human life on the African continent. A

Will always continue. A

Are here to stay. D

Leadership structure from below. D

Structural connection to the parish. D

Best way of being church today. A

Best way of evangelization. D

Zoom gatherings. A

We share our life experiences. A

Intentional community. D

Do It Yourself (DIY) Small Communities. D

Find support in one another A

Its synodal spirit. D

Real life faith discussion. D

Foundation of the Catholic Church. D

Core of ecclesial life. D

Its online faith sharing component. A

Online Prayer Circle (OPC). A

Space where the faithful are renewed and confirmed in their baptismal ministry. A

Conversion of Catholic Church structures that enhances the sense of belonging and ownership. A

Helps participants to recall, honor, and reify their baptismal promise and its priestly function.

A

Members exercise their priestly capacity to shape shared moments of illumination. A

Forum for participants to habituate themselves to living, thinking, and acting eucharistically.

A

Small Home-based Community (SHC). D

Alternative way of meeting some basic needs. A

We embrace God's love and salvation. A

Acts as a counterbalance to the culture of "individualism." A

Praxis Group. A

Praxis Discernment. A

Being mutual and sharing our gifts. A

Part of a hub of Small Faith Communities (SFCs) D

Small Rural Faith Communities (SRFCs) D

Functional SCCs. A

Promotes the health and vitality of the Catholic faith in the diocese. A

Strategy of evangelization. A

“Praxis” of reflection. A

Carry the voice of faith during daily life struggles. A

Platform for believers to come together. A

New model of relationship. D

Brings the faithful together to share the Word of God and prayers from the grassroots. A

Where one finds harmony, love, brotherhood, and forgiveness. A

Passion is the fuel that drives us forward. A

Way of being church and pastoral priority. D

Tool of living African values on communal living. A

Top vote getters in the SCCs Poll:

Peer group small **faith sharing** community. A 486 **NOTE:** Distorted by Chinese hacking.

Mass in the neighborhood. A 211

Praying together for the **Synod** to take place in Rome in October, 2023. A 174

Praying together for peace in the world. A 170

Online **faith sharing**. A 167

Helps the needy during **Covid-19**. A 167

Richness of small community **Gospel** reflection and **faith sharing**. A 166

Communal listening to the **Word of God**. A 157

Special **prayers** for people with **Covid-19**. A 153

Helps deepen our personal relationship with **Jesus Christ**. A 153

Concern about the **Covid-19** pandemic. A 153

Sharing daily experiences. A 153

Pray for and assist people living on the margins of society. A 148.

Opportunity to thank God for all he has done for us. A 142

Zoom and other online platforms for **Gospel** Sharing and Reflection. D 140

Privileged place of faith formation. D 135

Prayer solidarity with refugees crossing borders. A 135

Personal encounter with **Jesus Christ** through SCC. A 134

Sharing life experiences. A 133

Prayer, reflection and **faith sharing** grounds me. A **Special Poll** 125

Strong unity/communion allows people to participate fully in the **Synodal** Process. A 125

Adapts to the **Covid-19** pandemic situation. A 124

Responds creatively to the New Normal. A 123

Helps needy people in our neighborhood. A 123

Spreads the **Gospel**. A 123

Where the Holy Spirit works. A 122

Expressing fraternity and solidarity amid the **Covid** 19 situation. A 117

Praying together for special intentions. A 114

Networking of young people through SCCs. D 113

Tool for evangelization today. D 110

Christ-centered Small Community. D 110

Safe place for people to share and grow. D 108

Gospel-based Faith sharing. A 108
Lectionary-based faith sharing in a **Synodal** style. A 108
 Emerging paradigm of youth empowerment in Africa. D 107
 Helps us learn from the **Covid-19** pandemic. A 105
Prayer, reflection and **faith sharing** grounds me. A 105
 Reaches out to the marginalized and those on the periphery of society. A 105
Praying together for peace in war-torn areas. A 105
 Way of life, not just a program or project in the parish. 104 D
 Empowerment of women. D **Special Poll 103**
 Experience of **Synodality**. 103 A
 We share faith and hope with one another. 103 A
 Gives us courage to overcome obstacles during **Covid-19** pandemic. 103 A
 Reignites our faith through reading and reflecting on the **Gospel**. 103 A
 Combines **Bible Sharing** and **Faith Sharing**. A 101
 Reinvigorated SCCs as a fruit of **Synodality**. A 101
 Weekly **lectionary-based faith sharing** leading to practical action. A 101
 Youth peer group small **faith sharing** community. D **Special Poll 100**
 New way of evangelization. D 98
 Key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa. D 97
 Platform and context to deepen the issue of **Synodality**. D 97
 Helps our spiritual life. A 97
 Supportive **faith sharing**. A 97
 A basis for the **Synodal** journey. D 95
 Key pastoral priority in Eastern Africa. D **Special Poll 93**
 Youth peer group small **faith sharing** community. D 92
Gospel-based Faith sharing. A **Special Poll 91**
 Powerful way to accompany one another as pilgrims on the journey. A 91
 Daily **prayer** in our gatherings plays a key role during the **Synodal** Process. A 90
 Interactive shared homilies. A 90
 Evangelization means service to other people. A 90
 Small Peer Group **Faith Sharing** Community. D 90
 Weekly **lectionary-based faith sharing**. A 89
 Weekly **lectionary-based faith sharing** is the preferred methodology. A 89
 Flexibility in digital communications and connections. D 88
Synodality is the true spirit of a SCC. D 87
 SCCs as a way of life. D 86
 Neighborhood evangelism. A 86
 Helps other people. A 86
 True experience of **Synodality** in Africa. D 86
 Way of evangelization in the current situation of the **Covid-19** pandemic. D 86
 Relationships. A 85
 Field hospital. A 85
 “Communion of Communities” Model of Church. D 85
 Weekly **Gospel-based Faith sharing**. A 85
 Daily **Scripture-based Faith sharing**. A 85
Praying together for the Golden Jubilee of SCCs in Eastern Africa. A 85
 In solidarity with **Covid-19** sufferers and their caregivers. A 85
 Helps the needy during **Covid-19**. A 85
 SCCs model -- gift of the African Church to the Universal Church. D 83
 Where the faithful experience and live **Synodality** as mission, participation and communion.
 A 82

Center of evangelization to the family and youth. D 82
 Operates in a **Synodal** style or way. A 82
 Helps me persevere through **Covid-19** pandemic. A 81
 Using the new social media resources to promote faith life. A 80
 Connecting **Bible** to life. A 80
 Focus on the **Word of God (Bible)**. D 80
 Online practice of our faith. A 80
 Responds to Pope Francis' emphasis on reaching out to those on the peripheries. A 80
 WhatsApp social media exchange. D 80
 Empowers laypeople to take more responsibility for their church. A 80
 Element or feature in the **Synodal** Church. A 78
 Strengthen each other in our faith. A 77
 Helps us persevere during **Covid-19**. A 77
 Gathering online to celebrate our faith together. A 77
 Spiritual support community. 76 D
 Sharing faith and hope with one another. 76 A
 Value of listening to the **Gospel** in our current **Synodal** Process. A 76
 Local context is king (and queen!). D 76
 Growing SCCs. A 76
 Home mass. D 76
 Community of missionary disciples. D 75
 Sharing the **Word of God**. A 75
 Small faith-based community. D 75
 Source of comfort to the lay faithful. D 75
 Outreach evangelization. A 74
 Joining hands in promoting YPSCCs. A 73
 Young Professionals SCC. D 73
 Basic means of evangelization. A 72
 Personal spiritual growth. A 72
 Listening circle. A 71
 Multi-ethnic small community. D 70
 Zoom **Bible** Sharing. A 70
 Discernment Circle. A 70
 Support for our spiritual life. D 70
 Young People Small Searching Community. D 70
 Model of evangelization. D 70
 Home blessings. A 69
 Small Young People Peer Group **Faith Sharing** Community. D 69
 Church on the ground. D 68
 Privileged place to experience family spirit, **Synodality** and outreach to others. A 68
 Evangelization means practical action and reaching out to others. A 68
 Weekly **lectionary**-based **faith sharing**. A 67
 Strength of our parish community. D 67
Prays together for the needs of others. A 67
 Connecting with other young people. A 67
 Evangelizing through smartphones. A 66
 Online small community. D 66
 Deepens my faith and **prayer** life. A 65
 Thanksgiving for getting back to nearer normal. A 65
 Unique opportunity to use the **Synodal** Process. A 65
 Sharing life experiences. A 64

Thanking God and celebrating our 50 Year SCCs Anniversary in Eastern Africa. A 64
 Responds to Pope Francis' emphasis on reaching out to the marginalized. A 64
 Family Communities. D 63
 New model of church. D 63
 Digital SCC. D 63
 Ongoing formation of SCC members. A 63
 Regular practical action and outreach. A 63
 Local context is king (and queen!). D 62
 Place of evangelization. A 62
 WhatsApp SCC as a support group. A 62
 Campus small communities. D 61
 Proclaiming the **Good News of Jesus Christ**. A 61
 Reawakens the missionary spirit in the laity. A 60
 Families support one another in times of need. A 59
 Training for SCC leaders. A 59
 Strength of our parish community. D 58
 Focus questions that relate **Scripture** to daily life. A 58
 Laity form the engine of SCCs. A 57
Faith sharing grounded in **Scripture**. A 57
Gospel-centered faith. D 57
 Silent periods in our gatherings. D 57
 Church from the grassroots. D 57
 Applies the **Gospel** to our daily/everyday life. A 56
 Offers many faith formation opportunities. A 56
Lectio Divina. D 56
 Breaking open the **Word of God**. A 55
 Network of SCCs. D 55
 Virtual SCC. D 55
 Center of communion and outreach. D 54
 New way of being church. D 54
 "Must" hour every week. D 54
 Authentic experience of **Synodality**. A 54
 Online SCC. D 54
 Intergenerational mass. D 54
 Helps me to go deeper in my faith. A 53
 Online communities. D 53
 Networking communities. A 53
 Spirit of belonging. D 53
 Online *jumuiya* (Swahili for "community"). D 53
 Follows the example of **Christ** the Healer. A 53
 Practical action and service. A 52
 Sharing ideas and ways to evangelize. A 52
 Safe space to discern God's call for each of us. A 52
 Pastoral tool of evangelization today. D 52
 Structurally connected to the parish. D 52
 Mass in the neighborhood. A 52
 Parish is communion of communities model with SCCs structurally connected. D 52
 Online Campus SCCs. D 51
Lectionary-based Catholics can change the world. A 50
 Effective network of church renewal. D 50
 Missionary Outreach. A 50

Helps me to connect the **Bible** and everyday life. A 50

Our analysis and assessment is as follows:

1. Key words marked: **Bible/Good News/Gospel/lectionary/Scripture/Lectio Divina/Word of God** in **BLACK** bold; **faith sharing** in **ORANGE** bold; **Pray/Prays/Prayer** in **BLUE** bold; **Synodality** in **GREEN** bold; **Jesus Christ** in **RED** bold; and **Covid** in **DARK BLUE** bold.
2. The number of overall choices is close (826 on D: the dynamics/process/principles/classifications of SCCs and 871 on A: activities/content/Outreach/practical action of SCCs). Of the top 20 choices, 18 are A and only 2 are D. This reveals a voting preference for activities, etc.
3. **Bible**-related, etc. is the most common word (28), **faith sharing** the second most common word (21) and **Pray/Prays/Prayer** the third most common word (13).
4. Big difference in the choices of those who vote in person (paper and pen) and those who vote online.

12 December, 2023

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 Seven Steps of LUMKO or 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 or not reading the Gospel a second time.

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”.¹⁴⁷³ 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.

¹⁴⁷³ 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, talks and Zoom Gatherings we use a demonstration (role play) where three volunteers come to the blackboard (or front of the room/gathering) 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. Most drawings are of the church building alone,¹⁴⁷⁴ 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.¹⁴⁷⁵

Most drawings over emphasize the importance of the priest and clerical/ 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, 1994.¹⁴⁷⁶ The discussion can also reflect on the sacred character of the church that Jesus by extension calls "my Father's house" (*John 2:15*).

Similar exercises are:

1. Draw the "Kingdom of God" from an African Perspective.
2. Draw an image or picture of Jesus Christ that comes to your mind or reflects the work that you do. Interpret this image or picture and how it reflects your personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. Ask the question: 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

¹⁴⁷⁴ In a conversation with the author, Maryknoll missionary priest Father John Lange MM said that Africans continue to view the Catholic Church as a building and as the "House" of God (similar to how the Jews view the "Temple" in Jerusalem). Better educated African Catholics and expatriates view the Catholic Church as people and specifically as the People of God. Nairobi, Kenya, 16 January, 2017.

¹⁴⁷⁵ "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.

¹⁴⁷⁶ 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.

mentality of seeing the Catholic Church as a hierarchical institution (a top down, vertical approach) to the People of God (a horizontal communion).

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. Demonstration of Unity and Working Together Using an African Proverb

During a SCC Workshop a very effective teaching on of unity and working together is to demonstrate African proverb *The cooking pot sits on three stones* in the traditional African fireplace. The three cooking stones of equal size and placement easily support the clay or metal cooking pot. The three cooking stones are positioned very carefully. The balance between their standing close together yet apart is a symbol of community life. The three stones need each other; they work together. Take away one stone and the pot falls down.¹⁴⁷⁷

The teachings:

5. A creative way of teaching the importance of SCCs is to describe the three cooking stones on which SCCs are "cooked" as spiritual values, acts of mercy, and concrete projects.
6. The metaphor of the one cooking pot¹⁴⁷⁸ and three stones can be used in different ways to describe the Catholic Church.
 - a. One church but three parts: priests, religious and laity.
7. The image of the cooking pot and the three stones is an important analogy for the Trinity: one God and three Divine Persons.
8. A Sukuma, Tanzania proverb: *The three stones that support the cooking pot are cold* (literally *mafiga baridi* in Swahili) means that there is no fire and thus no food is being cooked -- a sign of the lack of hospitality, welcome and love. The cold stones are a sign of the lack of good relationships within the home itself and with people living outside.
9. The water pot is compared to a stable family or community where everyone has to give joint positive support in all activities for success to be realized.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Rita Ishengoma is a SCC specialist in using this demonstration. She travels with a small box that contains a cooking pot and three very small stones. She uses the demonstration as part of a Prayer Service or Talk on unity and working together.

¹⁴⁷⁸ *The Parable of the Pot:*

During a demonstration in a Small Christian Community (SCC) Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, three members separately tried to stabilize an African clay cooking pot with a rounded bottom on a table top. They failed. Having no flat bottom on which to rest, the pot would simply roll to one side. Going on their hands and knees they tried the same thing on the floor and failed again. Eventually each person added a small stone at the base of the pot until three stones together finally stabilized it. The pot now stood upright.

Then they turned to SCC members and simply asked, "What did you see?" Small group conversation started and then an open forum. A wide range of keen observations and rich reflections flowed from the group. "The church is the pot. The three stones are the priests, the religious and the laity that have complementary roles." "The church is the pot. It is supported by the people, by Small Christian Communities from the grassroots." "The stones represent faith, hope and charity." "Everyone has a contribution to make to the church." "Conflict and tension are part of being church." "It is only when we get down on our hands and knees that we do the work of being the church." "The stones suggest the Trinity that supports the whole church." "The pot is the one God and the three stones are the three Persons of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Some examples of the many African proverbs:

The cooking pot sits on three stones. OR Three stones support the cooking pot. (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

If you sit on a hearthstone, you do not grow tall or The person who sits on a stone that supports the cooking pot will never grow taller (Ganda, Uganda).

A water pot cannot stand on its own without a support. (Luo, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda)

Two stones are not enough for cooking (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).

Cold stones – an idiom in Sukuma, Tanzania (*Mafiga baridi* in Swahili). Meaning translation above.

In traveling around the world one can ask what are the parallels for the metaphor of one and three in other contexts and cultures. Some examples:

1. Flashlight (torch) with three parts.
2. Photocopy machine with three parts.
3. Flag with three colors.

F. 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).

G. Write Down the Names of Three Close Friends?

An interesting exercise in SCC Training Workshops that emphasize the importance of the *Bible*: hand out a blank piece of paper and ask the participants to write down the names of three close friends? These are friends that they have known for a long, long time and with whom they have regular contact and communications.

Then ask: Did anyone write down the name of one of the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) or an important writer of books in the *Bible* like St. Paul? Probably not. But the message/reality is clear. These writers are our close friends. At certain times of the liturgical year we “meet” them every day. We regularly read their gospels/epistles and reflect and meditate on them. We try to put their teachings into practice. But ordinarily we don’t think of them as “friends.”

A related exercise is to hand out a blank piece of paper and ask the participants to write down ten favorite *Bible* passages (a quotation, a parable, a miracle, a special event, etc.) without looking at the *Bible* itself. Then open the *Bible* and next to each passage put its author/writer. In this way you can see what are your favorite books of the *Bible* and your favorite authors/writers of the books of the *Bible*.¹⁴⁷⁹

¹⁴⁷⁹ When the author did this exercise on “Your Favorite Evangelist” during a retreat he discovered that nine of the 10 passages were from St. *Luke’s* Gospel.

H. 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*:¹⁴⁸⁰

- 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 DVD Scripture music video “Who Is My Neighbor” (5:57 minutes in the *Parables Alive!* Series produced by Paulines Africa Books and Audiovisuals¹⁴⁸¹ 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 a SCC based on the Gospel story in *Mark* 6: In verse 7 Jesus sends out the 12 apostles two by two to preach and to heal. Then in 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 apostles’ 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. After a period of rest and reflection the apostles 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 Workshop participants if they have ever heard or read this Scripture text

¹⁴⁸⁰ 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.

¹⁴⁸¹ <http://www.paulinesafrica.org/audiovisual.html>

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, the time (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*.¹⁴⁸² 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 “Composition of Time and Place.”¹⁴⁸³ 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.

¹⁴⁸² 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.

¹⁴⁸³ Once I celebrated Sunday Mass at Christ the King Parish in New Vernon, New Jersey, USA. I invited the parishioners to enter creatively into the Scripture Readings (the *Bible* story) by using the method of “Composition of Time and Place.” In the First Reading, *Genesis* 18:1–2 says: “The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.” Abraham showed immediate hospitality to the three men, inviting them to rest under a tree and preparing a big meal for them (verses 3–8). After mass a Catholic man greeted me in the sacristy and said, “Father, I followed your suggestion of entering into the *Bible* story. Wow, it was hot sitting with Abraham in the heat of the day in the desert. I started to sweat and my shirt became wet.”

Another is a communal reading of the *Bible* when each SCC member reads a verse in turn or a paragraph at a time.

I. 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."

J. 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.

K. 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.¹⁴⁸⁴

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.¹⁴⁸⁵

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 Eastern Africa SCC Training Team feels there are practical solutions. One is to politely but firmly challenge the assumption that men are superior to women,¹⁴⁸⁶ and that men have more leadership skills than women. Help

¹⁴⁸⁴ Steps 1 and 2 can take place ahead of time when the Eastern Africa SCC Training Team meets with SCC leaders, members of the Parish Pastoral Council, catechists and parish staff.

¹⁴⁸⁵ As I travel around the most frequent question that I get is: How do other SCCs practically solve these obstacles/problems?

¹⁴⁸⁶ 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:

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

the men 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.

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,” “Discern,” and “Act” Process/Method as Part of the Pastoral Spiral

Future Challenge/Priority/Action No. 6 states: “Promote the use of the “See,” “Discern” 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:

1. 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. **Discern (or Amua/Tafakari/Tathmini)**:¹⁴⁸⁷ 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: 12 December, 2023

1. Example of a SCC Practicum Write-up

SEE

Bible Service and Meeting of St. Kizito Small Christian Community (SCC),

¹⁴⁸⁷ There is a lot of discussion (and even disagreement) on the best words to use. “Discern” is preferred over “Judge.” Alternate words in Swahili are *tafakari* and *tathmini*.

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 (1st 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 1st 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.

DISCERN

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:

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Updated 12 December, 2023

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)¹⁴⁸⁸

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?

¹⁴⁸⁸ 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 Communities (SCCs) Priority in a Parish or Diocese in Eastern Africa

It is helpful to do a basic inventory as a beginning step. Then evaluate both the quantity and quality of the SCCs.

On the Parish Level:

Arriving in a parish, a person can rather quickly gather data. First, on the more informational level:

How many SCCs are in the parish?¹⁴⁸⁹

How many YSCCs are in the parish?

Is there a Parish Pastoral Plan?

Are SCCs a major part of the Parish Pastoral Plan?

Is there a coordinator of SCCs on the parish level? Full time? Part time? Is there a Parish SCCs Coordination Team?

Is there a Parish SCCs Training Team?

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 SCCs emphasized on the Parish Website?

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:

¹⁴⁸⁹ The answer to this question feeds into the question -- How many SCCs are in the diocese? – that feeds into the question -- How many SCCs are in the country? that feeds into the question -- How many SCCs are in the AMECEA Region?

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?

Do the SCCs have Recollection Days and Retreats?

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/Traditional Parish Organizations or Associations in the parish?

Are the SCCs just one of many pastoral ministries in the parish or fundamental to the whole ecclesial structure and life of the parish?

Do the lay ecclesial ministers, catechists, coordinators, animators and facilitators in the Pastoral Ministry of SCC have regular meetings?

Do they have formation and training workshops? How is the formation and training carried out?

Are there formation and training workshops in the SCCs themselves?

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, catechists and lay ecclesial leaders emphasize the importance of SCCs in their talks?

How do the SCCs in the parish use the internet especially the social media and social networking? Facebook? Twitter? What'sApp? YouTube?

On the Diocesan Level:

Arriving in a diocese a person can rather quickly gather data. First, on the more informational level:

How many SCCs are in the diocese?¹⁴⁹⁰

How many YSCCs are in the diocese?

Is there a Diocesan Pastoral Plan?

Are SCCs a major part of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan?

Is there a coordinator of SCCs on the diocesan level? Full time? Part time? Is the person connected to the Pastoral Department of the diocese?

Is there a Diocesan SCCs Coordination Team?

Is there a Diocesan SCCs Training Team?

Are SCCs emphasized in Pastoral Letters?¹⁴⁹¹

Are SCCs emphasized on the Diocesan Website?

Then the deeper questions:

Are there regular meetings of SCCs coordinators, animators and facilitators at the diocesan and deanery levels?

Are there regular formation and training workshops of SCCs coordinators, animators and facilitators 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 homilies and 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 and social networking?

¹⁴⁹⁰ These results can feed into the national results and eventually into the Eastern Africa results (nine AMECEA countries) to get a complete picture of the number of SCCs in the AMECEA Region.

¹⁴⁹¹ A study of many Pastoral Letters in dioceses in the USA show that SCCs are recommended as one of the many pastorals and spiritual options in the parish along with *Bible* Study Groups, popular devotions (like adoration, novenas, the rosary and Stations of the Cross) and prayer groups rather than a new Pastoral Model of Church.

Does the diocese share its SCCs experiences with other dioceses and the Catholic Secretariat of the National Catholic Bishops' Conference?

Updated: 12 December, 2023

20. Sample of the Program/Timetable of a SCCs Workshop¹⁴⁹²: 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* (2nd Sunday of Advent).
- Evening: DVD on SCCs.

Wednesday, 4 December 2013: Day Three

- Learnings, questions and comments from the 1st Day.
- Using **SEE – DISCERN/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.

¹⁴⁹² 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.

DAY/DATE	TIME (HRS)	ACTIVITY	RESOURCE PERSON
<u>Monday 2 Dec.</u>	16:00	Arrival of Delegates/Registration Meeting of Steering Committee.	
	18:30	Supper	
	20:00	Opening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening remarks - Touchdown: self-introduction, brief sharing on their experience of SCCs and expectations for the workshop. - Sharing of roles and responsibilities, structure of the program/timetable. - Creation of four Youth SCCs <p>Bed Time</p>	
<u>Tuesday 3rd Dec.</u>	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 (2nd Sunday of Advent)</i>	Fr. J. Healey
	18:30	Supper	
	20:00	DVD on SCCs	Fr. J. Healey
	22:00	Bed Time	
<u>Wednesday 4 Dec.</u>	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"> - Explanation of the method - Practical experience 	
	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	

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21. Sample of an African Inculturated Small Christian Community Mass -- *Jumuiya* Mass¹⁴⁹³ (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 University 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. At the end of the rite is 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*). . The idea is that the Christian community should be reconciled and at peace with each other **before** hearing the Word of God.
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

¹⁴⁹³ Mass begins in an African way with the celebrant greeting the congregation with “Good Morning.” Then “Welcome to this Eucharistic Celebration on the feast of...” Mentioning the liturgical season, the feast day and a reference to the theme of the Scripture readings puts the mass in context and makes it more personal.

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 "Prayer of the Faithful" starting from our everyday local experience in English and in our home language/heart language/ mother tongue. Some intentions flow directly from the scripture readings. Ends 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*).
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."
9. Before Communion: **Ugandan** proverb: *Relationship is in the eating together*.
10. Communion Song: “*Tazama, Tazama*”¹⁴⁹⁴ (on sheet).
11. 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.”
12. 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.”
13. 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)

¹⁴⁹⁴ 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 Stories¹⁴⁹⁵ on the themes of belonging, brotherhood and sisterhood, collaboration, collegiality, communion, community, consensus, cooperation, family, friendship, intimacy, marriage participation, mutuality, partnership, personal relationships, sharing, solidarity, synodality, teamwork, togetherness, union, unity¹⁴⁹⁶ 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. Some are universal proverbs applied to the African context and situation. 227 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.
Alone a youth runs fast, with an elder slow, but together they go far.
Alone, alone, one cannot produce history.
All good friends are bad friends to lose.
An army of well-organized ants can bring down an elephant.
As long as you stay united in a group, the lion will go hungry.
Baboons shared the chaff.
Bananas cook best when bunched in a pot (Meaning: Neighbors do good things together).
Bangles sound when there are two.
A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long.
A big cooking pot of rice is not without hard, burnt rice at the bottom.
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.
A neighbor near by is better than a brother or sister who lives afar.
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.

¹⁴⁹⁵ 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>

¹⁴⁹⁶ For examples six saying on “unity” and two sayings on “community” are found in Joseph Healey, *Collection of, and Commentary on, 436 Sayings on East African Cloth (Misemo Kwenye Khanga na Vitenge vya Afrika Mashariki)*, Nairobi: African Proverbs Working Group, 2005, Ebook, African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 5 November, 2017, <http://www.afriprov.org/images/afriprov/books/easayingsoncloth.pdf>. Computer Version updated to 600 sayings, 16 April, 2018.

Carve with your friends; alone you cut yourself.
A chicken develops a headache when it sees another chicken in the cooking pot.
A child belongs to everyone.
The child of many guardians is not bitten by ants.
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.
Cross the river in a crowd and the crocodile won't eat you.
Eating together promotes friendship.
Eating together strengthens brotherhood and sisterhood; there is nothing like brotherhood and sisterhood.
Everything is all right if you love each other.
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.
The family is the cornerstone of our society.
The family that eats together, stays together.
The family that prays together, stays together.
Famine said, "send me to people who don't unite."
A friend is someone you share the path with.
Friendship is eating and sharing with friends.
Goat droppings (that later become manure) are mainly found in a loafing shed (barn).
Goodbye 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.
A herd of aged animals has no future.
Hoes that dig together never miss to knock at one another.
Home is best.
Home is not where we live; home is where we belong.
Home is where we return for resources for the journey of life.
A home that welcomes strangers will never lack food.
The hoes of two people cultivating together in a field clash (hit against each other).
The hyena chasing two gazelles at the same time will go to bed hungry.
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 each person sweeps in front of his or her house then the whole world will be clean.
If God lives as a community, we must do the same.
If people come together, they can even mend a crack in the sky.
If relatives help each other, what evil can hurt them.
If we stand tall, it is because we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us.
If you get a fine harvest of maize don't break your local brotherhood and sisterhood.
If you pick up one end of the stick you also pick up the other.
If you run after two hares you will catch neither.
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 in the shelter of each other that people live.
It is the teeth that are together that bite meat.
It takes a village to educate a child.
It takes a village to prevent abuse.

It takes a (whole) village to raise a child.
It takes many hands joined together to put a roof on a house.
It takes many hands to capture a buffalo.
The journey of many people does not make one get tired easily.
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.
Little by little, a little becomes a lot.
The load is lighter when two people carry it.
A lone buffalo is an easy hunt for a lion or a hunter.
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 buffaloes have no good soup/Many buffaloes are no meat.
Many cooks spoil the broth/pot).
Many hands make light work.
Many hands will more easily lift a mortar.
Many pieces of firewood keep the fire burning until the morning.
Many sticks burn together.
The mother is the cornerstone of the family.
Mountains never meet but people do.
Neighbor before house.
A neighbor is a second cloth.
A neighbor near by is better than a brother or sister who lives afar.
Neighbors share meat.
Never be afraid to be outnumbered. Remember pigeons flock together but an eagle flies alone.
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.
No matter how small and crowded the house, there is always room for the people you love.
No person is an island (universal proverb that is found in African languages including Turkana, Kenya).
Not to aid one in distress is to kill him/her in your heart.
One bite at a time.
One does not love if one does not accept from others.
One faith, one hope, one love.
One by one a bird makes a nest.
One child does not chase away birds from the millet field.
One¹⁴⁹⁷ finger does not (or cannot) kill a louse.

¹⁴⁹⁷ 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

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 furrow at a time.
One giant alone cannot catch a lizard.
One grain does not make porridge.
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 head does not sit in council.
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.
One who eats alone cannot taste the food with others.
The one who eats alone dies alone.
*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 one who walks alone by the river gets eaten (by the crocodile).
The one with many uncles slept hungry.
The pain for one of us is the pain for all of us.
A single bracelet does not jingle.
A single firewood cannot make a fire.
A single thumb does not kill a louse.
Those who move together remind each other.
A person cannot dance well on one leg only.
A person is a person through other persons.
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.
Rain does not fall on one roof alone.
Reconciliation is strengthened by eating together.
The red gourd is shared from one person/homestead to another.
Relationship is in the eating together.

proverbs using the pattern "Two..." communicate unity, togetherness, 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 Narrative Theology*, pp. 113-28.

A relationship is incomplete unless people dine together.

Relationship is a space filled by eating.

Ring and finger don't separate.

Sharing is wealth.

Show me your friend and I will tell you who you are.

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 sky is vast enough for all birds to fly without collisions.

*A small house will hold a hundred friends. **NOTE:** This Duruma proverb is often used as a riddle. A small house with many people. Answer. Pawpaw.*

The snake like walking alone and that is why it is killed.

The speed of a whole herd of buffaloes 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/Sticks in a bundle cannot be broken.

Teamwork without coordination leads to confusion.¹⁴⁹⁸

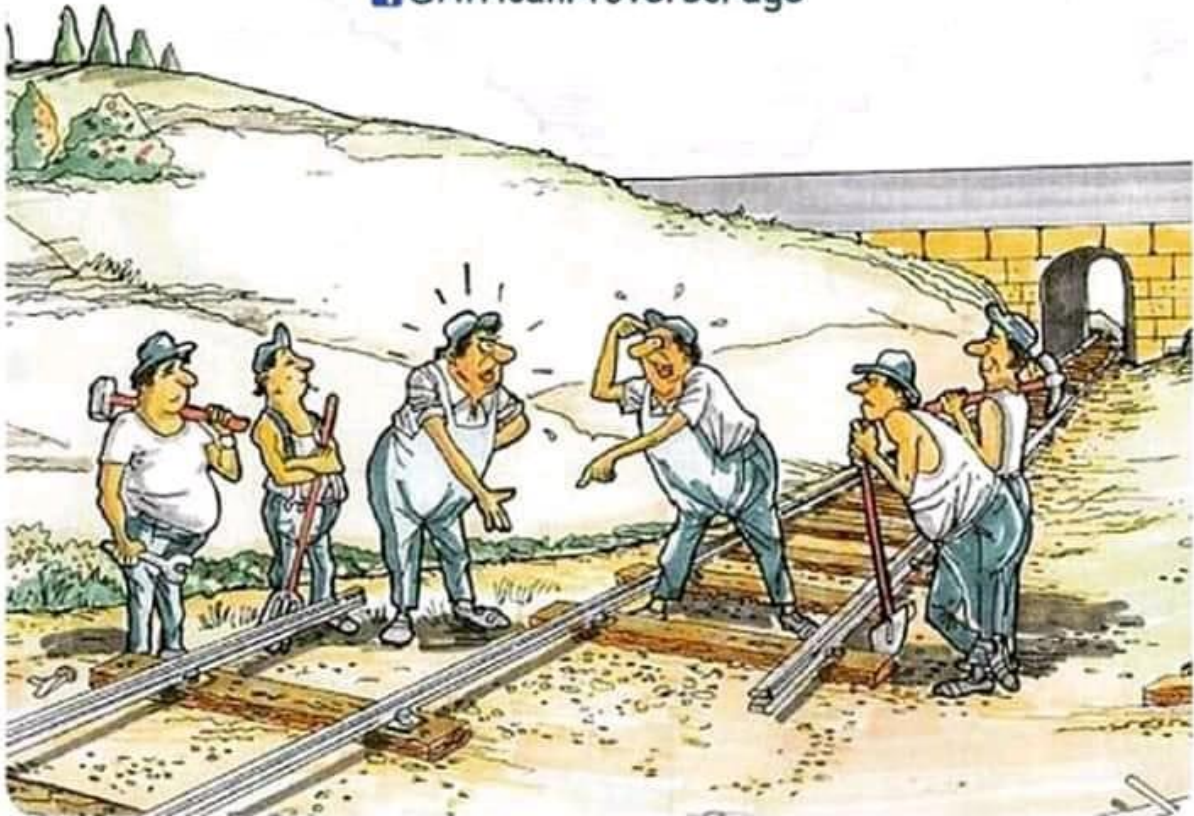
¹⁴⁹⁸ If a picture is worth a thousand words, then this drawing of two gangs of railroad workers laying tracks that don't match is perfect for this proverb.

"TEAMWORK WITHOUT COORDINATION LEADS TO CONFUSION"



AFRICAN PROVERB

f @AfricanProverbsPage



The teeth can only bite when they work together.
There's always room for one more person at the table.
There is no hyena without a friend.
There is no secret between two people.
There's always room for one more person at the table.
They help each other like white ants.
Three stones support the cooking pot.
Things are interdependent.
Those who eat together do not eat one another.
Those who move together remind each other.
Together like basket and food.
Together many people lift up a mortal.
Together use the long way to get there rather than the short cut that does not get there.
Together we stand, divided we fall (universal proverb popular in Africa).
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 fingernails kill a louse.
Two fingers killed a louse.
Two foxes cannot fail to carry a beehive.
Two hands wash each other.
Two heads are better than one.
Two is better than one.
Two or more people scared by a lion will make a good company in the forest.
Two bulls can't stay in the same kraal.
Two bulls can't share the same cowshed.
Two lions cannot rule in the same valley.
Two roads overcame the hyena.
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.
The unity of the fire stones.
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 don't heal in isolation, but in community.
We rather than I.
What falls on one, falls on all.
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 one hand washes the other, both hands are clean.
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 can live without a friend, but you can't live without a neighbor.
You can't break a bundle.
You can't chase two antelopes at once.
You can't eat with your enemy.
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 African 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 13: family life, raising children and marriage ministry/marriage preparation/marriage counseling. Some are universal proverbs applied to the African context and situation. Here are 219 examples:

Family Life (105)

- *A united family eats from the same plate* (Ganda, Uganda).
- *Members of the same family are open to each other and can discuss anything* (Samburu, Kenya).
- *The family is the cornerstone of our society* (many languages).
- *A family is like a forest. When you are outside it is dense. When you are inside each tree has its place* (Africa).
- *The family that eats together, stays together.*
- *The family that prays together, stays together.*
- *If relatives help each other, what evil can hurt them.* (Africa).
- *Goat droppings (that later become manure) are mainly found in a loafing shed (barn)* (Sukuma, Tanzania).
- *Famine said, "send me to people who don't unite"* (Hema, DRC).
- *Never bite the hand that once fed you.*
- *There is no secret between two people* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *One who gossips with you will gossip about you.*
- *A small house will hold a hundred friends* (Duruma, Kenya). NOTE: This Duruma proverb is often used as a riddle. *A small house with many people.* Answer. *Pawpaw.*
- *There's always room for one more person at the table.*
- *No matter how small and crowded the house, there is always room for the people you love.*
- *The house of a person we love is never far* (Kenya).
- *If two brothers have only the head of a fly, they will divide it equally between them* (Setswana, Botswana).
- *Dine with a stranger but save your love for your family* (Ethiopia).
- *Those who love each other need only a small space* (Ganda, Uganda).
- *We are blind to the faults of those we love.* (Yoruba, Nigeria).
- *Fighting does not build a family* (Kamba, Kenya).
- *When brothers fight to the death, a stranger inherits their father's estate* (Ibo, Nigeria).
- *The person who forgives ends a quarrel* (Africa).
- *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).

- *A big cooking pot of rice is not without hard, burnt rice at the bottom* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa)
- *Many cooks spoil the pot* (Nuer, South Sudan).
- *Blood is thicker than water* (many African languages including Rendille, Kenya).
- *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).
- *Relationship (sisterhood, brotherhood) is in the eating together* (Ganda, Uganda).
- *A relationship is incomplete unless people dine together* (Shona, Zimbabwe).
- *The color of the skin doesn't matter* (Zimbabwe).
- *You can't eat with your enemy* (DRC).
- *One hand washes the other* (Meru, Kenya, Uganda).
- *When one hand washes the other, both hands are clean* (Africa).
- *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 [and sisters] 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).
- *If people come together, they can even mend a crack in the sky* (Africa).
- *I belong by blood relationship. Therefore I am* (Ghana).
- *I am because we are; we are because I am* (Zulu, South Africa, Swaziland).
- *A chicken develops a headache when it sees another chicken in the cooking pot.*
- *When you reap problems, you share with your family* (Nande, Democratic Republic of Congo – DRC, Uganda).
- *What falls on one, falls on all* (Africa).
- *A person is a person through other persons* (Zulu, South Africa, Swaziland).
- *Show me your friends and I will tell you who you are/tell you your character* (many African languages).
- *All good friends are bad friends to lose* (Africa).
- *The person who sits on a stone that supports the cooking pot will never grow taller* (Ganda, Uganda).
- *Blood relationships don't often procure mercy; favor comes only by divine connection* (Africa).
- *Any sheepfold without siblings has no life because sooner or later it will be finished* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *A boma without calves is a dead one* (Africa).
- *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 youth talk first and then listen; the elders listen first and then talk* (Africa).

- *The person who does not listen to an elder's advice gets his or her leg broken* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *Give advice; if people don't listen, let adversity teach them* (Africa).
- *Even though you disagree, do not refuse to listen* (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).
- *When a man raises his voice at home, know that he is lowering it elsewhere* (Africa).
- *Women give birth with other women* (Alur, DRC and Uganda).
- *Giving birth brings happiness* (Nyanga, DRC).
- *The cord for bearing the baby remains where the mother died* (Nyanga, DRC).
- *The umbilical cord is not a sweet potato vine* (Mbeere, Kenya).
- *A woman who uses safe delivery might be killed by the ninth delivery* (when she least expects it, it happens) (Tanzania).
- *Parents are gold; to take care of them is a blessing* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *You only have one mother* (many African languages).
- *The mother is the cornerstone of a family* (Somali, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia).
- *My thanks, receive Mother* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *Your friend's mother is your mother too* (Digo, Kenya).
- *A mother can take care of 10 children, but sometimes 10 children can't take care of their mother* (Africa).
- *When you stand with the blessings of your mother and God, it matters not who stands against you* (Africa).
- *The person who has not traveled widely thinks his or her mother is the only cook (the best cook)* (many African languages including Bemba, Zambia and Ganda, Uganda).
- *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).
- *A child can be taller than his father but never be older than his father.*
- *Give a stammerer enough time, and he/she will pronounce his/her father's name.* (Africa).
- *It doesn't matter how tall your grandfather was* (Medumba, Cameroon)
- *The person who has friends from wherever he or she walks to, gets a place to sleep* (Gusii, Kenya).
- *Best friends killed each other over a hare's head* (Tonga, Zambia).
- *You don't ask for a chair when you visit a place where the chief sits on the floor* (Africa).
- *It's not how big the house is, it's how happy the home is* (Africa).
- *Without a home or (family) support, a country is of no use to you* (Bemba, Zambia).
- *Never despise the home that once gave you shelter* (Africa).
- *Home is not where we live; home is where we belong* (Africa).
- *Home is where we return for resources for the journey of life* (Swahili).

- **A home that welcomes strangers will never lack food.** (Africa).
- *It is in the shelter of each other that people live.*
- *We don't heal in isolation, but in community* (Africa).
- *You can live without a friend, but you can't live without a neighbor* (Africa).
- *"Neighbor before house."*
- *If we stand tall, it is because we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us.*

Raising Children (64)

- *The hen with baby chicks doesn't swallow the worm* (Sukuma, Tanzania).¹⁴⁹⁹
- *A hen's feet cannot kill its chicks* (Ganda, Uganda).
- *A cow never runs away from her calves.* (Bemba, Zambia).
- *A cow's horn does not/cannot kill its calf.* (Kalenjin, Kenya and Uganda and Nandi, Kenya).
- *A hen's feet cannot kill its chicks* (Ganda, Uganda proverb).
- *A child eats at his/her parents even if he/she has poured out the flour.* (Nyanga, DRC).
- *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 and Cameroon).
- *A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long* (Ibo, Nigeria, Sukuma, Tanzania and many African languages).
- *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).
- *In Africa old people are not kept in a nursing home; they stay home and teach their grandchildren the ways of life* (Africa).
- *Who loves the mother must love the children also* (Bemba, Zambia).
- *One who loves you, loves you with your dirt* (Africa).
- *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 including Bemba, Zambia and Ganda, Uganda).
- *Even if your mother has a short leg she is still your mother* (Malawi).
- *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).

¹⁴⁹⁹ 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>

- *A child that has never visited another man's farm will brag that his or her father's farm is the biggest (Yoruba, Nigeria).*
- *When you follow in the path of your father, you learn to walk like him (Ashanti, Ghana).*
- *No matter how skinny, the son always belongs to his father (Kipsigis, Kenya and Galla, Ethiopia).*
- *Do not tell the person who is carrying you that he or she stinks (Africa).*
- *There are no children to be discarded and given to the hyena to eat (Gikuyu, Kenya).*
- *When the hyena wants to eat its children, it first accuses them of smelling like goats. (Africa).*
- *All people are born with the same rights. There are no children of the stomach and of the back (Gikuyu, Kenya).*
- *You can only resemble the parents that gave birth to you. For a cow does not give birth to a sheep (Yoruba, Nigeria).*
- *You give birth to a child, not their character (Beti, Cameroon).*
- *The child's appearance/respect/dignity mirrors that of a parent (Chewa, 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 a blessing from God (Africa).*
- *Children are a gift from God (Africa).*
- *Children are the reward of life (Africa).*
- *Children are the seeds of the future (Nuer, South Sudan).*
- *The child you sired hasn't sired you (Somali, Somalia),*
- *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).*
- *A tree can easily be straightened out when it is still young (Rwanda).*
- *The hardworking, obedient child will always get someone to wash him or her, will always get a response (Gikuyu, Kenya).*
- *An elder (or a parent) who won't sharply reprimand a child when young will be compelled to run helter skelter when the child is fully grown, and becomes grossly disobedient (Africa).*
- *It's not hard work to bear a child, but the work is to nurture him/her. (Africa).*
- *A little patience is better than a lot of force.*
- *When a chicken spends a night outside its coop, it becomes a partridge (Bembe, Democratic Republic of Congo -- DRC).*
- *Spare the rod, spoil the child (Tugen, Kenya).*
- *The parent who corrects his or her child with a rod does not sin (Bangubangu, Democratic Republic of Congo -- DRC).*
- *If a father gets so angry as to throw his child into a raid of army ants, by the time he's appeased, the ants may not be (Nigerian Proverb).*
- *No one can stop monkeys from squatting; no one should deprive a child of his patrimony (Nigerian Proverb).*

- *One knee does not bring up a child* (Sukuma, Tanzania proverb).¹⁵⁰⁰
- *One hand does not nurse a child.* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa Proverb)
- *A child belongs to everyone.* (Haya, Tanzania)
- *It takes a village to educate a child.*
- *It takes a village to prevent abuse.*
- *It takes a whole village to raise a child* (Igbo and Yoruba, Nigerian Proverb).
- *The child of many guardians is not bitten by ants* (Sukuma, Tanzania).
- *If the youth are not initiated into the village, they will burn it down just to feel its warmth* (Africa).
- *The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth* (Africa).
- *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).
- *Two fingers killed a louse* (Saamia, Kenya and Uganda) Proverb).

Marriage Ministry/Marriage Preparation/Marriage Counseling (49)

- *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).
- *Love is blind* (Rendille, Kenya and Nuer, South Sudan),
- *There is no hill too steep when going to a loved one* (another translation: *a lover's place has no hills or there are no hills to a lover's place* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *For those who love each other a louse's skin will be the right size to cover them against the cold.* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *Everything is all right if you love each other.* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *One who married for love alone will have bad days but good nights* (Arabic, Egypt).
- *Home is best* (Swahili, Eastern and Central Africa).
- *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).
- *The beauty of a woman is to please her husband and what she does for the people of her community* (Kabwari, Democratic Republic of the Congo -- DRC).

¹⁵⁰⁰ 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.

- *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.*
- *It does not matter how hot-tempered you are, you will never boil yams* (Gikuyu, Kenya).
- *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).
- *Perfect people hardly find each other in marriage* (Shona, Zimbabwe).
- *A widow who's missing her late husband, should remember her 'living husband'* (Nigeria)
- *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 gas passed by the woman you love does not smell* (Builsa, Ghana).
- *Settle down with one woman, there are many beautiful women in the world* (Shona, Zimbabwe).
- *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 Nigeria).
- *A broken relationship is better than a broken marriage* (Africa).
- *"Now the marriage begins," says the woman who has been beaten with thorns* (Nigeria).
- *A man with envy has always his eye on his wife's pot* (Kele, DRC).
- *The person who sees the in-laws to be bad is not the engaged woman.* (Tembo, DRC)
- *Come we stay* (Kenya).
- *Character is like pregnancy; you cannot hide it for long* (Chewa, Malawi).
- *He who has a sister has a brother-in-law* (Chonyi, Kenya).
- *A family that has a son will never lose the debts owed to it* (Rendille, Kenya).
- *Where there is a will, there is a way* (universal proverb popular in Africa).

24. Constitution of St. John the Evangelist Small Christian Community (Nairobi, Kenya)¹⁵⁰¹

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.

Meetings

¹⁵⁰¹ 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.

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 Mass¹⁵⁰² 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)

¹⁵⁰² This is an unfortunate expression that is used frequently. Better is “to participate in mass.”

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.¹⁵⁰³

¹⁵⁰³ 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: stjosephchristians@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 including Online Digital Resources (566)¹⁵⁰⁴

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¹⁵⁰⁵ As a footnote in my personal history, I carried this book with me when I came to Africa in 1968. I carried it to all the places that I have lived in East Africa during the past 54 years (1968-2022) using it from time to time. Now as I pack to return to the USA for good. I throw away this dog-eared edition with its cover already torn off. Good bye.

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Churches continue to be a privileged places where most active Catholics learn, live, and celebrate their faith. However, many Catholics are looking for deeper ways to experience community and belonging. In recent decades, many apostolic movements along with the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), have played an important role in parishes with Hispanic ministries in the United States. Saint Camillus church, in the Archdiocese of Washington, is one of them. In 2006, this parish started a process to develop Base Ecclesial Communities.

This study explores the pastoral effectiveness of the three oldest BECs at St. Camillus. The goal is to determine the characteristics and elements that have helped them to stay active for so many years. Using participant observation and qualitative interviews, the research seeks to discover the secret, the recipe and the ingredients that have made these three small communities an example of perseverance. What are their stories, opportunities, strengths, and challenges that have allowed them to grow and prosper? As Roberto S. Goizueta said, “one’s actions are the most accurate reflection of one’s identity.

If you want to know who I am, observe how I live my life, with whom I interrelate, to which activities I devote my time, energy, and resources.”

The investigation concludes that these three BECs have been a sign of vitality within the parish, where members can live the sacredness in the small. These BECs have offered a sacred space where first generation Hispanic immigrants can experience belonging and the presence of God in and through others. This sacred space also offers a way to grow in their Catholic Christian faith.

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Importance of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) in the Philippines and their relationship to the ongoing 2021 – 2024 Synodal Process. The first small communities were established in the Philippines in the late 1960s, immediately after the Second Vatican Council, by foreign missionaries, the American Maryknoll Missionaries, who came to the vast area of Mindanao and surrounding islands. They worked in close collaboration with the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) that is one of the largest organizations of rural workers in the Philippines --a socio-political movement run by peasants and for peasants.

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Our “[Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community](#)” is a digital place for young people from all over the world to come and exchange ideas on why [Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\)](#) are so important for young people and what the difference is between gathering in a Small Christian Community and gathering in a traditional church. The Online Young Adult Seekers of Small Christian Communities met and exchanged ideas through Zoom on 17 August 2023. Here are some answers in a pdf File from five young men and three young women. Six are from Kenya, one from Tanzania and one from Indonesia. There are seven hyperlinks. The article is posted on our SCC Website under Africa (African Continent, Kenya and Tanzania) and Asia (Indonesia and Pakistan). It is also posted on other websites and Facebook Pages:

Today’s American Catholic Website,

<https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/2023/09/a-sense-of-belonging/>

Catholic Church Reform Int'l Website,
[Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community's View on Why a Small Christian Community Is Important and What Happens in Small Communities That Doesn't Happen in More Traditional Larger Church Gatherings - Catholic Church Reform International \(catholicchurchreformintl.org\)](https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/2023/09/a-sense-of-belonging/)

Azetsop, Jacquineau (ed.), *HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016. In process: African Editions in both English and French.

Contains Seven Parts.

This comprehensive look by African scholars at the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Africa features contributions from noted scholars from across the continent, offering analysis from theological, sociological, ecclesiological, and public health perspectives. It is a valuable resource for social analysis and theological reflection from an African perspective, something badly needed for theologians and academics alike.

Includes, "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Agents of Change in the Fight Against HIV and AIDS in Eastern Africa," by Joseph Healey, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 9 September, 2016,
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/311-small-christian-communities-sccs-as-agents-of-change-in-the-fight-against-hivaids-in-eastern-africa.html>

Google Website, retrieved 2 September, 2016,
https://books.google.com/books?id=hl3ADAAAQBAJ&pg=PT20&lpg=PT20&dq=home+based+care+Leonard+Chiti+Zambia&source=bl&ots=d8Nr-bb7AN&sig=C5zmtn_sBReBFgRpDC1wsg9p3EM&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjtgIyiq_DOAhXDJB4KHckkCMEQ6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=home%20based%20care%20Leonard%20Chiti%20Zambia&f=false

Baawobr, Richard, *God's Word -- Year A, God's Word -- Year B, God's Word -- Year C*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006-8. In Swahili in three booklets, *Kujfunza na Kushirikishana Biblia katika Injili ya Mathayo, Injili ya Marko, Injili ya Luka kwa ajili ya Jumuiya za Kikristo*, Nairobi: AMECEA Pastoral Department and BICAM, 2008.

Baawobr, Richard, *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.

Baawobr, Richard, "The Origins and Reasons for Small Christian Communities," Missionaries of Africa West Africa Website, retrieved on 24 August, 2015,
<http://www.mafrwestafrica.net/content/view/648/71/lang.en>

- “Background Papers” of the Fifth International SCCs Consultation: International Video Conference (Webinar) on “Small Christian Communities: The Church on the Move around the World,” Notre Dame, Indiana: Latin American/North American Church Concerns (LANACC), 2014.
- “Background Papers and Final Statement” of the Fourth International SCCs Consultation on “Global Spirituality for SCCs,” Notre Dame, Indiana: Latin American/North American Church Concerns (LANACC), 2002.
- “Background Papers and Final Statement” of the First International SCCs Consultation on “Rediscovering Community: International Perspectives,” Notre Dame, Indiana: Institute for Pastoral and Social Ministry, 1991.
- Ball, Robert and Kyle Markham with Rev. Robert S. Pelton, CSC, *The Future of Our Past: The Rev. Robert S. Pelton, CSC’s Life, Light and Social Vision of Notre Dame in the New Millennium*, South Bend, Indiana: Diamond Communications, Inc, 2001.
- Baranowski, Arthur, *Creating Small Church Communities: A Plan for Restructuring the Parish and Renewing Catholic Life*, 3rd Edition, Cincinnati, OH: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1996.
- Baranowski Art and Theresa Doyle, *Eucharist at the Center: Continually Forming the Parish*, North Hampton, NH: Mindstir Media (www.mindstirmedia.com), 2019. Available on Amazon, retrieved on 2 September 2020, https://www.amazon.com/s?k=Eucharist+at+the+Center%3A+Continually+Forming+the+Parish&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss
- Barasa, John Kevin, *Low Participation of the Youth in SCCs: A Case Study of St. Austin Parish, Muthangari, Nairobi Archdiocese*, Eldoret, Kenya: Catholic University of Eastern Africa, AMECEA Gaba Campus, 2019.
- Baur, John, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, First Edition, 1994, Second Edition, 2009.
- Benedict XVI, *The Door of Faith, Motu Proprio Porta Fidei* with Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2012.
- Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *The Word of the Lord*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2010.
- 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_africaemunus_en.html
<http://www.zenit.org/article33862?l=english>
- Bible Lessons: Bible Month, September, 2013* Book III, Lilongwe, Malawi: ECM Catholic Secretariat Pastoral Department, 2013. Some of these booklets are also available in Chewa and Tumbuka.

Biziyaremye, Gilbert, "The Relevance of *Ecclesia in Africa* for Small Christian Communities in Africa: Case of the Catholic Archdiocese of Kigali, Rwanda," in *African Christian Studies* (CUEA), Vol. 28, No. 4 (December, 2012): 7-21.

Blaney, Joanne, "Celebrating Holy Week 2020 in an Online Base Community in São Paulo, Brazil: A 2020 Holy Week Celebration With People Who Live or Lived on the Street Moves to Zoom This Year," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website retrieved on 26 April, 2020, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/celebrating-holy-week-2020-in-an-online-base-community-in-sao-paulo-brazil>

Bodewes, Christine, *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums: Voices of Kibera, Kenya*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005.

Boff, Leonardo, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986.

It is generally agreed that the SCC/BCC/BEC/CEB Model of Church started with the CEBs in Barra do Pirai Diocese, Brazil in 1956. The language was Portuguese. 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, Brazil to launch a community catechetical/evangelization movement in Barra do Parai out of which small communities [CEBs] eventually emerged.

Bongmba, Elias Kifon, *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology*, England: Routledge, 2020.

An authoritative and comprehensive survey of the theological landscape of Africa. Chapter 20 on "We Create the Path by Walking: Evolving an African Narrative Theology" is written by Joseph G. Healey.

Bonnar, David, *Testify to the Light*, a Pastoral Letter of Bishop David J. Bonnar, Bishop of Youngstown, Ohio, USA, 19 February, 2021. <https://doy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Pastoral-Letter-Bishop-Bonnar-2021.pdf>

Bishop Bonnar is clearly a Francis Bishop who understands the life and activities of the SCCs Model of Church. He highlights:

1. "The Value of Faith Sharing" (*Lectio Divina*)
2. "The Sacredness of Parish Life" ("community of communities")
3. "The Formation of Small Groups" (parishes form small communities for people to share their faith and support one another as they become disciples)

Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991.

Breen, Frank (compiler and editor), *Maryknoll History in Africa*,

Volume One (Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Namibia – 1951 to 2011), Maryknoll, NY: Privately Printed, 2011.

Volume Two (Tanganyika – 1946 to the early 1960s), Maryknoll, NY: Privately Printed, 2015.

Volume Three (Musoma Diocese – 1961 to 2015), Maryknoll, NY: Privately Printed, 2016.

Volume Four (Shinyanga Diocese from Independence to 2016), Maryknoll, NY: Privately Printed, 2017.

Volume Five (Archdioceses of Dar es Salaam and Mwanza, Zambia, Mozambique and Rome), Maryknoll, NY: Privately Printed, 2017.

Available online on the Maryknoll Africa Region Website, under “Our Downloads” under “Resource Center,” <https://maryknollafrica.org/category/our-downloads>

Broszkowski, Krzysztof, *The Unity of the Parish and the Celebration of the Eucharist in Small Parish Communities in the Light of Recent Documents of the Magisterium of the Church*, Warsaw, 2013.

I analysed the problem of parish unity faced with separate Eucharistic celebrations organized by small communities [especially connected to the Neocatechumenal Way] existing in a parish. I tried to formulate theological principles of that unity in the light of the magisterial documents of 20th and 21st century. The unity of a parish is most importantly connected with the spiritual, invisible dimension that is also expressed in the external, visible way by bonds of profession of faith, sacraments, church hierarchy and communion. Unity between parishioners is built by initiating them into the Paschal Mystery and into daily meditation of the Word of God. Instead of seeing in SCCs a threat to unity, both John Paul II and Benedict XVI indicate that small communities participate in the process of strengthening the unity of the parish by leading people along the mystagogical way towards the initiation into the Paschal Mystery. I also referred to sociological data about religiosity in contemporary Polish parishes indicating that there is a serious crisis in the life of faith and a dire need for these communities as a means of Christian initiation.

Bukumbi Pastoral Institute, “Position Papers for the 1969 National Seminar Study Year (SSY),” Bukumbi: Printed Papers, 1969.

Bujo, Bénézet, *Plea for Change of Models of Marriage*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009.

Bwangatto, Ambrose, “A Church Struggling to Answer Her Missionary Vocation,” Kampala: Privately Printed, 2018.

Bwangatto, Ambrose, “A New Way of Being Church for Young People? Small Christian Communities and the Youth in Uganda,” published in “Reader for the Network Small Christian Communities Africa – Fifth Workshop” (Réseau des Communautés

Ecclésiales de Base en Afrique – Cinquième Atelier), Theme: “A New Way of Being Church for Young People? Small Christian Communities and the Youth” (Theme “Une nouvelle manière d’être Église pour les jeunes? Les Communautés Ecclésiiales de Base (CEB) et les jeunes,” Aachen: Missio, Privately Printed, 2018.

Called To Be Church: Small Church Communities on Campus, New Haven: Saint Thomas More the Catholic Chapel and Center at Yale University, 2011-2013.

Cardinal, Ernesto, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010.

Collection of commentaries on the Christian gospels composed by Ernesto Cardenal that were made by a group of peasants in Solentiname. For many years, the peasants in Solentiname, a remote archipelago in Lake Nicaragua, gathered each Sunday in a type of CEB to reflect on the gospel reading. From recordings of their dialogue, this extraordinary document was composed. First published in the 1970s in four volumes, it was immediately acclaimed as a classic expression of liberation theology and a radical reading of the Good News of Jesus from the perspective of the poor and oppressed. Forty years later, now available in one volume, *The Gospel in Solentiname* retains its freshness and power.

Caramazza, Giuseppe and Eleanor Gibson (eds.), *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Proceedings of the Symposium held at Tangaza University College, February, 2017, Nairobi: Institute of Youth Studies, 2018. Includes:

Chapter 9: “Youth Small Christian Communities: Creating the Path by Walking” by Alloys Nyakundi (covering university YSCCs and Parish YSCCs)

“The Way Forward: Creating the Path by Walking” by Joseph Healey, MM (including YSCCs providing a safe place for prayer, sharing and reflection)

Carney, J. J., “The People Bonded Together by Love: Eucharistic Ecclesiology and Small Christian Communities in Africa,” *Modern Theology* 30: 2, April, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/8361392/The_People_Bonded_Together_by_Love_Eucharistic_Ecclesiology_and_Small_Christian_Communities_in_Africa

This article examines the most important Catholic ecclesiological development in East and Central Africa since Vatican II - Small Christian Communities or Living Ecclesial Base Communities. Drawing from historical literature on the movement as well as participant interviews in Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo, the article argues that the SCC movement has striking resonance with post-Vatican II Eucharistic ecclesiology and calls for deeper theological reflection on the sociopolitical implications of a thoroughly "Eucharistic" vision of the SCC.

The author breaks new ground in bringing two important Catholic ecclesial visions -- Small Christian Communities as the dominant model of church in Africa and Eucharistic Ecclesiology --into dialog with one another. First, he analyzes the origins and theological vision of the Small Christian Community movement in Africa, focusing on Eastern and Central Africa. Second, he considers the resonances and tensions between the SCC vision and post-Vatican II Eucharistic Ecclesiology. Third, he discusses what many see as the biggest contemporary challenge facing both SCCs and the African church—namely their engagement with issues of social justice, peace, and reconciliation. He argues 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.

Carney, J. J., "The People Who Do All Things Together," Living Ecclesial Base Communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,: Unpublished Manuscript, 2023.

In Lingala, the language most widely spoken in DRC's capital of Kinshasa, CEVBs -- *Communauté Ecclesiale Vivante du Base* or "Living Ecclesial Base Community" -- are known simply as *lisangas* -- the "people who do all things together."

Carney, Joseph, *The History of the Functional Structure of the Maryknoll Mission in Musoma and Shinyanga, Tanzania*, New York: St John's University Unpublished Dissertation, 1973.

Thomas Cashore (ed.), *Robert S. Pelton Latin America Collection*, South Bend: Moreau Seminary Library, 2018.

The collection contains the following:

- All of Pelton's books and published articles.
- Excellent documentation on the history of CEBs going back to the Medellín and Puebla Conferences up to the present.
- Full set of the *Latin American/North American Church Concerns (LANACC) Newsletters and Papers*.
- Complete Record of the International Small Christian Communities Conferences that Pelton coordinated.
- Audio-visual Resources.
- Some Eastern Africa SCCs documents and resources.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994.

Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa Pastoral Policy, Mombasa: Unpublished Paper, 2014. Chapter Two is on "Small Christian Communities."

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Build Our Family and Nation with Dignity: Today's Seeds, Tomorrow's Harvest*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2015, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2015. Available on the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) Website at:

<http://www.cjpckenya.org/index.php?page=programs&fid=1>

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *A Dawn of New Hope: Implementing the New Constitution*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2011, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2011.

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. Available on the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) Website at:

<http://www.cjpckkenya.org/index.php?page=other&gid=84>

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Justice, Peace and Reconciliation*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2009, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2009.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Kenya's Good Governance: My Responsibility*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2007, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2007.

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.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *The Leadership Handbook* (Swahili is *Maelekezo ya Uongozi*), Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2012.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Peaceful and Credible Elections – Leaders of Integrity*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2017, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2017.

<http://www.cjpckkenya.org/index.php?page=other&gid=94>

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Peaceful and Prosperous Kenya... My Responsibility*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2016, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2016.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Reconciliation for Peaceful Co-Existence and National Integration: Justice for All (Mapatanisho ili Kuishi Pamoja kwa Amani kwa Taifa Lenye Usawa kwa Wote)*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2018, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2018. KCCB Website, retrieved on 1 March, 2018,

English: <http://www.kccb.or.ke/home/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/lenten-campaing-english-16-1-181.pdf>

Swahili: <http://www.kccb.or.ke/home/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/lenten-campaing-kiswahili-16-1-18.pdf>

Weekly topics:

First week – Good governance.

Second week – Reconciliation.

Third week – Youth and Development.

Fourth week – Security.

Fifth week - Child Protection (covering different kinds of child abuse including physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse). **NOTE:** This week was used in the SCCs Course at Tangaza University College in March, 2018.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Towards Healing and Transformation*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2010, Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2010.

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.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *United and Peaceful Kenya...The Change I Want To See*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2013. Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2013. Including the DVD *United and Peaceful Kenya...The Change I Want To See: 2013 Lenten Campaign Launch, 9th February 2013, Nyayo National Stadium, Nairobi*.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *Uniting, Healing and Renewal of our Nation...God's Gift*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2019. Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2019.

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, *With a New Heart and a New Spirit*, Kenya Lenten Campaign, 2008. Nairobi: KCCB Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 2008.

Centore, Michael, "Cords of Human Kindness": An Introduction to Small Christian Communities, *Today's American Catholic (TAC)*, 29 November 2022, article in *Today's American Catholic (TAC)* Website retrieved on 5 March, 2023, <https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/2022/11/cords-of-human-kindness/> Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 5 March, 2023, [Cords-of-Human-Kindness.pdf \(smallchristiancommunities.org\)](https://smallchristiancommunities.org/Cords-of-Human-Kindness.pdf)

This article from the online magazine *Today's American Catholic (TAC)* takes its title from a verse in the Old Testament book of *Hosea* 11:1-4

Centore, Michael, "The Hallowing of the Real": Small Christian Communities and the Universal Priesthood, article *Today's American Catholic (TAC)*, 3 March 2023, *Today's American Catholic (TAC)* Website, retrieved on 5 March, 2023, ["The Hallowing of the Real": Small Christian Communities and the Universal Priesthood - Today's American Catholic \(todaysamericancatholic.org\)](https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/the-hallowing-of-the-real-small-christian-communities-and-the-universal-priesthood/) Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 5 March, 2023, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/the-hallowing-of-the-real-small-christian-communities-and-the-universal-priesthood/>

This article from the online magazine *Today's American Catholic (TAC)* takes its title from what the Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel called "the hallowing of the real," and our participation in this hallowing as devotional beings fulfills the words of Fr. Schmemmann: "If the church is in Christ, its initial act is always this act of thanksgiving, of returning the world to God."

Centore, Michael, "A Leaven for Positive Change: Synod Report for October 12, 2023," *Today's American Catholic*, 12 October, 2023. Retrieved from the *Today's American Catholic* Website on 16 October, 2023. [Leaven for Positive Change: Synod Report for October 12, 2023 - Today's American Catholic \(todaysamericancatholic.org\)](https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/leaven-for-positive-change-synod-report-for-october-12-2023/)

The importance of Small Christian Communities (SCCs), also known as Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) or Basic Christian Communities (BCCs), to the life of the church has been a recurring theme of the synodal discussion this week.

Centore, Michael, "Loyola Institute for Ministry and Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa Advance the Work of Synodality and Small Christian Communities," *Today's American Catholic (TAC)*, 1 June 2023, *Today's American Catholic (TAC)* Website, retrieved on 1 June, 2023,

<https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/2023/06/loyola-institute-for-ministry-and-episcopal-conferences-of-eastern-africa-advance-the-work-of-synodality-and-small-christian-communities/>

Summary article of an international Zoom Gathering with the following headings:

- The Synodal Spirit
- A Lasting Collaboration
- Walking with Young Adults
- A “Neighborhood Church”
- Inner Life and Public Life
- Conclusion: Reasons for Hope

Chikwekwete, Dadirai Miriam and Janice McLaughlin, MM, eds., *Combating Human Trafficking - Voices from East, West and Southern Africa*, Harare: African Forum for Social Teaching (AFCAST), Arrupe Jesuit University, 2021.

American Maryknoll Sister Janice McLaughlin who died earlier in 2021 seamlessly integrated African stories and proverbs into her talks and writings. The "Acknowledgement" section of this book quotes the African proverb, *It takes many hands joined together to put a roof on a house*.

Chimenge, Sylvester, Interview with Jane Njenga, *Polygamous Marriages and the Eucharistic Famine*, 10 November 2015 in *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*, Nairobi: Unpublished Master's Thesis in Pastoral Ministry, Tangaza University College, 2016.

Jane is second wife who goes to Mass every Sunday and is a faithful member of her SCC. She entered the RCIA (Adult Catechumenate) with the desire to be baptized as a Catholic. But she had to stop the instructions because she is a second wife. Her husband is a Catholic, but he had to stop receiving the Eucharist when he married a second wife. Jane was unable to find a suitable husband (men seem fewer in Kenya). To meet her human needs/sexual/social needs she decided to become a second wife.

Chimombo, Emmanuel, “AMECEA: Pastoral Coordinator Assures Theologians that Small Christian Communities Domesticate Theology at Grassroots,” *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, Issue 441 (29 July, 2022), AMECEA Website, retrieved on 30 July, 2022, [AMECEA: Pastoral Coordinator Assures Theologians that Small Christian Communities Domesticate Theology at Grassroots](#)

Chimombo, Emmanuel, “Establishing Small Christian Communities: Ecclesial Communities in Vatican II and Post-Conciliar Documents.” CUEA. Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 2003.

Chimombo, Emmanuel, Joseph G. Healey, Rita Ishengoma, Rose Musimba, Febian P. Mulenga and Alphonse C. L. Omolo, (eds.), *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators*, Nairobi: AMECEA Pastoral Department and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2017. Second Revised Edition, 2018.

The Swahili (Eastern and Central Africa) is *Kuimarisha Ukuaji wa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo katika Afrika* (2022).

The Chewa (Malawi) is *Kulimbikitsa Miphakaki/Malimana mu Africa – Buku Lophunzitsira ndi Kusulira* (2023).

The Tumbuka (Malawi) is *Kukhozga Kakuliro ka Mauzengezgani mu Africa – Buku La Kunjirikizgira Wasambizgi* (2023).

The French is *Renforcer la croissance des Petites Communautés Chrétiennes (CEB, CCB, CEV, PCC, CEVB, CEVB) en Afrique– Manuel de Formation pour les Animateurs et Animatrices*.

1. Paperback and Ebook available on Paulines Publications Africa.

Ebook available through Paulines Publications Africa on Android Platforms only (smartphones, tablets, etc.) – not on Apple or Microsoft.

<http://e.paulinesafrica.org/index.php/book/bookDetails/1356>

Malawi editions by Likuni Press

2. Paperback (Print on Demand -- POD) and Ebook available on Amazon.

https://www.amazon.com/STRENGTHENING-GROWTH-CHRISTIAN-COMMUNITIES-AFRICA-ebook/dp/B07H2YRBTJ/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1536294296&sr=8-1&keywords=emmanuel+chimombo

1. 128-page booklet to assist in SCCs training courses for SCCs facilitators and animators in Africa.
2. Preface by H. E. Souraphiel Cardinal Berhaneyesus, Archbishop of Addis Ababa Archdiocese, Ethiopia and former Chairman of AMECEA.
3. Recommends 15 topics and sessions for an effective training course on this key pastoral priority of the Catholic Church in Eastern Africa. They include: arrival of the participants, introduction of the participants, logistics, sharing of roles and responsibilities, participant's fears or concerns, training topics, expectations and training objectives.
4. Includes a rich bibliography that comprises references, additional reading materials, videos, DVDs as well as accompanying rich annexes. The new handbook recommends a checklist of 16 common activities in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa today for effective training of SCCs facilitators.

Chin, Maria-Pia Negro, "Embracing Synodality: Missioners Listen, Dialogue and Discern Together in the Worldwide Synodal Process," *Maryknoll Magazine*, Winter, 2023, retrieved on 1 June, 2023, [Embracing Synodality - Maryknoll Magazine](#)

Chin, Maria-Pia Negro, "Young Adult Faith Leads To Action: Maryknoll Accompanies and Empowers Young Adult Missionary Disciples," *Maryknoll Magazine*, Summer, 2022, retrieved on 7 June, 2022, [Final-LORES-MKMG-Summer-2022-1.pdf \(maryknollmagazine.org\)](#) **CORRECT**

1. Young people “are not bystanders. They’re part of the journey,” says Father Healey. He has spent over 10 years researching and writing about small young adult faith-sharing communities. All of this leads to responding to the baptismal call to mission. “It is faith leading to action,” he says.

2. Community members also delve into the global charism of Maryknoll. For example, a missionary working in Kenya connected them with Small Christian Community leader Alphonse Omolo who facilitated an international virtual encounter of young people. Coordinators say they are constantly working with Maryknoll to ensure YAE members feel part of God’s mission and the mission of the universal Church.

3. With Father Healey’s guidance, YAE coordinators engaged members in the Synod on Synodality, a Catholic Church-wide process of listening and dialogue. Some young adults were already involved in listening processes in their home dioceses; all look forward to the fruits of this “journeying together” as a church.

Chiti, Leonard, “Fighting AIDS From the Grassroots: History, Theology, Values and Challenges of Home-Based Care in Zambia,” in Jacquineau Azetsop (ed.), *HIV and AIDS in Africa: Theological Reflection, Public Health Crises, and Social Transformation*, Orbis Books, 2016.

The home-based care (HBC) system emerged in Zambia in the late 1980s as a complement to the mainstream health-care delivery system for people living with HIV. Local parish had home-based care programs such as the group called Caring Women who went around their neighborhood bringing medicine and praying for those terminally ill, many of whom had AIDS. In Zambia in the Catholic Church that accounts for a third of the people calling themselves Christian, the home-based care system followed closely the pattern of Small Christian Communities.

Cieslikiewicz Christopher, “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.

Cieslikiewicz, Christopher, *Small Christian Communities: Pastoral Priority and a Vital Force for Evangelization in the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. An Evaluation and New Perspectives*, Rome: Lateran University, 2004.

Thorough doctorate dissertation based on current SCC surveys, an in-depth questionnaire and extensive field interviews with extensive bibliography and appendices.

Cieslikiewicz Christopher, “Urban Small Christian Communities and Formation for the New Vision of the Church: Tanzanian Study Case,” *Africa Tomorrow*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (June, 2006).

Cimperman, Maria, *Social Analysis for the 21st Century: How Faith Becomes Action*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015.

This is the successor to the best-selling classic *Social Analysis: Linking Faith to Action* and it’s 25th Anniversary volume *The Pastoral Circle Revisited: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation*.

Today, the widespread use of social analysis in many forms, makes this publication very timely and helpful. Based on her experience of teaching courses, conducting workshops,

and participating in social movements, the author has brought together both theory and practice with good examples, realistic methods, and probing challenges. This book explores the “Pastoral Spiral.” This process, undertaken communally, in dialog, is geared towards the transformation of systems and also towards the transformation of individuals and peoples involved. The process offers tools, for seeing, assessing, reflecting, responding, acting and helping people to work together to imagine and allow possible responses to emerge from a vision of God’s world, and finally to take action to create this vision.

Our SCCs in Eastern Africa (and around the world) regularly use the Pastoral Spiral that is also called the Pastoral Circle and the Pastoral Cycle. See, Christine Bodewes, *Parish Transformation in Urban Slums: Voices of Kibera, Kenya*.

Unfortunately this particular edition has few African examples.

Chongwain, Ireneus Chia, “Editorial: Small Christian Communities, Learning from the East African Experience,” *L’Effort Camerounai*, 23 October, 2008, *L’Effort Camerounais* Website, retrieved on 22 July, 2014,
<http://www.leffortcamerounais.com/2008/10/editorialsmall.html>

Christian Life Community: Resources for Small Groups. Phase 1: “Friends in God.” Phase 2: “Finding God in All Things.” Phase 3: “Vocation Discernment.” Santa Clara, CA: Santa Clara University, Campus Ministry, 2010.

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. Addis Ababa, Privately Printed, 2002.

Le Communautés Chrétiennes Catholiques de Base: Lancement et Organisation – Diocèse D’Atakpame, Lome: Editions Saint-Augustin Afrique, 27 Juin 2009, 2015.

“Communique of the 3rd Pan-African Workshop on the Founding of a Network of Small Christian Communities in Africa held in Nairobi, Kenya, 21 to 25 October, 2016,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 28 October, 2016,
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/COMMUNIQUE.pdf>

The 16 participants made the following commitments:

- To form a Pan–African Network of Small Christian Communities
- To promote Small Christian Communities in our countries and bring more members on board
- To support a steering committee that has been selected and mandated to coordinate the networking
- To meet annually on a rotational manner in different countries of Africa
- To share the best practices through social media and internet
- To start an independent African SCCs Networking Website with its own domain name. The internet address is: www.africansccsnetworking.org. It should include the Missio SCCs Network logo. The website will have dialog/discussion pages in English, French and Portuguese. This will be a revised and updated version of the “original, temporary” African SCCs Networking Website (what we call the trial or Beta version) created in April, 2016 that has the internet address (URL):

http://www.topsoftchoice.com/secam_scc/

- To mandate the AMECEA Pastoral Department to manage this newly created website on SCCs Networking
- To encourage people from all 54 countries in Africa to send articles on SCCs

The Community Called Church. Volume 5 of an Experimental Sourcebook for Religious Education, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* No. 60, December, 1979.

Congar, Yves, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity*, Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965.

Cornwell, Megan, "What Young Catholics Want – the Answers May Surprise You," Blog on the *Tablet* Website, 09 January 2018, retrieved on 22 January, 2018, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/blogs/1/1115/what-young-catholics-want-the-answers-may-surprise-you>

Cotonou Archdiocese, "Manual to Guide Small Christian Communities in Benin's Cotonou Archdiocese," Cotonou: Privately Published, 2021. <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/3548/manual-to-guide-small-christian-communities-in-benins-cotonou-archdiocese-released>

Archbishop Roger Houngbédji said, "The Catholic Church will only be able to give its full measure of Church-Family if it branches out into communities that are small enough to allow for closer human relationships, through what we call SCCs." The manual contains presentations of life experiences with thematic explanations and biblical extracts and the writings of St. Augustine on fraternal communion.

Courage! Get on Your Feet, Continent of Africa, "Homily of his Holiness Benedict XVI at the Concluding Mass" and "Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God" of the Second African Synod, Nairobi: 2009.

Cowan, Michael and Bernard Lee, SM, *Conversation, Risk, and Conversion: The Inner & Public Life of Small Christian Communities*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

Damaseke, Francis, "AMECEA: The Church has Everything for Every One: Archbishop Tambala to Christians," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 29 August, 2023, [AMECEA: The Church has Everything for Every One: Archbishop Tambala to Christians](https://www.amecea.org/news/499/archbishop-tambala-to-christians)

Davies, Colon, "A Call to Action on Eucharistic Hunger – Now! Making the Eucharist Available to all Baptized People as the Bread of Eternal Life," Liverpool, England: Unpublished Paper, 2015.

Davies, Colon, *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop: Memoirs and Reflections of 53 Years of Missionary Life in Kenya*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2014.

Pages 111-114 highlight "Small Christian Communities." The author emphasizes Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a model of being church. "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" (page 14). He encourages membership and participation of the clergy in these small communities. He describes the Psycho-Social

Method of Paul Frere in the African context. The great value of the method was/is that it is genuinely involves “groups of people” becoming “communities” that are united in implementing projects.

Dayan, Eti, *One of Them: My Life Among the Maasai of Kenya*, ebookPro Publishing. 2020.

Available on Amazon as an Ebook and POD paperback,

https://www.amazon.com/s?k=One+of+Them%3A+My+Life+Among+the+Maasai+of+Kenya&i=stripbooks&ref=nb_sb_noss_2

Ddungu, Charles, *Towards Self-Ministering Small Christian Communities: The Case of Ndala Parish*, Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Brussels: Catholic University of Louvain, 2005.

Digal, Santosh, “My Experience with Filipino Basic Ecclesial Communities at the Synod,” *PIME AsiaNews*, retrieved on PIME AsiaNews Website on 27 August, 2023, [ECCLESIA IN ASIA Estela Padilla: 'My Experience with Filipino Basic Ecclesial Communities at the Synod' \(asianews.it\)](https://www.pime.org/asia/news/2023/08/27/my-experience-with-filipino-basic-ecclesial-communities-at-the-synod/)

Diocesan Pastoral Secretariat, *Pastoral Guidelines: Lilongwe Diocesan Mini-Synod 24 November, 1973 – 24 August, 1975*, Lilongwe: Likuni Print, 1976

Dixon, Rick, “Altars of Hope in El Salvador in Times of COVID-19,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 26 April, 2020, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/altars-of-hope-in-el-salvador-in-times-of-covid-19/>

Document Diocesain de la Pastoral des CCCB (Communautés Chrétiennes Catholique de Base), Vogan, Togo: Anêho Service Diocesain Archives et Bibliothèque, 2009.

Driciru, Mary Lilly, “UGANDA: AMECEA To Celebrate Small Christian Communities Golden Jubilee,” *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, 11 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 11 August, 2023, [UGANDA: AMECEA To Celebrate Small Christian Communities Golden Jubilee](https://www.amecea.org/uganda-amecea-to-celebrate-small-christian-communities-golden-jubilee/)

There is a need to promote campaigns for mass recruitment of members into SCCs. Home visits are also recommended for promoting children, youth and men participation in SCCs. Father Kaganda noted that they will use the mass media to promote key characteristics of SCCs and strengthen training and formation of leadership of SCCs focusing on the true spirit and characteristics of SCCs.

In this jubilee year the region desires that vivid information about a true picture of the SCCs be established: their numbers; their level of participation; the number of times they meet to share the Word of God; whether they are represented in the administrative structure in the parish/diocese. He added: “We desire to see the successes of the SCCs in the Local Church. We need to know how the church in the neighborhood has profited from SCCs. We also need to know the concrete programs carried out by the SCCs in building the church.”

Dufitimana, Damien, “Small Christian Communities and the Promoting of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Nairobi Archdiocese: An Anticipation of the General Elections of 2013 in Kenya,” *African Christian Studies* (CUEA), Vol. 29, No.1 (March, 2013): 52-67.

Dulles, Avery. *Models of Church*, New York: Image Books, 1974.

A classic book that describes five models of the Catholic Church:

1. Institution.
2. Mystical Communion.
3. Sacrament.
4. Herald.
5. Servant.

Later Dulles added a sixth model -- Community of Disciples – that is an amalgamation of the five models. We need an African Avery Dulles, that is, an African theologian of the new generation, to develop concrete examples of African Models of Church such as “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today.”

Duwe, Johannes ed., *Network Small Christian Communities Africa: Small Christian Communities as Missionary Agents*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, September, 2019.

East African Participants (Joseph Healey, Rita Ishengoma, Rose Musimba, Christopher Mwoleka and Alphonse Omolo) in the 1991 First International Consultation on Small Christian Communities on “Small Christian Communities: Rediscovering Community: International Perspectives”, eds. “Outline of Presentation of the African Continental Team,” Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, 8-12 December 1991. 1 page.

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Edele, Andrew, “Community Building in Lusaka,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)* 19:2 (March, 1977): 90.

Edele, Andrew, “Establishing Basic Christian Communities in Lusaka, Zambia,” *Pro Mundi Vita Bulletin* 81 (1980), 22.

Edwin, Victor (ed.), *Brother to All: The Life and Witness of St. Charles de*

Foucauld, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2022.

Charles de Foucauld (died 1916), a modern desert hermit, whose life and witness inspired the foundation of the Little Brothers of Jesus and other communities, was canonized on 15 May, 2022. In *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis ends by invoking the memory of this “brother to all” who demonstrated a new model of mission and evangelization based on friendship, solidarity, and witness among the poor. This volume includes original essays by leading theologians and spiritual writers about the significance of his witness. Paperback version and Ebook version available on the Amazon Website starting 8 September, 2022.

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0B4BCVJSX/ref=docs-os-doi_0

Includes the memoir "My 54 Years (1967 – 2021) Journey with Charles de Foucauld" by Joseph Healey.

'Enlarge the Space of Your Tent:’ Document for the Continental Stage (DCS), Synod 2021-2024: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission,” General Secretariat of the Synod, retrieved from the Synod Website, 29 October, 2022, [Documento-Tappa-Continental-EN.pdf \(synod.va\)](https://www.synod.va/Documento-Tappa-Continental-EN.pdf)

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L’ Experience des Communautés Chrétiennes de Base (CCB) dans L’Eglise Famille de Dieu au Burkina Faso (English: *The Experience of Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) in the Church Family of God in Burkina Faso*), Ouagadougou: National Council of the Laity of Burkina Faso, Privately Printed, 2015.

Final Document of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization” including the *Report of the Synod and the Message*, Vatican Website, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/index.htm

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Francis, *The Courage To be Happy: The Pope Speaks to the Youth of the World*, Edited by Robert Ellsberg, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. Available on Amazon as an Ebook and paperback, retrieved on 20 April, 2018, https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_2?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=The+Courage+to+Be+Happy

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To download it as .pdf, go to

http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf

Swahili Edition: *Furaha ya Injili*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2014.

Francis, *Walking Together: The Way of Synodality*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2023.

A compendium of Pope Francis's reflections and talks on Synodality. Preface by Cardinal Mario Grech. Introduction by Sister Nathalie Becquart, XMCJ.

Fraze, Barb, "Is the Priest Listening To You? Indian Diocese Surveys Families for Synod," Central Minnesota Catholic – Magazine of the Diocese of St. Cloud , [OSV News Focus on Faith, Synod 2021–2024](https://www.osvnews.com/story/news/faith/2023/03/17/is-the-priest-listening-to-you-indian-diocese-surveys-families-for-synod), 17 [March 2023](https://www.osvnews.com/story/news/faith/2023/03/17/is-the-priest-listening-to-you-indian-diocese-surveys-families-for-synod), Central Minnesota Catholic Website. <https://thecentralminnesotacatholic.org/is-the-priest-listening-to-you-indian-diocese-surveys-families-for-synod>

ALAPPUZHA, India. An Indian diocese used its existing Small Christian Communities to train lay leaders to reach out to a wide variety of Catholics — including broken families — ensuring that everyone had a voice in the listening process for the upcoming Synod of Bishops on synodality. Some participants said they already have seen changes. Almost 70% of parishes completed the initial reflection within three days, said Msgr. Joy Puthenveetil, vicar general of the Diocese of Alleppey. “We have tried to let every family have the experience of the synod,” he told OSV News in early March. “The process of listening is what is important for the synodal church.” The Diocese of Alleppey has about 1,200 Small Christian Communities, and leaders of those communities trained about 70 members of the Diocesan Synod Team.

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Our Sunday Visitor

[Small Christian Communities seen as model for whole church \(oursundayvisitor.com\)](http://oursundayvisitor.com)

The Byzantine Catholic (Pittsburgh Archeparchy)

[Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church | Archeparchy of Pittsburgh \(archpitt.org\)](http://archpitt.org)

Carmelite Quotes Twitter Message

<https://twitter.com/carmelitequotes/status/1718433887976652926>

Catholic CR

[Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church - Catholic CR](http://catholiccr.com)

Catholic Review (Baltimore Archdiocese)

[Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church - Catholic Review](http://catholicreview.com)

The Florida Catholic (Florida dioceses)

[Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church | World | thefloridacatholic.org](http://thefloridacatholic.org)

Barb Fraze Linkin Post

The Monitor (Trenton Diocese)

[Trenton Monitor](http://trentonmonitor.com)

New Outlook (Tucson Diocese)

[Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church :: Home | New Outlook \(diocesetucson.org\)](http://diocesetucson.org)

Northwest Catholic (Seattle Archdiocese)

[Small Christian communities 'bring us together, help us grow spiritually,' member says - Northwest Catholic: Read Catholic News & Stories \(nwcatholic.org\)](#)

Orbis Books Facebook Page

The Record (Louisville Archdiocese)

[Small Christian Communities, prominent in Asia, Latin America, seen as model for whole church - The Record Newspaper](#)

Thomas Reese Twitter Message

<https://twitter.com/ThomasReeseSJ/status/1717467973823201391>

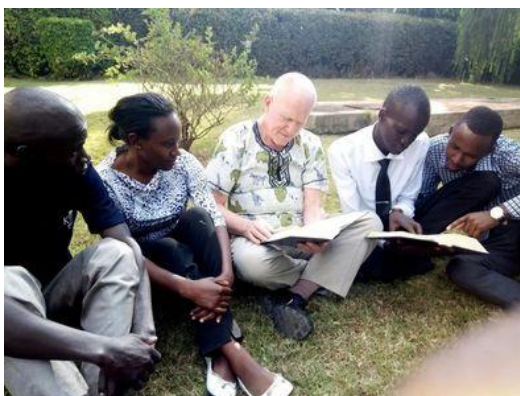
St. Patrick Roman Catholic Parish Website (Brizbee, Arizona)

<https://www.stpatsbisbee.com/catholicnews>

Spanish Version

[Comunidades Eclesiales de Base, prominentes en Asia, Latinoamérica, modelo para toda Iglesia :: Home | New Outlook \(diocesetucson.org\)](#)

"Throughout the various stages of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, several church leaders have referred to a new model of church that includes Basic Ecclesial Communities. But what exactly are those? The communities — often referred to as CEBs for their Spanish acronym (Comunidades Eclesiales de Base, also referred to as BECs) or as BCCs for Basic Christian Communities — are prominent in Asia, Latin America [and Africa]. The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa [AMECEA] refers to them as Small Christian Communities and has made them part of the ecclesial structure of the [Catholic] Church. Some such communities also exist within at least four archdioceses in the United States, primarily within ministry to the Hispanic communities in Baltimore, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles..."



Fraze, Barb, "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-theresmall-christian-communities-onlinein-africa> on 3 March, 2013.

Galvan, Maria Elena and Filipe Miguel Olivera Resende, *An African Journey through Mark's*

Gospel: A Tool for Small Christian Communities, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006. Also published in the Pökot, Kenya language.

A practical and dynamic method to animate Small Christian Communities. Helps SCC members to reflect on the situations of their everyday lives. 103 lessons based on a continuous reading of St. *Mark's* Gospel that contain: Story from the everyday life of the Pökot people in Kenya. Questions for discussion. Word of God (two or three verses from *Mark*) followed by focused questions. Main themes are: Prayer and Sacrifice, Community, Work and Service, Family Life, Christian Traditions and African Culture, Following Jesus and God's Care and Concern.

Ganda, Emma James Juma, Maureen Kemunto, Cosmas Kinda, Martin Obwar, Joseph Odhiambo, Alphonse Omolo, Rose Owuondo, *The Fish Handbook: A Handbook for Bible Sharing Weekly Meetings*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2020.

Ghislain, Mbilizi, *The Ministry of Godparents and Sponsors: Guidelines for Priests, Catechists and Pastoral Workers*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2018.
Many references to Small Christian Communities:

1.Role of the sponsoring community. "It is rather common that at an infant baptism and mass only the parents and godparents and some few friends are present. And yet most of these infants have been recommended by the Small Christian Communities. The failure of the small community to join in these ceremonies is an indication of the lack of awareness of the role of the sponsoring community on such as occasion. It would be encouraging to see the Small Christian Communities members participating in these masses, expressing their joy as a sign of their concern and their pledge to the faith development of these infants."

2.How supported the Adult Catechumens would feel if their Small Christian Communities members would attend the mass in which they receive the sacraments [often during the Holy Saturday Vigil Mass]. Another important practice that has been overlooked is that of fasting. How many small community members fast for their catechumens as they are intensively preparing for the sacraments?

Gichuhu, George, *The Spirituality of SCCs in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* No. 185, 1985.

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The book's main critique is based on Leonardo Boff's argument that the Holy Trinity should inspire and criticize human society. This research is a critique of this argument that is at the center of Boff's Social Trinitarian Model. Can Boff's argument be considered as a mere hypothesis or rather a fundamental axiom, i.e. a verified and accepted argument? The original contribution of this work is not only in the critique of the Social Trinitarian Model (STM) of Leonardo Boff using the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a case study, but also in the proposition of the Social Trinitarian Model (STM) for Tanzanian society. This Social Trinitarian Model is based on SCCs in relationship to an inclusive Tanzanian spirit of

unity and hope. It also includes the human values of ‘syn-bios,’ ‘syn-pathos’ and ‘syn-hodos.’ These human values are related to the Trinitarian life, *koinōnia* and *perichōrēsis*. In fact, in the Social Trinitarian Model, SCCs are like a ‘foretaste’ (*prolepsis*) of the Kingdom of God. Though this Social Trinitarian Model is based on the SCCs of Tabora in Tanzania, it is not exclusively for Tanzanian society. It can inspire other African societies and other parts of the world.

Gray, Mark, Michal Kramarek and Thomas Gaunt, “Faith and Spiritual Life in the United States,” Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., November, 2021.
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Guidelines on Small Christian Communities, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2015.
 For the Nairobi Metropolitan (dioceses in the Ecclesiastical Province of Nairobi): Kericho, Kitui, Machakos, Military Ordinariate, Nairobi, Nakuru, and Ngong.
 Foreword by Cardinal John Njue. Sections on:

1. “Introduction.”
2. “Historical Background.”
3. “The Current Situation of SCCs.”
4. “SCCs Guidelines.”
5. “Recommendations.”

The Swahili version is *Mwongozo Kuhusu Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2017.

Hawassa Catholic Secretariat: Five Year (2013-2018) Strategic Plan. Hawassa, Ethiopia: Hawassa Catholic Secretariat, 2013.

Hayes, Diana, *Were You There?: Stations of the Cross*, Paintings by Charles Ndege, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.

Insightful Lenten meditations by a woman theologian with African paintings from a church in Mwanza, Tanzania.

Healey, Joseph, “African Conversational Theology: A New Way Of Doing Theology,” Talk on *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III* during the “Africa Book Matters” Discussion at the Center for African Studies, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 27 September, 2016, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, Vol. 29 (2017), pp. 181-186. Gumbold Library Website, retrieved on 22 May, 2017, <http://guides.library.duq.edu/c.php?g=590460&p=4082522> Also available thru the Duquesne University Scholarship Collection platform: <https://dsc.duq.edu/beth/>.

Healey, Joseph, “African Conversational Theology: A New Way of Doing Theology,” Talk at the “Africa Matters” Book Discussion on two books: *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III* and *HIV & AIDS in Africa: Christian Reflection, Public Health, Social Transformation*, Boston College, Boston, Massachusetts, 20 September, 2016, Boston: Privately Printed, 2016, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 22 September, 2016, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/north-america/united-states-of-america/377--african-conversational-theology-a-new-way-of-doing-theology.html>

Healey, Joseph, *African Stories for Preachers and Teachers*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2005 (3rd Reprint, 2010, 4th Reprint, 2014, 5th Reprint 2017) . Swahili Edition: *Hadithi za Kiafrika kwa Wahubiri na Walimu*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2006.

Healey, Joseph, “African Theologians Are Now Writing Their Own Histories -- Why the *Handbook of African Catholicism* is Important,” Talk at the Book Presentation of the *Handbook of African Catholicism*. 19 July, 2022, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 8 August, 2022, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/african-theologians-are-now-writing-their-own-histories-and-theologies-why-the-handbook-of-african-catholicism-is-important/>

Healey, Joseph, “After College What? Developing Alumni Zoom Small Faith Communities,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 1 October, 2021, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/after-college-what-developing-alumni-zoom-small-faith-communities>

1. Four Case Studies.
2. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website Poll.
3. Three other important resources on University/College Small Faith Communities.

Healey, Joseph, “AMECEA: Timeline of Marehemu Archbishop Odongo’s Involvement in AMECEA’s Key Pastoral Priority of Small Christian Communities,” *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 358, 10 December, 2020, AMECEA Website, [AMECEA: Timeline of Marehemu Archbishop Odongo’s Involvement in AMECEA’s Key Pastoral Priority of Small Christian Communities](#)

Healey, Joseph, (Interview), “Archbishop Calls for Serious Bible Sharing,” *CISA News Africa*, 026, 17 May, 2011, 3-5.

Healey, Joseph G., “Basic Christian Communities in Africa and in Latin America,” *African Ecclesial Review* (AFER), Vol. 26. No 4 (August, 1984), ATLA Religion Database Website, retrieved on 10 June, 2015, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=fbebc85e-4ba4-4c20-a8f7-917a6375a662%40sessionmgr113&hid=107> **CHECK**

Healey, Joseph, “Basic Christian Communities: Church-Centered or World-Centered?” *Missionalia*, 14: 1 (April, 1986).

Case studies of a BCC in Chile and SCCs in Kenya and Tanzania. In comparing the Latin America and Eastern African experiences some clear differences emerge, but they can learn a great deal from each other and mutually enrich the World Church.

Healey, Joseph, *Best One Liners and Other Anecdotes/Stories of (or About) Uncle Joe’s Nieces and Nephews/Grandnieces and Grandnephews (up to October, 2000)*, New Vernon, NJ: Privately Printed, 2000.

These are quotations/comments/sayings/anecdotes/stories of and about my nieces and nephews (and to show my age, my grandnieces and grandnephews) over the years. They are both humorous and thought-provoking, examples of wit and wisdom, and at times, remarkable depth and insight especially from the young. They are cited according to:

- a. Age of my niece or nephew/grandniece or grandnephew when the quote or anecdote occurred.
- b. Context or situation.
- c. Actual quotation and/or anecdote/story.

One example: “22-year-old Megan Healey and I were having a discussion about our favorite things in life. Finally I decided how I could put my three favorite things together: ‘All my nieces and nephews and I would form a Small Christian Community that goes to Notre Dame to watch a football game together.’”

Healey, Joseph, “Beyond Vatican II: Imagining the Catholic Church of Nairobi I,” Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2015. Chapter in Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2016. Selection of essays from three Theological Colloquia on Church, Religion and Society in Africa (TCCRSA) in Nairobi, Kenya in 2013-2015.

Available in different online versions:

1. Under the “African Continent” under “Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 6 November, 2021, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/TCCRSA.pdf>
2. Orbis Books Version on the Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 5 September 2020, https://www.academia.edu/12816789/Beyond_Vatican_II_Imagining_the_Catholic_Church_of_Nairobi_I
3. Mikado Website, retrieved on 5 September, 2020, <http://www.mikado-ac.info/home-uk.html>
4. Kindle Library, retrieved 5 September, 2020, <https://read.amazon.com/?asin=B01J8VSMU6>
5. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 5 September, 2020, https://.academia.edu/28043817/Beyond_Vatican_II_Imagining_the_Catholic_Church_of_Nairobi_I

This essay treats:

1. “Be Bold and Creative.”
2. "Rethinking the Structures and Styles of Governing and Decision-making."
3. "From the Perspective of SCCs in Eastern Africa."
4. “Pastoral Solutions to the Two Meanings of the Eucharistic Famine in Africa.”
5. "Integrating African Process and African Content."
6. "Relevance for the Catholic Church in North America and Europe."
7. “Let Us Journey Ahead Together.”

Healey, Joseph, *Bishop Patrick Kalilombe and the Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi Mini Synod in 1973-75: One of the Foundations of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Pastoral Priority Leading Up to the Two “Synod on Synodality” Sessions in 2023 and 2024*, Talk at the Workshop on “Celebrating the Golden Jubilee Year of Small Christian Communities (SCCs): 50 Years (1973 to 2023) from July, 2023 to July, 2024,” Lilongwe, Malawi, 21 August, 2023, Small Christian Communities

Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 1 September, 2023, [Bishop-Patrick-Kalilombe-and-the-Lilongwe-Diocese-1.pdf](https://smallchristiancommunities.org/Bishop-Patrick-Kalilombe-and-the-Lilongwe-Diocese-1.pdf) (smallchristiancommunities.org)

Available also through:

AMECEA Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/Amecea>

Small Christian Communities Facebook Page
<https://smallchristiancommunities.org>

This article as an interesting Case Study on the ongoing Synodal Process in Africa and throughout the world. The article documents the important role of SCCs in three Mini-Synods in Lilongwe Archdiocese, Malawi:

1. 1973—1975.
2. 2004 -- 2006.
3. 2021—2023.

It included feedback from the participants and additional theological reflection and documentation. There are 46 footnotes and 18 Hyperlinks.

Healey, Joseph, “Brainstorming Draft No. 7 for the “Encounter of College Students Involved in Small Christian Communities,” Venue to be determined in 2017. New Vernon, NJ: Privately Printed, 2016.

Healey, Joseph, “Break-out Sessions: Questions on Mission,” *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*, 2016/2, pp. 55-59, Tangaza University College Website, retrieved on 25 January, 2019,
https://www.tangaza.ac.ke/theology/img/journals/Tangaza_Journal_2016_2.pdf

Healey, Joseph, “Brief Timeline of the Long History Between LIM and AMECEA,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 15 May, 2023, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/brief-timeline-of-the-long-history-between-lim-and-amecea>

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 revised and updated from the 2012 print version, is available as a free, online Ebook containing 1,462 pages as of 17 September 2023 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website: https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Build_new.pdf

The Second Revised Edition (Ebook and Paperback) – 16 May, 2018.

The Third Revised Edition:

a. Amazon as an Ebook (Kindle Edition and other digital formats) -- 1166 pages, 1488 footnotes, 11 August, 2020: \$6.99. <https://www.amazon.com/Joseph-G.-Healey/e/B001JO5VR8>

(go to: Academic Resources>E-Resources Off-Campus Access>Log-in>E-Books>Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa Off Campus Access, retrieved on 15 August, 2022, [Building-the-Church-as-Family-of-God-15-August-2022.pdf \(remotexs.co\)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331111111/figure/fig/1/figure-pdf?utm_source=figure&utm_medium=figure&utm_campaign=figure&utm_content=figure&utm_term=figure)

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

ResearchGate, retrieved on 3 March, 2015, https://www.researchgate.net/pr/Joseph_Healey2/contributions

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

Today there are over 190,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church in the nine AMECEA countries in Eastern Africa. This book treats the following 19 headings:

- “SCCs in the Historical Perspective of 59 Years (1961 to 2020) 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.”
- “Online Small Christian Communities.”
- “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.”
- “Tracking the Growth of Young People SCCs.”
- “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.”
- “The Role of SCCs in the Synodal Church in Africa”
- “Future Challenges, Priorities and Actions for SCCs in the AMECEA Region.”
- “General Conclusions: The Way Forward.”

Healey, Joseph, “Celebrating 180,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa: Speech at the Annual International Writers’ Conference,” Speech at the Annual International Writers’ Conference, Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) AMECEA Gaba Campus, Eldoret, Kenya, 20 September, 2016, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 22 September, 2016, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/376-celebrating-180000-small-christian-communities-sccs-in-eastern-africa-speech-at-the-annual-international-writers-conference.html>

Healey, Joseph, "Cell Churches in Africa," *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*, 2018.

Healey, Joseph, "Collection of, and Commentary on, 436 Sayings on East African Cloth (Misemo Kwenye Khanga na Vitenge vya Afrika Mashariki)" Nairobi: African Proverbs Working Group, 2005, Ebook, African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved 5 November, 2017, <http://www.afriprov.org/images/afriprov/books/easayingsoncloth.pdf>. Computer Version updated to 600 sayings, 16 April, 2018.

A number of these sayings are related to SCCs, community values and life and relationships. Example:

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

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

"AMECEA Celebrations. 40th Welcome to Tanzania. 40th

Healey, Joseph, "Comparing 'Basic' and 'Small' Christian Communities." *AMECEA Documentation Service (ADS)* 48/284 (8 May, 1984).

Healey, Joseph "Creative Ways of Promoting 'Africa Matters' -- Part II, 2017 Report of the Africa Region to the Orbis Books Advisory Committee Meeting," Maryknoll, NY: privately photocopied, 2017.

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, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/jan2014syllabus.pdf>

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 entries with many new Names, Titles, Terms, Expressions, Descriptions and Meanings added. This expresses the rich diversity of this new way of being/becoming church.

Healey, Joseph, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Back Christian Values*,¹⁵⁰⁶ Maryknoll: 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 published by Benedictine Publications Ndanda-Peramiho, Peramiho is *Kuishi Injili (Living the Gospel)* and the German version published by Missio, Aachen 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>

¹⁵⁰⁶ After publishing this book, I got a complimentary letter from an expatriate missionary priest in Tanzania belonging to the Missionaries of Africa Society. He said that I described the same missionary and pastoral experiences that he has had, but he did not think they were important until he read about them in my book.

I have close ties to my high school – Portsmouth Abbey School in Portsmouth, Rhode Island USA. Following the Benedictine tradition of reading in the rectory during meals they read my book in 1982.

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, 2016. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 8 May, 2016, http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/final_syllabus_tangaza_2016.pdf

This syllabus has been revised and updated over the past 12 years (2008 to 2019) 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 now not taught as separate weeks, but are integrated in the content throughout the course and included in the exam questions.

Other changes and updates: More and more of the course is taught online in a participatory, interactive way using the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and Facebook Page and other online materials. Deacons and other pastoral ministers report on their homilies and talks from week to week. The themes of the questions on the Final Exam are listed on the SCCs Website, but change from year to year. The “Opening Solidarity Prayer” is changed from week to week based on the local African context. Five different METHODS of *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflection Bible—Life Connections* are explained and practiced in the class in our individual SCCs.

There are now three sections each with its own lecturer. The three lecturers develop together a common syllabus, a common teaching plan, a common exam and a common marking system. The first two periods (mainly lectures and presentations) are all together, the last period is in the separate sections.

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 lecturers and presenters sit in on each other’s classes and lectures) rather than just “shared teaching” (various lecturers teach one or more classes on a rotation basis).

Healey, Joseph, Final Annotated Syllabus of Two Credit Core Course “Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today (PET190),” Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College, Nairobi, Kenya, Nairobi: Privately Printed, 2016. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 8 May, 2016, http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/final_syllabus_salesians_2016.pdf

Students took hold of the importance of starting and promoting specific YSCCs and the pastoral value of SCCs using the social media. In the evaluation they said it was the most practical and pastoral course in the semester. One concrete recommendation: Post the “Provisional Syllabus” of our SCCs Course online under “Kenya” on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website at the beginning of the course and the “Final Annotated Syllabus” at the end of the course.

Healey, Joseph, *Following the Road Less Traveled: Reflections on a 25 Year Journey of Maryknoll Missionary Priesthood*, Maryknoll Language School, Musoma: Privately Published Booklet, 1991.

Healey, Joseph, “Four African Evaluate SCCs in East Africa,” *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)* 29:5 (October, 1987): 266-277.

Healey, Joseph, “Go Digital or Die: Online Church,” *New People*, 186 (May – June, 2020): 27-30. Reprinted on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 10 June, 2020, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/digital-or-die-the-importance-and-use-of-the-internet-and-social-media-in-proclaiming-the-good-news-today>

Reprinted as: “Go Digital or Die: The Importance and Use of the Internet and Social Media in Proclaiming the Good News Today,” *Maryknoll News*, July-August, 2020, Maryknoll Intranet Website, retrieved on 2 September, 2020, <https://www.maryknoll.net/html/pubs/Current/MKLNews/default.pdf>

Healey, Joseph, “Gospel Reflection for the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A (15 October, 2023).” Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) Website, 15 October, 2023, retrieved on 16 October 2023.

The reflection went live on the MOGC Website on Monday, 9 October, 2023. It was sent by email to the MOGC contacts, and the *Maryknoll* Magazine will publish it on their website and social media

Are you following the Synod on Synodality that is taking place in Rome right now from 4 to 29 October, 2023? Some people say that it could be the most important event in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

Healey, Joseph, “Harvesting Some AMECEA Memories and Discerning What the Holy Spirit is Saying to AMECEA Today and in the Future.” Farewell Homily at the AMECEA Residence/Office, Nairobi, Kenya. 10 December, 2022.

Healey, Joseph, “Harvesting Some Maryknoll Memories in the Africa Region and Discerning What the Holy Spirit is Saying to Maryknoll Today and in the Future.” Reflection for Tanzania District Meeting, Mwanza, Tanzania. 23 November, 2022.

Healey, Joseph, "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

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/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
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 (and all of English-speaking 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," "Dialog", "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 190,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Catholic Church in the nine AMECEA countries. Tanzania has over 60,000 SCCs and Kenya has over 50,000 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.”¹⁵⁰⁷ 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 4 November, 2017, <http://www.tangaza.ac.ke/theology/img/journals/Tangaza%20Journal%202013-2.pdf> Tangaza University College Digital Repository, retrieved on 4 November, 2017, http://41.89.26.9:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/209/How_African_Small_Christian_Communities_Are_Implementing_the_Vision_of_Vatican_II_Two.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹⁵⁰⁷ See the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and “Facebook Page” 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
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.

Spanish translation is “Como Las Pequeñas Comunidades Cristianas Africanas, Implementan La Pastoral y Visión Misionera Del Vaticano II,” by Alejandro Marina Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 15 March, 2020, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/las.pdf>

Healey, Joseph, “How Doors Open,” *Maryknoll in Touch*, November, 2020.



FINAL English _
November 20 MIT.pc

The leaflet describes the door that opened when Online Small Christian Communities (SCCs) started in Kenya in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. It states: “When you celebrate Thanksgiving this year, please know how grateful we are for your love of Maryknoll. The global pandemic has been a challenge we never anticipated. So one door to mission was closed. But thanks to you, our [Online] Small Christian Communities have opened another. We are strong in our faith and committed to witnessing Christ in all we do.”

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.

Available in different online versions:

1. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 19 July, 2014,
http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/fall_article.pdf
2. ResearchGate Website, retrieved on 26 February, 2015,
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, Discern 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 To Reach Catholic Young Adults Today: A Variety of Voices and Quotations," Online Panel Discussion on "Small Christian Communities on Campus and Beyond" sponsored by *Today's American Catholic* (TAC), 21 March, 2023, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 20 May, 2023 and Today's American Catholic Website retrieved on 20 May, 2023

Includes:

- 7 Examples of Catholic Young Adults.
- 8 Research Studies.
- 8 Individual Voices/Quotations.
- 6 Takeaways.

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

Available in different online versions:

1. "Our Course Was Different," Tangaza University College Website, retrieved on 2 April, 2016, <http://tangaza.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Tangazaupdate4-16.pdf?d7c74e>

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 Ecclesiologies Especially from Eastern Africa*, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 2 April, 2016,
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 10 July, 2020
<http://journals.hekima.ac.ke/index.php/ojs/issue/view/44/showToc>

Available in different online versions:

1. Under the "African Continent" under "Africa" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 10 July, 2020,
<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/May2009HekimaReviewArticlewithFootnotesonInnovationsandNewTrendsInSmallChristianCommunitiesInAfricaToday.pdf>
2. Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns (MOGC) Website, retrieved on 10 July, 2020
<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
4. Semantic Scholar Website, retrieved on 12 July, 2020.
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Innovations-and-New-Trends-in-Small-Christian-in-Healey/80a3cb89207185ddc37aeceb5e3ee8429f549fda>

Today there are over 90,000 Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the nine 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.canafrica.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

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, Chile and Beyond,” *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XI, No. I, (January, 1983),

Available in different online versions:

1. Sage Journals Website, retrieved on 19 June, 2015, <http://mis.sagepub.com/content/11/1/15.short>
2. Google Scholar Website, retrieved on 19 June, 2015,
3. ResearchGate Website, retrieved on 19 June, 2015, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270604379_Let_the_Basic_Christian_Communities_Speak_Some_Pastoral_Theological_Reflections_on_Portezuelo_and_beyond
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) **CHECK**

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, "Levers of Integral Human Development: SCCs as Promoters of Social Justice," *New People*, 184 (2020), 18-20.

Healey, Joseph, "List of My Registered User ID Names, Passwords, Codes, Social Media Platforms and Internet Websites Plus Other Contact Information (as of 7 November, 2021), 22 pages," New Vernon, New Jersey: Privately Photocopied. 2021.

Included key data on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website and other SCCs Documentation.

Healey, Joseph, "Martha's Very Special 'Confession.'" Full version found on the African Stories Database, retrieved on 18 March, 2021, <https://afriprov.org/afri-story/marthas-very-special-confession/> Edited version in the Spring, 2021 *Maryknoll Magazine* under "Missioner Tales." Page 8 in the print version. Page 8 in the Digital Version, retrieved on 18 March, 2021, <MKMG-Spring-2021.pdf> (maryknollmagazine.org) Edited Spanish version in the Primavera, 2021 *Misioneros Magazine* under "Relatos Misioneros." Page 16 in the print version. Page 16 in the Digital Version, retrieved on 23 March, 2021, <https://misionerosmaryknoll.org/2021/03/relatos-misioneros-primavera-2021/>

Used when as a Chaplain to the Maryknoll Young Adult Empowerment Community Bay Area, I shared a story of a time when I was called to listen with my heart to a Tanzanian lay woman who was mute.

Healey, Joseph "My 54 Years (1967 – 2021) Journey with Charles de Foucauld" in Victor Edwin, (ed.), *Brother to All: The Life and Witness of St. Charles de Foucauld*, 11 *Essays on Different Themes Around Charles de Foucauld*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2022.

Healey, Joseph, "My Personal 50 Year Journey (1970 to 2020) with Orbis Books in Africa" in *Hekima Review: Journal of Theology, Governance and Peace Studies*, Vol. 61 (May, 2020). Theme: "The Evolution of African Christian Theology." Full issue: 189 pages pdf. My article: 18 pages pdf. [Hekima review front cover NO.61 blue.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Under the "African Continent" under "Africa" on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 22 May, 2023, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Joe-Healey-My-Personal-50-Year-Journey-1970-to-2020-with-Orbis-Books-Final-Text.pdf>

This reflection treats the author's personal missionary journey in Africa in the context of the 50 Year anniversary (1970 to 2020) of Orbis Books, the Catholic religious publishing house of the Maryknoll Missionary Society. Topics include: the author's four Orbis books; African and Africanists Authors of Orbis Books; other key Orbis Books; the author's participation in the Orbis Books Advisory Committee; the author's friendships with African Orbis Authors; African Conversation Theology: a Distinct Theological Method; and going digital in religious publishing. The reflection concludes with possible themes for Orbis Books on African Christian Theology in the next 50 years (2020 to 2070).

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

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*,¹⁵⁰⁸ Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004. Available as a paperback on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Google and Orbis. Available as an Ebook on Amazon (for Kindle), Google and Nook. Also available in different editions in French, Polish, Spanish and Swahili. This title has many variations such as *Once Upon a Time in a Land Far Away...NOTE:* In the Orbis Books Office we spent several days deciding on the exact wording of the sub-title. We wanted to capture the deeper meaning and spirit of African storytelling. So after discussing and comparing many words we settled on "wisdom" to express how the elders pass on cultural values from generation to generation and "joy" to express the cheerful and happy African character and personality.

¹⁵⁰⁸ The cover art of the Orbis Books Edition is a red Tanzanian fabric of African animals, birds, trees and symbols designed by Roberta Savage. The cover art of the Spring/Summer 2004 *Catalog of Orbis Books* is a similar green Tanzanian fabric. The testimonials/blurbs on the back cover are by: Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Diana Hayes and Beverly Carroll.

<https://www.orbisbooks.com/once-upon-a-time-in-africa.html>

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00CMC69BS/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1&fbclid=IwAR1vMRbogJefB_B9hxafV-mVyi47pQSbcjiAEM_MIG0yyvIhhAdEsUQtSic
https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=eoDAwAAQBAJ&hl=en_US&pg=GBS.P1

https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/once-upon-a-time-in-africa-stories-of-wisdom-and-joy/1111263/item/10943177/?mkwid=%7cdc&pcriid=448918240737&pkw=&pmt=&slid=&plc=&pgrid=104755242616&ptaid=pla-927269736418&gclid=Cj0KCQiAhP2BBhDdARIsAJEzXIEIduwoi-CS8Ummh2IDIGlzlyT07svaYc9r_spb7doYEaqhiuiWeFEaAhHpEALw_wcB#idiq=10943177&edition=3776581

[Once upon a Time in Africa: Stories of Wisdom and Joy by Joseph G Healey, Paperback | Barnes & Noble® \(barnesandnoble.com\)](#)

Healey, Joseph, “Origin and History of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website (2004 to 2021),” New Vernon: Privately Photocopied, 2015, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 13 March, 2021, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Origin-and-History-of-the-Small-Christian-Communities-Global-Collaborative-Website.pdf> and AMECEA Website, retrieved on 13 March, 2021, [Origin-and-History-of-the-Small-Christian-Communities-Global-Collaborative-Website.pdf \(amecea.org\)](#)

Healey, Joseph, “Our Stories as Fifth Gospels”, *Mission Studies*, 4, 2 (1987), *Missiology*, 16, 3 (July, 1988), *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, 30:3 (June, 1988). Sage Publications Website, retrieved on 22 June, 2022, [Our Stories as Fifth Gospels \(sagepub.com\)](#)

The author proposes that the term “a Fifth Gospel” is a valid metaphor in theology today. “Gospel” and “good news” can be applied to the way that God is revealing God through our human experience and daily lives. In light of the insights of the Story Theology/Theology of Story/Narrative Theology, our stories of faith are examples of Fifth Gospels. This article examines the history and deeper meaning of the metaphor of “a Fifth Gospel,” looks at these metaphors from the perspectives of the theology of revelation and Christology and narrates three concrete stories (examples) of Africa's Fifth Gospel. The article comments on the original reception given to Joseph Healey, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Back Christian Values*, Maryknoll: 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 published by Benedictine Publications Ndanda-Peramiho, Peramiho is *Kuishi Injili (Living the Gospel)* and the German version published by Missio, Aachen is *Auf Der Suche Nach Dem Ganzen Leben: Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften in Tansania*.

NOTE: Because of the many changes in word processing I have not saved in new formats like Microsoft Word .docx articles that I wrote 30 to 40 years ago. However they are now saved on the Cloud. This is a great advance in digital technology. I can access the full text of this article by using my *Missiology* account (subscription) to read back copies.

Healey, Joseph, "Pastoral Responses to the Worldwide Eucharistic Famine," FutureChurch Presentation, FutureChurch Website, 21 March, 2018.

Has an interesting section on "Evolving the Small Christian Community Model of Church in North America and Europe" that includes:

1. SCCs developed in Eastern Africa following our **local context**: small neighborhood, parish-based communities. SCCs are a pastoral model of church that transforms the parish into a communion of communities and an instrument of evangelization. SCCs combine *Bible Sharing/Bible Reflections* and practical action/outreach. SCC members are called to be missionary disciples. Much of the life of the SCCs and many of their activities take place in the local neighborhood (geographical area) where the SCC members live.

This is very different from the local context in North America and Europe. When I am asked to explain the difference between Africa and the West in one sentence, I say that in Eastern Africa "SCCs are not just a program or project in the parish, but a way of life." So, you have to be bold, creative and imaginative in your **local context**.

2. A final suggestion for North America and Europe: I am reminded of the 16-29 years age range being used for the Synod of Bishops and specifically for the Pre-Synod Meeting going on in Rome right now on the theme "Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment." I feel that there are many young people who are searching for meaning in their lives. They may not be interested in the Institutional Church, but they hunger for a "safe place"/"real space" for discussion/sharing/reflection. They want to meet in small communities by themselves without their parents, teachers and church leaders present. Here they can share their own journey, their own faith and reflect on their own concerns, doubts, hopes and dreams.

Available in different online versions:

FutureChurch Website, retrieved 23 March, 2018,
<https://www.futurechurch.org/sites/default/files/FutureChurch%20Teleconference%20on%20Eucharistic%20Famine%20on%2021%20March%2C%202018.pdf>

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 23 March, 2018,
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/futurechurchtelcon.pdf>

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>

Posted online in different versions:

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

2. Don Bosco Onyalla and Joseph Healey, “SECAM Workshop in Burkina Faso Emphasizes Networking among Small Christian Communities in Africa,” 13 August 2015. *CANAA 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

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 in 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.

Available in different online versions:

1. ResearchGate Website, retrieved on 8 June, 2015, [Promoting SCCs via the Internet.pdf](#)
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

Available in different online versions:

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
3. Google Scholar, retrieved on 26 August, 2015,
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), "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.

This chapter is available in different online versions:

1. Under the “African Continent” under “Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 7 January, 2016, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/278-promoting-small-christian-communities-in-eastern-africa-in-the-light-of-the-joy-of-the-gospel.html>
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
3. Google Scholar, retrieved on 7 January, 2016, 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 190,000 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, Provisional 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

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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

Healey, Joseph (Recueillis), *La Sagesse Africaine: Histoires Vraies, Mythes et Contes*, Kinshasa: Editions Paulines, 2012.

Healey, Joseph, "Saying 'Goodbye...Until We Meet Again.'" Farewell Homily at Maryknoll Society House, Nairobi, Kenya. 11 December, 2022.

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 in the Acts of the Apostles*. Webinar on Zoom for the CCRI Strategy Team. A five-session interactive study, discussion and reflection experience using the See, Judge and Act process or methodology. 15 July, 2020 to 12 August, 2020.

Session 1: Our personal (individual) and communal experiences of *Acts of the Apostles*.

Session 2: Foundational texts of the first SCCs: *Acts of the Apostles* 2: 42-47, 4: 32-35 and 5: 1-31.

How can we concretely apply the first two texts to our lives, our communities and our ministries in our local contexts today?

Acts of the Apostles 15: 28:

"It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us...
"It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us..."

Experience of the Council of Jerusalem. In today's divided Catholic Church can we have a Council of Jerusalem moment/experience?

Session 3: House Churches with lay leadership especially women. Each participant prepares one passage in *Acts of the Apostles* that describes/illustrates the House Church (also called a Small Domestic Church) with women in leadership positions.

To listen to the discussion, click on <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/-J0yHuvI5z1IAy38t0ePS6k8Hdvpaaa81yRKrqcFnQdtf2QBh48SMJFkDvrtqE0>.
Password: 5?%2\$sMR.

Session 4: Importance of the Holy Spirit. Each participant prepares three short inputs:

- A passage in *Acts* about the Holy Spirit that you like.
- Example in your life when you felt the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Example in your life when you **did not feel** the power of the Holy Spirit.

Session 5: St. Paul's call to Hardship and Mission and what it means for us today.

Healey, Joseph, "The Small Christian Community (SCC) Pastoral, Ecclesial Model of Church in Africa Today," SCCs Course Outline for Theology for the Laity Certificate Program – 2020, Hekima University College (Jesuit School of Theology), January, 2020. Retrieved 22 December, 2019, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/sccs-course-outline-for-theology-for-the-laity-certificate-program-2020>

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 AND AIDS in Eastern Africa," African Jesuit AIDS Network, Nairobi: Published Paper, 17 pages, 2015. Published in Jacqueline Azetsop, *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
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Today there are over 190,000 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 and AIDS. SCC members are important agents of change and transformation in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

The first goal of this paper is to analyze the reality of people with HIV and 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 and AIDS as responders, healthcare 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 and 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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1. Under the “African Continent” under “Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 6 June, 2015, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/297-small-christian-communities-sccs-as-domestic-church-in-the-context-of-african-Ecclesiology.html>
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
3. Mikado Website, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, <http://www.mikado-ac.info/home-uk.html>

Today there are over 190,000 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 on “Reconciliation, Justice and Peace throughout Africa,” 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 Africa Today (TS48),” Description and Outline of January to April, 2013 Three Credit Seminar Course Course 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. Nairobi: Hekima University College , 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, “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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1. Mikado Website, retrieved on 1 November, 2015, <http://www.mikado-ac.info/home-uk.html>

Healey Joseph, "Small Christian Communities in Africa: Histories, Themes, Development and Challenges," in Stan Ilo, (ed.), *Handbook of African Catholicism*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2022.

An essay that treats:

1. Historical Development of Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa.
2. Themes of Small Christian Communities in Africa.
 - a. Relationships and Community
 - b. Biblical
 - c. Ecclesiastical
 - d. Pastoral
 - e. Contextual
 - f. Synodality
 - g. Mission
3. Development of Small Christian Communities in Africa.
4. Challenges of Small Christian Communities in Africa.
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1. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 26 July, 2022, https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/scc_histories_themes.pdf

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Healey Joseph, "Small Christian Communities, The Joy of Love," *The Catholic Mirror*, Issue No. 5/16 (May, 2016).

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*

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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 AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) were part of the consultation process and answered 11 of the 39 questions in the poll. Research on the 190,000 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 Agbonkhanmeghe 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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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.

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<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/103-small-christian-communities-sccs-promotethemes-of-the2009-second-african-synod.html>

Healey, Joseph, "Small Christian Communities: Second African Synod," *New People*, No 121, May, 2009: 15-17.

Healey, Joseph, "Small Faith-sharing Groups: Searching for Better Models on College Campuses, New Vernon, New Jersey: Privately Photocopied, 2015. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 4 November, 2016.

http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/small_faith_shairing_groups.pdf

Healey, Joseph, "Small is Beautiful," *Tablet*, 4 November, 2004.

Healey, Joseph, "Stopping to Smell the Flowers in East Africa," "Soul Seeing Column," *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*, Online from 17 September, 2019. [Sept 20-Oct 3, 2019 print issue.](#)

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/soul-seeing/stopping-smell-flowers-east-africa>

<https://www.ncronline.org/authors/joseph-g-healey>

Healey, Joseph (in collaboration with African leaders), "Synodality in the African Context," Third Session to cover the third priority in the document – "Participation, Governance, and Authority," SynodWatch series covering the Working Document of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, FutureChurch Zoom Webinar, 12 July, 2023 FutureChurch Video Link on YouTube:

[SynodWatch Session 3: Participation, Governance, and Authority - YouTube](#)

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<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/synodality-in-the-african-context>

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2. "Some Cardinal John Njue Stories and Examples."
3. "Additional Notes from the Perspective of Africa."
4. "African Proverbs and Sayings Related to Family and Marriage."

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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
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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/Chief Intercessor. The Sukuma people's name for Jesus Christ is "Eldest Brother/Chief Intercessor." It is the eldest brother, the firstborn male who offers sacrifice¹⁵¹⁰

¹⁵¹⁰ While involved in missionary ministry in Tanzania, I visited the sacred grove off the dirt road leading into Ndoleleji Parish in Shinyanga Diocese and the sacred rock formations in Bujora Parish in Mwanza Archdiocese where the Sukuma people offer sacrifice. *The Light of*

to one God in the Sukuma Ethnic Group tradition. Compare *Colossians* 1:15: the beloved Son who is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” Jesus Christ is the intercessor to the one God [the Father] 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 in Tanzania 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 or African Conversation 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, ed. *Tracing Our Graham Family History: Five Generations from 1771 – 1973*, New Vernon, NJ: Privately photocopied, 2021. Retrieved on the Ancestry.com Website on 6 November, 2021, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/tree/49797539/family/familyview?cfpid=20477523348>

The Life Stories on Ancestry.com of James Graham, Thomas Bolden Graham, Ziba (old Zibe) Graham, Joseph Bolden Graham and Virginia Graham Healey Sheehan. Three Appendices: “Graham Family History Adventures,” “Graham Businesses” and “Graham Surname History.” There are occasional references to the SCC Model of Church and especially House Church Family Masses in person and on Zoom.

Healey, Joseph, ed. *Tracing Our Healey Family History: Four Generations from 1807 – 1947*, New Vernon, NJ: Privately photocopied, 2022. Retrieved on the Ancestry.com Website on 6 November, 2021, <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/tree/49797539/family/familyview?cfpid=20477523348>

Sukuma Culture Spreads Throughout Africa is an oil wall painting by Tanzanian artist Innocenti Ibalabala in the Archives Building of the Sukuma Cultural Museum at Bujora. Scene 1 (top left) portrays a traditional Sukuma diviner-healer praying under a sacred tree near some rocks in a mountainous place.

The Life Stories on Ancestry.com of Daniel (Denis) Healy, Jeremiah Denis Healey, Thomas Jeremiah (Denis) Healey and John Anthony (Jack) Healey. Three Appendices: “Healey Family History Adventures,” “Healey Family Horse Racing” and “Healey Surname History.” There are occasional references to the SCC Model of Church and especially House Church Family Masses in person and on Zoom.

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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, “The Way Forward: We Create the Path by Walking,” in Giuseppe Caramazza and Eleanor Gibson, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Proceedings of the Symposium sponsored by the Institute of Youth Studies (IYS) and held at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya, February, 2017. Nairobi: Institute of Youth Studies, 2018.

Available on the:

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The article is the “Conclusion” in a collection of the papers from the Symposium.

Healey, Joseph, “We Create the Path by Walking: Evolving an African Narrative Theology,” in Elias Kifon Bongmba, (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology*, Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2020. Chapter 20 under “Part III: Regional and Emergent Theological Themes.” Available in a Print Version and Online Version (eBook with a Read Aloud feature). See:

VitalSource Online Bookshelf (with a Read Aloud feature)

[VitalSource Bookshelf: The Routledge Handbook of African Theology](#) (Book)

[VitalSource Bookshelf: The Routledge Handbook of African Theology](#) (Chapter)

African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website

http://www.afriprov.org/images/stories/create_path.pdf

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website

https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/create_path.pdf

We create the path by walking goes a well-known universal saying. The same can be said about the development of African narrative theology in its many forms. Africans are writing a narrative contextual theology of inculturation and liberation out of their own experiences and lives.

Healey, Joseph, “We Create the Path by Walking: Reflections on a 50 Year Journey of Maryknoll Missionary Priesthood: 11 June, 1966 – 11 June, 2016, Morristown, NJ: Privately Printed, 2016.

Includes Section 1 on “Promoting the Key Pastoral Priority of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa” that traces the SCCs key pastoral priority as one of the important “signs of the times” in Africa from 1973 to 2016 in the context of the call of Vatican II “to read the signs of the times.”

Healey, Joseph, “We Create the Path by Walking: Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Involvement in Peacebuilding in Eastern Africa,” *The Journal of Social Encounters (JSE)*, August, 2017, College of St. Benedict (CSB)/St. John's University (SJU) Digital Commons, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 29 May, 2017,

http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/path_walking.pdf

Small Christian Communities (SCCs), a key pastoral priority of the Catholic Bishops in the Eastern Africa Region, officially started in major ecclesial meetings in 1973 and 1976. SCCs in the AMECEA Region evolve in responding to the contemporary signs of the times. We create path by walking. SCCs’ involvement in peacebuilding is growing in Eastern Africa. This essay treats: “The Slow, Winding Journey from Small Prayer Group to Genuine Small Christian Community (SCC).” “The Heart of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa.” “Case Study of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the 2017 Kenyan Lenten Campaign.” “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Peacebuilding Through the Internet.” A recent study on the SCCs in the AMECEA Region shows that there are over 180,000 SCCs in the nine countries. An estimated 45,000 SCCs are spread out in the Kenya’s 26 Catholic dioceses. To promote Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) we use various social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Zoom and online SCCs.

Healey, Joseph, “We Create the Path by Walking Together/Journeying Together: Developing the Synodal Process in Eastern Africa,”

Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 31 January, 2022, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/we-create-the-path-by-walking-together-journeying-together-developing-the-synodal-process-in-eastern-africa/>

and “Announcement” on the Small Christian Communities Facebook Page, retrieved on 31 January, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

1. Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) Website, “Around the World,” retrieved on 3 February, 2022, [We Create the Path by Walking Together/Journeying Together: Developing the Synodal Process in Eastern Africa \(catholicchurchreformintl.org\)](#)
2. AMECEA Online Newsletter, retrieved on 4 February, 2022, [AMECEA: We Create the Path by Walking Together/Journeying Together: Developing the Synodal Process in Eastern Arica](#)
3. Diocese of Mangochi Website, retrieved on 4 February, 2022, [News – Diocese of Mangochi](#)
4. “Together: Developing the Synodal Process in Eastern Africa” ACWECA AMECEA News Blog, retrieved on 4 February, 2022, <https://exterminators24.rssing.com/chan-12970239/latest.php>
5. Tom Reese’s Twitter Page, “Link” retrieved on 5 February, 2022, [Thomas Reese, S.J. \(@ThomasReeseSJ\) / Twitter](#)
6. Joe Healey’s Twitter Page, “Link” retrieved on 6 February, 2022, [Joseph Healey \(@Mwanajumuiya\) / Twitter](#)
7. “Aide aux Églises d’Afrique” (“Aid to the Churches of Africa”) Website,” “News from Africa” (English and French), retrieved on __ February, 2022.
8. “Mission and Migrations (Missions and Migrations) Website,” “Synod Dossier” (English and French), retrieved on __ February, 2022.
9. Serendeputy Website retrieved on 13 February, 2022. [The Parish articles organized by Serendeputy, newsfeed engine for the open web](#)

Healey, Joseph, “Walking Together in Building a Maryknoll Synodal Family and Missionary Movement,” *US Region Newsletter*, June. 2023.

Healey, Joseph, “What Catholic Young People Really Want to Talk About?” in Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), *God’s Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. The chapter can be found online on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at: http://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/what_catholic.pdf

Pope Francis’ challenge to bishops and other leaders in the Catholic Church is loud and clear: Be a “Listening Church” first and a “Teaching Church” second. What if we took his advice seriously in relation to young people in the Catholic Church. What if we really listened to youth and young adults – their concerns, needs, doubts, questions, criticisms, burning issues, hopes and dreams. Here are some concrete examples of what Catholic young people really want to talk about in their distinct peer groups without parents, teachers and church leaders present.

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

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, “When It Comes To Nurturing Faith, Smaller Is Often Better,” “When Smaller is Better: Small Faith Communities and the Future of the U.S. Church” and “Small Faith Communities and the Future of the U.S. Church,” *America Magazine*, 24 May 2016, *America Media Website*, retrieved on 16 April, 2020, <http://americamagazine.org/issue/when-smaller-better>. Also listed on the bottom of page 25 of the 20-27 June, 2016 paper edition of *America Magazine* under “Digital Highlights” as a WEB EXCLUSIVE: “Small Faith Communities and the Future of the U.S. Church.” Reprinted in:

1. “CHURCH NEWS” Section of the *FADICA* (Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities) *June, 2016 E-Update* (Monthly FADICA Update for Members). In his recent *America* magazine article, "[When Smaller is Better](http://americamagazine.org/issue/when-smaller-better)," Fr. Joseph Graham Healey, M.M., Maryknoll missionary priest, proposes small groups as a model for change in the Catholic Church. Fr. Healey, brother of FADICA member Thomas Healey, describes Small Faith Groups on Catholic campuses in the U.S. and his experiences of Small Christian Communities in East Africa.

2. “News Articles” Section of the *Leadership Roundtable Meeting of the Board of Directors*, Washington, DC, 2016.

This article treats four sections:

1. The Origins of Small Faith Communities.
2. Taking Hold on U.S. Campuses.
3. Small Groups as a Model for Change.
4. A Course for Action.

Also available on various social media links such as Facebook, Twitter. Followed by online comments and exchanges. Comments (compiled randomly) include:

1. When it comes to nurturing faith small is often better.
2. The Catholic Church in America cannot ignore the success of Small Christian Communities.

3. What can the U.S. church learn from Kenya's rich history with Small Christian Communities?
4. Our big challenge is finding a new generation of SCCs Leaders (in their 20s and 30s) around the world.
5. Why are small lectionary-based Faith-sharing groups not part of the "mainstream" of American Catholic life? How can we change this?
6. This ministry with SCCs resonates well with our research into how young people in universities come to faith and what they are thinking about the whole idea of religion and spirituality. I enjoyed the article and its insights into young peoples' perceptions about faith including those who say they don't go to church except that they do...on Thursdays! Besides shaving an elderly man in a nursing home, another example is being of service to the neighbor in a soup kitchen.
7. It is not too late for all of us to realize that the "future is built today" but without spiritually inspired youth that future does not go beyond a "simple dream."
8. We need to develop leadership to sustain a universal and local growth of SCCs. The moment to inspire youthful generation into SCCs membership and leadership is here! It can only be now!
9. Let us promote Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCC) in Africa and throughout the world.
10. Gives one a great deal to think about.
11. There are probably hundreds of Centering Prayer Groups around the world that function like the SCC groups talked about in the article. Ours at St. Pius X Church has been on going for over 15 years. Centering Prayer Groups provide an experience of spiritual community seldom found in the larger parishes, especially not at Sunday masses. Our research shows that Centering Prayer Groups are close to the *Lectio Divina* method or style of prayer. We have a very good one in Mwanza, Tanzania.
12. The formation of Intentional Eucharistic Communities is another sign that small groups may be better than big ones, even for Sunday mass. Our research shows that there are many Intentional Eucharistic Communities (IECs) in the USA but they are scattered, and, yes, in terms of American culture, they not part of the "mainstream." The members are very committed. More information can be found at: www.intentionaleucharistic.org
13. The problem of attracting Catholics and engaging them with the Catholic faith is not limited to young people. The issue may be seen as more important to the future of the church if we think of it as one associated with young people, but it affects Catholics of all ages.

This article is generating questions about the difference between specific pastoral, parish-based Small Christian Communities that are an ecclesial structure in the Catholic Church and the whole variety of small groups (for example, independent Small Faith-sharing Groups as described in this article and the small groups connected to new movements such as the Neocatechumenal Way in dioceses in New Jersey, USA). For a complete answer please use the Search Feature in the free online *Ebook 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/.../47-ebooks-.html>
http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/.../Build_new.pdf

Healey, Joseph, "Your Voice Counts in This Synod," spoken text of video to introduce the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers "Synod Listening Sessions." Maryknoll: Center

CED. March, 2022, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 23 March, 2022, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/your-voice-counts-in-this-synod/>

For the 5:19 minute video go to: <https://mission.maryknoll.us/en/listeningsessions>

The link to the video on Google:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FnRkkR9_YAqOnvoc834_TyVGISSV7u7S/view?usp=sharing

NOTE: The SCC Model is seen in many ways. I forwarded the text to the IT person at Maryknoll who put it on a teleprompter that operated as a rolling text on an iPhone mounted on a tripod. Then I read the text for a video in English to introduce the “A Time to Talk and Listen: Lent 2022 Synod Listening Sessions” sponsored by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers that were aired online on 15 March 2022 and 24 March 2022. There were “Small Breakout Rooms” during these Zoom gatherings.

Healey, Joseph and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005 (Second Printing 2006, New Cover 2014); Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006 (1st Reprint 2011, 2nd Reprint 2012, 3rd Reprint 2017); and Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2006. Available as an Ebook on:

1. Orbis Books Website, retrieved 6 November, 2021, <https://www.orbisbooks.com/small-christian-communities-today.html>
2. Amazon (for Kindle), Amazon Website, retrieved 6 November, 2021 https://www.amazon.com/Small-Christian-Communities-Today-Capturing-ebook/dp/B00CMC69C2/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Small+Christian+Communities+Today&qid=1573287453&s=books&sr=1-1
3. Google, Google Books Website, retrieved 15 March, 2020, <https://books.google.com/books?id=YsJ3CAAQBAJ&pg=PP1&dq=Small+Christian+Communities+Today:+Capturing+the+New+Moment&hl=en&sa=X&ei=S9eLVYH3HMMW2-AGJo4vADA&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=Small%20Christian%20Communities%20Today%3A%20Capturing%20the%20New%20Moment&f=false>

There are chapters on each continent: Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa and Asia and Oceania. Key international chapters include:

Chapter 22: Rita Ishengoma and Joseph Healey, “Re-energizing International SCC Twinning.”

Chapter 23: Joseph Healey, “Promoting SCCs via the Internet.” https://www.academia.edu/20499272/Promoting_SCCs_via_the_Internet?auto=download

Individual chapters are online:

Robert Moriarty, “Imaging Initiation (RCIA) in Small Christian Communities,”
 Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities (SCC)
http://www.sccquest.org/PDF/imaging_initiation.pdf **NOTE:** Domain name not renewed.

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 “Foreword” 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 have become a reality.

This book is a timely contribution to the Christian ministry in the 21st Century. Across the world people are looking for a new Pentecost in our Christian churches, and it is going to happen through small communities as well as through than mega churches. This book provides the basic tools for that renewal.

Healey, Joseph and the South Sudan Catholic Refugees in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Nairobi Archdiocese, Kenya led by their catechist and coordinator Simon Reat Mar, “Homily for the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A,” 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR), Sunday, 27 September, 2020.
 Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 3 August, 2020, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/homily-for-the-26th-sunday-in-ordinary-time-year-a/>

“Homily for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns Website, retrieved on 3 August, 2020
<https://maryknollogc.org/article/homily-world-day-migrants-and-refugees-2020>

German version in PredigtPlus+ series : <https://www.missio-hilft.de/mitmachen/glauben-teilen/gemeindeangebote/predigtplus/>

Healey, Joseph and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996 (1st Reprint 1996, 2nd Reprint 1997, 3rd Reprint 2000, 4th Reprint 2005, 5th Reprint 2012) and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997, (many reprints, New Cover 2012). Available as an Ebook on Amazon (for Kindle) and Google.

Orbis Books Website:
<https://www.orbisbooks.com/towards-an-african-narrative-theology.html>

Paulines Publications Africa Website
<http://e.paulinesafrica.org/index.php/book/bookDetails/223>

Amazon Website:

https://www.amazon.com/Towards-African-Narrative-Theology-Cultures/dp/1570751218/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Towards+an+African+Narrative+Theology&qid=1579312714&s=books&sr=1-1

Google Books Website:

https://books.google.co.ke/books?hl=en&lr=&id=IJV3CAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT10&dq=%22Joseph+G+Healey%22&ots=gJIQ-PO7C-&sig=wpPLfZZ5RRcEldGWucIa75FEj-E&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=%22Joseph%20G%20Healey%22&f=false

Reflects what traditional African proverbs, sayings, stories and songs used in Christian catechetical, liturgical, and ritual contexts reveal about Tanzania, and about all of Africa. Includes appropriations of, and interpretations of, Christianity in Africa.

Chapter Three on “African Christology” is called “Jesus Chief Diviner-Healer and Eldest Brother-Chief Intercessor” and Chapter Four on “African Ecclesiology” is called “Church as the Extended Family of God.” It includes sections on: “African Metaphors of Church.” “Communion Ecclesiology from An African Perspective.” “Trinitarian Communion Ecclesiology.” “We Are the Church.” “Theology of Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Being Church.” “Ecclesiology of Church-as-Family.” “African Communion Ecclesiology and Pastoral Inculturation.”

From Archbishop Raphael S. Ndingi Mwana a'Nzeki, Archbishop of Nairobi, Kenya’s “Foreword” to the Paulines Publications Africa Edition:

In particular, this book looks at the cultural riches of African Oral Literature such as proverbs, sayings and stories. I hope that these examples and reflections will help African priests, seminarians and other pastoral workers to rediscover their African roots and make connections to their preaching, teaching and evangelization.

From American theologian Father Robert J. Schreiter, CPPS’s “Foreword” to the Orbis Books Edition:

This book tackles the challenge of theology in oral cultures head-on. It goes directly to those modes of expression that carry an oral culture's information and values – proverbs, riddles, stories and myths – and proposes how these might become the basis for a local theology shaped in the language of the people...We hope that it will both encourage peoples in oral cultures to develop more boldly theologies out of the richness of their heritage, as well as introduce members of literate cultures to another pathway into the relation of faith and culture.

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.

Available in different versions:

1. Under the “African Continent” under “Africa” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website,
<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/342-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.html>
2. Academia.edu Website, retrieved on 25 August, 2015
https://www.academia.edu/15032232/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

Part I: “Brief History of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in AMECEA.”

Part II: “Practical Examples of How Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa.”

Part III: “The Involvement of Women in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promoting Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa.”

Healey, Joseph and Nicholas Obiero, “PTC 418: Small Christian Communities as a New Model of Church in Africa Today,” Description in *Tangaza University College School of Theology Academic Handbook 2018-2019*, Nairobi: Tangaza University College, 2018.

Hebblethwaite, Margaret, *Base Communities -- An Introduction*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993.

Hebblethwaite, Margaret. *Basic is Beautiful*, London: Fount (Harper Collins Publishers), 1993.

Heim, Joseph (ed.), *What They Taught Us: How Maryknoll Missioners Were Evangelized by the Poor*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009.

Henriot, Peter, “Steps Forward and Back,” *Tablet*, 3 December 2011, 11-12.

Hetsen, Jac and James Holmes-Siedle, *Aspects of Christian Community Building in Africa*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* 75, 1983.

Hirmer, Oswald, *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*.

This practical handbook (*vademecum*) of Catechetical Sessions for the Adult Catechumenate (RCIA) in Africa has been translated into (alphabetically): Anuak (Dha Anywaa), Arabic, Nuer and Sukuma.

Hirmer, Oswald, *Our Joy in Being Catholic: Our Catholic Customs and Beliefs*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2007.

Holland, Joe and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, Maryknoll, NY:

Orbis Books, 1983.

Holmes-Siedle, James, "A Look at 17 Years of SCCs in Eastern Africa, *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, 32:6 (December, 1990): 359-362.

Hope, Anne and Sally Timmel, *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers*, 3 volumes, Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1984.

How to Run the Alpha Course: Getting Started. Africa Edition. London: Alpha International, 2010.

Hurteau, Robert, *A Worldwide Heart: The Life of Maryknoll Father John J. Considine*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013.

Igboanyika, Sylvester, *Effective Pastoral Planning for Building Small Christian Communities in Africa*, Doctoral Dissertation, Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 2002.

Ilo, Stan, (ed.), *Handbook of African Catholicism*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2022. An African Edition was published in two volumes by Limuru, Kenya: Kolbe Press, 2023. Includes Joseph Healey, "Small Christian Communities in Africa: Histories, Themes, Development and Challenges," Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 3 August, 2022, [scc_histories_themes.pdf](http://smallchristiancommunities.org/scc_histories_themes.pdf) (smallchristiancommunities.org)

Imani na Matendo: Sera, Maazimio na Matamko ys Sinodi ya Kwanza ya Jimbo la Musoma (Swahili), Publisher: Jimbo la Musoma: Haki ya Kunakili, 2014. Printer: Dar es Salaam: Moccony Printing Press, 2014. Reprinted 2017. mocconyprinting@gmail.com

Sections 54-56 are on *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo (JNNK)*. Highlights are:

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.

Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document) for the Synod of Bishops III Extraordinary General Assembly. *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization*, Vatican: Liberia Editrice and Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2014. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris-familia_en.html

Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document) for the Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, Vatican: Liberia Editrice and Nairobi Paulines Publications Africa, 2012.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.pdf

Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document) for the Synod of Bishops XIV Ordinary General Assembly, *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World*, Vatican: Liberia Editrice and Nairobi Paulines Publications Africa, 2015.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20150623_instrumentum-xiv-assembly_en.html

Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document) for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Vatican: Liberia Editrice and Nairobi Paulines Publications Africa, 2018.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20180508_instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html

Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document) 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.

Instrumentum Laboris (Working Document) for the Synod of Bishops Second Special Assembly for Africa, *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, Vatican: Liberia Editrice and Nairobi Paulines Publications Africa, 2009.

Isenjia, Silas, "Align Small Christian Community Programs to the Word of God: Catholic Nun in Kenya," *ACI Africa Online Newsletter*, 20 January, 2022, ACI Africa Website, retrieved on 20 January, 2022, [Align Small Christian Community Programs to the Word of God: Catholic Nun in Kenya \(aciafrica.org\)](http://aciafrica.org)

Isenjia, Silas, "Malawi Bishops Call For 'Reflective Moments' Ahead of Small Christian Communities Jubilee," *ACI Africa Online Newsletter*, 7 July, 2023, ACI Africa Website, retrieved on 7 July, 2023, [Malawi Bishops Call for "reflective moments" ahead of Small Christian Communities Jubilee \(aciafrica.org\)](http://aciafrica.org)

The event to be launched on Sunday, 20 August, 2023 in all the Catholic Dioceses of Malawi and conclude in July, 2024. The SCCs Golden Jubilee celebrations, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) Secretary General says, aim to highlight four fundamental characteristics of this model of being church, which include *Bible*-centeredness, the communion of the people, having outreach to the people, and promoting the principle of subsidiarity. Includes an excellent photo of a meeting of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) region. Credit: Meru Diocese.

Ishengoma, Rita, *Akamwani: The Challenges of Bible Sharing in Small Christian Communities*, Dar es Salaam: Old East Africa Ltd, 2009.

International Theological Commission (ITC), *Synodality in the Life and the Mission of the Church*, Vatican: Liberia Editrice 2018, 121 paragraphs and 170 Notes, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html

During its 9th Quinquennium, the [International Theological Commission](#) undertook a study of synodality in the life and mission of the Church. The work was carried out by a specific sub-committee, whose president was Mgr. Mario Ángel Flores Ramos and whose members were Sr. Prudence Allen RSM, Sr. Alenka Arko of the Loyola Community, Mgr. Antonio Luiz Catelan Ferreira, Mgr. Piero Coda, Rev. Carlos María Galli, Rev. Gaby Alfred Hachem, Prof. Héctor Gustavo Sánchez Rojas SCV, Rev. Nicholaus Segeja M'hela and Fr. Gerard Francisco Timoner III OP.

General discussions on this theme took place during the meetings of the sub-committee and during the Plenary Sessions of the commission itself, held between 2014 and 2017. The present text was approved by the majority of the members of the commission during its 2017 Plenary Session, by means of a written vote. It was later approved by the President, His Eminence Cardinal Luis F. Ladaria SJ, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who authorized its publication on 2 March 2018, after receiving a favorable response from Pope Francis.

James, Thomas, Innocent Maganya, Joseph Healey, Reginald Nalugala, Marita Grudzen, Mary Aktay and Sterling Harwood (eds.), *Building Human Solidarity in the Light of Pope Francis' Encyclical Fratelli Tutti*, Publisher: Gerald Grudzen Global Ministries University, 2022. Available on the Amazon Website, retrieved on 2 February, 2022, [Building Human Solidarity in the Light of Pope Francis' Encyclical Fratelli Tutti: Grudzen, Gerald, James, Thomas, Maganya, Innocent, Healey, Joseph, Nalugala, Reginald, Grudzen, Marita, Aktay, Mary, Harwood, Sterling: 9798419810426: Amazon.com: Books](#)

A collection of the documents, transcriptions, recaps of speaker presentations and discussions, PowerPoint presentation links and video links for this global, inter religious conference that took place from 19-21 August 2021. More than 3,000 people from 19 countries across Europe, Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands and the Americas participated. The conference was inspired by the Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together (2019) jointly signed by Sheik Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Pope Francis and by the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (2020) of His Holiness Pope Francis.

James, Thomas, "Inculturation Versus Acculturation: Small Christian Communities in Africa," North American College Thesis, Gregorian University, 1991.

Jassy, Marie-France Perrin, *Basic Communities in the African Churches*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973.

Jassy, Marie-France Perrin, *Forming Christian Communities*, Kampala: Gaba Pastoral Paper No. 12, 1970.

Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection (JCTR) Publications including the *JCTR Bulletin*, Lusaka, Zambia.

John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *The Mission of the Church*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1991.

John Paul II, Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation, *The Church in Africa (Ecclesia in Africa)*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995.

Join-Lambert, Arnaud, “Synodes Diocésains, ‘Parasynodes’ et Conciles Particuliers dans Église Catholique Depuis le Concile Vatican II: Liste, Bibliographie, Ressources,” Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, 10e édition mise à jour (11 October, 2022). 113 pages. [Les synodes diocésains parasynodes et co.pdf](#)

The document presents a list of more than 1000 diocesan synods celebrated since 1965. Included are "parasynods" as a significant form of synodality. This term refers to alternative forms, forums or diocesan assemblies that are very similar to a diocesan synod from the phenomenological and ecclesiological point of view. Particular councils, both plenary and provincial, have also been added, as well as national processes with a similar dynamic. There are also active links to certain documents on the Internet. A bibliography is given at the national and diocesan levels. This is followed by a general bibliography on the whole question of diocesan synods.

Journey of 10 Years Achievements. Catholic Diocese of Machakos. Bishop Martin Kivuva, Machakos: Privately Printed, 2014.

Kahiu, Magdalene, “Kenya-Based Small Christian Community Facilitates Aid to Victims of Floods, Landslides,” [ACI Africa](#) Online News, 11 December, 2019, https://www.aciafrica.org/news/533/kenya-based-small-christian-community-facilitates-aid-to-victims-of-floods-landslides?_hsenc=p2ANqtz--JRLPAcu916vZ4n2b-zJ0CtdcYPge0TRubMFT25Qkj4ZlaqllOrXUkZnsDjmBE1oQDV8vsLDCmcts7wuj4_juy3qFt_w&_hsmi=80609138

Kahiu, Magdalene, “Small Christian Communities True Experience of Synodality’ for Church in Africa: Priest,” [ACI Africa](#) Online News, 26 August, 2021, <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/4142/small-christian-communities-true-experience-of-synodality-for-church-in-africa->

Father Rafael Simbine, a member of the Clergy of Mozambique’s Xai-Xai Diocese and Deputy Secretary General of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), explains very clearly how the way of being church through membership in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa portrays a true experience of communion and collaboration – the theme of the October, 2023 Synod of Bishops in Rome. “This is the true experience of synodality that has been lived out in the SCCs: experience of communion, participation and mission, evangelizing themselves and bringing the Good News to others. It is precisely because of the SCCs that many lay people, men, women and youth in particular have become quite dynamic, both in the Catholic Church and in the society.”

Kalilombe, Patrick, *Christ’s Church in Lilongwe --Today and Tomorrow: Our Diocesan Pastoral Planning Project*, Pastoral Letter, Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1973. This 39 page booklet was reprinted in 1976 and 1979.

This Pastoral Letter introduces the Mini-Synod in Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi that took place from 24 November, 1973 to 24 August, 1975. Kalilombe was the first bishop in Eastern Africa to start a diocesan pastoral plan of Small Christian Communities on the grassroots level. 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 communities/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 communities/groups are

called *Miphakati* in Chewa (“Small Christian Communities”). This Pastoral Letter and the beginning of the Lilongwe Diocesan Synod predate by the *AMECEA Plenary: Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s* that took place in December, 1973.

Reprinted as Chapter 1 in *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi*

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Doing_Theology_at_the_Grassroots/7QFgDwAAQB-AJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover

Kalilombe, Patrick, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi*, Kachere Series, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999. Muzuzu: Luviri Press: Luviri Reprints No. 2, 2018.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Doing_Theology_at_the_Grassroots/7QFgDwAAQB-AJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover

Kalilombe, Patrick, *From Outstations to Small Christian Communities: A Comparison of Two Pastoral Methods in Lilongwe Diocese*, Doctorate Dissertation, Berkeley: University of California, 1983.

Kalilombe, Patrick, *From Outstations to Small Christian Communities*. Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* 82-83, June-October, 1984. Reissued as Bishop Patrick Augustine Kalilombe, *From Outstation to Small Christian Communities: A Comparison Between Two Pastoral Methods in Lilongwe Diocese (1902-1975)*, edited by Gerard Chigona, Balaka: Montfort Media, 2016.

The editor states the importance of getting this original and unprecedented work of research published and available to the Catholic Church in Malawi and all people interested in understanding Kalilombe’s thought. This helps us understand the vision and practice of one of the founders of SCCs in Eastern Africa. Two Pastoral Systems are compared and contrasted:

1. The Outstations System.
2. The System of Small Christian Communities.

Kamara, Ronald, “The Role of Small Christian Communities in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS with Specific Reference to Uganda” in Marco Moerschbacher, Joseph Bitole Kato, Pius Rutechura (eds.), *A Holistic Approach to HIV and AIDS in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2008.

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*.

Kaombe, Stefano, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo: Changamoto Kuelekea Ukomavu* (Swahili for "Small Christian Communities: The Challenge to Head towards Maturity"), Dar es Salaam: Privately Printed, 2006.

Kato, Joseph (ed.), *Evangelization through Holistic Development of Nomadic Communities in AMECEA Countries: AMECEA Pastoral Research Report 2008-2010*. Nairobi: AMECEA Secretariat, 2011.

Kaufa, Andrew, "AMECEA: Online Small Christian Communities, Sure Way to Give One Another Social-Spiritual Support During Unprecedented Times of Coronavirus," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 322, AMECEA Website retrieved on 27 March, 2020,

https://amecea.blogspot.com/2020/03/amecea-online-small-christian.html?fbclid=IwAR3r3tyeW1yo0UJSRCaEuAh7nIjwjRBNkcJBzKJHSbOeJprzWR_udKDT_h0#!/2020/03/amecea-online-small-christian.html

SCCs Website, retrieved on 6 April, 2020,

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/amecea-online-small-christian-communities-sure-way-to-give-one-another-social-spiritual-support-during-unprecedented-times-of-coronavirus>

Kaufa, Andrew, "AMECEA: WhatsApp Small Christian Community Meetings in the Context of Covid-19," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 323, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 4 April, 2020,

<https://amecea.blogspot.com/2020/04/amecea-whatsapp-small-christian.html?fbclid=IwAR2QVGR6g15583iCchN7a-IUefgdAHH4yQ56iVjqmXS2sc55TDKsf9ReRg#!/2020/04/amecea-whatsapp-small-christian.html>

SCCs Website, retrieved on 6 April, 2020,

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/amecea-whatsapp-small-christian-community-meetings-in-the-context-of-covid-19>

Kaufa, Andrew, "VATICAN SYNOD: What is Unique to The Lay Out of Synod Hall?" *AMECEA Online News*, 6 October, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 15 October, 2023, [VATICAN SYNOD: What is Unique to The Lay Out of Synod Hall? | AMECEA NEWS](#)

Speaking as an African from Eastern Africa, I can agree that this is a new grammar in so far as the synod is concerned. However, it is not a new grammar when it comes to being a church in the Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and Southern Africa (IMBISA) regions of the Church in Africa where the ecclesiology of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) has become the way of being a church. Coincidentally, the AMECEA region is also celebrating 50 years of the SCCs. The image of a Small Christian Community is that of a community of baptized men and women, youth including the religious men and women as the priests together sharing in a set of a circle, with the *Bible* as the center of their spiritual conversation about their life experiences and their mission to the world around them.

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. Online Version: *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>

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: Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops Unpublished Report, 2015.

Kenya: New Book Challenges Church on SCCs,” *Christian Telegraph*, 13 June, 2012, (Issue 16533), Christian Telegraph Website, http://72.30.186.176/search/srptcache?ei=UTF-8&p=small+christian+communities+in+kenya&xa=Lc7Hffn4bwOs7_aokGMeSw--%2C1362399838&fr=yfp-t-900-s&rs=6&u=http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=small+christian+communities+in+kenya&d=4530383994817236&mkt=en-US&setlang=en-US&w=2HbasfqfhNQMLk7qsKTP44rVQKtGe5W&icp=1&.intl=us&sig=3OCeevpU.bCLIW2UnwXybQ--

Khokhar Ashiknaz, Alloys Nyakundi and Joseph Healey, “We Create the Path by Walking: Online Spiritual Retreat for Young Adult Seekers on ‘Go Apart with Jesus Christ,’” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 8 April, 2023, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/we-create-the-path-by-walking-online-spiritual-retreat-for-young-adult-seekers-on-go-apart-with-jesus-christ/>

Kilaini, Method, “Small Christian Communities: Sharing the Tanzania Pastoral Experience,” Mwanza: Printed Paper, 2014. The Swahili version is *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo (JNNK): Uzoefu wa Kichungaji wa Tanzania*. Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 15 July, 2022, https://smallchristiancommunities.org/small-christian-communities-sharing-the-tanzanian-pastoral-experience/small_christian.pdf (smallchristiancommunities.org)

Kimambo, Emmanuel, *Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo: Shule ya Imani na Uinjilishaji*, in collaboration with Sister Rita Ishengoma (Tanzania) and Father Joseph Healey (Kenya),

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.

Korgen, Jeffry Odell, *Solidarity Will Transform the World: Stories of Hope from Catholic Relief Services*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007. The powerful Rwandan Case Study called "Forgiving the Unforgivable: Peacemaking in Rwanda" documents how some of the 20,000 base communities (another name for SCCs) were involved in the reconciliation and healing ministry in Rwanda, a neighbor of Eastern Africa, after the 2004 genocide.

Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften: Impulse für eine zukunftsfähige Kirche*, ThEW2, Theologie der Einen Welt, Freiburg: Herder, 2012.

It has five chapters on Africa including:

1. Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, “Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften als neuer Weg, Kirche zu werden – Gegenwart, Fortschritte und Zukunft.”
2. Joseph G. Healey, “Entwicklungsgeschichte der Kleinen Christlichen Gemeinschaften /Kirchlichen Basisgemeinschaften in Afrika,” Missio Website, retrieved on 9

August, 2015, http://www.missio-hilft.de/media/thema/theologie/thew/2/ThEW_2-4-1_Healey.pdf

3. Pius Rutechura, “Die pastorale Vision der Christlichen Basisgemeinden.”

Volume Two in German: *Small Christian Communities - Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church* (PDF, 1.83 MB) <https://www.missio-hilft.de/de/themen/theologie/thew-1/kleine-christliche-gemeinschaften.html>

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.

It has five chapters on Africa including:

1. Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, “Small Christian Communities as a New Way of Becoming Church: Practice, Progress and Prospects;”
2. Joseph G. Healey, “Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa;”
3. Pius Rutechura, “The Pastoral Vision of Basic Christian Communities/Ecclesial Communities.”

Volume Two in English: *Small Christian Communities - Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church* (PDF, 1.83 MB) <https://www.missio-hilft.de/de/themen/theologie/thew-1/kleine-christliche-gemeinschaften.html>

Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Evangelii Gaudium: Stimmen der Weltkirche*, ThEW7, Theologie der Einen Welt, Freiburg: Herder, 2015.

It has four chapters on Africa including Joseph G. Healey, "Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa in the Light of *The Joy of the Gospel*."

Volume Seven in German: *Evangelium Gaudium - Voices of the Universal Church* (PDF, 4.84 MB) <https://www.missio-hilft.de/de/themen/theologie/thew-1/evangelii-gaudium.html>

Krämer, Klaus and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Evangelium Gaudium - Voices of the Universal Church* Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation, Inc., 2015.

It has four chapters on Africa including Joseph G. Healey, "Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa in the Light of *The Joy of the Gospel*."

Volume Seven in English: *Evangelium Gaudium - Voices of the Universal Church* (PDF, 4.84 MB) <https://www.missio-hilft.de/de/themen/theologie/thew-1/evangelii-gaudium.html>

Kunda, Winfield, ZAMBIA: Bishops Conference Launches Small Christian Communities Jubilee Celebrations. *AMECEA Online News*, 6 October, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 10 November, 2023, [ZAMBIA: Bishops Conference Launches Small Christian Communities Jubilee Celebrations \(amecea.org\)](https://www.amecea.org/ZAMBIA-Bishops-Conference-Launches-Small-Christian-Communities-Jubilee-Celebrations)

This article has three insights/challenges:

1. Use of the term “Synodal Church.”

2. Danger of reducing Small Christian Communities to social fundraising groups.
3. Absence of men.

Kyaruzi, Damian, *Mwongozo wa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo*, Bukoba: Rumuli Press, 1990.

Leadership Roundtable, "Leadership Formation Tip: Encourage Prayer Methodologies that Connect Faith and Life," Leadership Formation Series, January, 2018.

Lee, Bernard and Michael Cowan. *Gathered and Sent: The Mission of Small Church Communities Today*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003.

Lima, Eduardo Campos, "With Pope's Support, Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil Show Signs of Revival," *La Croix International*, 28 July, 2023, *La Croix International* Website, retrieved on 31 July, 2023, <https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/with-popes-support-basic-ecclesial-communities-in-brazil-show-signs-of-revival/18212>

Once a powerful force in the Brazilian Church (and in Latin America as a whole), the Basic Ecclesial Communities – known as CEBs in Portuguese and Spanish – saw a continuous decline in the country since the 1990s. Now, with Pope Francis' support and a fresh interest from the younger generation, their members want to grow again. Some 1,000 Basic Ecclesial Communities leaders from all parts of Brazil gather to discuss the most pressing issues in the nation, including the need to bring more young Catholics to join them.

At the peak of the CEBs' presence in the Brazilian Church, they numbered at least 50,000, Celso Carias said. Now he estimates there are around 20,000 of them. Bishop Luiz Fernando Lisboa of Cachoeiro do Itapemirim in Espírito Santo state, was one of the 50 members of the Brazilian episcopate who attended the gathering in Rondonópolis. He celebrated the fact that so many bishops and priests took part in the meeting, but emphasized that "there is a huge resistance among many in the Catholic Church to accept the CEBs model."

Lineamenta (Preparatory Document) for the Synod of Bishops Second Special Assembly for Africa. *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2006.

Lineamenta (Preparatory Document) 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. Includes the Answers to the 30 Questions from the National Episcopal Conferences in the AMECEA Region.

Lineamenta (Preparatory Document) for the Synod of Bishops III Extraordinary General Assembly. *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization*, 2013.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20131105_iiiassemblea-sinodo-vescovi_en.html

Lineamenta (Preparatory Document) for the Synod of Bishops XIV Ordinary General Assembly. *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary*

World, Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2014. Includes the Answers to the 46 Questions from the National Episcopal Conferences in the AMECEA Region.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20141209_lineamenta-xiv-assembly_en.html

Lineamenta (Preparatory Document) for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly. *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2018.

Liturgical Calendars and Diaries with the Scripture References to the Daily Lectionary Readings.

Lobinger, Fritz, *The Empty Altar: An Illustrated Book to Help Talk about the Lack of Parish Priests*, Crossroad Publishing Company, originally copywritten in 2010, released on Amazon on 15 September, 2017.

A 141-page study on the shortage of priests and the future of the Catholic Church. In the context of the Eucharistic Famine especially in the Global South, Lobinger proposes the ordination of a team of local elders. This book makes a prophetic proposal, respectful of church teaching, that addresses the growing deficiency of priests in the Catholic Church. Based on sound theology and firsthand experience, this book is presented in an illustrated and easily digestible form and was written by an author with decades of experience who has studied the situation as a theologian and developed realistic solutions as a pastor and bishop.

Lobinger, Fritz, Response to J. Healey "Basic Christian Communities: Church-centered or World-centred," *Missionalia*, Vol. 14, No 1 (April 1986).

Lobinger, Fritz "What SCCs and CEBs Can Learn from Each Other," *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 2013/3.

"The Lobinger Model," retrieved on 30 December, 2016,

<http://files.constantcontact.com/7f9bce08001/9ccb623b-3847-4f4b-8666-862ddaee84f3.pdf>. Source: https://www.amazon.com/Like-His-Brothers-SistersOrdaining/dp/0824518500/ref=asap_bc?ie=UTF8

Also available on the Future Church Website, <https://www.futurechurch.org>

"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.

López, Marisela de los Santos, "Liturgical, Pastoral and Spiritual Formation Program for the Pastoral Parish Councils for the Triennium 2013 – 2015 at the Palica Center, Diocese of Wau, South Sudan," Wau: Unpublished Paper, 2012.

Luciani, Rafael, "From the Synod on Synodality to the Synodalization of the Whole Church: Towards a New Ecclesial Reconfiguration in the Light of Synodality," *Iglesia Viva*, No. 287 (July to September, 2021), *Iglesia Viva Website*, retrieved 12 November, 2022, [Rafael Luciani \(Synod-Synodality-Synodalization\) Iglesia Viva 2021 \(ENG\).pdf](#)

Lumko Institute Resources and Publications on Small Christian Communities such as

Training for Community Ministries. Delmenville, South Africa. 1978 on.

Lupande, Joseph M., Joseph G. Healey, MM and Donald F. Sybertz, MM, "The Sukuma Sacrificial Goat and Christianity: A Basis for Inculturation in Africa," *African Christian Studies*, 12, 1 (March, 1996), *Worship* 70, 4 (July, 1996) and *AFER (African Ecclesial Review)*, 40:4 (August, 1998). The updated version is on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website, retrieved on 21 June, 2017, <http://afriprov.org/bibliography/347-qthe-sukuma-sacrificial-goat-and-christianity-a-basisfor-inculturation-in-africaq-.html>

While this article is not about Small Christian Communities as such, it reflects the method or process of the "local community as theologian" -- a small community theologizing together on an African theme on the local level. The Sukuma examples of the sacrificial goat (based on a Sukuma proverb) and the self-reliant orphan lamb (based on a Sukuma thanksgiving song and proverb) can be applied to Jesus Christ and the Eucharist. This is a concrete step toward an inculturated Christianity in Africa.

Lushombo, Léo, Book Review of *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III Theological Studies*, March, 2018 (79:1), 222-223.

This review has this very challenging statement:

If the model or paradigm of the future is that of Small Christian Communities, as the book argues, then there is a need for the SCCs to undertake consistent theological formation because the laity do not have opportunity to access theological formation in many African countries.

Magesa, Laurenti, "Endless Quest: The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian" in Jesse Mugambi, and Evaristi Magoti (eds.), *Endless Quest: The Vocation of an African Christian Theologian. Essays in Honor of Laurenti Magesa*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014, 7-34.

Magesa, Laurenti, "A Panoramic View of 25 Years of African Theology in East Africa: Foundations, Developments and Prospects," in *Hekima Review*, Vol. 40 (May, 2009), 16-33. See especially Laurenti Magesa, "Theological Reflections on the Future of Mission in Africa."

Magesa, Laurenti and Michael Kirwen (eds.), *Exploring the Future of Mission in Africa: In Celebration of Maryknoll's 100 Years in Mission*, Nairobi: MIAS Books, 2012.

Magesa, Laurenti, *The Post-Conciliar Church in Africa: No Turning Back the Clock*, Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2016.

Magesa, Laurenti, *What is Not Sacred? African Spirituality*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013 and Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2014.

The title is a West African proverb. Magesa says: "Consequently, there are no movements in the indigenous traditions of black Africa that distinguish the "sacred" from the "profane" or "secular." For, indeed, just what is not sacred?"

Maithya, Cosmas, "Participation of Youth in Small Christian Communities." Part of the 1995

CUEA Theological Session on “Family Life in AMECEA Countries.” *African Christian Studies*, Volume 11, No. 2 (June, 1995), 54-58.

Makusanya, Edwin, *Efficient Management of Economic Resources in Parishes as a Way to Achieve Self-Reliance: A Case Study of Tabora and Sikonge Parishes, Archdiocese of Tabora, Tanzania*, MA Thesis in the Institute of Social Ministry in Mission, Nairobi: Tangaza University College, 2014.

“MALAWI: ECM Hosts National SCCs Workshop,” *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, Issue 037, December 19, 2013,
http://amecea.blogspot.com/2013/12/malawi-ecm-hosts-national-sccs-workshop.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=29c836c001-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-29c836c001-6746297

Marina Alejandro, “Como Las Pequeñas Comunidades Cristianas Africanas, Implementan La Pastoral y Visión Misionera Del Vaticano II,” Spanish translation of Joseph Healey, “How African Small Christian Communities Implement the Pastoral and Missionary Vision of Vatican II,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 15 March, 2020,
<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/las.pdf>

Marina, Alejandro, “Comunidades Eclesiales de Base -- CEBs (Small Christian Communities) in Argentina,” Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 15 March, 2020, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Comunidades.pdf>

The Spanish is *Las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base en Argentina*, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 15 March, 2020,
<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CEBs.pdf>

Marins, José, *Basic Ecclesial Community: Church from the Roots* (Quito: Colegio Tecnico Don Bosco, 1979).

Key book on CEBs in Latin America. Has the valuable distinction that *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs)/Basic Ecclesial Communities/Small Christian Communities “are not a Movement in the Catholic Church, but the Church on the Move.” Marins states: “The BEC 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 identifies five features or components central to the CEBs dynamic in Latin America: Prayer; Reflection on Reality; Discernment and Decision; Action [Mission]; and Celebration. In his research Marins has the insight that you cannot compare and contrast the CEBs in Latin America country by country. The diversity is too great. You have to evaluate diocese by diocese, for example, Mexico.

Massawe, Leodegard, *Kanisa la Nyumbani: Utume wa Familia* (Swahili for *Domestic Church: Apostolate of the Family*): Moshi Lutheran Printing Press, 2014. A clear, simple explanation of the meaning of the family as the Domestic Church including the responsibility of parents in raising their children in the Catholic faith and the close connection to SCCs.

Massawe, Leodegard, *Utaratibu wa Ibada kwa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo*, Marangu-Moshi: Habari Maalum Press, 1983.

Matua, Aquinas (ed.), "FORUM: Seminarians' Involvement in SCCs," *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*, 2016/2, pp. 150-155.

If SCCs are not introduced as a major course in the theology curriculum, many seminarians adopt the mentality that SCCs do not occupy an essential place in the life of the Catholic Church in Africa.

McDonald, Fintan, "Pastoral Experiment in Kalenjii," *Mirror*, February, 1972, 2.

McGarry, Cecil (ed.), *What Happened at the African Synod*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995.

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Sister Janice spent four decades of her life in Africa, mainly in Zimbabwe. Celebrating the country's independence in 1980, she was consistently committed to work in social justice with the newly developed ZIMFEP schools, at Silveira House and with marginalized communities. As Bishop Dieter Scholz points out in his "Foreword," she did not evade the hard truth that after 40 years the new regime has not fulfilled its promises to create greater equality of opportunity for the disadvantaged; she continued to work for a better, kinder and happier world.

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"I must emphasize that the Small Christian Community is a backbone of the church in Africa. In Europe because of individualism, like the Holy Father said, it could be difficult but here we have the structures and it is something that is woven into our culture. And so, the Small Christian Communities, the mission stations, the parishes, the deaneries, and the dioceses are all structures through which consultations can be done. And I think that when you get the Small Christian Communities walking the church is vibrant because everybody knows everybody in the neighborhood."

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"Good Case Study of Synodality/the Synodal Process:"

The Jesuits report that when Christian Life Community (CLC) Young Adults gather throughout the world, they reflect on their joys and challenges in Small Local Communities (SLCs) using the reflect, listen and share process. Through two or three rounds of authentic sharing and deep listening, the young CLCers share how they are traveling, reflect on their prayer and notice God's action in their daily experience. The community experience of God's goodness equips the young people to face life's tough times with hope.

CLC is a caring space to celebrate life. It is a familiar space free from judgment and discrimination, where God's presence may be named. It is a home for welcoming and including everyone, walking together as friends and sharing life with one another.

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Okafor, Ikenna, José Ngalula, Nicholas Segeja, and Stan Chu Ilo (eds.), *Journeying Together for a Synodal Church in Africa: Echoes from an African Christian Palaver*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2023.

Pope Francis has convoked a Synod on Synodality. "Synodality is a style, it is a walk together, and it is what the Lord expects from the Catholic Church of the third millennium. This challenging invitation has initiated countless dialogues in Local Churches throughout the world. In this fine volume, African theologians and pastoral agents contribute their contextualizations, reflections, and proposals.

Okoth, Jecinter, "AMECEA: Goal of the SCCs Golden Jubilee is to Reawaken Spirituality, says AMECEA's Chairman for Pastoral Department," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 29 August, 2023, <https://communications.amecea.org/index.php/2023/08/25/amecea-goal-of-the-sccs-golden-jubilee-is-to-reawaken-spirituality-says-ameceas-chairman-for-pastoral-department/>

Okoth, Jecinter, "AMECEA Launches Golden Jubilee Year for SCCs, Prelate Emphasizes a Period of Reflection and Discernment," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 28 August, 2023, [AMECEA Launches Golden Jubilee Year for SCCs, Prelate Emphasizes a Period of Reflection and Discernment](#)

The region of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) in Dedza, Diocese, Malawi on Saturday, 19 August 2023, launched a year-long celebration of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) since its establishment, where Archbishop George Desmond Tambala of Malawi's Lilongwe Archdiocese encouraged reflection and discernment moments as a way to understand deeply SCCs. "Small Christian Community is a great tool for the Church, actually we cannot think of the Catholic Church without the Small Christian Communities as we launch 50 years in the region."

Okoth, Jecinter, "AMECEA: "Other Christian Churches and Continents Treasure Small Christian Communities in AMECEA" *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 499, 25 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 29 August, 2023, [AMECEA: Other Christian Churches and Continents Treasure Small Christian Communities in AMECEA](#)

Okoth, Jecinter, "AMECEA: Prepares to Launch Golden Jubilee for Small Christian Communities Ecclesial Model in Region," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 488, 9 June, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 12 June, 2022, [AMECEA: Prepares to Launch Golden Jubilee For Small Christian Communities Ecclesial Model in Region](#)

In remembrance of 50 years existence of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), the region that is comprised of eight National Conferences and two affiliate countries, the AMECEA Secretariat through its Pastoral Department is preparing to launch a one-year celebration of

pastoral solidarity through SCCs. In the very first meeting of the preparations on Tuesday 6, June that brought together a team from AMECEA and representatives from the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), the coordinator of AMECEA's pastoral department Emmanuel Chimombo, clarified the need for the jubilee celebration saying, "Participants in the meeting are to help brainstorm and reflect on how best 50 years existence of Small Christian Communities can be marked in the region."

Okoth, Jecinter, "AMECEA: Small Christian Communities is Anchored on the Word of God: AMECEA's Pastoral Coordinator," "AMECEA Online News, Issue 500, 1 September, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 2 September, 2023, [AMECEA: Small Christian Communities is Anchored on the Word of God: AMECEA's Pastoral Coordinator](#)

Okoth, Jecinter, "Grants for Small Christian Communities Go Beyond Catholic Families: Subsidy Administrator," *ACI Africa Online News*, 20 September, 2019, <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/158/grants-for-small-christian-communities-go-beyond-catholic-families-subsidy-administrator>

Okoth, Jecinter, KENYA, "Kenya-based Maryknoll Missionary Appreciates Growing number of African Theologians in the Church," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 442, 5 August, 2022, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 6 August, 2022, [KENYA: Kenya-based Maryknoll Missionary Appreciates Growing number of African Theologians in the Church \(amecea.org\)](#)

Okumu, Joseph, "Synthesis of the Hybrid Maryknoll Kenyan Affiliate Chapter's Response to Pope Francis' Call to the Synodal Process 2021-2023," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 12 August, 2022,

Oluoch, Lourine, "Why Jumuiyas Form the Backbone of Kariobangi Parish," *Seed*, Vol. 26, No. 12, Issue 272 (December, 2014), pp. 12-13.

Oluwadare Michael, "Eucharistic Deprivation in the Western Part of Nigeria," Unpublished Licentiate Thesis, San Francisco: Santa Clara University, 2022.

1983 Code of Canon Law, Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983.

Omolo, Alphonse, "Small Christian Communities as Gathered and Sent: A Case Study of Two Online Small Christian Communities Courses at the Loyola Institute for Ministry, Loyola University, New Orleans, USA," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved on 12 August, 2022, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/small-christian-communities-sccs-as-gathered-and-sent-a-case-study-of-two-online-sccs-courses/>

Omolo, Alphonse, "Small Christian Community Model of Parish Church: A Case Study of Training SCC and Parish Leaders in Kisumu Archdiocese, Kenya," Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 7 June, 2022, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/small-christian-community-model-of-parish-church> Revised version dated June, 2023.

To claim authentically the title "SCC" is to integrate the inner (gathered) and public (sent) dimensions of SCCs. It is like moving through the world with the "Bible" in one hand and the "Newspaper/Radio/Television/"

Smartphone,” etc. on the other. Being in an SCC demands a high level of relationship and task orientation. Consequently, SCCs must provide a strong sense of belonging to members as well as be able to address questions of justice and mercy. Members of the SCCs must explore and realize their own power to change their living conditions by popularising action-oriented Bible reflections (Omolo 2005). In addition, mutuality and conversation should remain at the heart of the inner life and the public life of the SCCs. This can then awaken the question, how can groups of Catholic faithful organize around a common good? And with this occurrence, a safe and favorable environment is created not only for the membership of the SCCs but also for their neighborhood communities, and beyond.

The keenness to this SCCs training assignment on the part of the facilitator, the parish priest, and the parish lay leaders cannot be emphasized well enough. It must be a compelling desire on the part of the parish priest and the parish lay leaders to realize functioning SCCs in their parish. It is only such enthralling aspirations that can navigate the actualization of the planning and implementation of the training outcomes at the SCCs and the parish levels. The opportunity, warmth, and support that was availed by the parish priests and the parish lay leaders of the three parishes involved in the training cannot be taken for granted. The incomparable obligation and interest in realizing efficacious SCCs cannot go without recognition and earnest appreciation.

This was intensive one-day training for each sub-parish and at the parish levels. Over and above, is a recommended training for a parish team of facilitators for select members and leaders of the SCCs for not less than three days. These individuals must be selected from leaders and members of the SCCs who have shown great commitment to the setting up and promotion of SCCs, individuals who are inherently facilitators. These teams of trainers can ensure the continuation of training and formation at the SCCs and at the parish levels. Similarly, a team of SCCs trainers can be trained at a diocesan, national, and regional bishop’s conference levels. Such teams of SCCs facilitators must be inclusive and should receive continuous capacity building and refresher training.

Omolo, Alphonse, “Small Communities Light up Neighborhoods in Kisumu” in Healey and Hinton, *Small Christian Communities Today*, pp. 110-116. Retrieved from the Google Books Website on 3 June, 2017,

<https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=YsJ3CAAAQBAJ&pg=PT117&lpg=PT117&dq=Alphonse+Omolo&source=bl&ots=myTvwHAg6F&sig=ACfU3U3GTVAkR7zhIybCdj-Ypybs6gBZIQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjSu8PTxuTpAhVDyhoKHUFEDlcQ6AEw>

https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=YsJ3CAAAQBAJ&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

Onyalla, Don Bosco, “Africa: Essay on Development and Challenges of Small Christian Communities to be Part of Resource Book for Use Globally,” *CANAA News Updates*, 12 March, 2018.

http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1187:essay-on-development-and-challenges-of-small-christian-communities-in-africa-to-be-part-of-a-resource-book-for-use-globally&catid=16:latestnews&Itemid=103&lang=en

Onyalla, Don Bosco, “Synod: Church in Africa Called to “Theological, Pastoral Discernment on Polygamy Issue, *ACI Africa*, 28 October 2023.

[Synod: Church in Africa Called to “theological, pastoral discernment” on Polygamy Issue \(aciafrica.org\)](https://www.aciafrica.org/synod-church-in-africa-called-to-theological-pastoral-discernment-on-polygamy-issue)

Under “Matters for Consideration” under the topic “For a church that listens and accompanies”, the synod delegates encourage the People of God across the globe to enhance [Small Christian Communities](#) (SCCs), a new way of being Church that the leadership of the Church in Africa has included in its evangelization structures. “Widespread in many parts of the world, grassroots or Small Christian Communities foster listening practices of and among the baptized,” the synod delegates say in their 42-page document, adding, “We are called to enhance their potential, including exploring how they can be adapted to urban contexts.”

In Eastern Africa the Catholic Church has fostered SCCs for five decades. In August, 2023 the [Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa](#) (AMECEA) [launched the Golden Jubilee Year of SCCs](#) to assess the status of this new way of being church in the region. “By December 2023, it will be 50 years since the Small Christian Communities were adopted by the AMECEA Region as a pastoral priority,” Bishop [Rogatus Kimaryo](#) of Tanzania’s Same Diocese and Chairman for [AMECEA Pastoral Department](#) said in his key address during the launch that was held in Malawi’s Dedza Diocese. Bishop Kimaryo added that the Pastoral Departments of Bishops’ Conferences in the AMECEA region will be spearheading the yearlong Golden Jubilee celebrations, “not as an event, but a process comprising of several strategic activities involving all AMECEA Member Conferences.”

Under “Matters for Consideration” under the topic “Participating Bodies” the synod delegates also address the reality of SCCs. Referring to this new way of being church in Africa, the synod delegates say, “Synodality grows in the involvement of each member in processes of discernment and decision-making for the mission of the Church: in this sense we are edified and encouraged by many Small Christian Communities in emerging churches, which live a daily fraternal “body to body” around the Word and the Eucharist.”

Still under the topic of “a church that listens and accompanies”, the synod delegates pose the question of what needs to “change so that those who feel excluded can experience a more welcoming church” and go on to affirm, “Listening and accompaniment are not just individual initiatives, but a form of ecclesial action. This is why they must find a place within the ordinary pastoral planning and operational structuring of Christian Communities at different levels, also valuing spiritual accompaniment.”

Opondo, Elias and Paul Bere (eds), *African Theology in the 21st Century: A Call to Baraza*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2021.

The Swahili word *baraza* refers to both the meeting place and the meeting/conversation itself. A theological *baraza* that is not afraid of raising questions and

exploring new ways of doing theology is critical to the advancement of African Theology. The conversational framework proposed in the *baraza* approach is one that lists down matters “for conversation” and elaborates their importance. It selects the key participants to the conversation and draws the principles of the *baraza* dialogue, which lean on respect, open mindedness, critical thinking, spiritual perception of the course of action, and pastoral enunciation of the applicability. This methodological approach to *baraza* encounters opens up a wider possibility for building momentum towards a church that is present to the realities of the daily lives of the people, with a theological framework that is contextualized and responsive to pastoral challenges of the day.

Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe E. (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2016.

Part One: “The Francis Effect and the Church in Africa.”

Part Two: “Critique of Theological Methodology and Ecclesial Practice.”

Part Three: “A Church that Goes Forth with Boldness and Creativity.”

Africa continues to experience great religious ferment, not only in the enormous growth of Christianity over the past century but also in the robust intellectual output of African theologians and pastoral agents all over the continent. This volume brings together Africa’s theological elders with new and emerging voices to bring analysis and reflection on what John L. Allen Jr. has called “the most dynamic corner of the Christian map.” The volume is a treasure for anyone with an interest in theological reflection from an African perspective, and a necessary resource for theologians, scholars and pastoral agents working in a church that is steadily moving its center to the Global South.

Includes a chapter “Beyond Vatican II: Imaging the Catholic Church of Nairobi I” by Joseph G. Healey, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 1 November, 2019, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/TCCRSA.pdf> Has a section on “From the Perspective of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Eastern Africa.”

Available as an Ebook at:

Amazon Kindle. https://www.amazon.com/Church-We-Want-African-Catholics/dp/1626982031/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1469731962&sr=1-1&keywords=Orobator

Barnes and Noble Nook. <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-church-we-want-a-e-orobator/1123831368?ean=9781626982031>

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.

Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe E., *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in its Social Context*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2000.

Orobator, Agbonkhianmeghe E., *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV AND AIDS, Refugees and Poverty*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005.

5. To meet youth where they are, we could create Youth SCCs.

Pastoral Coordinator's Office, Arua, Uganda, *Towards a Community Church, Gospel Sharing: The 7-Step Method, God Renews the World Through Us, The Christian Community and its Leaders, Our Journey Together, Together As One*, Arua: Arua Diocese Publications, 2013. Also available in Lögbara, Alur and Madi.

Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities (SCCs), *MERCYQUEST: Celebrating the Jubilee of Mercy: Reflections for Small Groups*, Archdiocese of Hartford, 2016.

A full color four session booklet for general parish use designed around four parables of mercy. *MercyQuest* is useful for small groups, parish organizations and individuals. For SCCs in Africa two ways to use this booklet are:

1. Use as a four-week module during this 2016 Jubilee Year of Mercy.
2. Use the write-up of one of the four parables when that particular Gospel appears in the Lectionary Cycle.

Pastoral Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Nairobi 2013, Nairobi: Archdiocese of Nairobi, 2013.

Padila, Estela, "SCCs in Africa, Latin America and Asia and their Reception of Vatican II," Manilla: Unpublished Paper 2014.

Pattison, Mark, "Maryknoll Sister Who Ministered in Africa For Nearly 40 Years Dies at 79" *Catholic News Service*, 10 March, 2021, republished/recirculated in *Crux* and other Catholic News Services, [Maryknoll sister who ministered in Africa for nearly 40 years dies at 79 \(cruznw.com\)](https://www.cruznw.com/2021/03/10/maryknoll-sister-who-ministered-in-africa-for-nearly-40-years-dies-at-79/)

The uniqueness (the "new normal") of this article is that it quotes twice from my Personal [Joseph G. Healey Facebook Page](#) and is one of the Catholic news stories that is republished/recirculated by a consortium of Catholic News Agencies.

Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Africae Terrarum*, 29 October 1967, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS) 59(1967)1073-1097.

Paulines Editorial Team, *New Media for Everyone*, Civic Education Series No. 6, Media Training in Africa Series, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2013.

Peace Without End Based on the 2nd African Synod: "In the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace," The Word of God for Our Small Christian Communities, Lusaka: CARITAS Zambia and Biblical Desk Catholic Secretariat, 2011.

Pelaji, Sarah, "TANZANIA: Pastoral Coordinator Calls AMECEA Counties to Promote Small Christian Communities," *AMECEA Online News*, Issue 296, 13 September, 2019, <https://amecea.blogspot.com/2019/09/tanzania-pastoral-coordinator-calls.html#!/2019/09/tanzania-pastoral-coordinator-calls.html>

Reprinted as "Small Christian Communities, Model of Evangelization" in the *Fides International New Service*, 17 September, 2019 – adapted from the *AMECEA Online News*.

NOTE: More and more, the Vatican is publishing stories on SCCs in Eastern Africa. They like our SCCs Pastoral Model with a missionary outreach.

Pelton, Robert S., *Bob Pelton Legacy – Collected Documents and Papers*, Notre Dame Archives, 505 items, University of Notre Dame: Notre Dame Archives, 2021.

Organized into three sections: Pelton, Small Christian Communities, Romero.

Pelton, Robert S., *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.

Pelton, Robert S. (ed.), *Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.

Pierre, Pedro, “CEBs in the Synthesis Document,” unpublished document, Basic Ecclesial Communities, Guayaquil, Ecuador, November 2023. Posted on our Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, 7 November, 2023, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/comunidades-eclesiales-de-base-cebs-in-the-2023-synod-synthesis-document1-english-translation>

The Synthesis Document of the recent Synodal Assembly meeting in the Vatican in October, 2023 makes us see that yes, the CEBs (*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* in Spanish) are “a seed” that has become “a big bush.” This article documents the references directly and indirectly to CEBs in the “Synthesis Document.” The CEBs that the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mexico in 2021 described as a “synodal Church experience” have a particular responsibility in this Synodal Process to set in motion another way of being church as we have begun to be. The article suggests reflections and questions to work on in our CEBs.

The original Spanish article *Las CEBs en el Documento de Síntesis* is also posted on our the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, 7 November, 2023, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/las-cebs-en-el-documento-de-sintesis>

Pikiti, Febian, “Small Christian Communities: A Key Pastoral Priority for the Church in the AMECEA Region.” Mwanza: Printed Paper, 2014.

A Pocket Companion To Synodality: Voices from Africa, African Synodality Initiative, Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar, Nairobi, 2022, [FINAL ENGLISH ASI AMENDED \(jesuits.africa\)](https://jesuits.africa)

Members of the African Synodality Initiative (ASI) Theological Working Group developed reflections on some key synodality themes from an African perspective that were published as a collection of short essays. As a resource material, this publication is meant to promote and support a wide and inclusive listening of all the People of God in keeping with the vision of Pope Francis of synodality as “a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn.” This publication is available in both English and French.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005.

“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. Under the “African Continent” on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, <http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/274-post-workshop-report-workshop-on-how-small-christian-communities-in-africa-receive-and-implement-magisterial-documents.html>

Preparatory Document for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly on *Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2017. Vatican Website. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html
<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2017/01/13/0021/00050.html#EN>

Online questionnaire on the synod's official website:

youth.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/it.html.

It is open to any young person, regardless of faith or religious belief. Click here to start the survey in English.

Preparatory Document for the Synod of Bishops XVI Ordinary General Assembly on “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2021. Vatican Website. [Documento-Preparatorio-A4-EN.pdf \(synod.va\)](#)

The Synodal Path (Path of Synodality) will solemnly open on the 9 – 10 October 2021 in Rome and on the following 16-17 October, 2021 in each Local Church (diocese). One fundamental stage will be the celebration of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, in October 2023 that which will be followed by the implementation phase that will again involve the Local Churches (cf. EC, arts. 19-21).

ADD

Pre-Synodal Meeting’s Final Document for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly on *Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Vatican: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2018. <https://zenit.org/articles/pre-synodal-meetings-final-document>

Procedures and Guidelines for Small Christian Communities in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Lusaka: Pastoral Department of Lusaka Archdiocese, 2014.

Procedures for Meetings, Bible Sharing, Bible Study and of Praying with the Scriptures at All Levels in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Lusaka: Pastoral Department of Lusaka Archdiocese, 2013.

Proctor, Gerry, *A Commitment to Neighborhood: Base Ecclesial Communities in Global Perspective*, Doctorate Dissertation, Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2012.

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.

The first of two *Spearheads* that contains the papers of the Research Project and Symposium sponsored by AMECEA and Missio, Aachen on “The Reception of the *Communio* Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council” in Nairobi, Kenya from 18-26 September, 1993. Section Two on “Pastoral Praxis of Small Christian Communities” has three papers:

- Joseph Healey, MM, “Twelve Case Studies of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa,” pp. 59-103.

"Zwölf Fallstudien Kleiner Christlicher Gemeinschaften in Ostafrika" in *Alternativen zur traditionellen Pfarrstruktur: Die Communio-Ekklesiologie und ihre Rezeption in Afrika, Ozeanien und Europa* by Hrsg. von Ludwig Bertsch, Hermann Janssen und Marco Moerschbacher. - Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1997 (Forum Weltkirche; 7), S. 72-94.

- Rodrigo Mejia, SJ, “The Pastoral Priorities of the Local Church in Eastern Africa,” pp. 104-119.
- John Mutiso-Mbinda, “Ecumenical Challenges of Small Christian Communities and the African Synod of Bishops,”

Other relevant papers:

- Laurenti Magesa, “The Church in Eastern Africa: Retrospect and Prospect,” pp. 3-35.
- Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, LSOSF, “The Role of Women in Small Christian Communities,” pp. 181-202.

These papers are especially relevant as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II (1965-2015) on 8 December, 2015.

Radoli, Agatha (ed.), *The Local Church with a Human Face*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* 140-141, 1996.

The second of two *Spearheads* that contains the papers of the Research Project and Symposium sponsored by AMECEA and Missio, Aachen.

Rahner, Karl, *The Shape of the Church to Come*, New York: The Seabury Press, 1974.

Ramos, Belza Elia, *Reflections on My Journey of Faith: Moving Closer to My Destination*, Xulon Press, 2020. Available on the Amazon Website,

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/166280198X?pf_rd_r=ADB14M7PJM5M5ADJ95W9&pf_rd_p=a712d25e-094e-4a8b-b495-0be41c4dbcc9

Belza is one of the USA networkers of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website. She is a dedicated member of our St. Isidore of Seville SCC that meets online on Skype ever Tuesday. She writes:

Psalm 127:1a: “Unless the LORD build the house, they labor in vain who build.” This is the story of my journey of faith. I am a cradle Catholic who grew up with God, family and community as the moral compass points in my life in a small town where everyone knew each other. I conflated obeying God with obeying parents and cultural norms until I ventured out into the world. Sadly, I married outside the Catholic Church, my faith and culture, all of which taught marriage is forever. God was ever calling me back to my faith, immature and unschooled as it was, but the world tugged in another direction and I stayed frozen in the situation. With a clear promise from God that He would not leave me an orphan, I took a leap of faith and left with my two children. With God at its center, my life has been an incredible journey of learning to grow in faith and do His work. The Angels that surround me re-anchor me. This is my personal response to God. I leave you, the reader enough room to build your own response. That you are reading this book is the reason God was prompting me to share it. Belza Elia Ramos was born in 1940 in Salineño, Texas, USA and grew up in Corpus Christi. There she pursued her dream of being a nurse. Her life is full of "firsts" as a Hispanic woman, with few Hispanic women role models. She writes to encourage others to be resilient, have faith in God and themselves. Past experiences often help forge new careers. She enjoys being with family and she is looking forward to her first great-granddaughter! Writing with the hindsight of an adult helps her understand life better and she gets to laugh and cry all over again!

Ramos, Belza Elia, “State of the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) at St. Brigid Catholic Church, San Antonio, Texas (USA), June, 2021,” Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 24 June, 2021, [June-2021-Belza-Ramos-State-of-the-SCCs-Report-for-2021.pdf \(smallchristiancommunities.org\)](https://smallchristiancommunities.org/June-2021-Belza-Ramos-State-of-the-SCCs-Report-for-2021.pdf)

“I am sharing the following report/evaluation that I made to my pastor in San Antonio, Texas with you, knowing that we all faced and are still facing the challenges that COVID-19 brought to our Small Christian Community lives, not only health-wise, but in fulfilling our mission as a SCC Model of Church. My prayer is that you all are doing well, individually and as SCCs. Also I hope that you will be called to share your own experiences during these trying times, on this website, so that we can learn from each other. God be with all of us.”

Reader for the Network Small Christian Communities Africa – Fifth Workshop (Réseau des Communautés Ecclésiales de Base en Afrique – Cinquième Atelier), Theme: “A New Way of Being Church for Young People? Small Christian Communities and the Youth” (Theme: “Une nouvelle manière d’être Église pour les jeunes? Les Communautés Ecclésiales de Base (CEB) et les jeunes,” Aachen: Missio, Privately Printed, 2018.

Reese, Tom, “[Francis Wants the Synod in Every Parish. Here's How To Bring It To Yours.](https://religionnews.com/2023/10/23/francis-wants-the-synod-in-every-parish-heres-how-to-bring-it-to-yours),” *Religious News Service*, 23 October, 2023, <https://religionnews.com/2023/10/23/francis-wants-the-synod-in-every-parish-heres-how-to-bring-it-to-yours> Also available on audio.

Reprinted in *National Catholic Reporter*

[Francis wants the synod in every parish. Here's how to bring it to yours. | National Catholic Reporter \(ncronline.org\)](#)

and

America

[Pope Francis wants the synod in every parish. Here's how to bring it to yours. | America Magazine](#)

No document will convey the result of the synod. It will not be enough to read any document that comes from the synod; Catholics must experience the synod, must do synod. The best place to do this is in your parish. Some of the African participants at the synod report that they are already doing it. They have Small Christian Communities (SCCs) that meet weekly to converse about the Sunday Scriptures. They pray together and share their reflections. This provides the groundwork for a Synodal Parish. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna, Austria acknowledged that the European Church is lagging behind on such practices. Every parish in America can have its own synodal experience by adapting the Synodal Process as described in “Methodology for the Working Groups” published by the General Secretary of the synod.

“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. Includes “The Coming of Small Christian Communities to Eastern Africa” by Joseph Kelly and “Towards an Effective Bible Reflection Method in African SCCs” by Joseph Healey.

RENEW Africa Resources and Publications on Small Christian Communities in South Africa. <http://www.renewintl.org>

Roberts, James, “Building the Family of God: What Do Young People Look for in Church?: Just-completed Surveys of Young Africans and Americans Have Highlighted the Challenges Facing the Youth Synod Taking Place Later This Year,” *The Tablet* Website, 7 January 2018, <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/8357/building-the-family-of-god-what-do-young-people-look-for-in-church->¹⁵¹¹

Reprinted in:

1. “Tangaza Lecturer’s Work Gets Covered by The Tablet -UK.” Tangaza Blog under “UNIVERSITY NEWS & EVENTS,” 8 January, 2018. <http://tangaza.ac.ke/tangaza-lecturers-work-gets-covered-by-the-tablet-uk>

2. “African Youth Want To See More Space for Women and LBGT People.” FutureChurch Email Message, 11 January, 2018.

3. “Building the Family of God: What Do Young People Look for in Church?”

¹⁵¹¹ This online story had a different title, was longer and had three hyperlinks as compared to the printed article in the “NEWS: the Church in the World” section had a different title and was shorter. The whole paper (printed) issue is also online on *The Tablet* Website.

Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA), 15 January, 2018.

http://www.canaafrica.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=archive&year=2018&month=1&lang=en

Plus links on other news bulletins.

Roberts, James, "United States/Eastern Africa: Surveys Seek 'Real Voice' of Young People" *The Tablet*, 13 January, 2018 paper (printed) issue, page 26,
<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/downloadpdf/130118issue.pdf>

Rôle des Responsables dans les Communautés Chrésiennes de Base, Ouagadougou: Archidiocèse de Ouagadougou, Service diocésain de la formation permanente, 2014.

Rugambwa, Protase, *Ministry and Collaboration in Small Christian Communities: Communities in Rulenge Diocese, Tanzania, a Case Study*, Rome: Lateran University, 1998.

Rutechura, Pius, "The Experience of the AMECEA Region with Small Christian Communities, Pastoral Priority since the 1970s," 27th 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: Unpublished Paper, 22 February, 2011, 13 pages.

Rwechungura, John Joseph, *Mjue Askofu Christopher Mwoleka: Mtume wa Upendo Upeo wa Yesu*, Karagwe: Privately Printed, 2012.

Ryan, Patrick (ed.), *New Strategies for a New Evangelization*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2002.

Sangu, James, "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 *African Ecclesial Review (AFER)*, 10: 1 (January 1968): 71-84, 86 and Raymond Hickey (ed.), *Modern Missionary Documents and Africa*, Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1982.

"SCCs Holdings" as part of the "Rev. Robert S. Pelton Latin American Collection," Moreau Seminary, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2019.

Schreiter, Robert, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985. 30th Anniversary Edition, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015.

Scott, Eileen, "Verbum Dei: Graduate Students, Young Professional Enjoy Study Group," *Christian Union*, Spring, 2016.

Interesting Case Study of a SCC connected to the Harvard Catholic Center/St. Paul's Parish in Boston, Massachusetts, US. The 18 members consist of young professionals with careers in Boston and graduate students (American and international students) at Harvard University. They gather each Sunday to read and reflect on the Sunday readings (the relevancy of *Old* and *New Testament* readings to their life and career) and to share and pray about finding God in everyday life. One member, a second-year Harvard graduate student said: "I certainly think that a small group based on *Bible* Study is an essential part of any

Christian life. I would hope to find and encourage this kind of prayerful group engagement with scripture wherever I end up.”

Segeja, Nicholas, *An Ecclesiology of Reverential Dialog in the Family (Shikome)*. Nairobi: Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, CUEA, 2010.

Segeja Nicholas, "Family-Centered Parish Through Small Christian Communities: A Parish Model for the New Evangelization" in Nicholas Segeja and Emmanuel Wabanhu, (eds.), *The Echo of Amoris Laetitia in Africa: Towards Living the Joy of Love Experienced by Families in the Church*, Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2017.

Segeja, Nicholas, “Reverential Dialog-based Evangelization in Africa: A New Icon Towards Fully Human Person Liberation,” *African Christian Studies*, 26: 4 (December, 2010), 25-41.

Segeja, Nicholas, “Small Christian Communities: A Vital Icon for New Evangelization,” *African Christian Studies*, 27: 4 (December, 2011): 7-38.

Segeja, Nicholas, “Summary Notes” on *The Development and Ecclesiology of Small Christian Communities (SCCS) in AMECEA Countries*, Nairobi: Unpublished Course Notes at CUEA, 2010.

Segeja, Nicholas, “Syllabus of Course on ‘Small Christian Communities in Africa’ B-PT 111,” First cycle – Baccalaureate, Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), 2017.

Under Methodology: “As theology, at best, must respond to the joys, sorrows, hopes and fears of the community of faith which the theologian represents, the lecturer in this course envisions the student’s primary audience and always encourage him or her to do theology *with* the people and not simply to do theology for the people.”

Shijinga, Inviolata, “Small Christian Communities: The Ultimate Support System,” *The Basilican*, 1:6 (2016): 46-48.

Excellent description of the life of a SCC. More than a support group, more than a prayer group, more than a *Bible* study group. SCC members are always there for one another. They help each other to grow in the social, family, and most importantly, spiritual life. A special achievement is to help couples get married in the Catholic Church and receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Sirabahenda, Léon, *Eglise Famille de Dieu: Les Ressources Spirituelles de L’Image Réference pour L’évangélisation en Afrique*, Rome: Gregorianum Univeristy 1996. This Ph.D Dissertation treats the spirituality of BECs/SCCs.

Sivalon, John (ed.), *The Buffaloes: A Story Commemorating Maryknoll Society's 50 Years in Tanzania, 1946-1996*, Dar es Salaam, privately printed, 1996. Maryknoll Africa Region Website and African Proverbs, Saying and Stories Website, retrieved on 16 November, 2022, <https://afriprov.tangaza.ac.ke/?p=7473>

“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.”

“Small Christian Communities in the Light of the African Synod,” AMECEA *Documentation Service* (ADS), 7/No. 453/1996 (1 April, 1996), 8 pages.

Small Christian Communities Marching Towards the African Year of Reconciliation (also in French and Portuguese), Accra: SECAM Office, Privately Photocopied, 2015.

Small Christian Communities (SCCs)-- Diocese of Meru, Meru Diocese, Kenya: Privately Printed, 2017.

The Seven Steps of Lumko in three languages: English, Meru and Swahili.

“Small Christian Communities: 20 Years Later,” AMECEA *Documentation Service* (ADS), 10-11/No. 472/1997 (June/July, 1997), 20 pages.

Small Groups Field Guide: A Smarter Way to Build Your Small Groups Program. Produced by Michael St. Pierre and the Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA) in the USA. 2017. Available as a printed book and an Ebook. [iBooks Version for iPhone & iPad. PDF Version:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/578cce236a49638ee359e17b/t/59e7bf7bd74cffd56e0dea38/1508360141336/Small+Groups+Field+Guide+PDF.pdf
Small Groups Discussion Guide](#)

Small Groups Field Guide: A 22-page resource from the Catholic Campus Ministry Association in the USA. Small groups (also called Small Christian Communities -- SCCs) on college and high school campuses are an essential ingredient to any Catholic campus ministry program. This guide explains the details of small groups and provide motivation to utilize them on your campus. This guide provide useful information and suggested steps to planning gatherings, resources to use during small group sharing, etc. This book is available for download with iBooks on your Mac or iOS device. Multi-touch books can be read with iBooks on your Mac or iOS device. Books with interactive features may work best on an iOS device. iBooks on your Mac requires OS X 10.9 or later.

Spadaro Antonio, *WEB 2.0: Relationships in the Internet Age*, Media Training in Africa Series, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2014.

Ssentamu (Joseph Healey), Review of [Handbook of African Catholicism](#). Reviewed in the United States on August 3, 2022, Amazon Website, retrieved on 6 August, 2022, [“Small Christian Communities \(SCCs\) in Africa: Histories, Themes, Development and Challenges.” \(amazon.com\)](#)

“Summary Notes” on *The Development and Ecclesiology of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in AMECEA Countries*, Nairobi: Unpublished Course Notes, 2010.

“Statement (Position Paper) from Bishops of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) Who Are Delegates to the Synod of Bishops’ Second Special Assembly for Africa in Rome in October, 2009. Nairobi: Unpublished Paper, 29 September, 2009, 5 pages. Published online by Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) *Email News Bulletin*. Issue No. 096, Tuesday,

September 29, 2009. Available online:

[http://209.85.229.132/search?q=cache:4KIc04Qm0LkJ:www.africamission-mafr.org/cisa18_synod_africa.htm+%22Bishops+of+the+Association+of+Member+Episcopal+Conferences+of+Eastern+Africa+\(AMECEA\)+Who+Are+Delegates+to+the+Synod+of+Bishops%E2%80%99+Second+Special+Assembly+for+Africa%22&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk](http://209.85.229.132/search?q=cache:4KIc04Qm0LkJ:www.africamission-mafr.org/cisa18_synod_africa.htm+%22Bishops+of+the+Association+of+Member+Episcopal+Conferences+of+Eastern+Africa+(AMECEA)+Who+Are+Delegates+to+the+Synod+of+Bishops%E2%80%99+Second+Special+Assembly+for+Africa%22&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk)

Steffen, Paul, *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.

Steffen, Paul, “Lumko Institute: Towards Building a Participatory Church,” *East Asian Pastoral Review* 51:2 (2014): 109-139 and *Sedos Bulletin* 47:1-2 (2015): 3-17.

Steffen, Paul, “A Reflective Book Review: A New Way of Being Church. The Beginning and the Spread of Small Christian Communities and Bible Sharing in Africa and Asia” by Klaus Vellguth, *SEDOS Bulletin*, 2015.

[\(54\) \(PDF\) Klaus Vellguth A Reflective Book Review: A New Way of Being Church. The Beginning and the Spread of Small Christian Communities and Bible-Sharing in Africa and Asia | Paul Steffen - Academia.edu](#)

Stinton, Diane (ed.), *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations*, London: SPCK International Study Guide 46, 2010.

Sybertz, Donald, *Tears of Joy: African Story about Heroes and Monsters*. With editions in Sukuma and Swahili. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mathews Bookstore & Stationers, 2006.

Nanetya Foundation: Ethnic Stories in Mother Tongues Website

<http://nanetya-foundation.org>

<http://nanetya-foundation.org/sukuma-shisoji-ja-buyegi>

Sukuma Legacy Project Website

<https://sukumalegacy.org>

<https://sukumalegacy.org/2017/04/28/shisoji-ja-buyegi>

This is probably the most famous Sukuma story and is found in many versions. Some examples:

“Lishing’weng’we na Masala Kulangwa” in Kamati ya Utafiti wa Utamaduni Bujora, *Imani za Jadi za Kisukuma Katika Misemo, Hadithi, Methali na Desturi za Maisha* (Paris: Cid éditions, 1988), 296-305.

Section 2 on “Sukuma Redeemer and Savior Figure” in Chapter 2 on “Jesus, Chief Diviner-Healer and Eldest Brother-Chief Intercessor” in Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz (eds.), *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1996 and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997. Available as an Ebook on Amazon (for Kindle), Google and Barnes and Noble (for Nook).

Sybertz, Donald and Joseph Healey. *Kueneza Injili Kwa Methali: Hekima ya Kisukuma na Lugha Mbalimbali juu ya Chakula -- Kitabu cha Kwanza*, Peramiho: Benedictine Publications Ndanda -- Peramiho, 1984. The English translation is *Proclaiming the Gospel Through Proverbs: The Wisdom of Sukuma and Different Languages on Food*

– Book I.

Taketa, Carolyn, *Why Small Groups? The Reason Behind Intentional Christian Community*
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

Tertrais, Max. *The Clever Young Man and the Monster: The Sukuma Myth of Shing'weng'we and Masala Kulangwa*. Paulines Publications Africa, 2000. The Swahili version is *Kijana Mwerevu na Shing'weng'we: Hadithi ya Kisukuma ya Shing'weng'we and Masala Kulangwa*. With accompanying eight-page booklet *The Clever Young Man and the Monster: Comments on the Book*.

African Stories Database on the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website:

a. “Masala Kulangwa and the Monster Shing'weng'we.”

[http://www.afriprov.org/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=238](http://www.afriprov.org/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid[0]=238)

b. “The Clever Young Man and the Monster.”

[http://www.afriprov.org/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid\[0\]=156](http://www.afriprov.org/resources/storiesdatabase.html?task=display2&cid[0]=156)

While this article is not about Small Christian Communities as such, it reflects the method or process of the “local community as theologian” -- a small community of the Ndoleleji Research Committee in Shinyanga, Tanzania theologizing together on an African theme on the local level. The Sukuma myth narrated in a long song (in chant style) of the clever young man Masala Kulangwa and the monster Shing'weng'we can be applied to Jesus Christ as redeemer and savior. This is a concrete step toward an inculturated Christianity in Africa.

Tesfamariam, Menghhesteab, “The Role of the Church,” *New People*, No. 135, November-December, 2011: 13.

“Three Testimonies from Members of the Maryknoll Small Communities, Sal y Luz (Salt and Light)”, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 7 June, 2022, [Three Testimonies from Members of the Maryknoll Small Communities, Sal y Luz \(Salt and Light\) – Small Christian Communities](#).

“1961-2015 Timeline in the History and Development of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Especially Eastern Africa,” 2014, Nairobi, Unpublished Paper, 12 June, 2014, 55 pages. This timeline has proven very useful to many people and is quoted in books, articles and reports, Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 12 June, 2014.

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/africa/africa-continent/293-1961-2015-timeline-in-the-history-and-development-of-small-christian-communities-sccs-in-africa-especially-eastern-africa.html>

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/images/stories/pdf/timeline.pdf>

Ugeux, Bernard and Pierre Lefebvre, *Small Christian Communities and Parishes*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999.

Ulrich, Megan, "Carrying Each Other's Burdens," Today's American Catholic Website, 24 April 2023, retrieved 27 April, 2023, [Carrying Each Other's Burdens by Megan Ulrich - Today's American Catholic \(todaysamericancatholic.org\)](https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/Carrying-Each-Other-s-Burdens)

Uzukwu, Elochukwu, *A Listening Church, Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996. Reprinted: Eugene, OR: Wif and Stock Publishers, 2006.

Presents the problems and challenges facing the Catholic Church in Africa today. Nigerian Spiritan missionary priest Father Elochukwu Uzukwu, CSSP briefly describes the historical development of the church in the period of colonialism, but focuses his primary attention on how the church can respond today to African needs. AIDS, famine, ethnic strife, refugees, poverty, debt, environmental degradation -- these form the wounded face of Africa today, the reality confronting the Catholic Church in Africa. To heal Africa, Uzukwu argues that the church in Africa must become a credible and effective agent of change by making full use of African resources (natural and socio-historical) including traditional patterns of social organization. In order to renew itself, the church must remember that it does not exist for itself but for the people -- to bear witness in Africa to the risen Lord. Focusing on the Catholic Church in Africa today, *A Listening Church* proposes a fresh approach to Ecclesiology. Following closely on the First African Synod of Bishops, Uzukwu proposes the initiation of serious theological discussion on the structure of the church in Africa that came out of that historic occasion. Simply speaking, the African churches must listen to their people, and the church in Rome must listen to the churches in Africa. *A Listening Church* is a voice deserving to be heard in the ongoing discussions of world ecumenical and church outreach issues.

This book is enjoying a new life/resurgence in the light of Pope Francis emphasizing that we should first be a Listening Church and second a Teaching Church.

Young, Randy, *Catholic Campus Ministry: Fifteen Profiles in Achievement*, NJ, 2020. Ebook and paperback, Amazon Website, retrieved on 21 August 2021.
https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08HZFBNQ5/ref=pe_385040_118058080_TE_M1DP

Catholic Campus Ministry plays a crucial role in helping to shape the lives and deepen the faith of young adults. At a time of widening social, political, and spiritual unrest, campus ministries on colleges and universities around the USA are developing student-leaders to become agents for positive change in their communities, the Catholic Church and future professions. *Catholic Campus Ministry: Fifteen Profiles in Achievement* celebrates the work of Catholic ministries as a whole and, just importantly, the success of a laudable core group on very diverse campuses that has consistently found imaginative new ways to connect with and impact young people at a formative period in their lives. Some of these 15 campuses emphasize Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).

Youth of Dandora Parish, "An Overview Structure of Holy Cross Catholic Parish Dandora Youth Ministry in Nairobi Archdiocese Including a Case Study of St. Perpetua SCC," Nairobi: Unpublished Reports, 2015, 2018.

Vademecum **ADD**

Vandenakker, John Paul, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish: An Ecclesiological Analysis of the North American Experience*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995.

Villemure, Elizabeth, "Youth and Small Christian Communities in Kangemi Parish," *Newsletter Archdiocese of Nairobi*, November, 1993: 4-5.

Insightful historical article on 45 committed youth in four Junior Small Christian Communities (JSCCs) or *jumuiya ya vijana*. Base youth communities organized according to the neighborhood. Two animators ("wakolezaji" in Swahili) on the Parish Pastoral Team coordinate and give formation to the JSCCs.

Waliggo, John Mary, "The Church as Family of God and Small Christian Communities," *AMECEA Documentation Service*, No. 429 (1 December, 1994).

Wall, Barbara and Massimo Faggioli (eds), *Pope Francis: A Voice for Mercy, Justice, Love and Care for the Earth*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019.
<https://www.orbisbooks.com/pope-francis.html>

Wambua, Nzilani Mary, *Enhancing the Spirit of Communion in Small Christian Communities: A Case Study in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya*, Nairobi: Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Privately Printed, 2015.

Wasswa, Joseph, "The Next Step Ahead for the Existing SCCs," Tororo, Uganda: Unpublished Paper, 2015.

White, Robert, "Reaching Our Non-practicing Catholics and the Unchurched with Lay Evangelizing Teams," Nairobi: Unpublished Article, 2013.

Whitehead, Evelyn and James. *Community of Faith: Models and Strategies for Developing Christian Communities*. iUniverse, 1982. ISBN-13: 978-0-595-198-085 Available at iUniverse

Wiesendanger, Alex Tindal, *Seeds of Justice: Organizing Your Church to Change the World*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020. <https://www.orbisbooks.com/seeds-of-justice.html>

Refers to a House Meeting, a type of SCC. Five to 20 people get together for uninterrupted conversation. These meetings can be in people's houses, a church basement, a park, a backyard, a local coffee shop or a McDonald's. Drawing on long experience working in faith-based communities, churches, congregations and neighborhoods around issues of social justice using this House Meeting Model, Wiesendanger offers a handbook to translate a commitment to social justice into effective action. Beginning with the need to move beyond charity to justice, he then guides readers from being activists to becoming agents of transformation within their church and the world. This involves learning how to build power through relationships and listening. Finally, it means developing faith-based communities, churches, congregations and neighborhoods capable of wielding power in the public sphere. Contains a "Sample House Meeting Agenda with Justice Bible Study."

Wijzen, Frans, 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.

Wojcik, Michael, "Missionary Priest Shares African Culture With Students," *The Beacon*, 13 October, 2022, *The Beacon* Website, retrieved on 14 October 2022.

<http://www.evergreeneditions.com/publication/?m=32257&i=764707&p=2&ver=html>

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*Working Document*¹⁵¹² for the Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly. *Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Liberia Editrice Vaticana and Paulines Publications Africa, 2018. Vatican Website.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20180508_instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html

"ZAMBIA: ZEC Hosts National Youth SCCs Workshop on the Theme 'Youth SCCs Embrace the Word of God,'" *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, Issue 037, December 6, 2013,

http://amecea.blogspot.com/2013/12/zambia-zec-hosts-national-youth-sccs.html?utm_source=AMECEA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=29c836c001-AMECEA+Online+Newsletter+6+5+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_85fa866553-29c836c001-6746297

Zemale, Terese Josephine, *Christian Witness through Small Christian Communities*, Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, *Spearhead* No. 121, 1992.

Zengarini, Lisa, "Pope Upholds Brazilian BECs' Commitment To Promote An Outgoing Church," Vatican Website, 21 July, 2023, retrieved on 21 July, 2023,

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-07/pope-upholds-becs-commitment-to-promote-an-outgoing-church.html>, with a 1:57 minutes audio report. Republished on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, retrieved 22 July, 2023, <https://smallchristiancommunities.org/pope-upholds-brazilian-becs-commitment-to-promote-an-outgoing-church>

Report on the 15th Inter-ecclesial Meeting of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) in Brazil from 18--22 July, 2023 on the theme "Basic Ecclesial Communities: An Outgoing Church Pursuing the Full Life For All Men and Women." Discussions focused on five thematic areas including: Synodality and Power in the Church; the Political and Social Dimension; the Economy of Francesco; Integral Ecology and Education. Brazilian BECs held their first national inter-ecclesial meeting in 1975.

Zulu, Stella, "AMECEA To Celebrate 50 Years of Small Christian Communities," *AMECEA Online Newsletter*, 18 August, 2023, AMECEA Website, retrieved on 18 August, 2023, UGANDA: AMECEA To Celebrate Small Christian Communities Golden Jubilee **ADD**

¹⁵¹² The Vatican is still slow to "get it." Young people have pleaded with Vatican officials to use English (or other vernacular languages) rather than Latin. Good news: The *Lineamenta* came as the *Preparatory Document*. Bad news: we are going backwards again with Latin (*Instrumentum Laboris*) used rather than English (*Working Document*) in the official document from Rome. The Daughters of St. Paul wisely shifted to English in their local publication.

Zwack, Daniel, "Christian Community--African Style," *Channel*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Autumn, 1967).

Zwack, Daniel, *Nyarombo Mission Diary*, Nyarombo, Tanzania: Privately Printed, 27 March, 1967 and January, 1968.

CDs/DVDs/Videos/Webinars/Podcasts/Masses/Talks/Reports/
Powerpoints/Presentations/Audio-Visual Resources (127)¹⁵¹³

Africa Matters: A Book Discussion. Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology (CWCIT). DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois. 29 September, 2016
<https://vimeo.com/185504777>

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.

Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) -- DADITAMA¹⁵¹⁴ 50 Year Experience., Davao: Pastoral GKK Davao, 7 July, 2020,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2OD8lknDH0&fbclid=IwAR0FOYeUpOb5veqHgsP--Y_rcKJym0lGMsvneX6eiEB0pBH4zua_4VXmEY

Gamay'ng Khristohanong Katilingban (GKK) is the English translation/abbreviation of the Visayan name for “Small Christian Community.” The video portrays the journey of faith, hope and charity of 6427 BECs in Davao Archdiocese and three dioceses in Philippines in 50 years (1969 to 2019). The PIME Missionaries arrived in 1937 and the Maryknoll Missionaries arrived in 1959. The video narrates experiences of the Dididame BEC Church.

The Bible Alive (Swahili Version is *Biblia Hai*). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1988.

Bird's Eye View of the LUMKO Way of Being Church. By Ephigenia Gachiri. Nairobi: Powerpoint Presentation. 2014.

Bishop Patrick Kalilombe and the Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi Mini Synod in 1973-75: One of the Foundations of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Pastoral Priority Leading Up to the Two “Synod on Synodality” Sessions in 2023 and 2024.
By Joseph G. Healey. Workshop on “Celebrating the Golden Jubilee Year of Small Christian Communities (SCCs): 50 Years (1973 to 2023) from July, 2023 to July, 2024.” Lilongwe, Malawi. 21 August, 2023. Lilongwe: Powerpoint Presentation.

¹⁵¹³ 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

¹⁵¹⁴ The acronym for the Davao Metropolitan of: *Davao Archdiocese, DI, Tagum, Mati Diocese*

2023. [21 August 2023 Talk at SCCs Workshop in Malawi Final Version.pptx](#)

Betty Graham Headley 1930s Home Movie with Titles. Titles by Jonathan Oglesby. 17.41 minutes. 680 MB. Available on Google Docs (Cloud).

[Betty Graham Headley 1930s Home Movie with Titles.mp4 - Google Drive](#)

CARA, *Faith Group Activity among Catholic Young Adults: Many Living the Faith Outside of the Parish*, Powerpoint Presentation. 2021.

[Faith Group Activity among Catholic Young Adults \(georgetown.edu\)](#)

Case Study of How We Started Prisca and Aquila Companions Online Small Christian Community, by Valerie Stroud, 13:47 minutes (from 42:12 minutes to 56:01 minutes) in “Towards Pentecost 2023 -- Signs of the Spirit with companions Kevin Gallagher, Nicholas Postlethwaite and Valerie Stroud,” Scottish Laity Network Webinar, [Towards Pentecost 2023 ~ Signs of the Spirit with companions Kevin Gallagher, Nicholas Postlethwaite - YouTube](#). Thursday 18 May, 2023, 1 hour and 28:23 minutes.

For this Towards Pentecost 2023 program the three presenters again reflected on their Synodal Submission and, in the light of their recommendations, sought to discern where there are possible “Signs of the Spirit.” This third session on Thursday 18 May, 2023 -- “Where two or three meet in my name, I am there among them” -- was an opportunity to explore how our discipleship can develop through coming together in Small Groups either face to face or online. Kevin, Nicholas and Valerie shared how the current development of Small Ecclesial Groups (SEGs) is located in the “change of era” as affirmed by Pope Francis. There is also a renewed appreciation of the dynamic of Small Group encounters in Scripture. During the conversation ways of setting up and facilitating Small Groups were shared but it was stressed that there is no one model and it depends on the composition of the group and how the Spirit guides and empowers it.

Valerie’s Case Study’s full title was: “Patrons: Prisca and Aquila *Acts* 18: A Small Community in Cyberspace in the Catholic Christian Tradition, but welcoming everyone.” Her excellent powerpoint describes the creation of the SCC step by step. It meets weekly on Tuesdays on Zoom and communicates regularly through Google Group. 15 companions with 6- 8 each week on Zoom. Lectionary readings are the foundation. Exploring the readings on a Tuesday adds value to the following Sunday celebration of the Word and Eucharist.

[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 2 July, 2022, [African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories – African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories \(tangaza.ac.ke\)](#)

The Church in Africa Will Never Walk Alone. Part I. By Joseph G. Healey. Radio Podcast in the “African Catholic Voices” series sponsored by the Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network (PACTPAN), 28:26 minutes. retrieved 27 September, 2022, Part 1 (buzzsprout.com). Video Podcast in the “African Catholic Voices” series, 29:04 minutes, retrieved 1 October, 2022, YouTube Website *The Church in Africa will never walk alone : Fr Joseph G. Healey (Part I) - YouTube*

Maryknoll missionary, theologian, professor, and communication expert, Fr. Joseph G. Healey speaks on the renewal and reform of the Catholic Church in Africa. His favorite song is “You’ll Never Walk Alone” from the 1945 American Broadway Musical *Carousel*. At 84 and after 56 years as a priest, Joseph G. Healey exudes a freshness of perspectives, a depth of knowledge, and an arresting humility that are both compelling and inspirational. After more than 50 years of pastoral work in Africa, he carries the institutional memory of the post-Vatican II Church, and theology in Africa. He is considered the father of Small Christian Communities in Africa and is one of the pioneers of African Narrative Theology. In this first part of our dialogue with *Mwanajumuiya* (“Member of a Small Christian Community”) as he likes to be called, he shares with us his love for Africa, his enduring passion and commitment for the renewal and reform of the Church and for grassroots evangelization in inclusive African communities of faith. Fr. Healey is very proud of AMECEA's Social Communications Department that he pioneered in the early days of his priesthood and looks back in time in this episode. He leaves us with a very hopeful message that Africa and the world will never walk alone because the God of our ancestors is always with us.

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>

Climate Justice in Kenya. Maryknoll Global Solidarity Webinar. 19 November, 2020. 56.30 minutes. Available on the Google Drive of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Website (<https://www.maryknoll.us>). The link is: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q4-3FH8or7HpRcnLbsLxu3optP9WcvED/view>

The presenters were Alphonse Omolo (Powerpoint Presentation: Case Study of Fish Youth Group in Kisumu, Kenya) and Joe Healey (Case Study of. The facilitator was Stephanie Luna -- capable, smiling and a young adult!

The rate that our climate is changing is alarming and destructive, with the greatest impacts on communities who are poorest around the world. Dr. Alphonse Omolo and Fr. Joe Healey, M.M. share what’s happening in Kenya as hundreds of families living along the shores of Lake Victoria are displaced by recent floods. There is a Case Study of St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi’s ecology and environmental activities. We discuss how our faith helps us understand our call to act for climate justice and draw inspiration from the youth of the world that are demanding action and working to enact God’s love.

A Coordination of Charisms. Synod Report/Vatican Press Conference on 20 October, 2023. See the talk by Sister Mary Theresa Barron, OLA, President of the International

Union of Superiors General (UISG) [Women]. Vatican Website on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDv25cbXlgA>

Barron is an Irish missionary sister. Picking up on a theme that was introduced yesterday by Archbishop Anton Dabula Mpako of South Africa, she spoke of how her experience with Small Christian Communities (SCCs) has informed her understanding of synodality. Barron's work as a missionary took her to Eastern Africa, which she called "my first introduction to a synodal church." She described a parish structure in a rural parish in Shinyanga Diocese in Tanzania that comprised 35 villages. It was half the size of Ireland. Each village had an "outstation" with a catechist. "There were only two priests to serve the entire parish," she explained. "It was such a synodal process," she said. "We listened to each other. The decisions were taken together. The outstation fed into the center, which fed into the parish, which then fed into the diocese."

Barron said that the Rome Synodal Assembly reminds her of the weekly meetings of these Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa, particularly the way that everyone is given a chance to contribute regardless of rank, position, or educational status.

"I think the experience of sitting around the tables in Paul VI Hall brings me back again to East Africa. The setting is extremely different. I imagine myself outside a mud hut where we met every Sunday for our Basic Christian Community meetings — a small gathering of people, maybe 10 families in the Christian community. We sat around and shared our faith rooted in the Gospel of that Sunday. But the key was that we had to decide how we wanted to live that faith as a community and take an action. What was beautiful for me: "We shared our faith from the depths of our hearts and we came to a decision together," she said. "Every voice was the same around that Small Christian Community."

This witness talk/testimony is a very good description of the SCCs Model of Church from the grassroots up. Communion Ecclesiology work hand in hand with synodality (walking together).

Doing the Will of God: The Story of the Servant of God Maurice Michael Cardinal Otunga (1923-2003). Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2013.

Experiences in East Africa. Hybrid (in-person and on Zoom) Talk at the Old Guard of Summit, NJ Meeting in New Providence, New Jersey on 20 September, 2002. By Joseph G. Healey. 1:01:08 hours. Available on the YouTube Website: "[Experiences in East Africa](#)" -- [Fr. Joseph Healey - YouTube](#)

The invited speaker at the September 20, 2022 meeting of the Old Guard of Summit NJ was Fr. Joseph Healey, who has lived in East Africa, largely Kenya, since 1968 as a Maryknoll missionary (www.Maryknollsociety.org).

Facilitation Skills in Small Christian Communities. By Alphonse Omolo. Nairobi: Powerpoint Presentation, 2017.

Content:

1. Facilitation.
2. Characteristics of the members of SCCs.
3. Role of SCC facilitator.

4. Basic values and principles of facilitation in SCCs.
5. Core facilitation skills.
6. Listening skills.
7. The SCCs gathering setup.

Fr Joe Healey Speaks on African Theology, Calls for Married Priests in Africa To Meet the Eucharistic Hunger in Africa, and a Welcoming African Church for Same-Sex Persons, Part II. By Joseph G. Healey. Radio Podcast in the “African Catholic Voices” series sponsored by the Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network (PACTPAN), 43:10 minutes. retrieved 15 October, 2022, Fr Joe Healey speaks on African theology, calls for Married Priests in Africa to meet the Eucharistic hunger in Africa, and a welcoming African Church for Same-Sex Persons (buzzsprout.com). Video Podcast in the “African Catholic Voices” series, 43:10 minutes, retrieved 15 October, 2022, YouTube Website African Theology, Married Priesthood, Same-Sex Marriage and the Future of Africa Catholicism (II) - YouTube

In this concluding discussion, Maryknoll priest, professor, communicator and small Christian community pioneer in Africa, Fr Joe Healey, celebrates the development and achievement of African theology. He calls for a more creative church in Africa and hopes for a day when the Catholic Church in Africa will begin to ordain married men as priests. He sees this as an important item to be discussed in the synodal encounter of the African continent in Addis Ababa. He also bemoans the plight of same-sex persons in Africa and calls on the Church in Africa to welcome them rather than deny their existence in Africa.

Fr. Michael Martin, Duke Catholic Center, 15-minute CCMA Leadership Podcast (audio interview), 2018, <https://soundcloud.com/.../fr-michael-martin-duke-catholic-ce...>

Future Directions and Agenda for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Globally. Talk in the Loyola Institute of Ministry (LIM), Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA Summer, 2019 online specialization course on Small Christian Community Formation: “The Public Face of Small Christian Communities.” Published on 18 June 2019 by Thomas Ryan. Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8G36kpxJ9Y&feature=youtu.be>

Global Solidarity During A Pandemic: Kenya, South Sudan, And Uganda. Maryknoll Global Solidarity Webinar. 19 April, 2020. 1:19:30 hours. Available on the Google Drive of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Website (<https://www.maryknoll.us>). The link is:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11Zb3yoRSbJEMgqYP1IU4ueK9Mi8kQttw/view>

In this video, we hear how our brothers and sisters in East Africa are experiencing the impacts of the coronavirus. Join Maryknoll missionaries Mike Bassano, John Barth and Joe Healey, SCC leader Bernard Mberere and members of local Small Christian Communities in Kenya and the Malakal UN Protection of Civilians Refugee Camp in South Sudan and Uganda as they share their realities and enrich our reflection on where we are finding God in these difficult times. Join us digitally as we come together in global solidarity as missionary disciples with hope!

<http://www.smallchristiancommunities.org/videos/404-the-importance-of-lay-involvement-in-the-missionary-outreach-of-sccs-in-eastern-africa.html>

50 Years of AMECEA. Lusaka: Catholic Media Services, 2011.

The Fish Group. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1990.

History of the Development of Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Diocese of Tagum and Mati [Philippines]. Manila: San Jose Seminary seminarians from the Dioceses of Mati and Tagum. 18 minutes. 2017

History of the Kenya Lenten Campaign and Explanation of the Theme and Materials for the 2014 Campaign. Nairobi: Powerpoint Presentation. 2014.

How to Form and Participate in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Virtually/Online/ Digitally. Facilitated by Joseph G. Healey, MM. Coordinator: Debbie Northern, MLM. Maryknoll Lay Missioners Information Session Zoom Webinar. 16 October, 2020. Video Recorded on 16 October, 2020. Time: 1:24:20. Available on the Maryknoll Lay Missioners Website at:
<https://mklm.zoom.us/rec/share/654v16cT2x1HYAK8lu3uy-NICHzBrli-VndtXq8N1mF5qsXwB4LGX4fa-vL0Swz.3iKouHSa1IRCMBCY> The Passcode: Q\$YLN\$4f

The outline of the Zoom Webinar on *How to Form and Participate in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Virtually/Online/Digitally* on 16 October, 2020 can be found on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:
<file:///C:/Users/Father%20Joe/Downloads/16-October-2020-MLM-Missioner-Information-Session-on-Online-SCCs-002.pdf>

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.

The Importance of Lay Involvement in the Missionary Outreach of SCCs in Eastern Africa. By Alphonse Omolo. Nairobi: Powerpoint Presentation, 2017.

1. “The Missionary Spirit and Outreach of the Fish Youth Group in Kisumu Archdiocese.”
2. “Small Communities Light Up Neighborhoods in Kisumu.” (Chapter 16 of *SCCT*).
3. “St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC.”

The Importance of Small Groups on Your Campus. Interviews (two men, two women) with campus ministers at Duke, Michigan State, Seton Hall and Westchester. Focus on small group ministry in the USA. Produced by Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA). 2.32 minutes.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQvmTHF6MAg>

Inner Life of Small Christian Communities. Including Podcasts (digital audio files) on “Overview of SCCs Around the World Today” and “Breaking Open the Word in SCCs.” New Orleans: Loyola Institute for Ministry, 2017.

Introduction: Walking Together in Building a Synodal Maryknoll Family and Missionary

Movement. By Joseph Healey. Session on Synodality/Synodal Process. US Regional Assembly. Maryknoll, NY. 7 June, 2023.

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.

Lobinger Model for Parish Leadership and Ministry. Talk by Robert D. Duch. Future Church Emerging Models for Community Life and Leadership Teleconferences Series. 8 November, 2017. 50 minutes.

Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. on Dropbox

https://www.dropbox.com/l/scl/AACubiuTJF7Adq6ccGHn_huWV77GJosmyEk
Download the Spoken Presentation (talk) and Conversation

Lost in Encyclical Translation: Christus Vivit and the Dramatic Differences Between the Spanish Text and the English Translation. OSV Innovative Talk by Brenda Noriega, 24 September, 2020, YouTube Website, 19:50 minutes, retrieved on 17 October, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0GfHK7U0Ew>

When we speak our native language, our vocabulary insists on nuances unique to our own experiences. It is no wonder why Pope Francis wrote his encyclical *Christus Vivit* in Spanish. His understanding of serving the young church came from his experiences. To truly understand this, however, we must be diligent in examining interpretations of his words. This talk breaks down major cultural differences in the English and Spanish of *Christus Vivit* and opens channels of dialogue for future creative ministry strategies. In Francis’ experience the traditional Step Two in pastoral theological reflection called “Judge” is better explained as “Discern.”

“Maryknoll Fr. Joe Healey's Reflections on Small Christian Communities.” Podcast on Loyola Institute of Ministry Facebook Page. 16 October, 2016. 16:03 minutes.

<https://soundcloud.com/user113783834/joe-healey-small-christian-communities-interview>

“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

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 INSERTIONÉ
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 Case 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.

Online Spiritual Retreat for Young Adult Seekers on "Go Apart with Jesus Christ," Video Recording, 2023. YouTube Website, <https://youtu.be/FslUssUnMRQ> (2 hours and 10 minutes)

Online Small Groups: Best Practices for Building and Maintaining Momentum. Video

Recording of a Zoom Webinar: Four-person Panel Discussion sponsored by SmallGroup.com. Time: 1:07 hours.

<https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2020/online-small-groups-best-practices-for-building-maintaining.html>

Virtual small groups have become an essential element of discipleship and fellowship for our church members during this pandemic. Over the past few months, many small groups have adopted this digital format. And in the coming months many will try it out for the first time. Our panel explores the ins and outs of creating a successful online small groups ministry.

Opening a Door on African Theology and Music. Portrays the story of Father Don Sybertz, MM and life and ministry of Ndoleleji Research Committee in Shinyanga, Tanzania. Ndoleleji, Tanzania: YouTube Website, 2011. 8:01 minutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kf6HC67CbD8&feature=youtu.be>

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.

Pastoral Responses to the Worldwide Eucharistic Famine by Joseph Healey, FutureChurch Podcast, presentation, and the transcription of the question and answers, 21 March, 2018. Specific link to the digital audio file or program -- Podcast (mp3 file) is: <https://www.futurechurch.org/podcasts>

“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.

Reflecting on Holy Week Around the World with Fr. Daniel Kim and Fr. Joseph Healey, “Among the People” podcast, 14 April, 2022, Available on:

YouTube Website

Spreaker Website

<https://www.spreaker.com/user/amongthepeople/3-1-atp>

This is a special episode of “Among The People” with Fr. Joe Veneroso. Fr. Joseph Healey and Fr. Daniel Kim as they reflect on the celebration and meaning behind the Lent and Holy Week season in East Africa and Hong Kong, how it is celebrated across different cultures our missionaries work in, and how we as people of faith can use this Holy Week to help us all during the challenging times in 2022.

RESOURCES

Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa and Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books).
<https://www.amazon.com/Towards-African-Narrative-Theology-Cultures/dp/1570751218>

Diana Hayes, *Were You There?: Stations of the Cross*, Paintings by Charles Ndege, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books
<https://www.amazon.com/Were-You-There-Stations-Cross/dp/1570752788>

“Root & Branch DIY: Why We Stay -- Sharing Signs Of Hope.” Interview with Nicholas Postlethwaite, CP on Root & Branch Website. 28.29 minutes.
[Synod 2021 | Root & Branch Synod \(rootandbranchsynod.org\)](https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/synod-2021)

In this fourth video scrolling down, English Passionist priest, Nicholas Postlethwaite, CP speaks encouragingly about starting Do It Yourself (DIY) Small Groups and how this is the way forward for our church. Nicholas reminds us of Pope Francis' words that he felt Jesus was knocking on the church door to get out, not on the outside waiting to get in. We need to learn to combine two key essential human roles to move forward:

1. The role of undertaker (to know when something is coming to an end and how to lay it down respectfully and sensitively and gently but nonetheless not to try and prolong it beyond where it has come to).
2. The role of midwife (where is new life being born. How do we help this new life into its new birth and nurture it and sustain it).

“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. Interview with Joseph Healey in “Anchor” Program (CCRI Podcast Episode No. 1). 4 September, 2019. 28:39 minutes. Father Joe Healey explains the explosion of Small Faith Communities (SFCs) spreading around the world. He describes how they are conducted and how to join or begin one.

Available on:

[Anchor](#)

[Google casts](#)

[Spotify](#)

[Breaker](#)

[Pocket casts](#)

[Radio Public](#)

[Overcast](#)

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/05Ni7DFg5IdHuTXRTC3V6a>

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 Global Collaborative Website by Caroline Adams, Joe Healey, Bob Pelton, Belza Ramos and Xavier Thelakkatt at the National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC) Conference in Erie, Pennsylvania, USA on 25 July, 2009. Erie: Powerpoint Presentation. 2009.

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/25July2009PresentationontheSCCsGlobalCollaborativeWebsiteFinalVersion.pdf>

Small Christian Communities in the Acts of the Apostles. Webinar on Zoom for the Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) Strategy Team. Facilitated by Joseph G. Healey. A five-session interactive study, discussion and reflection experience using the See, Discern and Act process or methodology. 15 July, 2020 to 12 August, 2020.

Session 1: Our personal (individual) and communal experiences of *Acts of the Apostles*.

Session 2: Foundational texts of the first SCCs: *Acts of the Apostles* 2: 42-47, 4: 32-35 and 5: 1-31.

a. How can we concretely apply the first two texts to our lives, our communities and our ministries in our local contexts today?

b. *Acts of the Apostles* 15: 28: Council of Jerusalem. In today’s divided Catholic Church can we have a Council of Jerusalem moment/experience?

Session 3: House Churches with lay leadership especially women. Each participant prepares one passage in *Acts of the Apostles* that describes/illustrates the House Church (also called a Small Domestic Church) with women in leadership positions.

To listen to the discussion, click on <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/-J0yHuvI5z1IAAY38t0ePS6k8Hdvpaaa81yRKRqcFnQdtf2QBh48SMJFkDvrtqE0>. Password: 5?%2\$sMR.

- Session 4: Importance of the Holy Spirit. Each participant prepares three short inputs:
- A passage in *Acts* about the Holy Spirit that you like.
 - Example in your life when you felt the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - Example in your life when you **did not feel** the power of the Holy Spirit.

To listen to the discussion, click on https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/1PBHP5Kh0V5OAZXj0G-EBYw9XaW4X6a8gHVI_aYMxUk8Yw1hjrR0Pcbo2zGsOPU0. Password: eqNLYE&5.

- Session 5: St. Paul's call to Hardship and Mission and what it means for us today.
- How does St. Paul's response hardships in *Acts* inspire you in your life today?
 - How does St. Paul's missionary zeal in *Acts* inspire you in your life today?

To listen to the discussion, click on <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/x5E2C5j57H9LYoXQzxn7QacwJLzXea8hncfrPpYzEbFdDqFAPn87tyXCe3lyfzG>. Password: n6hm#!\$*.

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>

Small Christian Communities Promote Climate Justice in Kenya. Ten minute presentation by Joseph Healey. Nova Community Webinar. Theme: "What Communities and the Larger Society Can Do To Promote Climate Justice." 11 February, 2021. 57:16 minutes. YouTube Website, retrieved on 16 February, 2021, https://youtu.be/_eCY5b47HDA

Includes part of *The Hill We Climb*, the 2021 Inauguration Poem by Amanda Gorman. Ben Wanjala joined from Kenya at 1 am and described the tree planting activities of St. Kizito SCC in Nairobi.

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=QUCfFchwlw>

Stand Strong in Faith...Do Not Be Afraid: Pope Francis' Pastoral Visit in Kenya. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2017.

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>

Synodality in the African Context. Reform group FutureChurch-sponsored Zoom Webinar on the topic "Participation, Governance, and Authority," the third in the SynodWatch series covering the "Working Document" of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. 1 hour and 8:36 minutes. The 10:22 minute talk on "Synodality in the African Context" by Joseph G. Healey (in collaboration with African leaders) can be found on YouTube from the 30:58 minute mark to the 41:20 minute mark. Video Link on YouTube: [SynodWatch Session 3: Participation, Governance, and Authority - YouTube](#)

Text on [Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website](#).

<https://smallchristiancommunities.org/synodality-in-the-african-context>

Synod of Hope, Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 1993.

17th AMECEA Plenary Assembly and Golden Jubilee Celebrations. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2011.

"Tracking Changes (or the lack thereof) in the Catholic Church Worldwide." Presentation at the Maryknoll *Laudato Si* Focus Group on Zoom. 1 February, 2021. Dropbox Link.

Uncle Joe's 12 April, 2020 Easter Sunday Livestreamed Mass. Zoom Meeting. Nairobi, Kenya. 54 minutes. YouTube Website, https://youtu.be/HUzCI_LH5Tc.

Follows the plan of our Small Christian Communities (or *Jumuiya*) Masses via Zoom. Follows the style of our multi-generational or inter-generational Extended Healey Family Home Masses that we have been celebrating in the USA for over 50 years. The Maryknoll seminarians in Nairobi, Kenya coordinated the music. Jonathan Oglesby in Germanstown, Maryland, USA was Host and Technical Coordinator.

Uncle Joe's 4 April, 2021 Easter Sunday Livestreamed Mass. Zoom Meeting. Baltimore, Maryland, USA. Kenya. 55 minutes. YouTube Website, <https://youtu.be/YZGe0wZVCT0>

Follows the plan of our Small Christian Communities (or *Jumuiya*) Masses via Zoom. Follows the style of our multi-generational or inter-generational Extended Family Home Masses that we have been celebrating in the USA for over 50 years. I am sent the YouTube link directly to everyone who made a contribution:

Host and Technical Coordinator: Jonathan Oglesby

Music: Charlotte Hagerty

Reader: Matthew Oglesby

Shared Homily of 13 minutes, 9 seconds. 8 reflections: Grace Healey, Charlotte Hagerty, Sam Stanton, Lizzie Lynch, Uncle Joe Healey, Belza Ramos, Jeremy Healey, Ginny Hagerty.

Prayer of the Faithful (6): Andrew Oglesby, Cate Healey, Grace Healey, Alphonse Omolo, Uncle Joe Healey, Tom Healey (Gramps).

One footnote: A participant later thanked me for 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ quarters year old Grace Healey's profound reflection when she said: "Following Mary Magdalene we should run and tell others of the Risen Christ."

Three-year-old Joey Slomkowski said it best at the very end: "Happy Easter."

Uncle Joe's 24 December, 2020 Christmas Eve Livestreamed Mass. Zoom Meeting. New Vernon, New Jersey, USA. 57 minutes. YouTube Website, https://youtu.be/li-F_RzfMsc

Uses three Christmas Carols, the readings of the Christmas Mass at Midnight, Shared Homily and spontaneous "Prayer of the Faithful." Follows the plan of our Small Christian Communities (or *Jumuiya*) Masses via Zoom. Follows the style of our multi-generational or inter-generational Extended Family Home Masses that we have been celebrating in the USA for over 50 years. Charlotte and Ginny Hagerty in New Vernon coordinated the music. Jonathan Oglesby in Germanstown, Maryland, USA was Host and Technical Coordinator.

United and Peaceful Kenya...The Change I Want To See: 2013 Lenten Campaign Launch, 9th 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). One outstanding example is *The Chosen*.

The Vatican II Experience in Sub-Sahara Africa, by Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, 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>

Walking with the Eastern African Church in Mission. Nairobi: Ukweli Video Productions, 2004. A video of the life and missionary ministry of Maryknoll priest Father Joseph Healey.

When Ukweli Video in Nairobi, Kenya produced a DVD in 2004 on my missionary ministry in Eastern Africa from 1968 to 2004 called *Walking with the Eastern African Church in Mission*, I used the Gospel text – *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.'" that is very similar to *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.'" -- to trace a visual chronological line on a map of East Africa of my missionary journeys or travels to other towns and places in Kenya and Tanzania: Starting in Nairobi, Kenya and traveling to Rulenge, Tanzania to Iramba, Tanzania to Makoko, Tanzania to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

There is a section in the video on my ministry with Small Christian Communities (SCCs).

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 that are not geographical but situational. I used this passage in my homily at my 50th 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, Zoom, Skype, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. 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.

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.

Young People Small Christian Communities. Interview with Joseph Healey in “Anchor” Program (Catholic Church Reform Int'l -- CCRI Podcast Episode No. 6). 18 September, 2019. 29:05 minutes. Father Joe Healey explains the growth of Small Communities of Young People. Often the starting point is not the *Bible* or faith but their present life experiences. We need to tap into young people’s hunger for community and their passion for social justice issues like climate justice, gun control and diversity.

A vast number of young people are moving away from the Institutional Church and finding that the best expression of their values and their Christianity is much more through social justice, climate justice, and environmental issues. They want to share their experiences in some kind of small community setting. The future of the Catholic Church for today's Millennials and Generation Z may well become some model of Young People Small Christian Communities (YPSCCs).

Available on:

[Anchor](#)
[Google Podcasts](#)
[Spotify](#)
[Breaker](#)
[Pocket casts](#)
[Radio Public](#)
[Overcast](#)

<https://podcasts.google.com/?feed=aHR0cHM6Ly9hbmNob3IuZm0vYcy9kNzQ2MDhjL3BvZGNhc3QvcnNz&episode=YjcyZWmxZGYtOWZhYi1jN2E4LTk4NzEtNDZhOGMzN2VjNjQx>

<https://anchor.fm/rene-reid/episodes/Interview-with-Fr--Joe-Healey-on-Young-Peoples-Small-Christian-Communities-e5eli7>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0kK9IDKLTcaDq0EEIWWYE>

Young Seekers: An Informal Conversation with an International Small Christian Community Based in Kenya led by Alloys Nyakundi from Kenya with Kristiana Aurel from Indonesia, James Mhangwa from Tanzania, Ashiknaz Khokhar from Pakistan, Collins Ongoma from Kenya, Alexandro Rolandi from Pakistan and Mary Wahome from Kenya. Spirit Unbounded Video Clip, Spirit Unbounded YouTube, 22:06 minutes (from 1:14:57 to 1:37:03). [3 3 Ways of Being Church - Different Rhythms - YouTube](#) and https://youtu.be/T74SFrUo7PY?si=xklvTRoqrM_67c45

In a conversation with Maggi Conway members of the Online Young Seekers Small Christian Community describe their online SCC. These are 20 young adults (women and men) from four countries (Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan and Tanzania) who meet online every two weeks. See Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community (Kenyatta University) Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/875453985953421>

Your Voice Counts in This Synod, Spoken Text and Video to introduce the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers “Synod Listening Sessions.” Maryknoll: Center CED. March, 2022.

For the 5:19 minute video go to: <https://mission.maryknoll.us/en/listeningsessions>

The link to the video on Google:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FnRkkR9_YAqOnvoc834_TyVGISSV7u7S/view?usp=sharing

NOTE: The SCC Model is seen in many ways. This is the text that was read on a teleprompter for a video in English to introduce the “A Time to Talk and Listen: Lent 2022 Synod Listening Sessions” sponsored by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers that were aired online on 15 March 2022 and 24 March 2022. There were “Small Breakout Rooms” during these Zoom gatherings.

Internet Resources/Websites/Apps/E-Resources (191)

Academia.edu

<https://princeton.academia.edu/JosephHealey>

ACIAfrica (Association for Catholic Information in Africa) *Africa Online News Service* (a service of EWTN News)

<https://www.aciafrica.org>

Acton Publishers

www.acton.co.ke

Africabib -- Africana Periodical Literature Bibliographic Database

<http://www.africabib.org>

African Catholic Voices

[African Catholic Voices \(buzzsprout.com\)](http://AfricanCatholicVoices(buzzsprout.com))

Celebrating the stories of faith in action and the voices of Christians from the African heartland, the new center of gravity of World Christianity.

African Ethnologue (Home Standard monthly version)

<https://www.ethnologue.com/world> (limited/restricted automatic login)

<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/suk>

African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories (including the “African Stories Database”)

<https://afriprov.org/old> -- Joomla for temporary reference

African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories (including the “African Stories Database”)

<https://www.afriprov.org>

Our window into African Oral Literature and African culture in general from a Christian perspective. Over these 25 years (1998 – 2023) this has been a joint ecumenical project (different churches, religious denominations and religious groups) and a joint academic project (with educational institutional partnerships).

In 1998 we started the African Proverbs Working Group (APWG). Through the help of the Urban Ministries Serving God (UMSG) Office based in Nairobi, Kenya, we started our [Internet Website](#), then later our [Facebook Page](#) and now other social media such as WhatsApp (including the “AfriProv Working Group”). Over the last 25 years we have continued to develop our database including our collection of proverbs from 48 different African nations. 149 African Languages are represented in the 291 “African Proverbs of the Month.” A key feature is the [Endangered African Proverbs Collections](#) – over 60 collections of 100 proverbs each in lesser known African languages under Ebooks on our website.

African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories (including the “African Stories Database”)

<https://afriprov.tangaza.ac.ke>

African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/afriprov>

African SCCs Networking
<https://africansccsnetworking.org>

African Synodality Initiative
 Website: in production

Alexa Web Information Company
<http://www.alexa.com>

Amazon
<https://www.amazon.com>

Amazon Author Page
<https://www.amazon.com/author/josephghealey>

AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa)
 (including the sub-domains of Communications, Justice and Peace and Pastoral)
<https://amecea.org>

Copyright is 1999-2023 showing that it was ahead of the curve, ahead of its time and set an example for all of the AMECEA countries and the SECAM countries of internet use. Menu at top of the Home Page shows the rich variety of departments and activities.

AMECEA News Blog/AMECEA Online Newsletter
<http://amecea.blogspot.co.ke>

AMECEA Gaba Publications
<https://amecea.org/ggaba-publications>

AMECEA Pastoral Institute (Gaba)
<https://amecea.org/ggaba-pastoral-institute>

America Media
<http://www.americamagazine.org>

America Online
<http://www.aol.com>

American Society of Missiology
<https://www.asmweb.org/>

Ancestry
<http://www.ancestry.com>

APO Group
[APO Group | Leading Pan African Communications Consultancy \(apo-opa.com\)](http://apo-opa.com)

Pan-African communications consultancy and press release distribution service.

Ascension Catholic Community Parish
<https://www.ascensioncatholic.net>

Ask

<http://www.ask.com>

Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary Parish

<https://assumptionparish.org>

Attracta Search Visibility Technology

www.attracta.com

Ave Maria University

<https://www.avemaria.edu>

Baltimore Archdiocese

<https://www.archbalt.org>

Baltimore Carmel

<https://www.baltimorecarmel.org>

Weekly *Lectio Divina* on the following Sunday readings with small breakout sessions.
Monthly Contemplative Prayer Group for Young Adults (18-40).

Barnes & Noble

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com>

BibleGateway (32 searchable versions of the Bible in English)

<http://www.Biblegateway.com>

Bing

www.bing.com

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

<https://www.bbc.com>

Includes the African Proverb of the Day.

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)

<https://cara.georgetown.edu>

Cardinal Otunga Servant of God

<http://www.cardinalotunga.org>

[CARDINAL OTUNGA Servant of God](http://www.cardinalotunga.org)

Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA)

<http://www.ccmanet.org>

Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI)

<https://catholicchurchreformintl.org>

A Global Network of more than a hundred reform groups and individuals from 65 countries that seeks renewal of the Catholic Church and continuing on the path set by Vatican

II. Contains content on SCCs around the world. There are special sections on the Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community and the 2021-2024 Synodal Process.

Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) News Africa

<http://www.cisanewsafrika.com>

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) – Kenya **expired**

<http://www.cjpckkenya.org>

Catholic Media Network in Kenya (CMNK)

<https://catholicmedia497322637.wordpress.com>

Catholic Mirror

<http://www.kccb.or.ke/home/?s=Catholic+Mirror>

Catholic News Agency for Africa (CANAA) (including *CANAA Blog*, *CANAA News Updates* and *CANAA Online Newsletter*)

www.canaafrica.org

Catholic News Service (CNS)

<https://www.catholicnews.com>

Catholic Search Engine

<http://www.catholicsearch.net>

Catholic Standards for Excellence Forum

<http://catholicstandardsforum.org>

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

<http://www.cuea.edu>

Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) AMECEA Gaba Campus, Eldoret

<http://www.cuea.edu/gaba>

Catholic Women Preach

<http://www.catholicwomenpreach.org>

Catholic Women Preach offers the Catholic Church the faith and voices of Catholic women preaching on the weekly scriptures.

Christ the Teacher Parish, Kenyatta University, Kenya

<http://www.kucatholic.or.ke>

Christian Life Communities (CLC) Small Group Resources

<https://www.scu.edu/cm/get-involved/clc/resources>

Christ the King Parish, New Vernon

<https://churchofchristtheking.org>

The Chosen App, internet and TV

Version 1.2.135

<https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen>

“The Shepherd:” <https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen/watch?vid=the-chosen-shepherd-trailer-with-cta-season-1&ap=true>

Connect to your TV using Roku or Chromecast!

Church of the Nativity Parish, Baltimore

<https://www.churchnativity.com/groups>

Very successful Small Group Model of Church. States: “Everyone can be in a group. Small Groups is where our large church gets small. Groups are 6-12 people who meet to discuss faith, go deeper in the weekly message, and support one another in their relationship with Jesus Christ. This is the place to care for others and be cared for; a place to impact our community and the world.” Both Online Small Groups and In Person Small Groups. Includes the book *Rebuilt*.

I admire the dynamism of the parish and its success, but I have reservations about its Small Group Model. It is borrowed from the Rick Warren Model in California that is top down. I have written about this in my online ebook. Our Eastern Africa SCCs Model is bottom up, from the grassroots – very synodal. Quite different.

La Croix International

<https://international.la-croix.com>

Independent Online Catholic Daily News Service. Insight articles on the Catholic Church and the world.

Commonweal Magazine

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org>

CRUX

<https://cruxnow.com>

Daily Gospel

<https://dailygospel.org/AM/gospel>

<http://dailygospel.org>

(a service from evangelizo.org)

DB Utume Blog including the Jambo You(th) weekly online newsletter

<http://dbyouthbook.blogspot.com>

Diocesan and archdiocesan websites can be found at the beginning of Chapter 9.

Emmah’s Garden

<https://emmahsgarden.org>

Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM)

www.ecmmw.org

Esteem

Esteem | The Church's Future. Now. (esteemleadership.org)

Eternal Word Broadcasting Network

<https://www.ewtn.com>

Ethnologue

<https://www.ethnologue.com> (NOTE: Must be entered through Google)

<https://www.ethnologue.com/user/14731/subscription>

Detailed information on the 2,140 African languages among the world's 7,111 known living languages). Categorized as: Institutional: 197, Developing: 533, Vigorous: 909, In Trouble: 366, Dying: 135.

EWTN

<https://www.ewtn.com>

Facebook (32)

<http://facebook.com> including:

African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/afriprov>

African Wisdom and Biblical Parallels Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/African-Wisdom-Bible-Parallels-240971163508820/>

AMECEA

<https://www.facebook.com/Amecea>

American Society of Missiology

https://www.facebook.com/American-Society-of-Missiology-130557736998449/?ref=page_internal

Archdiocese of Lusaka Youth Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/groups/196941513776884/334481956689505/?notif_t=group_activity

CCMA (Catholic Campus Ministry Association)

[CCMA \(Catholic Campus Ministry Association\) | Facebook](#)

Cardinal Maurice Michael Otunga

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=cardinal%20maurice%20michael%20otunga>

Holy Cross Youth Dandora Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/113631995367088>

Jambo Youth Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/124330554391106>

Joseph Healey Facebook Page

[Joseph Healey | Facebook](#)

Joseph G. Healey Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/joseph.g.healey>

JPII Evangelizing Teams Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/JPII-Evangelizing-teams/1477925152465530>

Kerry Family History Society

[Kerry Family History Society | Facebook](#)

Kilgarvan Parish Church

[Kilgarvan Parish Church | Facebook](#)

[kilgarvan church - Search Results | Facebook](#)

KUCC Youth Small Christian Communities (YSCCs) Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1549609615274202>

Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM)

<https://www.celam.org>

Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM)

<http://cnh.loyno.edu/lim>

Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM) Facebook Page

[Loyola Institute for Ministry | Facebook](#)

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/maryknollsociety>

Maryknoll Lay Missioners

<https://www.facebook.com/MaryknollLayMissioners>

Maryknoll Magazine

<https://www.facebook.com/maryknollmagazine>

Maryknoll Mission Education

<https://www.facebook.com/Maryknoll.MEP.West>

Maryknoll Missioners Class of 1966

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/584645881713413>

Leo Shea created the Facebook Group “[Maryknoll Missioners Class of 1966](#)” on 22 April 2016.

Maryknoll Young Adults Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/MaryknollYA>

North American Forum for Small Christian Communities (NAFSCC)

[Small Christian Communities - NAFSCC - Home | Facebook](#)

**Online Young Adult Seekers Small Christian Community (Kenyatta University)
Facebook Page**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/875453985953421>

This Facebook Page was formed to help young people develop a personal relationship with one another, grow their relationship with the Lord, network young people through Small Christian Communities, support the marginalized in our local communities and help young people develop a sense of pride. It is connected to the twice monthly Zoom Gatherings.

Orbis Books Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/orbisbooks>

Portsmouth Abbey School Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/PortsmouthAbbeySchool>

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

This Facebook Page was formed to share Small Christian Communities (SCCs) information, events, materials, news, videos and photos for each of the six continents. It serves as a forum for an exchange of SCCs ideas and to promote dialog on SCC topics. The page has sections for “Like,” “Comment” and “Share.” It is classified as a society and culture website. We welcome any and all feedback, contributions, SCCs materials, etc.

St. Bakhita SCC Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/groups/169604069738674/736909729674769/?notif_t=group_activity

St. Dominic SCC Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/249820865098204/>

St. Gonzaga Gonza SCC Youth Group Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/gonzagagonzascc>

St. Martin de Porres SCC Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/134661419922238/>

St. Matthew's Catholic Church Amukoko, Apapa, Lagos Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1110930425603859/?multi_permlinks=1695691967127699¬if_id=1509843777013867¬if_t=group_activity

St. Vincent Pallotti Church Youth Information Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/110531205762326>

Tangaza Maryknoll Centre for African Studies

<https://www.facebook.com/Tangaza-Maryknoll-Centre-for-African-Studies-100591298333641>

FADICA

www.fadica.org

Faith Circles

<https://www.dow.org.au/media-resources/faith-circles>

FaithND Daily Reflection¹⁵¹⁵

<http://faith.nd.edu/s/1210/faith/interior.aspx?sid=1210&gid=609&pgid=10751>
<https://faith.nd.edu> (Click on Daily Gospel Reflection)

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

<https://fabc.org>

Federation of Christian Ministries (FCM)

<https://www.federationofchristianministries.org/index.php/about-fcm>

Fides

<http://www.fides.org>

Fresh Expressions

<http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk>

FutureChurch Website

<http://www.futurechurch.org>

FutureChurch works for:

- just, open and collaborative structures for Catholic worship, organization and governance
- a return to the Catholic Church's earliest traditions of both married and celibate priests
- a return to Jesus' inclusive practice of recognizing both female and male leaders
- regular access to the Eucharist, the center of Catholic life and worship

Gaba Pastoral Institute **CHECK**

Under CUEA

Global Ministries University

<https://www.globalministriesuniversity.org>

Google

<http://www.google.com>

Google Scholar

<https://scholar.google.com>

http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22Joseph+G+Healey%22&btnG=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C31

Hekima University College including Library E-Resources

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

Hekima Review

<http://journals.hekima.ac.ke/index.php/ojs>

¹⁵¹⁵ Many people read this reflection as the first activity that they do upon waking up each morning as a kind of Morning Prayer -- even setting their smartphone wake up time to begin the day with this reflection.

<http://library.hekima.ac.ke/journals/index.php/hekimareview> XX

ICONN Look Up
whois.icann.org

Intentional Eucharistic Communities
<http://www.intentionaleucharistic.org>

JCAM (Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar)
[Home - Jesuit Conference Of Africa and Madagascar: JCAM \(jesuits.africa\)](http://Home-Jesuit-Conference-Of-Africa-and-Madagascar-JCAM-jesuits.africa)

Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection (JCTR)
<http://www.jctr.org.zm>

Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) especially the Catholic Justice and Peace Department and Commission, Pontifical Missionary Societies, Family Life Program and “News” Pages
<http://www.kccb.or.ke>

KCCB Commission for Social Communications National Communications Network News
<http://www.kccb.or.ke/home/commission/13-commission-for-social-communications>

Laudete
<https://laudate.en.softonic.com>

Leadership Roundtable
<https://leadershiproundtable.org>
<https://summit.leadershiproundtable.org>

Loyola University -- Loyola Institute for Ministry (LIM)
<http://cnh.loyno.edu/lim>

Maryknoll (landing page)
<https://www.maryknoll.org>

Maryknoll Affiliates
<https://www.maryknollaffiliates.org>

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Africa Region (maintenance mode)
<https://maryknollafrika.org>

Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Mission Education
<https://www.maryknoll.us>

Maryknoll Institute of African Studies (MIAS) **fix**
<http://www.mias.edu>

Maryknoll Intranet
<https://www.maryknoll.net>

Maryknoll Lay Missioners
<https://mklm.org>

Maryknoll Magazine
<https://maryknollmagazine.org>

Maryknoll Mission Archives including a Blog
<http://maryknollmissionarchives.org>

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
<https://www.maryknollogc.org>

Maryknoll Sisters
<https://www.maryknollsisters.org>

Maryknoll Society of Priests and Brothers
<https://maryknollsociety.org>

Maryknoll YA Bay Area (What'sApp) Community
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/DuySSUqKSSaD4mTYqNMBKs>

Mikroi: TAC's Initiative on Small Christian Communities
[Mikroi - Today's American Catholic \(todaysamericancatholic.org\)](https://todaysamericancatholic.org)

In 2022 Today's American Catholic (TAC) launched an initiative to advance the work of Small Christian Communities. As part of this initiative, we are hosting Online SCC gatherings via Zoom. While these are not a substitute for in-person gatherings, they offer participants opportunities for faith-sharing, dialogue, and study that might not be otherwise available. If you are interested in joining one of our emerging SCC groups, please get in touch using the contact form on our website. We are also happy to share resources and guidance with those interested in starting their own SCC, either in their own location or through our online platform. We have established this page as a home for all of our SCC-related resources. *Mikroi* (*μικρός*) is a key term in *Matthew's* gospel that means "little ones" or "the least of these."

Mikado Mission Library and Catholic Documentation Center (Missio, Aachen, Germany)
<http://www.mikado-ac.info/homeuk.html>

Missio (Germany)
www.missio-hilft.de

Missio (The Pontifical Mission Societies -- USA)
<https://www.missio.org>

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>

Nairobi Archdiocese
<https://archdioceseofnairobi.org>

Nanetya Foundation
<http://nanetya-foundation.org>

The mission of this foundation is to enable children around the globe, who belong to small, endangered or unknown ethnic groups to read stories in their mother tongue and by that preserve the stories and traditions of these ethnic group cultures.

National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities (NAPRC)

[NAPRC – National Alliance of Parishes Restructuring into Communities](#)

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.

National Advisory Team for Catholic Young Adult Ministry (NATYAM)

<https://www.usccb.org/topics/youth-and-young-adult-ministries/national-advisory-team-young-adult-ministry>

National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM)

<https://nfcym.org>

National Catholic Register (NCR)

<https://www.ncregister.com>

National Catholic Reporter (NCR)

<https://www.ncronline.org>

Newark Archdiocese

<https://www.rcan.org>

<https://www.rcan.org/Synod2023>

<https://www.youtube.com/NwkArchdiocese>

<https://www.facebook.com/NwkArchdiocese>

New People Media

<https://www.facebook.com/newpeoplemedia>

New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com>

North American Center for Marianist Studies

<https://www.nacms.org>

Under E-Publications see:

The Best of Quest: Liturgical Year A



The Best of Quest is a lectionary-based resource for use by Small Christian Communities. Drawing upon a rich corpus of almost 30 years from *Quest*, a publication produced by the Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut, USA this installment of *The Best of Quest* focuses on Liturgical Year A.

Year B (coming)

The Best of Quest: Liturgical Year C



The Best of Quest is a lectionary-based resource for use by Small Christian Communities. Drawing upon a rich corpus of almost 30 years from *Quest*, a publication produced by the Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut, USA this installment of *The Best of Quest* focuses on Liturgical Year C.

North American Forum for Small Christian Communities (NAFSCC)

<http://www.nafsc.org>

password, effective 1 July 2021, to each page of the "members access": 2022NAFSCC.

Nova Catholic Community

www.novacatholic.org

NOVA is...

- A Progressive and Inclusive Catholic Community drawing from Northern Virginia and the Greater DC area.
- Committed to Social Justice & Peacemaking through our personal lives, communal worship and activities.
- Lay-led and inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- Celebrating 52 years of faithful witness and always welcoming to visitors and new members.

Opera Mini

<http://www.opera.com>

Orbis Books: discount of 40% using promotion code: MKLFAM
Orbis Books: discount of 30% using promotion code: CON30 time barred

<https://www.orbisbooks.com>
<https://orbisbooks.com>
[Orbis Books](#)

Orbis Books Catalog in Flipdox format
https://view.flipdocs.com/?ID=10027394_448352

Origins Online CNS Documentary Service
<http://www.originsonline.com>

Our Sunday Visitor (OSV)
<https://www.osv.com>
<https://www.osvnews.com>

Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network

Parish without Borders
<http://www.parish-without-borders.net>

Paterson Diocese
<https://rcdop.org>

Pastoral Department for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) -- Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut, USA (closed)
<http://www.sccquest.org>

Paulines Africa Books and Audiovisuals
<http://www.paulinesafrica.org>

Peacock Streaming Platform (Livestreaming)
<https://www.peacocktv.com>

The People Speak Out Website
<https://www.thepeoplespeakout.org>

Local Voices Connecting Globally. Contains a lot of SCCs resources.

Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS) – Kenya

<http://www.pmskenya.org>

Portsmouth Abbey School
<https://www.portsmouthabbey.org>

Presentation Ministries
<http://presentationministries.com/community/community.asp>

Raskob Foundation

<https://www.rfca.org>

Religious News Service (RNS)

<https://religionnews.com>

RENEW International especially RENEW Africa

<http://www.renewintl.org>

ResearchGate

<https://www.researchgate.net>

<https://www.researchgate.net/home.Home.html>

Sacred Space

<http://www.sacredspace.ie>

San Bernadino Diocese, California

<https://www.sbdioocese.org>

The Office of Small Faith Communities closed because of budget cuts and the ministry is now folded in under the Ministry Formation Institute. (909-475-5387 Amanda Alexander)

San Diego Diocese, California

<https://sdcatholic.org>

Scottish Laity Network (SLN)

<https://www.scottishlaitynetwork.org.uk>

The Scottish Laity Network (SLN) seeks to enable Scottish laity to come together as disciples of Jesus and through prayer, dialogue and discernment to find ‘new ways’ of being Church in Scotland in the 21st Century. We are rooted above all in a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Gospel. We are inspired by the principles of Vatican II seeking to make the Gospel values a lived reality in the world today, and by the encyclical letter *Laudato Si’*, the vision of Pope Francis to listen and respond to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. We trust the Holy Spirit to guide us as we make this journey.

The Scottish Laity Network has a YouTube Channel with 89 recent videos/events. It is now focusing on the SLN Synod Journey 2020 –2024.

SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar).

<https://secam.org>

SEDOS (Service of Documentation and Study)

<https://sedosmission.org>

Semantic Scholar

<https://www.semanticscholar.org>

Skype (including the St. Isidore of Seville International Online SCC)

<https://www.skype.com/en>

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative

[Small Christian Communities – Small Christian Communities](#) **without www**

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative

<https://www.smallchristiancommunities.org>

This website was started in 2004 with a vision to establish a global collaborative networking website for Small Christian Communities (SCCs) worldwide. We share SCCs contact information, events, materials, news, videos and photos for each of the six continents. Special features on the Home Page include a “SCC Poll,” “What’s New” and a “Calendar of Events.” We welcome any and all feedback, contributions, SCCs materials, etc.

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)

Solidarity with South Sudan

<http://www.solidarityssudan.org>

Spirit Unbounded

<https://spiritunbounded.org>

St. Cloud Diocese, Minnesota

<https://stcdio.org>

St. Patrick’s Church/Kilgarvan Parish

<https://www.dioceseofkerry.ie/parish/kilgarvan>

St. Petersburg Diocese Website

[Small Christian Communities - Diocese of Saint Petersburg \(dosp.org\)](http://SmallChristianCommunities-DioceseofSaintPetersburg(dosp.org))

The Small Christian Communities Office:

- Promotes, develops, supports and trains Small Christian Communities and their leadership.
- Assists parishes and Catholic entities in building communities that regularly engage in connecting life and faith through reflection and relationship building in all activities.
- Contains links to many SCCs Resources.

Traditional Legacy Research Society Website (Sukuma Legacy Project)

<https://sukumalegacy.org>

The Traditional Legacy Research Society promotes the history, culture, oral literature — Proverbs, Sayings, Riddles, Stories, Myths and Songs — and visual representations of the Sukuma People in Tanzania in East Africa. There are various examples of SCCs and community values. Includes a Blog (comments on the Sukuma Legacy Project).

Tablet

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk>

Provides an occasional article on SCCs/BCCs/BECs/CEBs around the world and valuable background information on the Global Church and the “context” of small communities. Online “Latest News” updates every day. An occasional article on Africa.

Tangaza Maryknoll Centre for African Studies (TAMCAS) Website

Tangaza University College including Library E-Resources and Digital Repository

<https://www.tangaza.ac.ke>

<https://tangaza.ac.ke>

Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC)

<https://tec.or.tz>

Today’s American Catholic (TAC) Online Newsletter

[Today's American Catholic \(campaign-archive.com\)](http://Today's American Catholic (campaign-archive.com))

Today’s American Catholic (TAC)

<https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org>

Includes Mikroi (*Mikroi* (μικρός) is a key term in *Matthew*’s gospel that means “little ones” or “the least of these.”) – TAC’s initiative on Small Christian Communities. Sections on:

- News and Articles.
- Opportunities to join.
- Additional Resources:
 1. Documents.
 2. Organizations.
 3. Colleges and Universities.

Twitter

<https://twitter.com>

<https://twitter.com/search?q=Orbis%20Books&src=tyah> (for *God’s Quad*)

1994 First African Synod

http://secretariat.synod.va/content/synod/en/synodal_assemblies/1994-first-special-assembly-for-africa--the-church-in-africa-and.html

2009 Second African Synod

Tübingen University Library Database (Tübingen, Germany)

www.ub.uni-tuebingen.de

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

Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God

http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_23_ii_specialeaffrica-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_specialeaffrica-2009/02_inglese/b33_02.html

2018 Synod on “Young People”

Synod on Young People Website

<http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en.html>

Synod2018 on Twitter

<https://twitter.com/synod2018>

Synod2018 on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/synod2018>

2021-2024 Synod on “Synodality” <https://www.synod.va/en.html>

Pope Francis has proclaimed a Synod 2021-2024 and describes it as a "walking together, a journeying together." Everyone participates – young and old, women and men, lay people, priests, Sisters, Brothers, Bishops. Everyone has a voice. The theme is “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.” The purpose is to listen to peoples’ concerns, questions and recommendations for changes and then to renew and reinvigorate the Catholic Church around the world. Everyone is invited to participate in the Synodal Process. The Synod Office in Rome, Italy has a wonderful website with online resources from every continent in the world. Maryknollers have contributed to this website.

Walking Together – Sharing Resources for the Synod

[Resources - Sharing synodal resources \(synodresources.org\)](https://synodresources.org)

For a Synodal Church Online Newsletter

[#ForASynodalChurch - Newsletter \(mailchi.mp\)](https://mailchi.mp/forasynodalchurch)

Access to the sites of the seven individual continental gatherings and reports
Portal

<https://synod2023.org>

Africa Synodal Continental Assembly

[Africa - 2023 Synodal Continental Assembly | \(synod2023.org\)](https://synod2023.org)

“North American Final Document for the Continental Stage of the 2021-2024 Synod:
For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”

[North-American-Final-Document_EN.pdf \(synod.va\)](https://synod.va/North-American-Final-Document_EN.pdf)

A Synodal Church in Mission, 42-page English text of the “Summary Report” of the First Session of the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. 29 October, 2023. [2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report_IMP.pdf \(synod.va\)](https://www.vatican.va/synod/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report_IMP.pdf)

Ukweli TV Kenya

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoxv34YQP8MTpFvZrvTrkqw>

<https://www.facebook.com/casmiro/videos/10219010869156852/>

University of San Diego

University of Notre Dame

<https://www.nd.edu>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

<http://www.usccb.org>

Vatican

www.vaticannews.va (Online News)

www.vatican.va (The Holy See)

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html> (for English)

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>

Young Adult Empowerment Community

[Missionary Disciples - Young Adult Empowerment Community \(maryknoll.us\)](http://www.maryknoll.us)

<https://www.maryknoll.us/home/young-adult-empowerment-community>

YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com>

YouTube Channels

SCC Channel

<https://youtube.com/shorts/DXAcfhewvEB?feature=share> **Video unavailable**

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

<https://www.bible.com>

We Are Church Ireland

<https://wearechurchireland.ie/>

What Apps Applications/Platforms (23)

<https://web.whatsapp.com>

African Proverbs Research

African Proverbs Working Group

BBC News

Eastern Africa SCCs Training Team

Hekima Theology Class 2018

Hekima Theology Class 2019

Holy Cross Youth Family

JPII Evangelizing Teams

KUCC (Kenyatta University Christian Community) -- Christ the Teacher Parish

Laudate

Many individual SCCs

Maryknoll YA Bay Area

Missio

Network SCC Africa

New Evangelization Africa

Nuer Small Christian Community in Kenya

RIP Fr. Richard J. Quinn

SOG Communication

SOG Maurice Michael Otunga

St. Augustine Graduate Fellowship SCC

St. Kizito SCC Waruku

United Airlines

The Pope App

Whispers in the Loggia

<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com>

Valuable summary of Catholic Church news, photos, and documentation on various social media produced by American Catholic lay chronicler/journalist/correspondent/analyst Rocco Palmo.

Whois

<https://lookup.icann.org/lookup>

<https://whois.icann.org/en/about-whois>

<https://lookup.icann.org>

Domain Name Registration data lookup.

Wikipedia

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

NOTE: I would update and revise the *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia, entry on "Basic Ecclesial Community" to read:

Basic Ecclesial Communities, also called Basic Christian Communities and Small Christian Communities is not a Christian movement in the church as such, but the church on the move (see José Marins quote). Some feel that this initiative has its origin and inspiration from Liberation Theology in Latin America. Many regard the emergence of this initiative as part of the concrete realization of the communitarian model of the Catholic Church (as Communion and as People of God) promoted by the Second Vatican Council. The communities are considered as a new way of "being the Church"— the Catholic Church at the grassroots, in the neighborhood and villages. The earliest small communities emerged in Brazil in 1956, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1961 and in Tanzania and the Philippines in the late 1960s and later spread to other parts Africa and Asia and in recent times in Australia and North America.

WordPress

WorldCat Website

<https://www.worldcat.org>

"Word to Life" Sunday Scripture Readings (CNS Blog) XX

<https://cnsblog.wordpress.com/category/word-to-life>

Practical, concrete examples of daily life followed by several challenging questions.

Zambia Episcopal Conference XX

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

ZENIT

<http://www.zenit.org>

Zoom Applications/Platforms (10)

Center at Mariandale

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81607099744>

Meeting ID: 816 0709 9744

John Eybel/Africa Group

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8638025609?pwd=YVlzc1B5Y01GcEJibG85ZkYvYUJSQT09>

Meeting ID: 863 802 5609

Passcode: 1911

Marita Grudzen

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81462228942>

Rene Reid

<https://zoom.us/j/2429500175>

password: spirit

Joseph Healey

Zoom Personal Meeting ID (PMI): 719-876-1799

Kerry Robinson

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88506480810>

Meeting ID: 885 0648 0810

Bob Short

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83405470212?pwd=RnBwOHNTUjlLVVVRVZ4dE1jTzBsdz09>

Meeting ID: 834 0547 0212

Passcode: 346503

Meeting Recording:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/fbdh6x_zDRTbi8qGeILGmQsvJ9ghgcDDUXnLYfaRLT wIQfSUMOhSkFFAgyr1cV2Z.LTVb8ClaziX3vIk5

Access Passcode: Ai1=8BDF

Rene Reid (CCRI)

<https://zoom.us/j/2429500175>

password: spirit.

Bob Short

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83405470212?pwd=RnBwOHNTUjlLVVVRVZ4dE1jTzBsdz09>

Meeting ID: 834 0547 0212

Passcode: 346503

Meeting Recording:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/fbdh6x_zDRTbi8qGeILGmQsvJ9ghgcDDUXnLYfaRLT wIQfSUMOhSkFFAgyr1cV2Z.LTVb8ClaziX3vIk5

Access Passcode: Ai1=8BDF

John Sivalon

<https://scranton.zoom.us/j/93546139230>

Gene Toland/Laudato Si Zoom Focus Group

?

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88144360410?pwd=dU9CL3lmZ3daNXhZaU5yWmxicmhkdz09>

Meeting ID: 881 4436 0410
Passcode: 767352

About the Author

Father Joseph G. Healey, MM is an American Maryknoll missionary priest who came to Kenya in 1968 and founded the Regional Catholic Bishops Association (AMECEA) Social Communications Office based in Nairobi, Kenya. He was a lecturer at Tangaza University College (CUEA) and at Hekima University College (CUEA) in Nairobi. Over many years he has taught courses on the “Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church.” He is a member of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Training Team. He facilitates SCC Workshops and animates SCCs in Eastern Africa. He is an ordinary member of the St. Kizito Small Christian Community in the Waruku Section of St. Austin’s Parish in Nairobi Archdiocese and the St. Isidore of Seville Online Small Christian Community. During the Covid-19 pandemic he started full time in Internet Ministry and now focuses on promoting Online SCCs, the Synodal Process and digital evangelization. He is now based in New Vernon, New Jersey, USA. Email address: JoeHealey@jghealey.com

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](#). 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](#). He co-edited *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa -- A Training Handbook for Facilitators* (the Swahili is *Kuimarisha Ukuaji wa Jumuiya Ndogo Ndogo za Kikristo katika Afrika*).

An ongoing 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. 1,518 pages and 1,514 footnotes as of 18 December, 2023 on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website at:

<http://smallchristiancommunities.org/building-the-church-as-family-of-god-evaluation-of-small-christian-communities-in-eastern-africa-2/>

http://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Build_new.pdf

On sale on Amazon (Kindle Edition and other digital formats) and Google as an Ebook and on Amazon as a Print on Demand (POD) paperback in two volumes.

He has contributed the following recent chapters and articles in books and journals and talks in podcasts and webinars as follows:

1. “Promoting SCCs in Africa via the Internet,” in Joseph Healey and Jeanne Hinton (eds.), *Small Christian Communities Today: Capturing the New Moment* (Orbis Books). 2005.
2. “New Learnings in Animating a Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Model of Church in Africa Today” in *African Christian Studies* (CUEA). Reproduced on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website, 2008.
3. “Innovations and New Trends in Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in Africa Today.” in *Hekima Review*. Reproduced on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website. 2009.

4. "Small Christian Communities: Second African Synod," *New People*. 2009.
5. "Small Christian Communities Promote Themes of the 2009 2nd African Synod" in *Hakimani – Jesuit Journal of Social Justice in Eastern Africa*. 2009.
6. "How Small Christian Communities Promote Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa" in *The Journal for Peace and Justice Studies*, 2010.
7. "Three Case Studies of African Christology among the Sukuma People in Tanzania," *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*, 2011.
8. "Small Christian Communities: Promoters of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Eastern Africa" in Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace – the Second African Synod* (Orbis Books and Acton Publishers). 2011.
9. "Historical Development of the Small Christian Communities/Basic Ecclesial Communities in Africa" in Klaus Krämer, and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Small Christian Communities: Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-looking Church* (Herder and Claretian Publications). 2013.
10. "How African Small Christian Communities Implement the Pastoral and Missionary Vision of Vatican II" in *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*. 2013.
11. "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. CUEA Press, 2013.
12. "Promoting Small Christian Communities in Africa through the Internet" in *International Journal of African Catholicism (IJAC)*. IJAC website. 2014.
13. "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family Ministry in Eastern Africa" in *Hekima Review*. Reprinted on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website. 2014.
14. "Promoting Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa in the Light of *The Joy of the Gospel*" in Klaus Krämer, and Vellguth, Klaus (eds.), *Evangelii Gaudium: Voices of the Universal Church* (Quezon City: Claretian Communications Foundation). 2015.
15. "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Promote Family and Marriage Ministry in Eastern Africa," in online *International Journal of African Catholicism (IJAC)*, IJAC website. 2015
16. "Beyond Vatican II: Imagining the Catholic Church of Nairobi I" in Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III* (Orbis Books and Acton Publishers). 2016.
17. "Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as Agents of Change in the Fight Against HIV AND AIDS in Eastern Africa" in Jacquineau Azetsop, *HIV and AIDS in Africa: Theological Reflection, Public Health Crises, and Social Transformation* (Orbis Books). 2016.
18. "Urban and Rural Models of Small Christian Communities (SCCs): A Case Study on Eastern Africa," in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner (Chief Editors), *Anthology of*

African Christianity (Regnum Books International). Reproduced on the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website. 2016.

19. "We Create the Path by Walking: Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Involvement in Peacebuilding in Eastern Africa" in *The Journal of Social Encounters* (JSE). 2017.
20. "The Way Forward: We Create the Path by Walking," in Giuseppe Caramazza and Eleanor Gibson, (eds.), *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*. 2018.
21. "What Catholic Young People Really Want to Talk About?" in Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, (eds.), *God's Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* (Orbis Books). 2018.
22. "Cell Churches in Africa," *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*. 2018.
23. "Pastoral Responses to the Worldwide Eucharistic Famine," FutureChurch Podcast (presentation and the transcription of the question and answers). 2018.
24. "*Small Christian Communities*." Interview with Joseph Healey in "Anchor" Program (CCRI Podcast Episode No. 1). 2019.
25. "*Young People Small Christian Communities*." Interview with Joseph Healey in "Anchor" Program (Catholic Church Reform Int'l -- CCRI Podcast Episode No. 6). 2019.
26. "Go Digital or Die: The Importance and Use of the Internet and Social Media in Proclaiming the Good News Today," in *New People*. Reproduced on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website and in the *Maryknoll News*. 2020.
27. "We Create the Path by Walking: Evolving an African Narrative Theology" in Elias Kifon Bongmba, (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology* (Routledge). 2020. (with a Read Aloud feature)
28. "SCCs in the Historical Perspective of 59 Years (1961 to 2020) in the AMECEA Region." Produced on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website. 2020.
29. "My Personal 50 Year Journey (1970 to 2020) with Orbis Books in Africa," in *Hekima Review*. Reproduced on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website. 2020. **MEMOIR**
30. "Small Christian Communities in the *Acts of the Apostles*." Webinar on Zoom for the CCRI Strategy Team. Facilitated by Joseph G. Healey. A five-session interactive study, discussion and reflection experience using the "See," Discern/Judge" and "Act" process or methodology. 15 July, 2020 to 12 August, 2020.
31. "Origin and History of the Small Christian Communities Global Collaborative Website (2004 to 2021). Posted on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website. 15 February, 2021.
32. "After College What? Developing Alumni Zoom Small Faith Communities." Posted on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website. 1 October, 2021.

33. “We Create the Path by Walking Together/Journeying Together: Developing the Synodal Process in Eastern Africa.” Posted on the Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Global Collaborative Website. 29 January, 2022.
34. “Small Christian Communities in Africa: Histories, Themes, Development and Challenges” in Stan Ilo, (ed.), *Handbook of African Catholicism* (Orbis Books, 2022). (with a Read Aloud feature).
35. "My 54 Years (1967 – 2021) Journey with Charles de Foucauld" in Victor Edwin, (ed.), *Brother To All: The Life and Witness of St. Charles de Foucauld* (11 Essays on Different Themes Around Charles de Foucauld) (Orbis Books, 2022). **MEMOIR**
36. *Your Voice Counts in This Synod*, Spoken Text and Video to introduce the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers “Synod Listening Sessions.” Maryknoll: Center CED. March, 2022.
37. “African Theologians Are Now Writing Their Own Histories -- Why the *Handbook of African Catholicism* is Important.” Talk at the Book Presentation of the *Handbook of African Catholicism* at CUEA in Nairobi, Kenya.
38. “Four African Theologians Assess the SCCs Model of Church,” Talk at the Virtual Book Presentation of the *Handbook of African Catholicism* at De Paul in Chicago, Illinois, USA.
39. “Case Study of Retracing the Footsteps of St. Isidore of Seville Weekly Lectionary-based International Online Small Christian Community (SCC).”
40. “Harvesting Some Maryknoll Memories in the Africa Region and Discerning What the Holy Spirit is Saying to Maryknoll Today and in the Future.” Reflection for Tanzania District Meeting, Mwanza, Tanzania.
41. “Harvesting Some AMECEA Memories and Discerning What the Holy Spirit is Saying to AMECEA Today and in the Future.” Farewell Homily at the AMECEA Residence/Office, Nairobi, Kenya.
42. “Saying ‘Goodbye...Until We Meet Again.’” Farewell Homily at Maryknoll Society House, Nairobi, Kenya.
43. “Bishop Patrick Kalilombe and the Lilongwe Diocese, Malawi Mini Synod in 1973-75: One of the Foundations of the AMECEA Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Pastoral Priority Leading Up to the Two “Synod on Synodality” Sessions in 2023 and 2024.”
44. “The Participation of SCCs in the Synodal Church in Africa” in *Mission Studies and Practical-Contextual Theology, Studia Missiologici SVD*, 2024. **IN PRODUCTION**
45. “The Participation of SCCs in the Synodal Church in Africa” in *Tangaza Journal of Theology and Mission*, 2024. **IN PRODUCTION**
46. The origin of the AMECEA Key Pastoral Priority of SCCs and the link to Bishop Patrick Kalilombe and the Mini-Synod in Lilongwe Diocese (now an Archdiocese) in 1973-1975. *SCC@50 Booklet*. **IN PRODUCTION**

47. Small Christian Communities and the Ongoing Synodal Process. *SCC@50 Booklet*
SCC@50 Booklet. Journal of Social Encounters Deadline: 15 March, 2024 Essays should be
15-25 pages double-spaced typed in the APA format, and include a 100-150 word abstract.
IN PRODUCTION

He has helped to produce a number of videos, DVDs and podcasts on SCCs as well as
coordinate radio and TV programs.

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