

## **B: SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

# **B\4 LEADERSHIP IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

### **TOPICS OF AsIPA TEXTS:**

**A : GOSPEL SHARING**

**B : SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

**C : A PARTICIPATORY CHURCH**

**D : TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS**

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AsIPA B: SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES  
Programmes for Training the Christian Community

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## B\4

### LEADERSHIP IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (SCCs)

#### INTRODUCTION

Sometimes, parishes experience great difficulties in getting the right leaders for SCCs or replacing them. Many of these difficulties can be avoided if certain principles on leadership are kept in mind from the beginning.

In this AsIPA text we would like to reflect on four topics which will help us to formulate our own leadership policy in a parish:

- A. Different ways of getting leaders (appointing, volunteering and voting.)
- B. Emerging leadership.
- C. Team leadership (At least two leaders for each task!)
- D. Rotating leadership.

## A. DIFFERENT WAYS OF GETTING LEADERS

- ☛ *Form groups of 4/6.*
- Each group discuss only one way of getting leaders for SCCs.
- Report after 10 minutes.

### 1. “Appointed leaders” start SCCs



Father Henry is very anxious to start SCCs. He divides his parish into zones and looks for leaders who could help him to start SCCs in each them.

“I know my people” Father Henry says. So he contacts prospective leaders himself, others are suggested to him by the Parish Pastoral Council. On a certain Sunday he announces in Church: “The following men and women are appointed leaders of SCCs in their respective zones:.....I hope all the faithful of the parish will co-operate with them because SCCs are a very important development in our Church today.”

#### **Question:**

- *What are the advantages and disadvantages if leaders for SCCs are appointed as in our story above?—*



### Supplement:

- + Some outstanding leaders may be found.
  - They may not be accepted by the community.
  - They remain the “prolonged arm” of the priest.
  - They may vanish when the priest is transferred.
  - They may regard their SCCs as their “property”.
  - They may develop a dominating style of leadership.
  - The responsibility for the life and actions of the group may rest with the leader and does not emerge from the community.

## 2. “Volunteer leaders” start SCCs



Father John wants to start SCCs. He explains the idea of SCCs in different sermons. Then he announces:

“For each SCC we need good leaders. Therefore

I call on the generosity of all the faithful. Please come forward and volunteer! Those who want to become leaders of SCCs, please enter your name in the list which you can find at the back of the Church. Thank you.”

### Question:

- **What can you foresee if a priest calls for “volunteer leaders” to start SCCs? What are the advantages and disadvantages?--**



### **Supplement:**

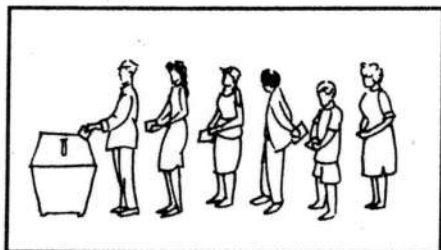
- + Good people may volunteer.
- + They may be committed and motivated leaders.
- They may not have any experience yet of leading a small community.
- They may not be accepted by the community.
- The wrong people may volunteer.
- They may volunteer for the wrong reasons, e.g. looking for an important rank (status) in the church.
- They may adopt a dominating style of leadership.
- They may lose interest when the priest is transferred.
- The responsibility for the life and the actions of the group may rest with the leader and does not emerge from the community.

### **Note:**

There will be situations, of course, where leaders have to be appointed or be asked to come forward as volunteers. This may be the case in times of emergencies or when qualified animators and trainers for the parish-animation-team will be needed.

It should remain, however, the expressive aim of the leaders to act as “animators” who build up the community and allow leaders to emerge from it as soon as possible.

### 3. "Elected leaders" start SCCs



In the parish of St. Andrew the priest divides the parish into zones and asks the people to meet to elect a leader for their SCC. Quite a number of the faithful come and they elect a chairman,

vice-chairman and secretary for each SCC in each zone.

#### **Question:**

- *What are the advantages and disadvantages if leaders (e.g. a chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary) are elected in the first meetings of a SCC? --*

#### **Supplement:**

- + Community is involved in getting leaders.
- + A leadership-structure is established soon.
- The wrong persons may be elected as the group has not experienced the actual life of a SCC.
- Usually the more articulate and socially better known people will be chosen. (who may have already a number of commitments)!
- Starting with a elaborate leadership structure make a SCC formal and hinders the spirit of warm fellowship.

## **B. EMERGING LEADERSHIP**

### **1. How leaders emerged in the SCC “St. Gabriel”**

“St. Gabriel” was one of the SCCs in the suburb of a city. How did they start? They asked their priest to send the parish team to help them conduct the first 5 meetings. In fact, the parish team came 8 times before the budding SCC could lead its own meetings. The parish team, consisted of a catechist and one member of the Parish Pastoral Council.

At first they talked about the idea of SCCs and then they introduced the 7-step gospel sharing. They did it gradually, explained the deeper meaning of the steps and practised with the group how to facilitate the steps.

In one of the last visits, the members of the parish team asked the question: “What are the two most important tasks which you as a SCC would like to undertake?”

After some discussions they discovered that somebody in the group should be able to facilitate the 7- step gospel sharing. Another urgent task which they found was visiting people who had just settled in the parish.





The parish team advised them to look for two people for each task, two for gospel sharing and two for visiting the newcomers.

After a while they suggested some members of the group to undertake these tasks. They agreed to do it.

The parish team suggested further that these “leaders” should rotate, that means, after three months or so, others from the group should undertake these tasks.

Then the parish team shared with the group the time and dates when leaders for gospel sharing and for visiting newcomers will be trained in the parish hall.



# METHOD OF ASIPA TEXTS

ASIPA TEXTS are compiled for Christian men and women at grass root level of the parish. They can be conducted most fruitfully in Small Christian Communities, Neighbourhood Communities, Parish Pastoral Councils or any other small groups in the parish.

ASIPA TEXTS can also be used with larger groups, e.g. in the parish hall - provided the “participatory method” is maintained in smaller working groups.

## **Features of the “ASIPA approach”**

1. ASIPA TEXTS adopt a **“participatory approach”** in which all participants of a group search and discover for themselves as far as they are able to.
2. The texts are compiled in such a way that the facilitator can use them with a **minimum of preparation**.
3. The facilitator is requested to **follow the text** as closely as possible and allow the participants to contribute when indicated in the text.
4. The facilitator is not content with one answer to a question but he/she encourages as many participants as possible to search for an answer. **“Buzz groups”** of 2/3 are helpful to achieve maximum participation.
5. The **SUPPLEMENT** can help add to the findings of the participants and summarize them.
6. The **SUMMARY** is meant to be used as ‘input’.

# **ASIPA:**

**As-ian -I-ntegral -P-astoral -A-pproach**

The Asian Bishops declared in the Final Statement of their Fifth Plenary Session in Bandung: The Church of 1990s has to be a "Participatory Church", a "Communion of Communities", a Church that "witnesses to the Risen Lord" (*FABC5,#8*).

The question was, how to promote this "new way of being Church". Therefore, late in 1993, jointly sponsored by the FABC Offices of Human Development and of Laity, a consultation meeting was held in Malaysia. It was during this consultation that the pastoral process for promoting a "Participatory Church" in Asia was termed ASIPA: Asian Integral Pastoral Approach.

ASIPA TEXTS (training programmes) follow this directive:

## **ASIAN**

They want to implement the vision of the Asian Bishops and help Asian Christians face Asian life in the light of the gospel.

## **INTEGRAL**

They aim at achieving a balance between the "spiritual" and the "social", between the individual and the community, between hierarchical leadership and the co-responsibility of the laity.

## **PASTORAL**

They train the laity in their pastoral mission in Church and world.

## **APPROACH**

The process of ASIPA TEXTS can be described as a pastoral approach which is "Christ- and Community centred". It involves the participants of workshops to search for themselves and allows them to experience a "New Way of Being Church."

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