

D: TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS

D\6

How to Start Small Christian Communities (SCCs)

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 D: TRAINING FOR PARISH TEAMS
Pastoral Leaders

D\6

HOW TO START SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (SCCs)

Introduction:

There are many ways of starting SCCs.

Experience has shown, however, that certain ways will necessarily lead to failure. Therefore, in our session today we would like to help the leaders of a parish (e.g. full-time pastoral workers, Parish Pastoral Council members, leaders of committees) to discover together important elements for starting SCCs.

A. DIFFERENT WAYS OF STARTING SCCs


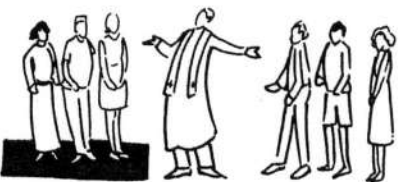
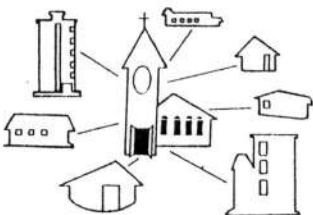

 *Work in small groups of 2/3.*

- Read the description of the two sets of drawings on page 2 and 3..
- Discuss the question.
- Report after 10 minutes.


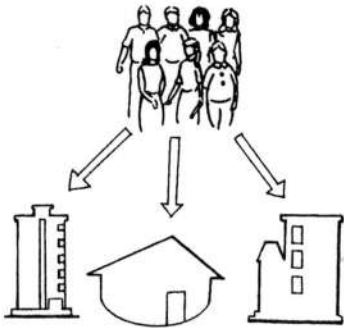
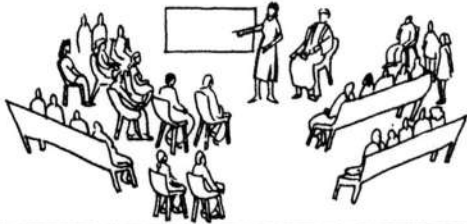


Question

- *List the advantages and disadvantages of both ways of starting SCCs. --*

1. 'EXPERT' START

<p>① Parish leaders decide: "We should have SCCs!"</p>	
<p>② Parish priest appoints or asks for volunteers to join the "Parish Team". -He trains the team to conduct SCC meetings.</p>	
<p>③ Parish Team divides the parish into zones and SCC groupings.</p>	
<p>④ Members of the Parish Team start and lead SCCs in all the zones.</p>	

2. 'COMMUNITY' START

<p>① Retreat weekends on "New Way of Being Church" by a small (diocesan) team.</p>	
<p>② Parish Team emerges & is trained to start SCCs.</p>	
<p>③ Parish Team & members of committees visit all homes.</p>	
<p>④ Parish Team conducts AP in parish hall and/or during the Sunday liturgy</p>	
<p>⑤ Parish Team conducts 5/8 initial meetings in SCCs on request.</p>	
<p>⑥ Emerging leaders in SCCs are trained regularly.</p>	



Supplement to the 'EXPERT START'

- + Quick start.
- + Training of team.
- SCCs remain "Father's business". People in the neighbourhood feel "organized". Inner conviction and lasting commitment will hardly be developed.
- Leaders may not be accepted by the community.
- People volunteer for the wrong reasons.
- Appointed and volunteer leaders may not be suitable for the task of promoting SCCs.



Supplement to the 'COMMUNITY START':

- + The community is involved in all the stages. People feel respected and taken seriously.
- + Deeper understanding of SCCs is offered, then people decide themselves to join the Parish Team or SCCs.
- + Guiding leadership is exercised.
- + SCCs are not left alone once they have been started. They are helped by regular training of their leaders and are accompanied by the Parish Team.
- People may not be ready yet.
- Slow start, time consuming..

Note:

There are many other ways of starting SCCs, e.g: developing existing prayer groups or action committees.

Certain parish projects may also initiate the promotion of SCCs, e.g. zones (wards) began by collecting money for the church but eventually they wanted more than that.

B. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE 'COMMUNITY' START

 *Work in the whole group.*

Read the different stages or 'principles' of the 'Community Start' as Father Mark has adopted it in his parish.

Question:

What inspirations does the approach of Father Mark give us in our own effort to start SCCs?—

1. Gave an experience and taste of 'community'

- Father Mark, for instance, offered two-weekends on the 'Renewed Vision of Church' to all those who were interested. About 30 people attended.
- He repeated these retreat-weekends with members of the Parish Pastoral Council and again with members of prayer-groups in the parish.

(He used some topics from the **AsIPA texts A** for gospel sharing and from **AsIPA texts C** for the vision of a participatory church.)

2. Let a "Parish Training Team" emerge and share in promoting SCCs.

Any of the participants who attended the two weekends were invited by Father Mark if he/she wanted to join the "Parish Training Team". 12 men and women came forward or, as we say, "emerged"!

- With this parish team, Father Mark arranged neighbourhood activities, for instance:
 - Introducing and discussing a letter of the bishop.
 - Visiting all the Catholic families.
 - Arranging neighbourhood liturgies in preparation of Christmas.
 - In this way Father Mark gave the parishioners a first "taste" of neighbourhood communities.

3. Made the whole congregation aware of the vision of SCCs

a) Awareness Programmes during the Sunday liturgy:

The parish team prepared and presented three awareness programmes to the Sunday congregation. The topic was: "The New Way of Being Church!"

They asked their diocesan Pastoral Institute to help them in presenting these awareness programmes on SCCs during the Sunday liturgy.

(They used the AsIPA texts no. D\2-5: samples for Awareness Programmes.)

- b) A series of Awareness Programmes on SCCs in the parish hall.

The invitation to such Awareness Programmes sounded like this:

“Interest has been shown to form SCCs in our parish. All those who want to know more about SCCs, are invited to come to the parish hall on Wednesday evening. Our parish team will help us to understand better the idea of SCCs, what they are and how they live.”

The parish team asked their diocesan Pastoral Institute to help them conduct these awareness programmes on SCCs in the parish hall.

(They used Lumko no. 19.)

5. Assisted in conducting the first meetings!

At the end of many awareness programmes offered in the parish hall the invitation was given:

“Those who wish to start an SCC in their neighbourhood, please contact the priest or one of our parish team. We shall come and help you start.”

Three neighbourhoods expressed their wish to start SCCs. The parish team (small teams of 2/3) helped them in their 5-8 initial meetings by deepening their understanding of SCCs .

They taught them the basic structure of a SCC meeting which follows the 7 step gospel sharing method:

Step 1-5: Growing together as a community in the presence of Christ.

Step 6: Continuing Christ's mission in this particular neighbourhood.

(They used AsIPA texts B\1-3 for a better understanding of SCCs and AsIPA texts A\1-5 for introducing gospel sharing.)

6. Trained emerging leaders

After the first 5-8 initial meetings, leaders "emerged" from the SCCs, e.g. two people from each group for *gospel sharing* and two people from each group for *visiting the sick*. The parish provided regular training for these emerging leaders (using **AsIPA texts A\1-7** for gospel sharing and **Lumko skill training booklets**.)

7. Accompanied and maintained SCCs

The newly started SCCs were not left alone. Father Mark with his parish team continued by offering:

- Deeper understanding of SCCs.
- Linking SCCs with each other and the whole parish.
- Assisting them in taking up tasks in the neighbourhood.
- Continuous training of emerging leaders in weekend retreats and skill training programmes.

(See **AsIPA text D\7: Maintaining SCCs**)

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."
