

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

The Spiritual and Social Contribution of the Small Christian
Communities in Tanzania

verfasst von | submitted by
Justin Santus Makungu

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2026

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 795

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Theologische Spezialisierungen

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Mag. lic. Dr. Johann Pock

INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	5
----------------------	---

CHAPTER ONE

General Introduction

1 Introduction	7
1.1 The Definition of the Basic Concept of SCCs.....	7
1.2 Basic Characteristics of SCCs	10
1.3 The Objectives of the SCCs in Tanzania	11
1.4 Biblical References about SCCs.....	13
1.4.1 Introduction	13
1.4.2 The concept of SCCs in the Old Testament (OT).....	13
1.4.3 The Concept of SCCs in the New Testament (NT)	13
1.4.4 Main Characteristics of the Early Christian Communities.....	14
1.4.5 Apostolic Teaching	14
1.4.6 The Needs of Members.....	15
1.4.7 Koinonia Community	16
1.4.8 Lay Ministries.....	17
1.4.9 Bible Sharing Methods	18
1.5 Problem Statement.....	18
1.6 The Objectives of the Research	18
1.7 The Scope and Limit of the Study	19
1.8 The Research and Methodology	19
1.9 Tanzania Country Profile.....	20
1.10 The Structure and Content of the Research	21

CHAPTER TWO

A Historical View on Development of the Small Christian Communities

2.1 Introduction	22
------------------------	----

2.2 Base or Basic Christian or Ecclesial Communities in Latin/South America.....	22
2.3 BECs/BCCs in North America (the USA and CANADA)	23
2.4 SCCs/BECs in Asia	24
2.5 BCCs/SCCs in Europe.....	24
2.6 The Second Vatican Council and SCCs (1962–1965)	26
2.7 The Episcopal Conference of Democratic Republic of Congo (1971–1972).....	27
2.8 Small Christian Communities in AMECEA- Region (1973–1974)	28
2.9 Small Christian Communities in Tanzania (1976–2008).....	30
2.10 Conclusion	34

CHAPTER THREE

Administrative Structure of the SCCs in Tanzania and its Theology

3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 SCCs are Administrative Communities in a Parish	36
3.3 Administrative Structure of the SCCs in Tanzania	37
3.3.1 The Lay Apostolate Council	37
3.3.2 Executive Committee	37
3.3.3 Financial Committee.....	38
3.3.4 Sources of Income	38
3.3.5 Expenditure.....	39
3.3.6 The Banking of Money and Financial Report	39
3.4 The Patron or Patroness of a SCC	39
3.5 Duties and Responsibilities of Each Baptised in SCCs.....	40
3.5.1 Responsibilities of Clergy	40
3.5.2 Bishops	40
3.5.3 Priests.....	42
3.5.4 Deacons	43
3.5.5 Religious.....	43
3.5.6 The Laity.....	43

3.6 SCCs' Contribution to the Praxis and Theology of Church as Family of God in Tanzania	44
3.7 Conclusion	47

CHAPTER FOUR

Spiritual and Social Contributions of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania

4.1 Introduction	48
4.2 Spiritual Development Contribution	48
4.2.1 Sacrament Administration and the Use of the Bible.....	48
4.2.2 Eucharistic Celebration.....	49
4.2.3 Sharing Prayer	50
4.2.4 Spiritual Growth	50
4.2.5 Spiritual Direction	50
4.2.6 The Moral Formation of the Christian Families	51
4.2.7 SCCs and Vocations.....	52
4.2.8 Pontifical Mission Societies	52
4.2.9 New Evangelization.....	54
4.2.10 Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue	55
4.2.11 Justice, Peace and Reconciliations in Societies	56
4.2.12 Inculturation.....	58
4.3 Social Development Contribution	58
4.3.1 Diocesan Self-Reliant Fund (DSRF)	60
4.3.2 Preferential option for the Poor	60
4.3.3 Social Services (Health and Education)	61
4.3.4 Social Communication	61
4.3.5 Good Politics and Good Governance	62
4.3.6 Entrepreneurial Activities and Projects	62
4.3.7 Environmental Conservation and Protection.....	63
4.4 Conclusion	65

CHAPTER FIVE
General Conclusion

5 Conclusion	67
5.1 Challenges of SCCs in Tanzania.....	69
5.1.1 Leadership Challenges.....	69
5.1.2 Economic Challenges	70
5.1.3 Social Challenges	71
5.2 Recommendations	72
5.3 Pastoral Implications of the Life in SCCs for the Church in Tanzania	75
5.4 Personal Learning Statement	77
 ABBREVIATION.....	 79
BIBLIOGRAPHY	80
ABSTRACT	84
ABSTRAKT	86

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This master thesis was made possible by grace and blessings from God the Almighty who created me and granted me precious life, both spiritual and bodily health. To Him, I am very grateful for His amazing grace and unconditional love.

My sincere and heartfelt gratitude goes to his Grace Gervas M. Nyaisonga the Archbishop of Mbeya Archdiocese and the former bishop of Mpanda Catholic Diocese for sending me for further studies in the field of pastoral theology to Vienna in Austria. May God grant him abundant blessings.

I am tremendously thankful to my Bishop his Excellence Rt, Rev. Eusebius A. Nzigilwa the bishop of Mpanda Catholic Diocese for his prayers, leadership, guidance, words of encouragement as well material and moral support throughout my academic life abroad. May God grant him abundant blessings and wisdom.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Archbishop Emeritus the former Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Vienna his Eminence Christoph Cardinal Schönborn for providing me board and room by assigning me with pastoral and spiritual duties in the three different parishes where resided. Additionally, I am very grateful for his spiritual, moral and material support. May God grant him good spiritual and bodily health.

I am so much grateful to my supervisor Univ.-Prof. Dr. Johann Pock for accepting my request to supervise my master thesis. Either I am sincerely thankful for his commitment, dedication, suggestions, recommendations and motivation which have made my research paper appears as it is. May God bless him abundantly.

I would like to thank so much the Foundation St. Lorenzo Ruiz of the Archdiocese of Vienna for Priestly Studies Program for granting me a scholarship. Also, I am very much grateful for their spiritual, material and moral support during the entire period of my pastoral and academic life in the Archdiocese of Vienna. I would like to express my special thanks for the guidance, cooperation and assistance which I received from diocesan Foundation St. Lorenzo Ruiz Director Dr. Alexander Kraljic, the Finance Manager Mrs. Helga Widmann and the Supervisor for the Priestly Studies Program Dr. Johanna T. Aoki.

I owe a lot of gratitude to family members, my beloved Mother, sisters and brothers back home in Tanzania. It would be unfair to end these words of thanksgiving without acknowledging their tremendous love and appreciation to me. Their prayers, constant WhatsApp calls, the words of encouragement and great support which have brought me this

academic achievement. I still need their spiritual and moral support so that my academic achievement may bring positive changes in a society.

I feel indebted to so many people who encouraged me. In my limitations, I cannot be able to mention all of them here individually. In summary, therefore, let me say thanks to be all who made it possible for me to go this far. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever. Amen.

CHAPTER ONE

General Introduction

1 Introduction

One of the images of the Church in the New Testament is that of family of God. One way through which the Church achieves this concept Church as family of God is through SCCs.¹ Since 1976, the Catholic Church in Tanzania started to implement AMCEA-bishops' decision of 1973 about SCCs as pastoral priority.

In Tanzania, SCCs were set up according to Tanzanian political context of "Ujamaa"² village. The first President Julius Kambarage Nyerere introduced Ujamaa socialism in his political establishment. He began the ten-households ruling ujamaa system. In every 10 households form a self-ruling and self-control system under the leadership of the 10-household's ambassador. This system is meant to engage people directly in their political, social economic affairs from the bottom of the society.³

In this chapter one, the concepts and the meanings of the SCCs will be discussed, the SCCs in the Scriptures especially in New Testament is also analysed and described. Additionally, the characteristics and objectives of the SCCs in Tanzania have been investigated.

The statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, Tanzania geographical and historical profile, limit and scope of the study and the content and the structure of the research work have been explored.

1.1 The Definition of the Basic Concept of SCCs

A SCC is a group of Christian families that come together to live as a family, inviting Christ among them by praying together, reading the Word of God and solving their spiritual and

¹ Cf. Richard B. KIMELI, SCCs. Membership and Participation in Tendin Sub-Parish, Kapcherop in Eldoret Diocese, in: *Global Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 8/8 (2020), 30-49, hier: 30. URL: <https://ejournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Small-Christian-Communities.pdf> [accessed: 12 March 2026].

² Ujamaa is a Swahili word which means socialism.

³ Cf. Method KILAINI, SCCs, *Sharing Tanzanian Pastoral Experience (Workshop)*, St. Dominic Pastoral Centre Archdiocese of Mwanza: On the Theme SCCs Embrace the Word of God, 20 May 2014, Mwanza. URL: http://smallchristiancommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/small_christian.pdf [accessed: 12 March 2026].

moral problems. A SCC is family made up of a father, a mother and children.⁴ A SCC is composed of 10 up to 15 families that live in the same neighbourhood.⁵

It is also known as the Church in the neighbourhood is a communion of Christian families in the same locality where Christians live and witness their faith. It is an extended family of brothers and sisters in Christ. It provides parishioners with an opportunity to connect life and faith in a supportive environment. It is a place to enhance one's spiritual growth during busy lives. It is a group of people who come together in the most basic and personal unit of a parish. The community gathers in the available homes of its members who discuss their lives in the light of the Gospel and share their Christian faith through prayers and conversation. Within such gatherings there naturally arises a connection of acceptance and support through which the members learn in a personal manner the meaning of being the Church.⁶ According to AMECEA defines SCCs as:

“Small group of people, small enough to manageable in life and work [...] it is in this community that Christian commitment is fully live, deepened and become the leaven and light of its members. Furthermore, “The small neighbourhood parish-based groups in an urban or rural area in Eastern Africa [and in Tanzania in particular] which are pastoral models of the Church. They are groups of about 10-15 families who meet in weekly basis in private houses, homes or in rare cases in a parish a school or any institution to read, meditate and the Bible especially the readings and Gospels of the following Sunday and apply it to their daily lives.”⁷

In AMECEA-region and Tanzania in particular SCCs are known in Swahili language as Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kiswahili.⁸

Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs) applied in Latin America. They are also called in the English translation “Basic Ecclesial communities (BECs). The word “base” expresses from the grassroots or base of the society and preferential option for the poor that describes

⁴ Cf. Leodegard MASSAWE, *Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo (JNNK)*, Moshi (6th ed.) 2016. Translated as Small Christian Communities in English language (SCCs).

⁵ Cf. Baraza la Maaskofu Katoliki Tanzania (This title is translated in English language as “Tanzania Episcopal Conference” and shortened as “BMKT”), *Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji wa Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo (JNNK) Nchini Tanzania Kuelekea Jubilei ya Miaka 50 na Baade*, Dar es Salaam 2022, 1. (in Swahili language, Swahili is the language which is widely spoken in Eastern, Central and Southern parts of Africa) which is literally translated in English as “Strengthening and Propagation of SCCs in Tanzania Towards 50 years of Jubilee Anniversary and Afterwards.

⁶ Cf. Emmanuel NHANWA, *Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo (JNNK) Shule ya Imani na Uijilishaji Dar es Salaam* 2020, 3. (My own translation from swahili language) translated in English as Small Christian Communities (SCCs) Schools of Faith and Evangelisation.

⁷ Cf. Joseph Rodrick MAHIMBLI, *SCCs are Pastoral Priority in Tanzania* [Master Thesis, Portuguese Catholic University, Porto], 2022, 38. Emphasis and additions in the text are my own. URL: <https://repositorio.ucp.pt/bitstream/10400.14/38197/1/203035194.pdf> [accessed 12 March 2026]

⁸ Cf. BMKT, *Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK Nchini Tanzania*, 1–2.

these communities. The word “ecclesial” stresses that these communities are in themselves Churches, Churches at the local level. BEC is also a concept commonly used in Asia especially in the Philippines.⁹

Basic Christian Communities or Base Christian Communities (BCCs). These are communities which are more on the edge of mainstream Churches, be it Catholic or Protestant. It was often applied in European situation. The word “basic” also implies from the grassroot or base of the society and daily conditions of Christian living.¹⁰

The Way of Being the Church this word was initially introduced in Latin America and mostly used in the West, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand to express many strategies in which Christians of various denominations seek the meaningful ways to be Church in more secularised societies.¹¹

In Democratic Republic of Congo, these communities are known as the *Communautes Ecclesiales Vivante de Base* or Basic Ecclesial Communities.

Redemptoris Missio defines that:

“Ecclesial basic Communities (SCCs) are groups of Christians who at the level of the family [in this case in a private house or a home] come together for a prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis and discussions on human ecclesial problems with a view to a common commitment. These communities are signs of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and solid starting point for a new society based on civilization of love.”¹²

The concept SCCs indicate that these communities are not the Christian groups like spiritual groups which are meant for living a certain spirituality, but they are formed as living Churches in themselves as explained below:

“The concept ‘community’ does not refer to the formation of spiritually like-minded Christians organised in a wider context, for example at the diocesan level or beyond. Rather, the key concept for a SCC is that of communion, that the Church of fellowship that can be experienced specifically within a local Church and thus within a parish and a pastoral context. The reference point continues to be the communion of the entire Church. For this purpose, SCCs endeavour to be Churches at truly local level as outlined by Vatican II’s Council.”¹³

⁹ Cf. Joseph G. HEALEY and Jeanne HINTON (eds.), *SCCs Today Capturing the New Moment*, Limuru 2006, 7.

¹⁰ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON (eds.), *SCCs Today*, 7.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹² JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate, Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990) Rome 1990, (§ 51). Emphasis and additions in the text are my own.

¹³ MAHIMBILI, *The SCCs are Pastoral Priority of the Church in Tanzania*, 39.

SCC-members should love each other as our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us. SCC-members should be able to help each other especially people with special needs in the society. When SCC-members practise the commandment of love, then a SCC can be a platform where the Word of God is preached, and the spiritual and social needs of the community are taken care of.¹⁴

Having looked on the meaning of SCCs that are spread across the world, Cecil McGarry concludes that:

“The SCCs are described as places where the whole people of God are mobilized to be Church and evangelize and their advantages in this regard are detailed as follows; the concept of family in Africa expresses in concrete imagery, the profound ecclesiological idea of communion of believers, a fellowship with diversity of roles and persons.”¹⁵

1.2 Basic Characteristics of SCCs

Understand the characteristics which make SCCs to become as one family with one Christian faith, one spirit in serving each other, it is important to analyse the essential characteristics of Small Christian Communities as follows:¹⁶

It is the communion of the baptized (those who are trained to be baptized) who are spiritually born by God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ and inspired by Holy Spirit. It is through baptism, SCC-members gather to participate in one faith and in the life of the sacraments and celebrate life in general.

It is a community of families or Christian faithful in the neighbourhood and in the communion which leads to strong unity of Christian life and of sharing life experience, mutual respect and of communion.

It is a community which evangelizes, bears witness to their faith through serving others especially the poor in the society, stewardship, urge and desire to let other progress in spiritual life and social welfare and bring the Word of God in the World.

Community is a natural unity of family whereby people are received, live, formed and enabled whichever promotes and destroys life is made known to the whole community.

We all live in communities in different levels, be it a family, a clan, a social or political institution, a school, a college or in an area or at work. This kind of network and relationship

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁵ Cecil MCGARRY, *What Happened at African Synod?* Nairobi 1995, 5. URL: <https://repositorio.ucp.pt/bitstream/10400.14/38197/1/203035194.pdf> [accessed: 12 March 2026].

¹⁶ Cf. BMKT, *Uimarisha na Ukuzaji JNNK*, 9.

motivate people cooperate and enjoy their daily life. While SCCs differ from one area to another (in villages, towns or cities, institutions etc.) but they constitute a communion of people who live together. It is through these communities in which:

Moral life, good customs and culture are manifested and all ideal values which preserve the purpose of life. The life of a human person is adopted, formed and introduced into adulthood, marriage and into a participation of a family life, this communion and unity get improved.

In times of sickness, pains and funeral, SCCs become the pillar to bolster a person and a family. In the life of the Church, communities participate in a process of initiating people into Christianity, marriage and family life and eventually in suffering and death. Therefore, SCCs are not only new ways of being the Church but also is an act of incarnation of the Church of Christ among people. In this way, the Church become local and relevant to the local Christian faithful.

1.3 The Objectives of the SCCs in Tanzania

Even though there are many Christians in the Catholic Church, but the Church leaders embarked on the programme of introducing SCCs in AMECEA region in general and in Tanzania in particular to make it awake, active and lively, therefore the main objectives of the introduction of the SCCs are as follows:¹⁷

That SCC-members live together in love, as children of one Father who is the Almighty God; This is the commandment of Jesus Christ, when he said: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ insists much more, when he says: "This my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this; to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." (John 15:12)

That SCC- members understand one another and live together after the example of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph who formed a very first holy and ideal Christian Family. SCC- members should live the life of listening, reading and meditating the Word of God, of sacraments and blessings. The SCC-members should have a unity: This also is the

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 9.

objective of SCCs because through SCC enables members of the community to have a unity as Jesus prayed to his heavenly Father saying: “God, we pray that we would be one together in the same way that You and Me are one so that the world may know that You sent me the Son and love them even as you love the Son.” (John 17:20)

So, even when we look at the early Christian Community, we realise that it was the community of people who believed in Jesus the Son of God, and they had one heart and one spirit. Because of this, SCCs have been formed based on the close relationship that exists among SCC-members without forgetting the fact that Jesus Christ is the Mediator and Supreme Leader of all activities of communities, also SCC-members should have a unity just like a human body has many organs, but they operate as a unity.

To make SCC-members know one another and wish themselves well. There are some Christians who live in the neighbourhood still they do not know each other. No one is concerned with the problems of his or her neighbour such as the basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. It is not enough, when Christians with such problems and challenges meet in the Church for prayers and celebrations of the liturgy.

Through SCCs, the pastoral and spiritual services will be easily accessed as it used to be before the introduction of SCCs. Before SCCs, all pastoral and spiritual services such as catechetical instructions, Mass services on weekdays, prayers, confessions, baptisms etc were all centralized at parish or outstation.¹⁸

Therefore, SCCs enable the Christians to know each other intimately so that they help one another and do away with selfishness, live in fraternal way, share their gifts and talents and have a good neighbourhood, assist themselves in spiritual and social needs and work for the benefit of the whole community, for example, healthy and education and establish a good relationship and true love in forgiving each other and in giving each fraternal warning.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cf. Denis NDOKEJI, Segregation Problem as Source of Disunity in SCCs. Case Study St. John the Apostle Parish [Diploma Research Paper, St. Paul’s Senior Seminary Kipalapala, Tabora], 2022, 7.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 82.

1.4 Biblical References about SCCs

1.4.1 Introduction

People who believe in God must be guided by his Word, contrary to that they will be deceiving themselves.²⁰ Therefore SCC-members must be guided by the word of God because SCCs have roots in the Holy Scriptures. Psalmist in this regard urges: “Your word is a lamp and a light to my path. Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. By your words I can see where I’m going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path.” (Psalm 119:105)

1.4.2 The concept of SCCs in the Old Testament (OT)

In the books of the Old Testament, the community life is reflected in the book of the Genesis in the story of the creation (Gen 1–3). In this story of creation, God reveals Himself to us (people) as community in himself when he says: “Let us create man in our image, after our likeness.” (Gen 1:26)

Human person becomes the image of God in a life of community participating in love, unity and solidarity with his or her community members. This call for community life can be seen in the Jewish life in the book of Psalms in which the Jewish community showed their unity and solidarity: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity [...]. It is as if the dew of Hermon falling on Mount Zion.” (133:1) This is a song of ascent sung while families travelled to Jerusalem for one the feasts of unity.²¹

1.4.3 The Concept of SCCs in the New Testament (NT)

The fonder of the SCCs in the New Testament is Jesus Christ Himself. The concept of SCCs can be seen in Gospels, Acts of Apostles and in some letters of Paul the Apostle.

To insist on the importance and power of the community in prayer Jesus says: “where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt 18:20) These words were used by the disciples who gathered in name of Jesus to pray. When a SCC assembles for weekly meetings, they experience the presence of God in their midst and let themselves be guided by God’s Spirit.²²

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 9.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*

²² Cf. Richard BAAWOBR, *God’s Word for Christian Communities. Guidelines for Facilitators*, Nairobi 2013, 19–20.

The story of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus after the death of Jesus on the cross can be encountered when SCCs read and meditate the Word, when they break the Bread of life (Eucharist). In other words when they celebrate the holy Mass.²³ This account of disciples of Emmaus is recoded in the Gospel of Luke 24:13–35. SCCs have their origin in the itinerant community that wandered the roads of Palestine with Jesus in gathering of the early Christian community which was formed in Jerusalem after the Pentecost and in all those groups that sprang in the gentile world.²⁴

1.4.4 Main Characteristics of the Early Christian Communities

SCCs express the reality of religious and social life contained on the need and concern for others as viewed from the early community in Jerusalem.²⁵ This was in fact how the original community in Jerusalem considered themselves. From this perspective, the same situation and zeal that unified the early community in Jerusalem must bind SCCs together in our modern context.²⁶

Taking the book of the Acts of Apostles: “They remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. [...] Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.” (Acts 2: 42–47)

The following are the main characteristics of the early Christian community in which the SCCs should be hinged:

1.4.5 Apostolic Teaching

A SCC unites people based on doctrine, the Word of God is at its centre and constitutes community’s guiding principles of a community in question. By the reference to the apostles, the text implies the entitlement to orthodoxy or authentic and original teaching of the apostles about a community. For this reason, a SCC is not a sect or esoteric group; but it rather keeps the communion with each believer that is with the entire Church.²⁷

²³ Cf. BAAWOBR, God’s Word for Christian Communities, 26–31.

²⁴ Cf. James O’HALLORAN, SCCs. A Pastoral Companion, Dublin 1996, 12–13.

²⁵ Cf. KIMELI, SCCs, Membership and Participation, 32. URL: <https://ejournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Small-Christian-Communities.pdf> [accessed: 12 March 2026].

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

The faithful kept and clung to the teaching of the Apostles. They preached and taught about the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This teaching was important to the community because the suffering of Christ motivated members to persevere in their work. The Apostles also preached them about the Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit-power to continue apostolic duty with a great zeal. This could be pointed to the divine support enkindled in them by the Holy Spirit. Since the apostles had been in touch with Jesus, His teaching and presence was essential to the work of evangelization. The Holy Spirit inspires the spiritual and social work of the early Christian community as well as the SCCs today.²⁸

The early Christian community has many pastoral lessons which SCC-members can obtain.²⁹ They were wise and God-fearing persons and were able to live their Christian faith. SCC-members today should be wise and God-fearing to be able to live their Christian faith. They lived together and helped each as brothers and sisters no one was left behind. The SCC-members should live together as brothers and sisters; their communion is the reflection of the Word of God and the teaching of the Apostles.³⁰

The early Christian community observed and kept their Jewish traditions and customs. They celebrated the Word of God and breaking of the bread in unity.³¹ In Tanzania, SCC-members are urged to pray, protect and respect human life, dignity, maintain good traditions and customs. Additionally, Christian faith and morals were fundamental principles of the early Christian community and are still spiritual values to SCCs today. Sometimes, some SCC-leaders fail to carry out this spiritual and social responsibility leading to some SCC-members stop attending the SCC-meetings.³²

1.4.6 The Needs of Members

A SCC is a place of loving each other, sharing spiritual and material well- beings, keeping and maintain solidarity, where human hardships are seriously addressed. It is a common place of prayer which retains a link with official houses of prayers i.e. churches. It is a place of inclusion. It accepts all those who turn to it and strengthen equality among its members,

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*

³² Cf. *ibid.*, 33.

an equality which does not detract, however from the diversity of roles and responsibilities within it.³³

The early Christian community preached about love of God and neighbour especially the poor, the sufferings, sinners and oppressed. They healed the sick and drove away evil spirits which were tormenting community-members and people in general. They tried to liberate themselves from spiritual and physical diseases which were affecting them. They were able to perform some miracles in the name of Jesus. The miracles attracted many people to Christian faith. Such deeds of the early Christian community are found in the book of Acts of Apostle as written down by Luke the evangelist especially in chapter (2:42–46).³⁴ For this reason, SCCs in Tanzania can only be concrete if spiritual and social activities take place.

1.4.7 Koinonia Community

A SCC is a place where individual Christians live together as communion (koinonia), service (diakonia) and proclamation of the Word of God (kerygma).³⁵

There were several other early communities which existed after the ascension of Jesus to heaven. These early Christian Communities went through joys, sorrows, sufferings and struggles.³⁶ The following biblical texts verify this fact: In Jerusalem Luke: “They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising.” (Luke 24:53–54)

Paul the Apostles in his letters underscored the model of the Church as community or People of God. For him, Church authority is not meant for domination but rather sisterly and brotherly service.³⁷ The communion of brothers and sisters prohibited any arrogance of power and embraced the humility of Christ: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather he emptied himself and took on form of a slave [...]” (Phil 2:6-7) He views the Church as the body of Christ which means also as a community.

These chapters in Acts of Apostles 2:44, 4:32 and 4:34 give information into the life in common shared believers in each concrete situation. The members of early Christian

³³ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁵ Cf. James HALLORAN, *SCCs. A Pastoral Companion*, Dublin 1996, 13.

³⁶ Cf. O’HOLLORAN, *SCCs. A Pastoral Companion*, 13.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 14.

community encountered many challenges. They lived peaceful and shared possessions equally. They ate and drank together; they provided shelter to the homeless and gave clothes to the naked. The apostles preached the Word of God and did the work of evangelization whereas the deacons took care of the daily needs of the community. The community-leaders served the members of the community wholeheartedly without expecting any return. They committed themselves to serving community-members especially the needy, sick and people with infirmities. They put the commandment of love into practice. Men and women worked equally hard in the work of evangelization. Paul the apostles was assisted by Priscilla and Aquilla in the work of evangelization. Paul used the house of Priscilla and Aquilla to preach the word of God.³⁸ They met in private homes and houses, prayed and read the Word of God. They helped each other and they were all loyal to the community. The breaking of the symbolizes unity that existed among them. They advised each other and corrected each other in love, when someone went wrong.³⁹

They led life of fellowship. They considered themselves as part of the universal Church. During their visits to community-members' homes, they insisted and urged community-members to remain united to universal Church. One faith in Jesus, one baptism, one spirit and love were values which kept the community together. SCCs should learn from early Christian community to remain relevant in the life of its members. They should live virtuous life and avoid vices such as corruption, nepotism and tribalism.⁴⁰

1.4.8 Lay Ministries

Members of primitive Christian Community played a significant role in home meetings as well as participating in the Eucharistic Celebration. They also facilitated the preaching the Word of God, family apostolate, the caring of the children, caring of the sick and social welfare of the community. In the Church today, members and priests need to incorporate these ministries to become channels where pastoral ministry can be enriched. Through such activities, the people of God turn out to be a communion of communities. Such a communion with a universal mandate to save humanity can rightfully organise SCCs from local level.⁴¹

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁹ Cf. KIMELI, SCCs, Membership and Participation, 34.

⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*

1.4.9 Bible Sharing Methods

Bible sharing is crucial because the Bible have important books of prayer. When we pray as a SCC, our prayers can help us develop the three theological virtues, faith, hope and love of God and neighbour. When we read, meditate and share the Word of God from the biblical text, it can challenge us in many ways. The Word of God permits us to understand how different people encounter divine love in their lives and how they reacted to it. The Word of God challenges us differently depending on our individual life-situations and the environment where we are living.

The SCCs refer to Scriptures especially the book of Acts of Apostles to consolidate and validate their existence. Just like the early Christian community, they evangelize a human person wholly that is spiritually and socially.⁴²

1.5 Problem Statement

To conduct research chronologically, research questions are very essential tools to establish a road map. Therefore, research questions are designed to set up a trajectory through which studies should go through.⁴³

The following questions need to be answered in this research work:

1. What is the historical profile of SCCs?
2. What are administrative structures the SCCs in Tanzania and its theology?
3. To what extent have spiritual and social activities in the SCCs facilitated the growth of SCCs in the Church in Tanzania?

1.6 The Objectives of the Research

The general objective of this study is to explore the spiritual and social contributions of SCCs in Tanzania.

For this study to be effective and critical, the general objective of the research has been divided into three more specific objectives as shown below:

1. To trace the briefly the historical profile of SCCS.
2. To describe administrative structure and theology of SCCs in Tanzania.
3. To investigate the spiritual and social contributions of SCCs in Tanzania.

⁴² Cf. MAHAMBILI, SCCs are Pastoral Priority in Tanzania.

⁴³ Cf. Peter KAGABA, An Assessment of Challenges Facing the Catholic Church's Pastoral Duty in Upholding Human Rights in Tanzania [Master's Thesis University of Vienna], 2024, 12.

The aim of this research therefore is to investigate with the aid of various literatures both primary and secondary to achieve the above objectives.

1.7 The Scope and Limit of the Study

This research covers the Tanzanian geographical area which consists of 36 catholic dioceses. SCCs are present in all 36 catholic dioceses of Tanzania, this is reason why this research work must cover all 36 dioceses.

1.8 The Research and Methodology

The methodology aims at describing several approaches used by a researcher to achieve the objectives of the study. The selection of methods usually is dependent on the essence of the research, its importance to reach accuracy, and audience. The method of research for this study is explained in this part and justification is given to achieve the goals of the study.⁴⁴

The work of master thesis in this regard does not consider any field research work but it involves the literature resources from libraries such as Church documents, conciliary documents, papal and curial documents, books journals, and internet sources. In data and information collection for this study, the researcher encountered a challenge of limited literatures of SCCs in the libraries of the University of Vienna which compels the researcher to search for literatures in elsewhere especially in the AMECEA-region and in Tanzania in Particular.⁴⁵

This section of the research intends to explain the method used in the study. This part of research is viewed as the basis at which information and data are gathered, processed and presented. For Kothari, research methodology can be explained as a science that analyses how the research was conducted chronologically and scientifically. It is a way the problem of the research is solved scientifically and systematically.⁴⁶ In research methods, various steps used by a researcher when studying and solving the research problem are studied. The researcher is expected to know the methods, techniques, or research approach, research design, target population, sample size, validity, reliability, data analysis and ethical issues.

This study is mainly based on qualitative nature of the study's analytical framework and exploring experiences or different motives. In this study, the researcher intends to analyse

⁴⁴ Cf. KAGABA, Challenges Facing the Catholic Church's Pastoral Duty in Upholding Human Right, 14.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Cf. C.R. KOTHARI, Research Methodology. Method and Techniques, New Delhi 2004, 9.

and examine the spiritual and social contributions of the SCCs in Tanzania. This study has used hermeneutical research method which as a matter fact has several limitations, one of them was the outdated sources which posed limitation.

Therefore, this study fulfils the criterion for qualitative approach as it gathers various data from various literatures both primary and secondary from the main Library of the University of Vienna as well as from AMECEA region and Tanzania.⁴⁷

1.9 Tanzania Country Profile

The United Republic of Tanzania is in Eastern Africa. It is bordered by Kenya and Uganda to the north, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi to the West and Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the South. The country's eastern border lies in the Indian ocean which has a coastline of 1,424 km.⁴⁸

Tanzania is officially known as United Republic of Tanzania consisting of two main islands Unguja and Pemba and several small islands. The two main islands Unguja and Pemba are 40 km apart and separated by 700 m deep Pemba channel.⁴⁹

The word Tanzania is a combination of the three words derived from the two of sovereign states Tanganyika and Zanzibar ("Tan" and "Zan") and the suffix "ia" to produce Tanzania.⁵⁰ This name was officially applied on the Day of Union April 26, 1964, when Tanganyika and Zanzibar united.⁵¹

Tanzania is situated between latitudes 1° and 12°S and longitudes 29° and 41°E. and has a total area surface of 945,087 sq. km 61,000 sq.km of inland water area. The total area of Zanzibar is 2,654sq.km. Unguja is larger of the two major islands has an area 1,666 sq.km, while Pemba has an area of 988sq.km. Tanzania has a population of 63,852,892 (2,022est.).⁵²

Brief History of Tanzania: From 1885 to 1919, Tanzania (previous Tanganyika) was under German colonialism and after the First World War, the British ruled Tanganyika under the supervision of United Nations' Trusteeship until 1961. On 9th December 1961,

⁴⁷ Cf. KOTHARI, Research Methodology and Technique, 9.

⁴⁸ Cf. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EAST AFRICA CO-OPERATION, Profile of Tanzania-2025 (22 September 2025). URL: <https://www.foreign.go.tz/tanzania/tanzania-country-profile> [accessed: 22 September 2025].

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Cf. FILM INDUSTRY IN TANZANIA, Tanzania Profile, URL: <https://www.spherex.com/blog/film-industry-in-tanzania-40f41> (4 September 2024) [accessed: 14 March 2026].

⁵¹ Cf. KAGABA, the Challenges Facing the Catholic Church's Pastoral Duty in Upholding Human, 11.

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*

Tanganyika achieved her political independence under the leadership of the first President, the Late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere. On 26th April 1964, Tanganyika and Zanzibar united to form Tanzania which is officially known as United Republic of Tanzania. Since independence, Tanzania has been ruled by six Presidents. In 1992, Tanzania adopted a multi-party democratic system which enables the national and local government elections to be held every five years. Since the introduction of multi-party democratic system in 1992, there have been five successful presidential and parliamentary elections. The first successful multiparty election in Tanzania was held in the year 1995 then once again after 5 years in were held more four multiparty elections in the years of 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015.⁵³

1.10 The Structure and Content of the Research

The research is chronologically conducted in chapters to achieve study's goals. My research work comprises of five chapters. It starts with chapter one which covers the following subjects: A general introduction, concept or meaning of SCCs, biblical references about SCCs Objectives of SCCs, problem statement, objective of the research, the scope and limit of the study, the research and methodology and Tanzania profile.

The second chapter traces the historical profile of the SCCs in general. It consists of the following chapters, introduction to chapter two, Basic Christian Communities or ecclesial communities in Brazil and Chile, BCCs in North America, BECs in Asia, BCCs in Europe, Vatican II Council and SCCs, DRC episcopal conference and SCCs, AMECEA and SCCs in Tanzania and conclusion.

Chapter three describes the administrative structure and theology of the SCCs in Tanzania. This chapter covers the following topics: SCCs and administration in the parish, the structure of administration in the SCCs in Tanzania, SCCs' contribution to praxis and theology of the Church as God's family in Africa and conclusion of the chapter three.

Chapter four seeks to examine and analyse spiritual and social contribution of SCCs in Tanzania. This chapter covers the following subjects: Introduction to the chapter four, spiritual and social contributions of SCCs in Tanzania and conclusion to the chapter four.

Chapter five seeks to explain in a summary form chapter one two, three and four. It contains the following topics. General conclusion, recommendations and personal learning statement.

⁵³ Cf. TANZANIA EMBASSY BEIJING, Politics. URL: <https://tanzaniaembassy.org.cn/en/tanzania-profile/politics.html> [accessed: 14 March 2026].

CHAPTER TWO

A Historical View on Development of the Small Christian Communities

2.1 Introduction

Small Christian Community (SCC) is a concept of evangelization that emerged because of theology of Vatican II Council. SCCs is a general concept which refers to the Church at the grassroot level or the Church for common people. One of the images of the Church in the New Testament is that of the family of God.⁵⁴

One strategy through which the Church achieves this concept of family is through SCCs. The present-day SCCs trace their origin from primitive Christian Communities in the New Testament.⁵⁵ As SCCs stand today, they are phenomena of the modern-day Christianity. In Latin and the Philippines and Asia, SCCs are also called as Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) whereas in Europe and North, they are known as Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) The reasons and purposes for SCCs differed from one country or continent to another. In Latin America, BECs were introduced as a struggle against social injustices and a response to shortage of Church ministers especially priests. In Europe and North America, BCCs were simply welfare associations to support poor people spiritually and materially. In Africa Sub-Sahara region and in Tanzania in particular, SCCs are pastoral priority or option. BECs began in Latin America between 1943 and 1956 and spread in North America, Europe and the parts of the world. In Africa, Sub-Sahara region, they started early 1960s after Vatican II Council 1962–1965. In the AMECEA-region, they began in 1973 and in Tanzania in 1976.

2.2 Base or Basic Christian or Ecclesial Communities in Latin/South America

According to Church history, Latin American Christian communities began in 1956 in Brazil. From Brazil they spread to Chile, Honduras, Panama and in the whole of America.⁵⁶ The reasons to start BECs were firstly shortage of Church ministers (deacons, priests and Bishops) and reluctance of the laity to do anything without them. Probably the biggest problem was the distribution of priests and even lack of them all together. The main concerns

⁵⁴ Cf. MAHIMBILI, *The SCCs are Pastoral Priority of the Church in Tanzania*, 30.

⁵⁵ Cf. O'HALLORAN, *SCCs*, 12–16.

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 18.

of the communities in Latin America have been justice and peace, the option with the poor, and the option with the Youth.⁵⁷ Additionally, communities in Latin America have been in recent years preoccupied with women issues and rights of indigenous people.

In Latin America, Asia and Philippines the term Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) was used. The word “base” indicates from the “grassroot” or base of the society and the preferential optional for poor that so characterises these communities. The word ecclesial emphasizes that these communities are in themselves “Church- Church at the most local level.”⁵⁸

“Basic Christian Community” (BCC) is a concept that is commonly applied within the European situation to signify communities that are on edge (close) to mainstream church either Catholic or Protestant. There were between 180,000–200,000 communities in South and Latin American.⁵⁹

The Church Base Communities are not movements of the Church, but churches in motion. At the centre of Church’s grassroot communities stand for the faith in Jesus Christ, which is shared and celebrated with great symbolism and sacramentalism. They are humble experience because they provide the real situation of the poor and the marginalized.⁶⁰

2.3 BECs/BCCs in North America (the USA and CANADA)

SCCs are present in different denominations across the United States. The reasons for the start of SCCs in North America were as follow:⁶¹

For the Catholic Church is the clerical sexual abuse crisis, the questioning of the credibility of the bishops’ leadership, and shortage of priests and the new ministry. For the Protestant it is the question related to ordination of openly homosexuals and lesbian ministers and the same sex marriages. SCCs were meant to renew churches from within in America and that communities could be example and model for large churches. Additionally, SCCs

⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Cf. Joseph G. HEALEY and Jeanne HINTON (eds.), *SCCs Today. Capturing the New Moment*, Nairobi 2012, 7.

⁵⁹ Cf. O’HALLORAN, *SCCs*, 18.

⁶⁰ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON (eds.), *SCCs Today. Capturing the New Moment*, 9.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.* 39.

could provide new ways of ministry and service and give new hope to Christians in America.⁶² The document also urged those working in the Hispanic ministry to:⁶³

Recognise the rights and dignity of the vocation of parents and rights of women in all aspects of social and religious life.

Observe the preferential option for the poor as an essential part of the Catholic faith. Affirm the dignity of human beings from the moment of the conception until natural death. Recognise the right to the dignified work, a just salary, decent housing, education that respects cultural differences, and access to decent health care.

Affirm solidarity with farmworkers, victims of political abuse, and undocumented immigrants, with special attention given to discrimination against immigrants.⁶⁴ As in Latin America, justice has been a key concern of these communities in North America.

2.4 SCCs/BECs in Asia

SCCs are in China, East Timor (Indonesia), Hong Kong, Laos, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri-Lanka. These communities are more in the Philippines than in the other Asian countries because of similar issues of injustices in Latin America such as poverty, cultural alienation, sexual exploitation, environmental abuse and crying for the need for land reform.⁶⁵ In the Philippines, they developed the theology of struggle accompanied with Good Friday spirituality of Cross. One of the important factors for the spread of SCCs across the land was the presence everywhere of the committed and valiant religious sisters some of whom did not hesitate to lie down before oncoming tanks to bring down the oppressive Marcos' regime.⁶⁶

2.5 BCCs/SCCs in Europe

There are SCCs among many denominations. The earliest SCC in Europe began on the island of Iona, Scotland in 1938 and it still exists.⁶⁷ During the 1960s, there was a catechumenate movement in France that was destined to have quite a bearing on establishing the groups in

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*

⁶³ Cf. O' HALLORAN, SCCs, 22.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 22–23.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 34.

Europe. The members of the catechumenate were rightly concerned that candidates for baptism, and indeed those already baptized, should thoroughly understand the importance and responsibilities arising from the sacrament. Experience showed, however, that catechumens must be prepared for baptism in a community environment; otherwise, the newly received can soon be lost. This realization was a factor in forming SCCs in France and the rest of Europe.⁶⁸

The Christian base Community of Pinerola was founded in December 1973 during the great Church renewal movement which occurred after the Second Vatican Council.⁶⁹ The Christian Base Community movement in Italy was preoccupied in building up an ecclesial model, a theology and spirituality to react to the most fertile seeds rediscovered during the years of the Second Vatican II Council. The base Church went beyond conciliar requirements. The reference point was in the Scriptures and in the World of the poor of the earth were historical and theological issues in which BCC was built.⁷⁰

Central to the community is the weekly celebration of the Eucharist. One of the community Bible groups chooses a biblical text on which the preaching in the Eucharist will be based prepares a homily and constructs a whole liturgical celebration. After a sermon a space is left for free participation of the brothers and sisters. Then spontaneous prayers followed by the breaking of the bread, the most crucial moment is the listening session where people listen to each other.⁷¹

Since 1940s, there were BCCs in various dioceses in Austria. Exempels of BCCs in Austria are Akkonplatz, Bade- Rauheneck, Vienna- Endresstraße, Micha and Mirjam in Innsbruck, Vienna-Machstraße, Vienna-Keplerplatz, the base camp in Münchendorf, the base group in Oberortsdorf, Vienna- Rodaun, Schwechat, Vienna south.⁷² In the year 1981, the Akkonplatz community in Vienna was founded and the name of the community is to the supper of the Lord. They are baptised Christians who live community life. They cultivate and share experiences in the light of the Gospel and discover how divine love and sacred liturgy can be put into practice.⁷³

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON, *SCCs Today*, 79–80.

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷² Cf. Wolfgang BAHR and Hans Peter HURKA (eds.), *Basisgemeinden in Österreich*, Graz, Wien, Köln 1989, 59.

⁷³ Cf. BAHR and HURKA (eds.), *Basisgemeinden in Österreich*, 59.

There are two communities in Akkonpatz Parish Saturday and Sunday communities. Each community consists of 30 to 40 adult members aging from 20 to 85 years old. There are also children and few numbers of the Youth. Each community meets once a month during the supper evening in the Parish centre to give a report and a plan for the community life.⁷⁴

During the meeting, they celebrate the holy Mass which is open to all regardless their membership to the community. The chapel accommodates approximately 140 persons and are all seated in semi-cycle close to the altar to enable eye-contact for each other. After Readings and Gospels, the role of the preaching is not left to a priest alone but a shared homily in which every individual member is allowed to talk. The holy Communion is received in both species Body and Blood of Christ. Apart from prayers and liturgy, these communities engage in helping the people who are in- need within and outside the communities.⁷⁵

2.6 The Second Vatican Council and SCCs (1962–1965)

One of the theological transformations in the Catholic Church had been the Vatican II Council (1962–1965) and the recognition of the Church as People of God: “Thus, the Church has been seen as people made up of unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁷⁶

Or as communion: “[...] Therefore, the chosen people of God are one, one Lord, one faith and one baptism.”⁷⁷

Body of Christ: “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its parts form one body so its Christ.” (1 Cor 12:12–27)

Therefore, the Second Vatican Council reminds us that the Church is the people of God which sustain theological and other images of the Church and different Faith-Sharing-Groups. One such image is the Church as family of God and as a communion of God’s people who has various roles and gifts.⁷⁸ This communion is brought about by the acts of the Holy Spirit who is as its source also unites members in faith, in teaching of the Apostles,

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 62.

⁷⁶ SECOND VATICAN CUNCIL, On the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (21. November 1964), in: Vatican Council II. The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, ed. By Austin FLANNERY, Northport-Dublin 1996, no 4.

⁷⁷ LG 32.

⁷⁸ Cf. BAAWOBR, God’s Word for Christian Communities, 21.

fellowship, prayer and Eucharist.⁷⁹ The council applied the word “koinonia” to express this communion, it means participation and sharing in divine grace. Vatican II Council created a space for the laity’s participation in the Church’s activities. Through sacrament of baptism, all Christian faithful participate in the three offices of Christ, kingly, prophetic and priestly office.⁸⁰

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church expresses the Trinitarian understanding of the Church as “the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.”⁸¹ The term “Small Christian Communities” is not directly indicated in the Documents of Vatican II: “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. For this reason, in their locality these are the new people called by God, in the Holy Spirit and much fullness.”⁸²

Therefore, SCCs in AMECEA-region and in Tanzania were introduced to implement the communion of ecclesiology and the resolutions of the Second Vatican Council, and the SCCs are one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council and a clear expression of the Church as People of God.

2.7 The Episcopal Conference of Democratic Republic of Congo (1971–1972)

The Church in Africa and in Tanzania in particular introduced SCCs as pastoral requirement to curb the problems of few priestly and religious vocations and to bring the Church at grassroot levels. Additionally, SCCs were also meant to address the social and political challenges that existed after the independence of many African states in the year 1960s.⁸³

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the actual launching of SCCs took place between 1971–1972 following a confrontation between President Mobutu Sese seko and the Catholic Church. Mobutu embarked on an “authenticity campaign” which suppressed missionary institutions and associations. This made the work of evangelization difficult for the Church

⁷⁹ Cf. Florian KALISA, Inadequate Active Participation of Men in SCCs. In Reference To our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish Kashambya-Bukoba Diocese, [Diploma Paper, St. Paul’s Senior Seminary Kipa apala, Tabora] 2021, 4.

⁸⁰ Cf. KALISA, Inadequate Active Participation of Men in SCCs, 4–5.

⁸¹ LG 17.

⁸² LG 26.

⁸³ Cf. KIMELI, SCCs. Membership and Participation, 31. URL: <https://ejournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Small-Christian-Communities.pdf> [accessed: 12 March 2026].

in Democratic Republic of Congo by then Zaire. Therefore, to solve this problem, the Church gave priority to the creation and organization of SCCs.⁸⁴

The Bishops in Democratic Republic of Congo embarked on the establishment of SCCs in all dioceses as pastoral option. In the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, his eminence Joseph Cardinal Malula declared SCCs as pastoral priority. He ordered that all parishes should be divided into SCCs as means of organizing spiritual and social activities. Today, most of pastoral activities in the Archdiocese of Kinshasa are carried out under the administration of SCCs.⁸⁵

2.8 Small Christian Communities in AMECEA- Region (1973–1974)

During the 1971 Synod of Bishops in Rome, the Africans realised that SCCs were already present in Africa. But the SCCs existed in Africa were quite different from the ones existed in Latin America.⁸⁶

In 1973, the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) adopted pastoral option SCCs. Although manner of execution differed from diocese to diocese, what is important is that SCCs have a positive contribution to the evangelising mission of the Church in the AMECEA-region. In this region SCCs have rightly referred to as the Church in the Neighbourhood, the members live in the same neighbourhood. They give a concrete example to the real meaning of Church.⁸⁷

The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) Study Conference on Planning for the Church in Eastern Africa in the 1980s was held in Nairobi, Kenya. The aim was to build the life of the Church on social groups characterized by solidarity and a strong sense of belonging:

“We must 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 [. . .] 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.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Cf. BAAWOBR, *God’s Word for Christian Communities*, 21–22.

⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Cf. HOLLARAN, *SCCs*, 23.

⁸⁷ Cf. BAAWOBR, *God’s Word for SCCs*, 22.

⁸⁸ Joseph HEALEY, *Building the Church as the Family of God. Evaluation of SCCs in Eastern Africa*, Vol. 1, ed. by Benedict Toroitich, Nairobi 2012, 6.

Although 1973 was the official start of SCCs in the AMECEA countries the seeds were sown much earlier in some AMECEA-countries. The early beginning of SCCs can be traced back to Nyarombo, Ingri and Masonga Parishes in North-Western Tanzania in 1966 with the research on the structures and community values of the Luo Ethnic Group. The term “Chama” (meaning “small group”) and “Small Communities of Christians” (forerunner of SCCs) was used.⁸⁹

The 1969 seminar in Tanzania, the Small Communities of Christians’ name was changed to “Local Church Communities of Christians” which were regarded as pastoral priority in both rural and later urban parishes, and they were documented in journal service and published by Tanzania Pastoral and Research Institute (TAPRI).⁹⁰

In 1970, SCCs were introduced in Iten Parish, in Archdiocese of Eldoret, Kenya. They were called Kokwet, the natural local unit meaning neighbourhood in the Kalenjin language. In 1970, SCCs were introduced in St. Charles Lwanga Parish in Lusaka Archdiocese, Zambia.⁹¹

Between 1973–1975, Malawian Bishop, Patrick Kalilombe, Missionary Africa conducted a small synod in Lilongwe Archdiocese in Malawi. He then became the first Bishop in Eastern Africa to initiate a diocesan pastoral Plan of SCCs at the grassroot level.

Usually, the leaders of SCCs are lay people, this is one reason why SCCs are a new way of being Church. Bishops Priests, deacons, religious brothers, religious sisters, and seminarians are animators and formators but not bosses.⁹²

The AMECEA Bishops speaking at the World Synod of Bishops in Rome reminded their fellow bishops that priests, religious brothers, and sisters constitute only 2% of the Catholic Church while the laymen and women are 98%.⁹³

There is also a rich history of SCCs in post-conciliar documents. The world Synod of Bishops took place in Rome 1974, and Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation on the Evangelization in the modern World was published in 1975, Base Ecclesial Communities states that Base or Basic Ecclesial Communities are places of evangelization and hope for

⁸⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, 8–9.

⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*

universal Church: “This authoritative voice of the Pope and the universal Church confirmed and endorsed the direction that the AMECEA countries were taking in building the SCCs.”⁹⁴

This was reinforced by St. John Paul II. In his 1979 Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in Our Time, in the Parish refers to “more pertinent and effective small communities.

In his 1989 Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful, “the Parish”, Pope John Paul observes:

“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 true expressions of ecclesial communion and centres of evangelization in communion with their pastors.”⁹⁵

In South Africa the former Bishop Fritz Lobinger heard about the development of SCCs in AMECEA-countries especially in Kenya where SCCs were declared as Pastoral Priority.⁹⁶ The Year 1978 saw the birth of Bible Sharing/Gospel sharing at the Lumko Missiological Institute in South Africa. Excellent SCC training manuals began to be published that popularised the Lumko seven steps Method of Bible Sharing/Gospel sharing. Altogether there were eight Gospel sharing methods that can be adapted to the local context and section. These training manuals have been used throughout the AMECEA Region. Lumko courses have been conducted in Eastern Africa countries annually from 1992 to the present.

“A challenge to the dioceses in AMECEA region came from Bloemfontein Archdiocese in South Africa that went up a step further in pastoral planning and coordination and that emphasizes SCCs by establishing this guideline. If a pastor in a parish with active SCCs is transferred, there is an archdiocese policy that his successor should be committed to SCCs.”⁹⁷

2.9 Small Christian Communities in Tanzania (1976–2008)

Small Christian Communities in Tanzania officially started in 1976, after the general AMECEA meeting held by AMECEA countries. The Tanzanian Bishops decided to introduce SCCs in Tanzania which were based on Tanzanian context of socialist villages.

Firstly, the Tanzanian representatives in AMECEA meeting recognised the presence of the movement of socialist villages in Tanzania which originated from the philosophy of

⁹⁴ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) (8 December 1975), Rome 1975 (58).

⁹⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocations and Missions of the Lay faithful in the Church and in the World, *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988) Rome 1988 (26).

⁹⁶ Cf. Christian HENNECKE, *Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften (KCG) Verstehen. Ein Weg, Kirche Mit den Menschen zu Sein*, Würzburg 2009, 49.

⁹⁷ HENNECKE, *KCG-Verstehen*, 14.

socialist politics and self-reliance. The first President of Tanzania Mwl. Julius Kambarage Nyerere capitalized on the family traditional institution in his ujamaa (ujamaa is a socio-economic policy implemented in Tanzania by President Julius Kambarage Nyerere between 1964 and 1985. In Swahili can be taken to mean extended family, brotherhood and if used in a political context a form of solidarity).⁹⁸ political setup. He established the ten cell-governing Ujamaa system. Every 10 families would establish a self-governing and self-sustaining unit. This increased people's participation in the political, social and economic governance from the grassroots.⁹⁹ The socialist villages were built as a pillar of sharing the wealth and property in equality. Therefore, they decided to build SCCs based on the following criteria.¹⁰⁰ To build SCCs in the spirit of socialist politics in socialist villages and to educate the clergy, religious and the lay faithful through seminars on the building of SCCs in parish levels.

The Bantu community has a clan system in which their religious, political and social activities are organized. People who belonged to the same clan lived together in the same area. When clan grows bigger, it is divided into new smaller manageable clans, while the old clans become the foundation for the new clans. The clans unite all families, no family can thrive outside the Bantu clan, because it provides social and spiritual services.¹⁰¹

Some Catholic bishops were impressed with *Ujamaa(socialism) ideology*. Bishop Christopher Moleka of Rulenge Diocese established Christian communities which were based on Ujamaa socialism, he lived with his community members and cooperated with them in all their activities. The name SCC was taken from there and brought into the entire Church in AMECEA-region.¹⁰² He was the first bishop in Tanzania to make the Small Christian Communities a pastoral priority in his diocese.

In 1974, he was so much delighted to inform his fellow Tanzanian Bishops about his decision on SCCs as Pastoral priority in his diocese. In addition, he had already established the administrative systems in the whole diocese in which SCCs operate.¹⁰³ Other Tanzanian

⁹⁸ Cf. Nic CHEESEMAN (etal.), Ujamaa, in: A Dictionary of African Politics (2019). URL: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191828836.001.0001/acref-9780191828836-e-339> [accessed: 2 December 2025].

⁹⁹ Cf. MAHIMBILI, Joseph Rodrick, SCCs are Pastoral Priority in Tanzania, 31.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 24.

¹⁰¹ Cf. KILAINI, SCCs, Sharing Tanzanian Pastoral Experience, 2.

¹⁰² Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Cf. AMECEA. URL: <https://amecea.org/amecea-news/> [accessed: 15 März 2026].

dioceses adopted his SCC-administrative model applied it as their pastoral model and eventually by the national directory of SCCs.¹⁰⁴

The Tanzanian representatives in AMECEA conference saw the importance of emphasizing the concept of self-reliance especially the idea of economic independence. In 1977, Tanzania Episcopal Conference (BMKT) “Plenary Meeting” reviewed the directory issued by AMECEA general conferences of 1973 and 1976. In this BMKT-plenary meeting, the bishops continued to emphasize and give pastoral priority to start SCCs in villages and cities/towns for that time and for the future.¹⁰⁵

They wanted every diocese to provide plan and directory of the start of SCCs, they resolved that; to propagate that message of the SCCs, each diocesan bishop should convene seminars and workshops in his diocese to make the concept of SCCs comprehensible and understandable among the faithful and then after the seminar to start SCCs with immediate effect. At the national level, BMKT- bishops resolved that the seminars on SCCs should be conducted to educate bishops, priests, religious men, and women and the lay faithful. The Catholic newspapers and radios should be used to transmit the message and evaluate the structure of the SCCs. Therefore, right from the start, the bishops saw that the SCCs have special power in providing sustainable education to the individual faithful and to the Christian families. To implement the priority of the parish pastoral plan, SCCs are of paramount importance, moreover, bishops saw that it was appropriate to start the biblical apostolate to speed up the spirit of reading, meditating, and sharing the Word of God.

Finally, the theological meditation and pastoral experience in SCCs ought to be introduced in diocesan junior seminaries, major seminaries, religious communities, and catechetical training colleges.¹⁰⁶

BMKT-Bishops started SCCs which have almost the same principles, they only differ because of the environmental and cultural differences of one diocese to the other. In the year 1977, BMKT in “Meditation Seminar” issued “Directory” to start SCCs. This directory contains, the general objectives of SCCs, guidelines, and responsibilities of SCC-member. As result of this directory, each diocesan Bishop issued directory of promoting SCCs which led to the formation of SCCs in all dioceses in Tanzania.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Cf. KILAINI, SCCs. Sharing Pastoral Experience, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 24-25.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 26.

In the year 2007, BMKT-Bishops celebrated thirty years since the introduction of SCCs in Tanzania since 1976 to 2006. The Late Right Rev. Amedeus Msarikie, the Bishop of Moshi Diocese and Chairman of BMKT-Pastoral Department by then said, according to ‘research’ conducted by the pastoral directors in the dioceses and BMKT-Pastoral Department, it was observed that there are challenges in SCCs in Catholic Church in Tanzania. He mentioned two objectives of that time; first objective was to conduct research to discover the successes and failures within SCCs. The second objective was to promote and celebrate the successes achieved.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, after these celebrations, a new fire of promoting the SCCs was enkindled to strengthen SCCs in all dioceses.

The year 2007–2008, was dedicated as the year to commemorate the anniversary of 30 years of SCCs in Tanzania. The official opening ceremonial masses were celebrated on Pentecost Sunday of the year 2007 in all Catholic dioceses in Tanzania.¹⁰⁹

By the order of Tanzanian bishops ‘plenary meeting in 1997, the Commission of Canon Law reviewed and revised the constitution of the Lay Council and in 1998 Constitution of the National Lay Council was passed, in this new constitution there is a provision that all elections of lay leaders in Church in Tanzania must begin from SCCs and go upwards to the parish, diocesan and national levels. In this manner, one can be elected a leader in a parish, a diocese, or national level if he/she is a SCC-member and leader. This was an important decision and significant move that fostered the SCCs and fortified the Lay Council from the grassroot-levels to the top-levels.¹¹⁰

SCCs in Tanzania have grown, developed and spread the great deal as per evaluation meeting held by the BMKT-bishops. SCCs are more prevalent and active in rural areas than in towns on account of social and economic differences between these two areas. In urban areas of Tanzania, poor people show more interest in participating in SCC-meetings than the rich ones, therefore it is the participation within the life of the poor which gives SCCs their

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Cf. KILAINI, SCCs. *Sharing Tanzanian Pastoral Experience*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 2.

relevancy and legitimacy.¹¹¹ According to statistics in Tanzania, there are over 65,000 SCCs in all 36 dioceses.¹¹²

2.10 Conclusion

In the conclusion, the historical profile of SCCs helps us in understanding the root causes for the SCCs in different continents or countries and it helps us in understanding the different concepts used to refer to the Christian Communities in different continents and countries.

In this chapter, the study has found out that SCCs trace their origin historically from the BCCs and BECs which already existed in Latin America, the Philippines, Asia, Europe and North America.

More importantly was that the introduction of SCCs in AMECEA-region and in Tanzania was a response to the ecclesiological concepts of the Vatican II council that Church as People of God, Body of Christ, family of God and as Communion. AMECEA and BMKT-bishops introduced SCCs as implementation of Vatican II's ecclesiological concepts and as well as pastoral options to the local Church.

The bishop's conference of Democratic Republic of Congo the former Zaire under leadership of his eminence Joseph Cardinal Malula the Archbishop of Kinshasa in the between 1971 and 1972 decided unanimously that the SCCs are pastoral options of the Church in DRC as response to President Mobutu's authentic movement which suppressed missionary institutions and activities.

The official inauguration of the SCCs in the AMECEA-region was in the year 1973. As soon as SCCs were declared as pastoral priorities, they came to spread throughout the AMECEA-region.

Between 1976 and 1977, the SCCs were officially launched and declared as pastoral priorities. The BMKT-bishops decided to introduce SCCs based on Tanzanian socialist context or Ujamaa villages. 1997, the National Canon Law Commission revised and amended the constitution of Laity Council to accommodate SCCs and in 1998, the new constitution for the Laity Council was passed. It requires that all elections of the leaders in

¹¹¹ Cf. James Jay CARNEY, *The People Bonded Together by Love. Eucharistic and SCCs in Africa*, *Modern Theology* 2014, 303.

¹¹² Cf. Jesca D. MASSAWE and James Alex MHANGWA, *Youth Participation in SCCs. Insights and Recommendations*. URL: <https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/2024/02/youth-participation-in-small-christian-communities-in-tanzania/> [accessed: 04 November 2025].

the Laity Councils should start from the grassroot levels (SCCs) then upwards to the national level.

Therefore, SCCs are so significant in pastoral activities and evangelization process in AMCEA-region and Tanzania. The year 2026, BMKT will celebrate 50-year jubilee anniversary since the official launching of SCCs in Tanzania.

CHAPTER THREE

Administrative Structure of the SCCs in Tanzania and its Theology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, administrative structure and theology of SCCs are analysed and discussed. The administration structure and leadership system in SCCs is organization and government of SCCs. It explains the governing organs of the SCCs and the way the SCCs are managed and how leaders are elected. Additionally, it explains the way the liturgical services are carried out. The duties and responsibilities of the clergy, the religious and the laity is stipulated in this chapter.

SCCs contribute to the praxis and theology of the Church as God's family in Africa and in Tanzania in general.

3.2 SCCs are Administrative Communities in a Parish

SCCs are not independent Churches, but they are part of universal or local Church which help in pastoral issues and evangelization of the people at the grassroot levels. They are not separate entities, but they are directly connected to the Church and help in pastoral activities in a parish. The diocesan bishops through parish priests as their representatives in the respective parishes must approve the establishment of SCCs in their dioceses. There is no way can Christians start a SCC without the approval of diocesan bishop. SCCs help so in running administrative activities in a parish.¹¹³ They are easily integrated in the pastoral structures and activities in the parish Churches. In other words, SCCs are pastoral models and help to build the parish administrative structures. The leadership structures are directly represented in the outstation, sub-parish and parish councils. This is a participation from the grassroots.¹¹⁴

The SCCs are Churches at grassroot levels are in communion with the parishes. To assume lay parish council leadership, one should first be a leader in a SCC. An outstation, a sub-parish and a parish represent SCC-lay leadership. This is to enhance the communion between parish Churches and SCCs and ensure that parish administration starts from the bottom of the community. This bottom-up leadership style creates sense of Church's

¹¹³ Cf. MAHIMBILI, *The SCCs are Pastoral Priorities in Tanzania*, 43.

¹¹⁴ Cf. HEALEY, *Building the Church as Family of God*, 89.

ownership and responsibility of the faithful to their Church. They are also involved in making important decision pertaining the administration of the Parish.¹¹⁵

3.3 Administrative Structure of the SCCs in Tanzania

The administrative is composed of the lay apostolate council, executive committee, financial committee and liturgical committee.

3.3.1 The Lay Apostolate Council

Is the highest decision body in SCC. It is composed of the elected leaders (the executive committee), chairpersons of all apostolic associations and one representative from each family that forms SCCs. They hold six meetings annually, or any time in case of an emergency.

The roles of the Parish council: Is to formulate the regulations for services in SCCs, for example, spiritual and bodily service for the sick, funeral services and ceremonies etc. Endorsement of developmental plans recommended by SCC-executive committee.

Creation of small statutes and regulations that govern and control relations in SCCs and approved by its members in accordance with SCC-executive committee's recommendations.¹¹⁶

3.3.2 Executive Committee

It is an executive body which implements various decisions approved by the lay apostolate council and SCC-members. This committee is made up of five leaders elected by SCC-members (chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer) or any high-ranking leader (parish, outstation or deacon).

The roles of leaders: Chairman/vice is overall in charge of SCC-spiritual, pastoral and social activities. They supervise others in fulfilling their responsibilities. They build good relationship with other communities in the parish.¹¹⁷ Secretary is crucial person in the community because many things depend on him for implementation or execution. During the weekly SCC-meetings for prayers and Bible service, he/she receives reports and records

¹¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 127.

¹¹⁶ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji, JNNK, 132–133.

¹¹⁷ Cf. MASSAWE, JNNK, 18.

them in the book. He gives reports to SCC-members when the need arises. Treasurer receives and keeps SCC-properties, collects tithes and other Church's collections.¹¹⁸

They meet once a month before the general meeting all SCC-members to set agenda and minutes for discussion about development of their community, any time in case of emergency which requires their decision.

The Executive Committee is elected after three and the votes are confidential. Those who are legible to be elected are SCC-members 18 yrs old and above and those who are free from sacramental impediments.

Its roles: Implementation all decisions from lay apostolate council and SCC-members. To create new sources of revenues and share them with SCC-members before implementation. To prepare a quarterly, semi and annual financial report (revenues collected and expenditure) and present it to the meetings of SCC. To monitor the life of SCCs and spiritual lives of its members.

To ensure that all requirements of SCC are available such as crucifixes, candles, tables, service-forms etc.

To prepare and preserve the census' report of the community. To prepare and coordinate spiritual and liturgical events such as sacraments, patroness-masses of SCC etc. To keep important memories of SCC and all community's properties.¹¹⁹

3.3.3 Financial Committee

SCCs are parts of universal Church, many of its activities and deliberations are the reflections of local and universal Churches. It is important for SCCs to have fund to solve various challenges affecting its communities, as well to donate fund for church-construction projects.¹²⁰

3.3.4 Sources of Income

Collections from SCC-members, special fund- contributions (consolation fund, funeral services fund etc.) and SCC-projects.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 18–19.

¹¹⁹ Cf. BMKT, *Uimarisha na Ukuzaji JNNK Nchini Tanzania*, 135.

¹²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 137.

¹²¹ Cf. *ibid.*

3.3.5 Expenditure

Purchase for important items in SCCs; Bible, faithful missal, books for prayers, books for hymns, catechism of the Catholic Church, crucifixes and crosses, candles, chairs, tables, cashier book, etc. Ceremonies and celebrations of the SCC, to support the needy people such as the sick, prisoners, and the victims of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, drought. Miscellaneous expenditure according to SCC-members' agreement (but such expenditure should not contradict the Church's competent authority).¹²²

3.3.6 The Banking of Money and Financial Report

The SCC-treasurer is the one who reads the financial reports of collections whenever SCC-members meet for their routine-time of prayers. It is important the money of SCC be kept in a safe and secure place and conform with the instructions of parish's leadership (parish priest) regarding SCC-money. In most cases, the SCC-money is deposited in a parishes or bank's accounts for the safety. This helps in avoiding conflicts between SCC-leaders and SCC-members regarding funds' mismanagement. After every three months, SCC-treasurer gives a three-month financial report to the SCC-members for the sake of transparency and accountability. Each family of the community receives a hard copy of financial report to be able to know the income and expenditure of the community. The treasurers of SCCs are strictly prohibited to borrow money of the community without consent of the all SCC-members and are urged to deposit money into the relevant accounts to avoid unnecessary conflicts with members of SCC.¹²³

3.4 The Patron or Patroness of a SCC

Each SCC is named after the patron or patroness saint who is also the patron or the patroness saint of the SCC and SCC-members in general. It is crucial for the members of SCC to understand a biography and life history of their patron/patroness and be proud of his or her divine intercessions for various intentions they offer. SCC-members are asked to imitate the exemplary life of their patron/patroness saint.¹²⁴

¹²² Cf. *ibid.*, 137–138.

¹²³ Cf. *ibid.*, 139.

¹²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 139–140.

It is important SCC-members to pray this prayer during the different periods of prayers, both private and community prayers.¹²⁵ Each saint has his or her own Memorial Day. Some saint memorial days fall into birthday date and others on death dates. That date becomes a memorial date for a patron or a patroness saint in a SCC. This is a day of prayers, charitable deeds, pilgrimages, or feast of a SCC. The feast is often accompanied with the Holy Mass.

3.5 Duties and Responsibilities of Each Baptised in SCCs

The Holy family is a good example and a role model of God-fearing community and is the first school of faith and evangelization. This is the way our families and communities are supposed to be. Let us emulate the values of the Holy Family so that we may benefit in the life of the community and make SCCs ever active.¹²⁶

3.5.1 Responsibilities of Clergy

The “clergy” is the word which encompasses bishops, priests and deacons. The clergy are direct responsible for the formation and the life of SCCs because they are clerical leaders of the life of the SCCs. The clergy should live the life of the community to be role models of SCCs which we lead in helping people to achieve the holiness.

3.5.2 Bishops

Bishops are principal pastors of the local Churches. They are according to divine succession plan successors of the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who was inspired to them and who were consecrated and installed to the Church to be pastors of souls as teachers of church’s doctrine, priests of the sacred liturgical celebrations and administrators of the sacraments.¹²⁷

Teachers of Doctrine

Bishops are responsible, they are supposed to lead the Church of Christ by teaching fundamental doctrines to people and teach the Christian faith, baptize them and introduce into a bigger community the Church.¹²⁸ Thus making SCCs continue to be active.

¹²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 74–75.

¹²⁷ Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, Washington/DC 2000, no. 375.

¹²⁸ Cf. CCC 861.

Governance

They have authority to govern their dioceses, making decisions related to its administration and pastoral activities. Therefore, as principal pastors in the dioceses, they are responsible to ensure that SCCs in their respective dioceses become true instruments of evangelization and sustainable. They can sustain the lives of SCCs in their dioceses by supervising the way SCCs are operated. As diocesan bishops, each bishop in his diocese is responsible to issue directives and regulations which are binding and followed by SCC-members in their prayers and meetings. This makes a SCC active and the best instrument of promoting, protecting, advocating and propagating the Christian faith to all people.¹²⁹

Sacred Ceremonies

They lead and oversee the liturgical life of the diocese, ensuring the proper celebration of sacraments and other acts of worship. Therefore, a diocesan bishop is responsible for coordinating celebrations of sacraments and other divine worship in his diocese. For a SCC to remain active, a bishop is responsible for coordinating the way the liturgical rites of SCC should be celebrated. A diocesan bishop has a responsibility for introducing a new prayer of the community and directives and regulations that govern SCCs in his diocese. In this way, bishops make SCCs remain relevant and active in the process of evangelization.¹³⁰

Bishops as Examples of Holiness

Bishops are responsible for showing examples of personal life of holiness through love, humility and simple lifestyle. In this way, a bishop has a responsibility for forming Christian faithful into the life of holiness each one according to his or her vocation. Bishop as the principal dispenser of the God's mysteries is responsible for ensuring that his faithful Christians in SCCs are growing in divine grace through the celebrations of the sacraments in understanding and living the paschal mystery. So, by considering all these, the bishop succeeds in making SCCs sustainable and active and enabling Christians to emulate the life of holiness.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji wa JNNK, 76.

¹³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 77.

¹³¹ Cf. CCC 387.

3.5.3 Priests

Priests are principal supervisors and representatives of bishops in parishes and various Church's institutions. The bishops as principal pastors plan, and coordinate strategies and special days of catechesis for various services of the Word of God including SCC-meetings and give them to the priests for implementation of those pastoral plans. Therefore, the apostolate of SCCs is unavoidable to the priests because they are the catalysts in promoting and sustaining SCCs.¹³² To ensure that SCCs thrive, grow and spread the priests undertake the following roles.

Developing and Promoting SCCs

Priests as bishops' representatives in the parishes are responsible for implementing all bishop's pastoral plans about SCCs. As ordinary ministers of the sacrament of baptism are responsible for expanding the Church of Christ by providing fundamental religious instructions to people and by strengthening them in Christian faith and by baptizing and introducing them into larger Christian community and thus making the SCCs active and effective.

Seeking the Separated SCC-Members and Bring Them Back to The Community: As pastors, priests are responsible for seeking and bringing all SCC-members who have separated from their communities. Either they should teach the separated SCC-members about the values of life of community and its importance. They should bring them back into the community and accept those who were lost despite their baptism in the Catholic Church, they stopped receiving the Holy Communion even lack of faith.¹³³

Visiting SCC-Members in their Communities

Visitation to SCCs strengthens a closer relationship between priests and community-members and thus making the work of evangelization to all people easier and making SCCs active and be instruments of proclaiming Christ to people. Priests as bishops' assistants are obliged to preach the Word of God to all people.¹³⁴ By so doing, the priests make SCCs to be active, and they will be implementing the command of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Go into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15) Additionally, they are

¹³² Cf. NHANWA, JNNK Shule ya Imani na Ujilishaji, 27.

¹³³ Cf. LG 21 (FLANNERY126).

¹³⁴ Cf. PO art. 4 (FLANNERY 126).

obliged to teach the Christians a good community life, because they are the founders of SCCs through various meeting in AMECEA-region and in Tanzania in particular. They ensure that the Word of God especially homilies and catechises are well taught and carefully observed so that all Christian doctrines are given to all Christians.

3.5.4 Deacons

The deacons are the clergy in the third order of the Sacrament of the Holy Order. They are responsible for establishing the mission which the laity carry out according to their capacity in the Church and in the world. For this reason, deacons as ministers of the Word of God have a responsibility for preaching the Word of God in SCCs, this makes SCCs active and effective and truly vehicles of evangelization. They should be examples of community life and through them SCCs can emulate values of community life and live them. They are obliged to assist priests in fulfilling the SCCs' ministry and should work together with all SCC-members so that SCCs may live in unity and solidarity.¹³⁵

3.5.5 Religious

Religious are very important for Church's life and progress of the local Church. Pope stated that where is a religious there is also happiness. Therefore, religious are examples of happiness in SCCs. The gift of the consecrated life which they have decided to pursue and live willingly can contribute largely to build and encourage SCCs which have divine love among SCC-members and all people. According to their evangelical counsels (obedience, poverty and chastity), religious can be a catalyst of propagating and promoting the life of SCCs which surround them. They should cooperate with SCC-members in a proper caring of SCCs to become truly vehicles of evangelization for all people. Religious are caretakers of SCCs cooperating with bishops, priests and SCC-members themselves in caring SCCs morally, socially and credulously to make them to be active and effective.¹³⁶

3.5.6 The Laity

Group of the Catholics who are non-ordained and non-consecrated faithful. These are real and active participants of SCCs who analyse people's faith and their own faith to bear

¹³⁵ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK Nchini Tanzania, 80.

¹³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 81.

evangelical witnesses among themselves and to the people surrounding them. It is through the SCCs the laity faithful are renewed spiritually, and SCCs become a forum of getting to know each other and cooperate among themselves closely. It is in SCCs where a member of a community should feel and taste a real love, appreciated, welcomed and especially when he or she feels rejected and excluded by his or her own family or society, when they are depressed, with family problems particularly in their marriage life. The lay faithful in SCCs participate in SCCs in various groups such as youth, holy childhood, women, men and catechists.¹³⁷

3.6 SCCs' Contribution to the Praxis and Theology of Church as Family of God in Tanzania

The families are of paramount importance for the SCCs in Tanzania. One of the models of the Church in Africa and in Tanzania is that of the Church as the family of God, therefore it is from this line of thought that SCCs in Tanzania are also family-based communities.¹³⁸

SCCs in Tanzania are home or house-based communities because are places where everybody feels comfortable and can give out his or her views freely. Strong and formidable SCCs are the direct outcome of the strong and committed Christian families. Therefore, the Church in Tanzania has engaged herself in preaching about the model of the Church in Tanzania as family of God.

The role of Christian families in forming ideal SCCs is that they should live according to the will of God and observe Christian values and morals. When SCC-members meet in their regular meetings, they should ensure that many families participate actively. Since a family consists of parents and children, the parents should encourage their children to participate in SCC-meetings whenever they have opportunities to do so.¹³⁹

The families that pray produce prayerful and devout communities, therefore, Church in Tanzania emphasizes that life of prayer should begin at family level or household.¹⁴⁰

St. Paul, the Apostle changed his missionary activities centre from synagogues to families making the true sense of solidarity (domestic Churches), open to other domestic churches. Therefore, Paul set up the first SCCs as house Churches that met in private homes, 1 Cor 1

¹³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 82.

¹³⁸ Cf. MAHIMBILI, *The SCCs are Pastoral Priority of the Church in Tanzania*, 41.

¹³⁹ Cf. MASSAWE, JNNK, 16.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. MAHIMBILI, *The SCCs are Pastoral Priority of the Church in Tanzania*, 43.

and 16. These communities were self-governing, they were missionary by their very nature. They were families based on evangelizing communities.¹⁴¹

SCCs consist of the values of inclusiveness, sharing, unity and solidarity that form present family of God. The models are the first small community of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and that of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.¹⁴² The African SCCs are communion of families which are mostly referred to as home-based churches. We are invited to share the life of the Trinity that is the life of sharing. For Mwoleka sharing in the Trinity is the model for sharing in the Trinity:

“I think we have difficulties in understanding the Holy Trinity because we approach the mystery from the wrong side. [...] I am dedicated to the ideal of Ujamaa (Swahili word 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.”¹⁴³

The SCCs’ lives are guided and inspired by the divine power of the Holy Spirit. Just like the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit love and respect each other, so should SCC-members love, respect and help each other and others in their spiritual and social needs. They should be united in one heart, one spirit, one baptism and one faith like Jesus reiterates: “Father and I are one.” (John 10:30)

Therefore, the notion of the Church as Family of God model together with parish-based SCCs and lectionary-based SCCs form family-based SCCs.¹⁴⁴ These include SCCs that incorporate youth and children into the activities of the SCCs and “Mother SCCs” which parts of Youth SCCs and Children SCCs.

African SCCs insist on personal relationships, family bonds, solidarity, and Christian belonging, sharing together (meals and entertainment included) African values and customs. Thus, SCCs are concrete expression and practice of, the Church as Family of God Model in African.

SCCs take from Vatican II’s ecclesiology of the Church as People of God, although they are still in process of growing. It means that all faithful their vocation and mission in the

¹⁴¹ Cf. HEALEY, *Building the Church as Family of God*, 78.

¹⁴² Cf. Peter MBUGUA, *Social Differences in SCCs. A Pastoral Challenge for Deeper Evangelization in Nairobi-West Deanery, Nairobi* [Master Thesis, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi], 2012.

¹⁴³ HEALEY, *Building the Church as Family of God*, 80.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

Church, meaning a change from a parish-based apostolate to a people- based apostolate that requires that the takes the role of a community-minded inspirational minister.¹⁴⁵

For Magesa, the best contribution of SCCs in Eastern of Africa and in Tanzania has been to provide a clear theological elaboration of the threefold theological characteristics of these phenomena. A SCC performs three functions like that of a baptized person as priests, SCC-members, pray together, read and meditate the Word of God and dedicate their lives to God as prophets, SCC-members proclaim the Gospel in words and deeds in their neighbourhood. They should preach peace, justice and reconciliation among themselves and outside the community as kings, SCC-members are urged to exercise control over their inordinate desires and conquer their temptations and sins. These three offices are designed to serve the poor and the needy in SCCs and in the whole Church.¹⁴⁶

The SCCs in Tanzania have developed the practical theology of the Church as family of God. Flynn stated that the foundations of African culture, particularly in terms of relationships and communal life are what provide a developing model based on African family. He added that SCCs are taken as fundamental building blocks of the Church as Family of God in Africa. In other words, SCCs are ideal foundational units of building the Church as Family of God.¹⁴⁷

According to Rutechura, SCCs are of paramount importance, when we want to build formidable foundational units of the Church as Family of God. He further states that SCCs is a communion of families. The parish is a community of believers, it consists of SCCs, outstations and sub-parish. The Word of God and prayer are central to the meetings of a SCC. The SCC-members meet every week to read and meditate the Gospel message of the next Sunday. On Sundays, they attend masses as part of big parish community.¹⁴⁸

If Eucharist is the source and epitome of the Christian life, establishing the Eucharistic communities at all levels from the SCC Mass in private houses or homes to the Sunday Eucharist in the parish church is very crucial. African relationship and values of the community strengthen the meaning of the Eucharistic community.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.* 83.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 84

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Degree on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4 December 1963), in: Vatican Council II. The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, ed. By Austin FLANNERY, Northport-Dublin 1996, no.10.

For Peter Assenga, the image of the Church as SCC would be a perfect model of the family. He further states that the Church is regarded as a community (or communion) of communities, and a family of families. He insists that for SCCs to be fully and effectively realised as the African family Church model they should observe the proper guidelines.¹⁵⁰

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the administrative structure and theology of the SCCs in Tanzania is of paramount importance. It shows the structure and leadership or administrative system of SCCs in Tanzania. SCCs are family-based in the sense that they are made up 10–15 families or households in the neighbourhood. They are family-based because the Church is viewed as the family of God therefore they are big families which build up the Church from grassroot level.

SCCs in Tanzania are administrative communities in a parish because they are not independent Churches but rather intimately integrated in administrative structures of a parish to help pastoral activities of the parish that is why diocesan bishops must approve their establishment in the parishes.

The administrative structure of SCCs in Tanzania is similar and led by laity. They are composed of lay apostolate council, executive committee and financial committee. Leadership in a SCC is a service and an employment for personal gains. Elections of leaders the lay apostolate council in Tanzania start at the grassroot levels (SCCs) and move upward. There is no leader who can be elected in the higher level without being first elected in a his or her SCC. Each SCC is named after a saint who also is a patron or patroness of that saint. Memorial Day of a patron or patroness is usually celebrated as a feast of a SCC. Additionally, though leadership in SCCs is undertaken by the laity the clergy and religious have important role to play especially spiritual and moral guidance of community members. SCCs in Tanzania contributed to implementing the theology of the Church in Africa as the family of God, this is because SCCs are formed from the families or households in the neighbourhood.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. 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* [Doctorate Thesis, Catholic University of Leuven] 2009, 262.

CHAPTER FOUR

Spiritual and Social Contributions of the Small Christian Communities in Tanzania

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, social contribution and challenges of SCCs in Tanzania will be discussed. Since the introduction of SCCs in Tanzania the great spiritual and social development have been achieved. Such development include justice, reconciliation, peace, Bible sharing, administration of the sacraments, social services, diocesan self-reliant fund program, environmental protection, promotion of vocations, entrepreneurial activities. The SCCs have stood up on key spiritual and social in Tanzania in different ways. SCCs have great spiritual and social contributions in Tanzania.

4.2 Spiritual Development Contribution

The SCCs in Tanzania were introduced to help Christians grow spiritually. From the spiritual perspective, SCC-members read and meditate the Word of God, celebrate Eucharist and other sacraments, pray together, give spiritual direction and foster the spiritual growth as briefly explained below.¹⁵¹

4.2.1 Sacrament Administration and the Use of the Bible

Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Matrimony and Anointing of sick can be now administered in the SCCs. Children and adult can be baptized, marriages can be officiated, confessions can be heard and the sick can be anointed, and masses can be administered in SCCs. The SCC-members commemorate the feast of their patron saints every year. The Sunday Gospel message is read, meditated and shared among the community members. Additionally, SCCs observe other special liturgical events such as lent, advent, the feast of harvest and personal intentions requested by a SCC-member.¹⁵² The tithes and funds for CARITAS and other Church's developmental projects can now be collected right from SCCs.

The criterion for the faithful to receive baptism, confirmation and Christian burial is determined by attendance and membership to a SCC. Therefore, a faithful can be baptized,

¹⁵¹ Cf. HEALEY, Building the Church as Family of God, 341–342.

¹⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, Vol.1, 90.

confirmed, anointed, buried in a Christian manner or allowed to receive other sacraments under the condition that he is the active member of a SCC.¹⁵³

The SCC-members keep and practise special traditional blessings which are compatible with the Gospel and Christian faith and morals such as rite of initiation and circumcision, baptizing children in traditional names, and traditional burials and mourns.¹⁵⁴

Additionally, SCC-members pray the sick and dead of the community and of the whole Church. They use the sacramentals such as blessed water available in the most Churches and private homes. They use also the incense as symbol of the acceptance of their prayers to God.¹⁵⁵

4.2.2 Eucharistic Celebration

Eucharist is the Body and the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. During holy masses, SCC-members remember the paschal mysteries of our salvation or the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Like during the early Christian community breaking and sharing of bread was an expression of the presence of Christ, blessed Sacrament expresses the presence of Christ not only in the Eucharist, but also the presence of Christ in the SCCs. During the celebration of the Eucharist, they can give thanks and gratitude to God for the gift of life, talents, blessings and grace that God bestows to them. The Eucharist fosters unity among community members and prevents unnecessary division.¹⁵⁶

Nevertheless, there are still some SCC-members who do not actively attend holy masses because of laziness, weak faith, immoral life or simply for some other legitimate reasons. On the other hand, many SCC-members can receive the Communion, whereas others cannot receive due to the canonical impediments. For example, people who have polygamy and those who have committed public scandals.¹⁵⁷ The Church urges these people to rectify and fix their spiritual life to continue participating in Lord's table.¹⁵⁸ The Church accepts anyone who is ready to repent.

¹⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, 131.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 134.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Cf. KIMELI, SCCs. Membership and participation, 35.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. can. 916, CIC 1983.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. KIMELI, SCCs. Membership and participation, 35.

4.2.3 Sharing Prayer

SCCs pray and sing together while paying homage to God who communicates through the needy members in the neighbourhood. The early Church considered prayer as crucial activity before doing anything. The Church or a SCC draws its strength through sharing in prayer and fellowship. The Church in Jerusalem was an active community engaging herself in all aspects as relates the members. An active SCC even today should daily pray and do what conforms to the holistic liberation of members from spiritual as well as social poverty.¹⁵⁹

SCC-members gather at a scheduled time to pray, fast and intercede for their needs and that of others. Part of their prayer arrangement includes preparation of the celebration of the Eucharist. In such meetings, men participate in Preaching, planning and serving at table. They complete their roles by providing leadership whenever required.¹⁶⁰

4.2.4 Spiritual Growth

SCCs provide a platform through which members can freely communicate and share experiences of life. Sometimes, some members of SCCs avoid such testimonies due to presence of other members of the family. They choose to be silent, and this makes meetings very boring. There is an insistence on the power of the shared prayer. The SCC-members have their own ways of involving all members through sharing of testimonies without humiliating any of them. The traditional taboos that made men to be sole decision makers are now removed, and all members play a lead role in SCC-activities.¹⁶¹

4.2.5 Spiritual Direction

Through the exchange of personal experiences, each member witnesses to what life brings forth in the daily basis. Such personal discussions need fervent commitment particularly when a member shares things related to his or her relationship with God. The concept of SCCs builds not only an individual within the Church but the whole family unit. The family may at times go through many social challenges that need counselling. The practise of self-openness heals and helps whenever counsellors are difficult to come by. Even in situations

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*

where counsellors are present, SCCs play a significant role to liberate members from conditions of either social or self-conflict.¹⁶²

4.2.6 The Moral Formation of the Christian Families

Family is the sanctuary of life and a vital cell of society and the Church. It is here that the features of the people take shape, it is here that its members acquire basic teachings. Whenever these fundamental experiences are lacking, society suffers violence and becomes in turn progenitor of more violence.¹⁶³

In African context, a family consists of a father, a mother, children, relatives of a husband and a wife and other close and distant relatives. In other words, a word “family” is extensively defined as “extended families”. For this reason, the needs of extended families are much more compared to that of one strict family, thus demanding more pastoral efforts be directed to apostolate of families and marriages. Although the marriage life is a great treasure and gift from God, there are still many challenges facing many Christian families and marriages, such as abortions, children abandonment, children taking care of their fellow-children, irresponsible men and women, orphans, alcoholism, contraceptives, rapes, paedophilia, chronic fiancé traditional marriages, divorces, violence in families, huge amount of money for dowries, drug abuse, child-marriages, challenge of the transgender, conflicts due to big age-gap among the married persons, side effects of globalisation, moral decadence, slavery, married couples living with HIV and AIDS, homosexual marriages, injustice in marriages, human trafficking, child-labour, ignorance, infertility and bareness.¹⁶⁴

Unity in formation promotes human dignity and good morals. Let us imitate the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph:¹⁶⁵ “Everybody who had him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. [...] But they did not understand what he was saying to them.” (Luke 2:47-50) Therefore, a SCC is an important institution for promoting and developing Christian families and marriages.

¹⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, 36.

¹⁶³ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Post- Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace *Africae Munus* (19 November 2011), in: AAS (2012) 239–314, no.42.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 33.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 35.

4.2.7 SCCs and Vocations

Vocations are a matter of great concern to SCCs. Their members pray for this course at every opportunity, provide generous support, and hold various ceremonies – such as sending-off ceremonies – tailored to each stage of formation. These efforts have inspired people to reflect on their vocations. In fact, they have led many to become priests and religious. Additionally, SCC-members are asked by Church competent authorities to contribute money to support the seminarians in their studies. This is because the financial support from the Church organizations such as “the Society of St. Peter the Apostle” has been significantly reduced.¹⁶⁶

There are various types of vocations in the Catholic Church such as priesthood, religious or consecrated life and holy matrimony. Of the three vocations, the first two vocations are special vocations whereas the third one matrimony is the natural vocation as indicated in Scriptures: “So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created male and female he created them.” (Gen 1:27)

The vocations of priesthood and religious are divine gifts. It is the Almighty God who calls a person to priesthood or religious vocations for His holy Church. Therefore, Jesus urges us to pray for the holy vocations of priesthood and religious: “Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.” (Matt 9:38)

Through SCCs, the parents should be also reminded to offer their children for the Church’s service, especially when their children express desires to join priestly or religious vocations, they should not prevent them from the joining holy vocations.

SCCs are platforms whereby seminarians meet to pray together, meditation of the Word of God and even discuss various issues regarding life. Therefore, SCCs must be encouraged in seminaries and formation houses because their future apostolate will be mainly built on SCCs. Additionally, SCCs in various parishes are equally important due their significant contribution to the holy vocations.¹⁶⁷

4.2.8 Pontifical Mission Societies

The pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) are organisations which help the Holy Father for evangelisation. This mission is intended to carry out evangelization in the Church and to give the Holy Father financial or economic support for evangelization. For the mission to

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 37.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 39–40.

succeed, it must be introduced in SCCs. Community members are invited to understand the four PMS, take care of them and strengthen their mission.

SCC-members should see PMS as their own organisations which have helped in the evangelisation and continue carrying out evangelisation in the Church.¹⁶⁸ There are four PMS entrusted with the following mission under jurisdiction of the Pope, these include the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Society of St. Peter the Apostle, the Missionary Childhood Association and the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious. Each of the Pontifical Mission Societies has its own specific identity and goal.¹⁶⁹

The Society of Propagation of Faith:

The main objective of this society is to promote and spread faith, strengthen love and especially in finding the spirit of generosity in giving the Holy Father financial and economic support in the work of evangelisation. The caretaker of this organisation in SCCs will be a secretary of a SCC who is also the spiritual leader.¹⁷⁰

The Missionary of Childhood Association:

The main objective of this organisation is to support children to grow in faith, teach them prayers, sacrifice their lives to Christ and cultivate the virtue of love. The motto of this association is: “Children should help their fellow Children in need”. They should help their fellow-children through the Holy Father who know the need of the whole Church. The leader of this association in the SCCs is called the caretaker of Christian/Catholic-formation or children-caretaker in the community.¹⁷¹

The Society of St. Peter, the Apostle:

The main Objective of this association is to promote and nurture vocations in mission-countries by generously supporting the Holy Father spiritually (through prayers) and

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 45.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. ACHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON, Pontifical Mission Societies -Archdiocese Washington 2025. URL: <http://adw.org/about-us/who-we-are/missions/missions/pontifical-missionsocieties/#text=Under%20the%20jurisdiction%20of%20theown%20specific%20identity%20and%20goal> [accessed: 22 May 2025].

¹⁷⁰ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 46.

¹⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 46.

economically (through fund collections around the world) to support seminaries and formation houses.¹⁷²

The Missionary Union of Priests and Religious:

This union is intended to urge all people to be evangelizers of Christian faith. This union does not ask for economic or financial from people, but it supports and promotes the above-mentioned associations to achieve their objectives in supporting the Holy-Father in his efforts for evangelisation. The motto of the union: “we are all missionaries.” The Chairman of a SCC is also a leader of this union.¹⁷³

4.2.9 New Evangelization

Having discussed about the contributions of SCCs to the growth of PMS in Tanzania, it is now a high time to discuss about the contributions of SCCs to the new evangelization in Tanzania. Why do we need a need evangelisation? And how SCCs are catalysts for a new evangelisation in Tanzania?

The Church in our times is faced with our various challenges. These challenges have caused the work of evangelization fail to produce many and good fruits and make many Christians to retreat in matters of faith. These are some of the challenges:

Secularism is a way of life and thinking that rejects religion.¹⁷⁴ Relativism is an idea that truth and values are not absolute but rather depend on the perspective of the observer or context within which they are assessed.¹⁷⁵ Faith without deeds and being dominated by negative effects of globalization. All these challenges have devastating consequences in people’s lives and even to their faith such as increase of nominal and seasonal Christians, Christians who do not live or practise their faith. Syncretism mixing Christianity with paganism for example wearing a rosary and a charm at the same time on someone’s neck. Christians who would like to hear only the Gospel of prosperity mainly from prophetic Churches at the expense of Christ’s Gospel which preaches that there is no salvation without

¹⁷² Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Charles PRESTON (etal. eds), *Secularism*, in: Britannica 2025. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/secularism> [accessed: 22 September 2025].

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Maria BAGHRAMIAN and J. Adam CARTER, *Relativism* 2025 (10 January 2025). URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/> [accessed: 22 September 2025].

suffering, then Jesus said to his disciples:¹⁷⁶ “Whoever want to be my disciples must deny themselves and take up his cross and follow me. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.” (Matt 16:24–25)

It is because of these challenges that the new evangelisation comes into play. So, SCCs are better places and opportunities to meet and re-evangelize people such groups. To achieve this goal, there should be a special place for the Word of God, on-going formation of the Catholic faith, dialogue and cooperation in various sectors of life, cultivate and maintain culture of life (pro-life) to be a living cell through a personal or general encounter with Christ our Lord.¹⁷⁷

4.2.10 Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue

According to Vatican II Council, the Church considers ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue as her intrinsic responsibility. Ecumenism means various efforts and activities which have been planned and undertaken in accordance with various Church’s needs and as an opportunity to promote Christian unity.¹⁷⁸ The dialogue with other religions on the hand are efforts among different faiths and religions towards a good understanding among them, encouraging to accept and show respect, peace and justice in the whole world.

The emphasis of promoting unity and solidarity among Christian denominations acquires a special place in our time more than any other time in the history of the Church. Today, Church is often urged to enable her member to relate with people who are different from their faith and live as witnesses of faith with them.¹⁷⁹ Again, about this call, Pope John Paul II reiterates that:

“Each member of the faithful and all Christian Communities are called to practise dialogue, although not always to same degree or in the same way. The contribution of the laity is indispensable in this area for they can favour the relations which ought to be established with the followers of various religions through their example in the situations in which they live in their activities.”¹⁸⁰

The dialogue among Christians is known as ecumenism whereas dialogue between Christians and non-Christians is known as interreligious dialogue. And Unitatis Reintegratio

¹⁷⁶ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji, 47–48.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Cf. UR 4 (FLANNERY 126).

¹⁷⁹ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 49–50.

¹⁸⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio* (§ 57).

(UR) number 3 focuses on the relationship between Catholic Church and other Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities, it acknowledges that these separated communities while not fully in communion with Rome: “Most certainly can truly engender as capable of giving access to the community of salvation.”¹⁸¹

SCCs have a special opportunity to maintain dialogue between Catholic Christians and non-Catholic-Christians. That is four types of dialogues; dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange and dialogue of religious experience are concerned; dialogue of life takes a significant opportunity.¹⁸² Through these types of dialogues, the faithful of various religions bear witness among themselves through their daily lives concerning their human and spiritual values and thus help these value so as to build a society which is characterised by justice and brotherhood. SCCs should provide a conducive platform for their members to encourage each other in maintaining unity with other religions, at the same they should be used to encourage the faithful to live well their Christianity so that their good lives may touch and attract others to return to Church’s communion and eventually become one group under one Shepherd. To achieve this goal, prayer and the Word of God must be prioritised.¹⁸³

4.2.11 Justice, Peace and Reconciliations in Societies

According to the second synod of Africa 2009 with the title “AFRICA MUNUS”, meaning African Responsibility, the special emphasis to Church in Africa was ministry and responsibility of every baptized to be agent of justice, peace, and reconciliation. According to Africae Munus number 3 reiterates: “[...] She may truly be the salt of the earth and light of the world inspired by faith working through love (Gal 5:6). The Church seeks to offer the fruits of love, reconciliation, peace and justice (1 Cor 13:4–7).”¹⁸⁴

This is specific mission of the Church. Since, SCCs are Part of the Church at the grassroots, it is therefore a conducive platform to promote and advocate peace, reconciliation from the grassroot-levels.

We experience at daily basis conflicts and turmoil within man’s self, between man and man, group and group, village and village, clan and clan, tribe and tribe etc. These conflicts

¹⁸¹ UR 3 (FLANNERY 126).

¹⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, 51.

¹⁸³ Cf. BMKT Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 52.

¹⁸⁴ BENEDICT XVI, Africae Munus (§ 3).

have led to devastating consequences such as: Lack perfect freedom of worship, lack of quality of education, lack of proper medical care, hunger lack of decent settlement and even death. When peace and justice lack in a person, a family, community or nation, it is very hard to have peace and unity among people regardless of their religious affiliations.¹⁸⁵

The structure of SCCs can demonstrate the meaning of being the Church in Africa and elsewhere. This is because not all people who suffer injustices can raise up their voices and defend themselves against their oppressors, hence SCCs as part of the Church has an opportunity of becoming the voice of the voiceless. The same as our societies value at most their position of our social clans, norms and customs, similarly we can look at our SCCs as our Christian clans, and we will therefore be ready to use them as opportunities for each one of us to help each other in keeping and living these essential Christian values.¹⁸⁶

Despite everyone's responsibility in promoting justice, peace and reconciliation, it should be understood the true peace is achieved in Jesus Christ, and we should always put our trust to him: "Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives you do I give you it to you. Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid." (John 14:27)

These of values of justice, peace and reconciliation should never be viewed as political issues, governments or political party's responsibility but rather this responsibility has its foundation in God Himself and is a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world in general.¹⁸⁷

Each one of us can ask God as St, Francis of Assisi prayed: "Oh Lord make me an Instrument of peace [...]." ¹⁸⁸ A better place to sharpen ourselves to fulfil this responsibility is in SCCs.

When SCC-members meet, they do not only recite prayers and share the Message from the Word of God, but also, they settle down the conflicts and misunderstands which prevail in individual members, families and communities in general.

In Tanzania and Mpanda, there are justice, peace and reconciliation -committees in SCCs to settle down conflicts, disputes arising in families and communities.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 53.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 54.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Laurenti MAGESA, *what is Not Sacred? African Spirituality*, Nairobi 2014, 190–91.

¹⁸⁸ CATHEDRAL OF ST. THOMAS MORE, *Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi* 2025. URL: <https://www.cathedralstm.org/about-our-catholic-faith/expressing-our-faith/treasury-catholic-prayers/prayer-st-francis-assisi-prayer-peace/> [accessed: 22 September 2025].

4.2.12 Inculturation

Every society has its own traditions, norms, customs and culture, including the good ones (the ones which are compatible with Christian faith) and the bad ones (ones which are incompatible with Christian faith.) Therefore, in many societies, traditions and customs are very powerful to the extent that the members of the societies make a deliberate effort to preserve and protect them. When traditions and customs are good, they render a conducive environment for the Christian faith to grow, if they are bad, they can cause many challenges such as hindering the Gospel values to deepen their roots in the Christian communities.¹⁸⁹

Our pastoral plans, including SCCs should know various values which are found from people's cultures and the Gospel's values and purify them and incorporate them in our liturgical celebrations.¹⁹⁰

According to Vatican II's Post- Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, inculturation is very important in ensuring that the Gospel spreads in Africa and in the world: "Just as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), so the Good News, the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to nations, must take root in the life situation of hearers of the Word. Inculturation is precisely this insertion of the Gospel message into cultures [...]."¹⁹¹

Since, SCC is the Church at the grassroot levels, it is an ideal platform in answering the question of inculturation. When they are properly used, they can be a good meeting point between Gospel and culture. The meeting among cultures can be a good opportunity to understand the customs and traditions of each one of us, while the meeting with the Gospel is a good opportunity of allowing the Gospel to penetrate people's cultures. Understanding people's culture, customs and norms can put one in a better position of appreciating and accepting others despite cultural differences.¹⁹²

4.3 Social Development Contribution

SCC-members view social development as an endeavour in providing social services, entrepreneurial skills, credits, good politics and governance and in conserving and protecting

¹⁸⁹ Cf. BMKT, Strengthening and Propagation of SCCs in Tanzania, 55.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 56.

¹⁹¹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa *Ecclesia in Africa* (14 September 1995), Rome 1995 (§ 60).

¹⁹² Cf. BMKT, Strengthening and Propagation of SCCs in Tanzania, 57.

our environment.¹⁹³ The Church engages in social development as part of her ministry. In SCCs, the laity takes initiative and financial responsibility for the churches and their involvement in a wider society.¹⁹⁴

The work of evangelisation in the Church should be integral (the whole person) body and soul as Jesus himself gave us an example: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon him, and he has been anointed to preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to prisoners, recovery sight to the blind and liberation to the oppressed.” (Luke 4:18–19)

In his encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI insists that:

“True to the teaching and example of her divine Founder, who cited the preaching of the Gospel to the poor as a sign of His Mission, the Church has never failed to foster the human progress of the nations to which she brings faith in Christ. Besides erecting sacred edifices, her missionaries have also promoted the construction of hostels, hospitals, schools, sanitariums, universities etc.”¹⁹⁵

This teaching of evangelizing a human person integrally is found in other Church Fathers’ teachings:

“Christianity is a meeting point of the earth and the heaven. It lays claim to the whole man body and soul, intellect and will inducing him to raise his mind above the changing conditions of this earthly existence reach upwards of eternal life of heaven, where one day he will find his unfailing happiness and peace.”¹⁹⁶

Additionally, Pope John Paul II in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* reiterates that: “The human development of every person and of the whole person especially of the poorest and neglected in the community is at the very heart of evangelization.”¹⁹⁷ Based on the Teachings of Church’s Fathers, SCCs provide a conducive platform for promoting various human development activities. Some of these activities include water, education, health services, housing etc.

¹⁹³ Cf. Jude FANWONG, *SCCs and Development in Cameroon*, [Master Thesis, Norwegian School of Theology, Spring] 2015, 61.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. HEALEY, *Building the Church as Family of God*, 344–345.

¹⁹⁵ PAUL VI, *Populorum Progressio* (§ 12).

¹⁹⁶ JOHN XXIII, *Encyclical Letter on Christianity and Social Progress Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961), Rome 1961 (§ 2).

¹⁹⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Africa Ecclesia in Africa* (EA) § 68.

4.3.1 Diocesan Self-Reliant Fund (DSRF)

Through SCC-structures, the Church in Tanzania wants to be self-reliant by organizing fundraising and collections and financial support from” Propaganda Fide” has and other financial donors has been reduced.

It is more efficient and effective to collect annual tithes and other collections through SCCs. The Diocese of Mpanda and other dioceses in Tanzania collect their annual tithes through SCCs. They also organize their Diocesan Self-reliant Fund (DSRF) by assigning each parish with a certain amount of money or collections. In turn, parishes assign each SCC with a certain amount of money to contribute to DSF, this method fund raising from the grassroot-levels (SCCs) has proved to be more efficient and effective as result the overall annual collections of DSF have doubled or in some cases tripled.

Submission of these collections for DSF takes place during special holy Mass organized for that purpose. Normally, the Holy Mass is presided over by the diocesan Bishop, or he may delegate his assistants to preside over the Mass. The collections are submitted to the Diocesan Financial Administrator for worth projects in the dioceses such as education, health programmes, administration of dioceses, food, elderly programmes, counselling services, building churches or public buildings, national campaigns such relief freedom from hunger, internally displaced persons and medical research.

4.3.2 Preferential option for the Poor

The second part of this section discusses about the SCCs as the preferential option for the poor. Jacob the Apostle in his pastoral letter says: “What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? [...] As the body without spirit is dead, so the faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2:14-26)

Furthermore, Pope Paul VI in his encyclicals argues that: “But evangelization would not be complete if it did not take into count of unceasing interplay of the Gospel and man’s concrete life, both personal and social.”¹⁹⁸

SCCs offer platforms and opportunities for evangelization, and it is a place where Christian faith can be witnessed and manifested through our good deeds. SCCs are opportunities to preach our faith by our good deeds. The call of Jesus to his Apostles: “But

¹⁹⁸ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) (8 December 1975), Rome 1975 (§ 29).

you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

SCC-members share in their daily lives the good values of the Christian faith such as helping each other, visiting each other during joys and sorrows, and share their human necessities such as (food, clothing and shelter), and that they put into practice the principle of preferential option for the poor.¹⁹⁹

Considering the Lord’s commandment of love to the needy, SCCs in Tanzania/Mpanda are committed to helping the needy regardless their religious affiliation. SCCs have materially and financially supported many people such as Christians, non-Christians and non-believers, nobody has been denied access to aid, provided one has a genuine ground to deserve aid. During Lenten period, SCC-members collect money, food, clothes, soap and other material things for the needy, the sick and prisoners.²⁰⁰

4.3.3 Social Services (Health and Education)

In Tanzania, SCCs have significantly contributed to promote social services. Although, their contribution to the social services may not be that much big, nevertheless their contributions cannot be ignored. For example, they have introduced special programmes of promoting health issues such as first aid kit, maternal-child services, education about HIV/AIDS, refugee-fund service, street children-relief fund and even raising fund for the construction of dispensaries and healthy- centres. They collect fund for special adult education and formal education for children from poor families. Introduction of the remedial class programmes for the children in the communities and even facilitating the construction of kindergarten. These social services benefit Christians and non-Christians, and they turn to be an evangelizing opportunity.²⁰¹

4.3.4 Social Communication

Since we are in globalisation and its negative effects, there are many achievements in this area which are the fruits of SCCs. Through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, there are many SCC-members who have learned the

¹⁹⁹ Cf. BMKT, Strengthening and Propagation of SCCs, 35–36.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Paul M. MAMBOLEO, The Ministry of SCCs at Mafia Parish in Tanzania and Encountered Islamic Pressure [Diploma Paper/Thesis St. Paul’s Senior Seminary Kipalapala, Tabora], 2021.

²⁰¹ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji, 59–60.

correct use of these social media. Through social media, community members receive various information including the readings of the next holy Mass and meditation of the Word of God, the life the saints, and various religious instructions. Therefore, SCCs become proper platforms for community members and other people to learn the correct use of social media and the benefits of globalisation.²⁰²

4.3.5 Good Politics and Good Governance

SCCs are big families which are formed by people of different characters and status. Among them are the politicians. Since a real people centred development is also dependent on the good politics and good governance, therefore SCCs become forum to help those who desire to join politics or those who are already in politics to understand the human values, human dignity and principles of human rights and even the value of life. SCCs are platforms to condemn evils or crimes committed some SCC-members who are in politics. In this way, SCCs become truly schools of every sector of life including politics.²⁰³

4.3.6 Entrepreneurial Activities and Projects

Every human person is entitled to legitimate work and income for his/her welfare and that of his/her dependants. From time to time, the Church has taught that to do work is to participate in God's creation. That is why the Church respects and celebrates St. Joseph the staple Father of Jesus as the true role model and Patron of all workers. Through these efforts, SCCs are in the fore front to enable their members improve their living standard. Some SCCs have started common projects such as agriculture, animal keeping, poultry projects both broilers and layers, hiring firm for chairs, canvas for, music and loudspeaker systems, catering services etc for meetings and feasts in various dioceses in Tanzania.

Others have joined credit-organisations such as Village Community-Banks (VICOBA) these are banks at a grassroot group-based on micro-finance model designed to support viable income-generating activities for poor especially women excluded from formal sector and Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOS).²⁰⁴ Others have been in fore front in providing entrepreneurial education to community members and others. In this way,

²⁰² Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰³ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Cf. MZUMBE UNIVERSITY, Village Community Bank (VICOBA), URL: <https://ejahme.Mzumbe.ac.tz/index.php/ejahme/article/download/8/5/19#> [accessed: 13 March 2025].

SCCs have shown themselves as truly ideal schools for the importance of self-reliance and for the benefit of all people. Therefore, SCCs are very useful in so far as social development is concerned.²⁰⁵

The general contribution of SCCs on parish and diocesan level can be seen in different ways. Bishop Emeritus Methodius Kilaini speaks about the contribution of SCCs in a particular way in Dar es- Salaam Archdiocese: “More than a half of parishes in Dar es Salaam were founded by SCCs. Normally in a new residential place a few strong Catholics would start a SCC and pray together in houses. As their number increased, one member donated area to build a common pray shed. The SCC was divided as the number of SCC-members increased but the shed became common to all. As number of Christians increased and multiplied the faithful bought more land around the origin plot or found a bigger plot in the neighbourhood and asked permission to build a house for prayers and kindergarten. The next step is that it would be changed into an outstation Church and later into a parish Church.²⁰⁶ Therefore, SCCs develop a solidarity that built many parishes in Tanzania and in the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam in particular.

4.3.7 Environmental Conservation and Protection

In his encyclical letter “LAUDATO SI” (our common home), Pope Francis speaks about the protection of our common home. To emphasize his argument on environmental protection, pope Francis referred to the song of St. Francis of Assisi which reminds us that the universe is like our sister whom we participate together in life, likewise like a beautiful woman who always opens her arms to embrace us.²⁰⁷ Unfortunately, we have turned rulers and destroyers of our universe, a clear indication of chaos which are in our hearts and wounds of sins which affect us. We have really forgotten that we created from the soil. When we examine our earth now, we realize the way various human activities if unchecked can destroy our environment. The human developments as we witness today in different sectors such as industries, animal keeping, agriculture, construction, mining and security activities etc in some areas have produced poisons which are dangerous to our planet earth where we live. As Pope John Paul II once said:

²⁰⁵ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 61.

²⁰⁶ Cf. HEALEY, Building the Church as the Family of God, 346.

²⁰⁷ Cf. FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter on Our Common Home the Earth, LAUDATO SI (24 May 2015), Rome 2015, § 1–3.

“At the same time, exploitation of the earth not only for industrial but also military purposes and the uncontrolled development of technology outside the framework of a long-range authentically humanistic plan often bring with them a threat to man’s natural environment, alienate him in his relations with nature and remove him from nature [...].”²⁰⁸

People should always remember that the whole world is the witness of God’s love, the everlasting love. Upon meditating the beauty of this world, which is visible to creatures, the human being eventually comes to understand He who the Creator: “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it; the world and all who live in it.” (Psalm 24:1) “May the glory of the Lord endure forever: May the Lord rejoice in his works.” (Psalm 104:31). Since the earth all that live in it belongs to God, we as human beings have been entrusted the stewardship to keep and preserve the earth and not plunder it at will.

Additionally, it is the commission of our Lord to us to evangelize all creatures:²⁰⁹ “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel message to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be save; but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15–16)

Therefore, our responsibility to conserve our environment is compulsory, since environment plays significant role in ordinary and spiritual life, because through environmental conservation the Almighty God receives glorification: “Animals are God’s creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. Thus, men owe them kindness.”²¹⁰

SCCs can be an opportunity of providing education for environmental conservation, even promotion of activities such as the planting of trees, use of renewable and sustainable energy, good planning of social activities (agriculture and animal keeping) considering the environment available. When possible, it is good to start special environment groups at SCC level, importantly is the Motto for conserving natural environment should never be stopped.²¹¹

Youths (boys and girls) have great role to prayer in SCCs. Their role to the community is of paramount importance for the future sustainability of the SCCs. They are not only members of the present Church but also, they are members of the future Church. Therefore, the youths should attend SCC-meetings without an excuse of any sort. Parents are urged to

²⁰⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio* (RM), § 15.

²⁰⁹ Cf. FRANCIS, *LAUDATO SI*, § 84.

²¹⁰ Catechism of Catholic Church Washington/DC ²2000, no. 2416.

²¹¹ Cf. BMKT, *Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK*, 63–64.

give their youths a piece of advice about the importance of SCCs in their lives. SCCs can help young men and women to grow spiritually and economically.²¹²

The leaders should visit their SCC-families to be able to understand their challenges, and they should not therefore wait the SCC-meetings to attend community members' challenges. A good leader is the one who sees the challenges of his/her people and present them to meeting-sessions without discrimination.

4.4 Conclusion

SCCs in Tanzania have important contributions in spiritual and social development of a human person and they were formed to serve that purpose. With regards to the spiritual contributions, SCCs have contributed to the spirit of reading and meditating the Word of God, the reception of the sacraments especially baptism, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, matrimony and rare cases matrimony.

SCCs in Tanzania promote priestly, religious and marriage vocations. Those who want to become priests or religious their spiritual and moral assessment begins at a SCC. The community members must approve spiritual and moral suitability of a candidate who would like to join priestly or religious formation. There is a special assessment form to be filled in a SCC to approve or disapprove a priestly or religious candidate depending on his or her spiritual or moral suitability. The SCC-members donate money to support the seminarians and religious candidates in their formation this has helped much to reduce the financial dependence on the overseas Church's organisation. SCCs have contributed to promoting the ideal Christian values such as love, mutual respect, obedience, piety and devotion. They have contributed to the growth of the missionary pontifical societies, inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism.

They are platforms where unity and harmony between Catholic Church and other religions and Christian denominations are promoted.

Regarding social development, SCCs in Tanzania are communities where funds for development of Church in Tanzania are raised through diocesan self-development fund to support various Church's projects and to cover various administrative costs which parishes or dioceses incur. They promote social communication, entrepreneurial projects and

²¹² Cf. Peter Romanus MLIMAKIFU, *Zijue JNNK*, Dar es Salaam 2020, 46. Translated in English language Understand SCCs.

activities, social services such as education and healthy, good politics and good governance and environmental conservation and protection.

CHAPTER FIVE

General Conclusion

5 Conclusion

The research has vividly shown that SCCs as pastoral priority in Tanzania have got huge contributions in spiritual and social development of the people in Tanzania. The major argument of this study is to explore the SCCs' contributions in spiritual and social development of the people in Tanzania.

To conduct the research chronologically and systematically, the researcher has formulated three research questions as follows: What is historical profile of SCCs? What are administrative structure and theology of SCCs in Tanzania? To what extent do SCCs contribute to spiritual and social development of the people in Tanzania?

In the conclusion, the historical profile of SCCs helps us in understanding the root causes for the SCCs in different continents or countries and it helps us to understand the different concepts used to refer to the Christian Communities in different continents and countries. In Latin America, Asia especially the Philippines, they are known as BECs in Europe and North America are called BCCs. BECs started in Brazil and Chile between 1943 and 1956. The reasons for the BECs were to stop oppression and injustices inflicted upon the poor by rich people and dictatorial regimes as well as to address the challenge of shortage of Church ministers (priests and religious).

The bishop's conference of Democratic Republic of Congo the former Zaire under leadership of his eminence Joseph Cardinal Malula the Archbishop of Kinshasa in the between 1971 and 1972 decided unanimously that the SCCs are pastoral options of the Church in DRC as response to President Mobutu's authentic movement who suppressed missionary institutions and activities.

The official inauguration of the SCCs in the AMECEA-region was in the year 1973. As soon as SCCs were declared as pastoral priorities, they came to spread throughout the AMECEA-region.

Between 1976 and 1977, the SCCs were officially launched and declared as pastoral priorities for the Church in Tanzania. The BMKT-bishops decided to introduce SCCs based on Tanzanian socialist context or Ujamaa villages. 1997, the National Canon Law Commission revised and amended the constitution of Laity Council to accommodate SCCs and in 1998, the new constitution for the Laity Council was passed. It requires that all

elections of the leaders in the Laity Councils should start from the grassroot levels (SCCs) then upwards to the national level.

Therefore, SCCs are so significant in pastoral activities and evangelization process in AMCEA-region and Tanzania. The year 2026, BMKT will celebrate 50-year jubilee anniversary since the official launching of SCCs in Tanzania.

The SCC-leaders are dominated by the spirit of service for the people rather than dominance and power, they are coordinators and animators. The leadership in SCCs is composed of the lay apostolate council, executive committee and financial committee. In SCCs, there are elected lay- leaders and non-elected clergy or religious leaders such bishops, priests, deacons and religious men and women that is leaders by the nature of the office they serve. The Lay apostolate council is the decision-making body; the executive committee is the policies implementing entity and financial committee is responsible for the funds of the community.

Each SCC has been named after the name of the saint who also becomes the patron or patroness of the community. Additionally, there is a celebration of a saint memorial in each community. SCCs have contributed to implementing the praxis of theology of the Church as family of God in Tanzania.

From the spiritual perspective, SCCs are viewed as platforms where family values such as love, forgiveness, unity and ideal Christian life are promoted. Family, Priestly and religious vocations are propagated through prayers and material support for the seminarians and religious candidates.

SCCs have promoted the new evangelization by promoting good deeds and condemning evil deeds in the modern world where people cherish evil. SCCs are Churches in the grassroot-levels where the Word of God, prayers and Sacraments are celebrated.

SCCs promote peace, justice and reconciliation among the community-members and in the Church as whole through prayers and by settling conflicts and misunderstands. In addition, SCCs are places where ecumenism and interreligious dialogue between Catholics, Christian denominations or sects and other religions take place to establish friendship and harmony.

They are forums for inculturation i.e. adapting Christian faith into local culture or integrating Christian teaching with the local traditions to make the faith more relevant and

understandable within a particular cultural context while maintaining integrity of the core message.²¹³

From the social development point of view: SCCs have engaged in various social development projects for the Church and for the society at large. For example, Diocesan Self-Reliant Development Fund is raised from the SCCs in all dioceses in Tanzania. Special health and educational programs such aid-kit, maternal-child services, HIV-AIDS education, raising funds to construct dispensaries and health centres and adult education are carried out in SCCs.

They advocate good politics and governance so that true social development can be achieved. SCCs promote the entrepreneurial projects such as small-scale agriculture, poultry projects, animal keeping etc. Many SCC-members have joined credit organisations to reduce if not alleviate poverty among themselves and for the society.

SCCs are forums for promoting the environmental conservation and protection. In this responsibility for environmental protection, they respond to the “LAUDATO SI” (our common earth) the encyclical letter of Pope Francis which urges all of us to protect our common earth.

The research has explored the significance of SCCs as pastoral priority in Tanzania i.e. the significance of SCCs consists in their contributions to the spiritual and social development. Therefore, this research can be used as document in referring to the contributions of SCCs in spiritual and social development.

5.1 Challenges of SCCs in Tanzania

There are leadership, economic and social challenges of the SCCs in Tanzania as follows:

5.1.1 Leadership Challenges

There are no pastoral plans to awaken and renew the catechetical instructions in SCCs. Some priests do not have a pastoral plan for a regular visit of SCCs in their respective parishes to awaken them spiritually.²¹⁴

²¹³ Cf. Charlotte NICKERSON, Simply Psychology. URL: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/acculturation-definition.html> (24, February 2024) [accessed: 17 October 2025].

²¹⁴ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 65.

Some leaders are weak in faith and in the sacramental life; they do not go to confession and do not receive Eucharist which is a bad example to the SCC-members. Some leaders are influenced by ideas of rich community members; regardless how constructive and effective these ideas might be and neglect good constructive ideas of the less privileged community-members.

Some bishops and priests do not consider SCCs as pastoral option as decided by AMECEA and BMKT so, they ignore the role of SCCs.

The failure of the Church leadership to integrate SCCs into the academic curriculum of priestly and religious formation. For SCCs to be deeply into hearts priests and religious men and women should be treated as one of the theological disciplines in the seminaries.

The failure of some parish priests and their parish pastoral councils to build strong SCCs thinking that they may turn into a potential threat to the Parish leadership.

Some leaders are egoistic and selfish and seek leadership in SCCs to fulfil their own personal interests. They consider leadership in SCC as something for personal gains so, they tend to favour their own families (nepotism) or own tribes (tribalism), our people from their own region (regionalism), the haves and non-haves.

After elections, many SCC-leaders do not have on-going catechesis on leadership and their responsibilities as leaders in the SCCs particularly parish-diocesan pastoral plans. When such a leadership catechesis misses, SCCs tend to weaken.

Some leaders have not even the basic knowledge of the Word of God, this brings a lot of challenges in leading SCCs. Some parishes and even a diocesan neglect planning the annual Gospel-texts which are supposed to be read and meditated by SCC-members.

5.1.2 Economic Challenges

From economic point of view, SCC-members complain that there are too many money-collections, and their SCCs have been turned into funding agencies instead of pastoral agencies. Fundraising programs have been prioritised at the expense of pastoral activities. Some SCC-members dodge their meetings because of too many collections.²¹⁵

Many SCC-members especially in urban and rural areas are poor to sustain their own needs leave alone making contributions for Church's projects and the needy.

²¹⁵ Cf. Joseph HEALEY, *Building the Church as Family of God*, 345.

Some leaders lack financial transparency and accountability to their members. Money after being collected, some leaders do not bother in giving quarterly, semi and annual financial reports to their SCC-members. When leaders misuse funds, sometimes they are not held accountable, or they do not want to resign.

Some priests spend much of their time talking and instructing about money-collection instead of Word of God.²¹⁶

5.1.3 Social Challenges

The real situation of Tanzania provides a serious social challenge of the widespread injustices, the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, the violation of the human rights by the powerful, corruption in public places, mismanagement and embezzlement of tax-payers money, and the serious outbreak of AIDS.²¹⁷ This new social context challenges previous pastoral activities and requires active involvement in the broader problems of the society not only on the local Church but also of SCCs. The truth remains that until now, SCCs in Tanzania have been more effective in prayer and mutual assistance among their members than in the sociopolitical life.²¹⁸

SCCs are formed on the Church as a communion or as the family of God cannot achieve the genuine goals without full participation of all their members. As family without a father is wounded so are SCCs without the presence of men and youth.²¹⁹

The attendance of men and youth SCCs is often poor. The participants SCC-meeting and activities are mainly women, children whereas most men and young men do not attend. Most men claim that they do not have time to attend SCC-meetings because they have other responsibilities and work and they are the providers for family's livelihood.²²⁰

Parish pastoral councils should understand that SCCs will not reflect the model of family if they are designed to gatherings of only women and children.²²¹

²¹⁶ Cf. BMKT, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK, 69.

²¹⁷ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON (eds.), SCCs Today, 103.

²¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

²¹⁹ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON (eds), SCCs Today, 101.

²²⁰ Cf. MLIMAKIFU, Zijue JNNK, 48.

²²¹ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON (eds.), SCCs Today, 102.

The Church in African is the young Church, because a great percentage of the population is sixteen to twenty- five years old. Yet small number of young people who participate in SCC-meetings.²²²

Most communities in most big cities so big and may become unmanageable. Large communities cannot provide a strong sense of fellowship and sense of belonging.²²³

The issues of superstition such as witchcraft has greatly affected the effectiveness, progress and efficiency of SCCs. Superstition breeds hatred, misunderstanding and conflicts in families, societies and communities.²²⁴

Then, lack of commitment in the community. Many people are not ready to sacrifice their efforts for the benefit of the community and Church in general, the way they sacrifice themselves for their own private activities, this kind of behaviour hinders the smooth growth of SCCs.

Many Christians do not live sacramental lives. In many SCCs, some SCC-members live with women without Church marriages (Chronic Fiancé). Additionally, there are those who do not participate in receiving sacrament of penance and holy Eucharist. Worse still, since the foundation of a SCC, it has never offered the vocation-youths to assist Church service such as catechists, religious and priests. This is a clear sign that a SCC does not grow spiritually. A clear sign of a spiritually matured SCC is its ability to attract many youths to the service of the Church and to advise them in making correct choices of their lives.²²⁵

Some Catholics have defected from Catholic Church to other Christian denominations where they only preach the gospels of success (being rich without hard work) and miracles of cure (without medication in hospitals). Many Pentecostals Churches have convinced people to believe that only in these Churches there are miracles. This has increased the rate of our Catholic faithful to convert into other Christian denominations.²²⁶

5.2 Recommendations

From this research paper based on the findings and the conclusion, some of the recommendations for the challenges affecting SCCs in Tanzania are as follows:

²²² Cf. *ibid.*, 102–103.

²²³ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON (eds.), *SCCs Today*, 101.

²²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 49.

²²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

²²⁶ Cf. BMKT, *Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji JNNK*, 71.

Regarding big communities especially in urban areas, it is recommended that communities can be divided into smaller ones to enable close fraternal and amicable relationships and interactions. In this way, SCCs become places of genuine communion where people gather to pray, listen the Word of God, and celebrate the sacraments. Moreover, in such community's life can be celebrated and death can be mourned; people get to know each other and can feel a sense of fraternity.²²⁷

Regarding social involvement, it is recommended that in community formation programs, it is necessary to do away with dichotomy between the spiritual dimension and secular world because the social concerns of the Church and promotion of justice and peace are constitutive dimensions of the mission of the Church.²²⁸

Priests should have clear pastoral plans SCCs, so that SCCs can be led according to a clear pastoral plan. There should be pastoral plan of making SCCs active by delivering basic religious and catechetical instructions in these communities.

Leaders should be strong and committed to their Christian faith and free from impediments which inhibit them from receiving holy Eucharist.

They should be able to visit their SCC-members regularly. This act motivates and inspires SCC-members to attend the SCC-meetings because their leaders do so in regular basis.

Priests should attend and listen all SCC-members regardless their social, political and economic status. They should avoid partiality and preferential treatment social and powerful people in SCCs, instead they should treat all people impartially.

Parish catechetical programmes should be able to prioritize SCCs. Catechesis should be on-going and up to date to cope with the needs of new generation in our SCCs.

The ongoing formation and religious education, especially in the field of the Bible study should be urgently promoted. Special attention must be paid also to family catechesis especially in this difficult time of cultural transition for the family. Social issues are still marginal in the life of SCCs. There is a serious need to create social awareness in the growing situation of poverty and injustice.²²⁹

SCCs will become more relevant in human involvement if they reflect on the human problems in the light of the Gospel. Now the exercise of the Bible sharing often remains

²²⁷ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON, *SCCs Today*, 100.

²²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 103.

²²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 105.

merely at the level of expression of one's thoughts or ideas, little else is done in addition to this. SCCs in Tanzania should be involved in projects that will guide them towards concrete prophetic actions.²³⁰ One of the key issues that should be taught and propagated is sharing. The concept of sharing is crucial for spiritual life of the faithful that expresses itself in sharing the Word of God, faith experiences, ways of living, and joys and sorrows. But it also refers to material aspects such as helping community members in times of sickness, funerals, and celebrations of sacraments. Sharing is needed also to fight against poverty, injustice, and corruption. This concept of sharing is strongly backed up by traditional value of solidarity but must be purified of its restrictions to one's clan or ethnic group.²³¹

In seminaries and religious formation houses SCCs should be a priority. SCCs should be part and parcel of priestly and religious formation. All seminarians, aspirants and formators must attend SCC-meetings. The SCCs as concepts should be integrated in seminaries' syllabi and curriculum.

To solve this challenge of the most men dodging SCC-meetings, they should spare precious time for both their private activities which provide their families a livelihood without for getting their spiritual exercises. In other words, men are supposed to attend SCC-meetings because in most dioceses SCC-meetings are held on Saturdays. On Saturdays most workers are on the weekend break, therefore most workers have excuse and grave reason of not attending SCC-meetings.²³² Additionally, SCC-members should ask themselves why some members do not participate voluntarily in the weekly meetings and what is to be done in order to attract them to attend the weekly meetings and participate in the life of the community. It has been noticed that SCCs tend to turn easily into simple prayer groups where the presence of women prevail.²³³

Youths (boys and girls) have great role to prayer in SCCs. Their role to the community is of paramount importance for the future sustainability of the SCCs. They are not only members of the present Church but also, they are members of the future Church, therefore, the youths should attend SCC-meetings without an excuse of any sort. Parents are urged to give their youths a piece of advice about the importance of SCCs in their lives. SCCs can

²³⁰ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON (eds.), *SCCs Today*, 105.

²³¹ Cf. *ibid.*

²³² Cf. MLIMAKIFU, *Zijue JNNK*, 51.

²³³ Cf. HEALEY and HINTON, *SCCs Today*, 102.

help young men and women to grow spiritually and economically.²³⁴ Furthermore, it should be remembered that young people initially gather for recreational and social activities and only later become involved in service and prayer. The community should create an environment in which an individual can find faith attractive and not forcibly imposed.²³⁵

The leaders should regularly visit SCC-families to be able to understand their challenges and should not therefore wait up until there is a scheduled meeting to attend the challenges that affect people. A good leader is the one who sees the challenges of his/her people and present them to meeting-sessions without discrimination.

To prevent people from dodging SCC- meetings as result of many fund collections, the annual collection for SCCs should be introduced and affordable minimum amount collection should be fixed.

SCCs should focus on integral development and holistic evangelization; this enables a total liberation out of spiritual and material poverty by encouraging people to pray and work hard to get out of poverty.

SCCs are pastoral priorities and vehicle of evangelization in the AMECEA region and Tanzania. To be able to discover, the spiritual and social contributions, pastoral challenges, weaknesses of SCCs in Tanzania, it is recommended that further research should be conducted. This research should be carried out to investigate and assess the contributions of SCCs in spiritual and social development in the lives of the people in Tanzania, and the pastoral challenges that affect the smooth growth of SCCs in Tanzania. Research on the small attendance of men and young people should be conducted to discern the reasons which prevent many men and youths from attending SCC-meetings and find proper ways to solve this challenge.

5.3 Pastoral Implications of the Life in SCCs for the Church in Tanzania

Despite many challenges facing SCCs, these basic communities are very important in the life of the Church as a whole. This can be learned from the following points that make SCC-meetings crucial for the life of its members.²³⁶

SCCs are platforms whereby relationships and the life of the community emphasized and promoted. When SCC-members help one another, they may be able to see the needy of

²³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

²³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 103.

²³⁶ Cf. KIMELI, SCCs. Membership and Participation, 48.

members outside the community and extend their helping hand to them. This kind of relationships fostered from these basic communities help to strengthen the Church. These kinds of relationships established in basic communities are much stronger than that of attending masses, events or activities in the main Church.²³⁷

They are places where new members or non-members are easily introduced to Church's life before they get to main congregation. These new SCC-members are introduced into a small group of their communities. There, they deepen their faith by learning how to pray, engaging in meditation, and studying the Bible. In some cases, they may also raise serious questions about their faith and grapple with them.²³⁸

SCCs also serve as a place where members support one another. Whenever a member is in trouble, someone is always there to help. The rest of the members can see financial, emotional, social and physical challenges and discern a better means to solve it. These communities become forums where members mutually help another.²³⁹

SCC-members practise and live out their Christian faith to the full rather than being mere hearers and listeners. They go out the whole week implementing the Word of God into their daily lives. They use Holy Scriptures to fight against the spiritual battles while praying for one another.²⁴⁰

They are suitable platforms to open and share. Acts of Apostles provide examples of how the early Church was a comfortable place in homes where community members easily opened, listened, learned and grew.²⁴¹

They are opportunities for edification of self and others. Bible sharing gives SCC-members more opportunities for spiritual food than they receive during a homily in the main Churches. After a sharing of the Word of God, they come to realise that they are also responsible to share it with others. When they share it to others, they help one another to seek solutions to their challenges.²⁴²

²³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

²³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

²³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁴² Cf. *ibid.*

They offer men an opportunity to learn while on their own. Unlike in the usual mass where they are passive in the Church, SCC-members take lead and sort out issues that affect them.²⁴³

5.4 Personal Learning Statement

Due to the impact of the SCCs as pastoral priorities in AMECEA region and in Tanzania in particular, I see that SCCs have brought the Church at the hearts of the Christians, and they now feel that the Church belongs to them and not only to clergy or religious men and women but also to the laity. Before the SCCs, all pastoral plans and their executions were done by the clergy or religious while laity became mere spectators of pastoral activities in the Church.

Since the Word of God is at the centre of SCC-meetings, many Christians can read, reflect and meditate the Word of God. The seven ways or steps of Bible learning has been introduced in all SCCs. The right and correct interpretation of the Scripture is done by priests, religious or biblical scholars. Additionally, the Word of God has transformed the lives of many Christians from bad to good life. Before the introduction of SCCs, people used to attend the Sunday masses and listen to the Sunday homilies, the homilies were not enough to equip people with biblical knowledge. Furthermore, during the SCC-meetings, the community members read and meditate the readings and the Gospel of the coming Sunday to understand the message of the Sunday and apply it into their daily lives.

The sacraments such as baptism, confession, Eucharist(masses) anointing of the sick can be celebrated in SCCs. People must go to parish-Churches to receive these sacraments. SCC-leaders and members know very well their members who are worthy to receive sacraments and who have canonical impediments to receive the sacraments of penance and Eucharist.

In Tanzania, the SCCs are pillars on which pastoral work evolves. If a sick needs the holy anointing, holy communion and penance the approval letter of the SCC-leaders about his or her legibility to spiritual service is a must. If there is a burial service, there are forms which must be filled by SCC-leaders to confirm that the deceased deserves the Christian burial.

In Tanzania, SCCs have created neighbourhoods of people who know each other and live together as communities in unity. When they meet in people's homes, they establish

²⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*

friendship among themselves and get to know each other. They share everything they possess be it material or spiritual.

SCCs have improved the spiritual and social life of the Christians and people in both urban and rural areas. Through SCCs, Christians can easily access spiritual and pastoral services such as holy masses, reception of the sacraments, reading and meditating the Word of God, praying together and burial services. Through SCCs, people in need can access the material support from the community members.

SCCs have played a significant role in the social development of its members and the entire population at large such as economic projects, helping its members to join credit organisations, promoting and advocating environmental conservation and protection, peace, reconciliation and peace advocacy.

Through SCC-historical profile, the lesson to be learnt is that the reasons for SCCs in Tanzania were mainly pastoral options, whereas in Latin America were struggles against social injustices and curb the problem of lack of priests and North America and Europe, BECs were simply welfare associations.

ABBREVIATION

DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
SCC	Small Christian Community
SCCs	Small Christian Communities
JNNK	Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo
BEC	Base or Basic Ecclesial Community
BECs	Base or Basic Ecclesial Communities
BCC	Base or Basic Christian Community
BCCs	Base or Basic Christian Communities
BMKT	Baraza la Maaskofu Katoliki Tanzania
CEBs	Comunidades Eclesiales de Base
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici
OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
AMECEA	Association of Member of Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
TAPRI	Tanzania Pastoral and Research Institute
PMS	Pontifical Mission Societies
HIV	Human Immunity Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrom
DRSF	Diocesan Self- Reliant Fund
VICOBA	Village Community Bank Organizations
SACCOS	Savings and Credit Co-operative Organizations
LG	Lumen Gentium

BIBLIOGRAPHY

COMMON SOURCES

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Washington/DC ²2000.

CODEX DES KANONISCHEN RECHTES, Lateinisch-deutsche Ausgabe mit Sachverzeichnis, Kevelaer ⁷2012.

The Holy Bible. Containing the Old and New Testaments. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Catholic Edition, Bangalore 2015.

PAPAL AND CHURCH DOCUMENTS

BARAZA LA MAASKOFU KATOLIKI TANZANIA, Uimarishaji na Ukuzaji wa Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo Nchini Tanzania Kuelekea Jubilei ya Miaka 50 na Baade, Dar es Salaam 2022.

BENEDICT XVI, Post- Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace Africae Munus (19 November 2011), in: AAS (2012) 239–314.

FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter on Our Common Home the Earth, LAUDATO SI (24 May 2015), Rome 2015.

JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa Ecclesia in Africa (14 September 1995), Rome 1995.

_____, Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, Redemptoris Missio (7 December 1990), Rome 1990.

_____, Encyclical on the Mission of the Redeemer Redemptoris Missio (7 December 1990), in ASS 83 (1991).

_____, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocations and Missions of the Lay faithful in the Church and in the World, Christifideles Laici (30 December 1988), Rome 1988.

JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter on Christianity and Social Progress Mater et Magistra (15 May 1961), Rome 1961.

PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, Evangelii Nuntiandi (EN) (8 December 1975), Rome 1975.

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium (21 November 1964), in: Vatican Council II. The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, ed. By Austin FLANNERY, Northport/NY-Dublin 1996.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- BAAWOBR, Richard, God's Word for Christian Communities, Guidelines for Facilitators, Nairobi 2013.
- CARNEY, James Jay, The People Bonded Together by Love. Eucharistic and SCCs in Africa, Modern Theology 2014.
- HEALEY, Joseph G. and HINTON, Jeanne (eds.), SCCs Today Capturing the New Moment, Limuru 2006.
- HEALEY, Joseph, Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa, Nairobi 2nd ed. 2020.
- HENNECKE, Christian (ed.) Kleine Christliche Gemeinschaften Verstehen. Ein Weg, Kirche mit den Menschen zu sein, Würzburg 2009.
- KILAINI, Method, SCCs, Sharing Tanzanian Pastoral Experience (Workshop), Mwanza Archdiocese: On the Theme SCCs Embrace the Word of God, 20 May 2014, Mwanza.
- KOTHARI, C. R., Research Methodology. Methods and Techniques, New Delhi 2004.
- KRÄMER, Klaus and VELLGUTH, Klaus (eds), SCCS. Fresh Stimulus for a Forward-Looking Church, Quezo 2013.
- MAGESA, Laurent, what is Not Sacred? African Spirituality, Nairobi 2014.
- MASSAWE, Leodegard, Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo (JNNK), Moshi (6th ed.) 2016.
- MCGARRY, Cecil, What Happened at African Synod?, Nairobi 1995.
- MLIMAKIFU, Romanus, Zijue Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo (JNNK), Dar es Salaam 2020.
- NKHANWA, Immanuel, Jumuiya Ndogondogo za Kikristo (JNNK) Shule ya Imani na Ujilishaji, Dar es Salaam 2020.
- O'HALLORAN, James, SCCs. A Pastoral Communion, New York 1996.
- WEBER, Franz and FUCHS, Ottmar, Intercultural Community Theology, Latin America, Africa and Asia, Ostfildern 2007.

DISSERTATIONS

- ASSENKA, Peter, 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 [Doctorate Thesis, Catholic University of Leuven], 2009.
- FANWONG, Jude, SCCs and Development in Cameroon [Master Thesis, Norwegian School of Theology, Spring], 2015.

- KAGABA, Peter, An Assessment of Challenges Facing the Catholic Pastoral Duty in Upholding in Tanzania [Master's Thesis University of Vienna], 2024.
- KALISA, Florian, Inadequate Active Participation of Men in SCCs. In Reference To our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish Kashambya-Bukoba Diocese [Diploma Paper, St. Paul's Senior Seminary Kipalapala, Tabora], 2021.
- MAMBOLEO, Paul M., The Ministry of SCCs at Mafia Parish in Tanzania and Encountered Islamic Pressure [Diploma Paper/Thesis St. Paul's Senior Seminary Kipalapala, Tabora], 2021.
- MBUGUA, Peter, Social Differences in SCCs. A Pastoral Challenge for Deeper Evangelization in Nairobi-West Deanery, Nairobi [Master Thesis, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi], 2012.
- NDOKEJI, Denis, Segregation Problem as Source of Disunity in SCCs. Case Study St. John the Apostle Parish, [Diploma Research Paper, St. Paul's Senior Seminary Kipalapala, Tabora] 2022.

INTERNET SOURCES

- ACHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON, Pontifical Mission Societies -Archdiocese Washington 2025. URL: <http://adw.org/about-us/who-we-are/missions/missions/pontificalmission-societies/#text=Under%20the%20jurisdiction%20of%20theown%20specific%20identity%20and%20goal> [accessed: 22 May 2025].
- BAGHRAMIAN, Maria and CARTER, Adam J., Relativism 2025 (10 January 2025). URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/relativism/> [accessed: 22 September 2025].
- CATHEDRAL OF ST. THOMAS MORE, Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi 2025. URL: <https://www.cathedralstm.org/about-our-catholic-faith/expressing-our-faith/treasury-catholic-prayers/prayer-st-francis-assisi-prayer-peace/> [accessed: 22 September 2025].
- CHEESEMAN, Nic (etal.), Ujamaa, in: A Dictionary of African Politics (2019). URL: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191828836.001.0001/acref-9780191828836-e-339> [accessed: 2 December 2025].
- FILM INDUSTRY IN TANZANIA, Tanzania Profile, URL: <https://www.spherex.com/blog/film-industry-in-tanzania-40f41> (4 September 2024) [accessed: 14 March 2026].
- KIMELI, Richard B., SCCs. Membership and Participation in Tenden Sub-Parish, Kapcherop in Eldoret Diocese, URL: <https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Small-Christian-Communities.pdf>. September 2020 [accessed: 12 March 2026].
- MAHIMBILI, Joseph R., SCCs are Pastoral Priority in Tanzania, URL: <https://repositorio.ucp.pt/bitstream/10400.14/38197/1/203035194.pdf> (2022) [accessed: 12, March 2022].
- MASSAWE, Jesca D. and MHANGWA, James Alex Youth Participation in SCCs. Insights and Recommendations. URL: <https://www.todaysamericancatholic.org/2024/02/youth>

-participation-in-small-christian-communities-in-tanzania/ [accessed: 04 November 2025].

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EAST AFRICA CO-OPERATION, Profile of Tanzania-2025 (22 September 2025). URL: <https://www.foreign.go.tz/tanzania/tanzania-country-profile> [accessed: 22 September 2025].

MZUMBE UNIVERSITY, Village Community Bank (VICOBA). URL: <https://eajahme.Mzumbe.ac.tz/index.php/eajahme/article/download/8/5/19#> [accessed: 13 March 2025].

NICKERSON, Charlotte Simply Psychology. URL: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/acculturation-definition.html> (24 February 2024) [accessed: 17 October 2025].

PRESTON, Charles (etal. eds.), Secularism, in: Britannica 2025. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/secularism> [accessed: 22 September 2025].

TANZANIA EMBASSY BEIJING, Politics. URL: <https://tanzaniaembassy.org.cn/en/tanzania-profile/politics.html> [accessed: 14 March 2026].

ABSTRACT

In general introduction, the study investigates the significance of SCCs in evangelization and pastoral activities and in making the Church in Tanzania local, relevant and practical. The researcher explains briefly how SCCs are rooted in Holy Scriptures both Old and New Testaments. In OT, SCCs are more explicit than in NT. In the creation story of Adam and Eve in the book of the Genesis 1:28, God acts as community of God the Triune. In the NT, Jesus founded early Christian community as reflected in Acts of the Apostles 2:42–47. It is from the early Christian Community; the present-day SCCs trace their origin.

In the statement of the problem, the study intends to investigate the content structure and leadership system of SCCs in Tanzania, spiritual and social contributions, pastoral challenges and a brief history of SCCs in Tanzania. To be able to conduct research systematically the researcher has formed the following research questions: What is historical profile of SCCs? What are administrative structure and theology of SCCs in Tanzania? To what extent have SCCs contributed to spiritual and social development in Tanzania?

In the research objectives, the study aims at making this research work effective, critical and measurable. This being the case, the researcher has divided his objectives as follows: To trace the historical profile of SCCs, to describe the administrative structure and theology of SCCs in Tanzania, to analyse spiritual and social development of SCCs in Tanzania.

Regarding the research and methodology, the researcher has not conducted any quantitative field research work but has only restricted himself to literature resources, both primary and secondary sources.

To able to understand the case study or the area in which the research work is restricted, the study has briefly explained Tanzania profile.

As regards the content and the structure of the research work, study has briefly described the entire research work, i.e. General introduction, chapter one, chapter two, chapter three, chapter four and general conclusion. This to enable the reader of the research work to have an overview of the research work.

Historically, SCCs trace their origin from early Christian Community in Acts (2:42–47) Furthermore, it is a concept evangelization that emerged from the theology of Vatican II Council, i.e. Church as family of God. In South and Latin American and the Philippines were known as Base Christian Communities (BECs). In North America and Europe were called Basic Christian Communities (BCCs). They began in Brazil and Chile between 1943 and

1956 as an answer/solution to the challenge of shortage of Church ministers and struggles against injustices posed by dictatorial regimes and rich people. In Africa South of Sahara, the situations in 1960s such as struggles for independence, volatile political, tribalism, civil wars, refugee problem and severe shortage priestly and religious vocations resulted into the establishment of SCCs. Therefore, SCCs became pastoral option or priority. Firstly, in early 1970s under Episcopal Conference of Democratic Republic of Congo then 1973, then Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern African (AMECEA) and under leadership of two German Fidei Donum priests Fr. Oswald Hirmer and Fritz Lobinger (later became Bishop of Aliwal) under Lumko-institute in South introduced ways of bringing the Bible to the heart of Christian community.

Despite successes of SCCs in Tanzania, there are also challenges affecting them as follows: leadership; one main leadership challenge is lack of pastoral strategic plan for SCCs. Economic; there are too much money-collections which turn SCCs into funding agencies instead of pastoral priorities. Social; most men and youths do not attend SCC-meetings.

ABSTRAKT

In der allgemeinen Einleitung untersucht die Studie die Bedeutung der SCCs („Small Christian Communities“ – „kleine christliche Gemeinden“) für die Evangelisierung und Seelsorge, sowie ihren Beitrag für die lokale, relevante und praxisnahe Gestaltung der Kirche in Tansania. Der Forscher erläutert kurz, wie die SCCs sowohl im Alten als auch im Neuen Testament der Heiligen Schrift verwurzelt sind. Im Alten Testament sind SCCs expliziter als im Neuen Testament. In der Schöpfungsgeschichte von Adam und Eva im Buch Genesis 1:28 handelt Gott als Gemeinschaft des dreieinigen Gottes. Im Neuen Testament gründet Jesus die frühe christliche Gemeinschaft, wie in der Apostelgeschichte 2:42–47 beschrieben. Aus dieser frühen christlichen Gemeinschaft gehen die heutigen SCCs hervor.

Ziel der Studie ist es, die inhaltliche Struktur und das Führungssystem der SCCs in Tansania sowie ihre spirituellen und sozialen Beiträge, pastorale Herausforderungen und die kurze Geschichte der SCCs in Tansania zu untersuchen. Um die Forschung systematisch durchführen zu können, hat der Forscher die folgenden Forschungsfragen formuliert: Wie sieht das historische Profil der SCCs aus? Wie sehen die Verwaltungsstruktur und Theologie der SCCs in Tansania aus? Inwieweit haben die SCCs zur spirituellen und sozialen Entwicklung in Tansania beigetragen?

In Bezug auf die Forschungsziele zielt die Studie darauf ab, diese Forschungsarbeit effektiv, kritisch und messbar zu gestalten. Vor diesem Hintergrund hat der Forscher seine Ziele wie folgt unterteilt: Nachverfolgung des historischen Profils der SCCs, Beschreibung der Verwaltungsstruktur und Theologie der SCCs in Tansania, Analyse der spirituellen und sozialen Entwicklung der SCCs in Tansania.

Was die Forschung und Methodik betrifft, so hat der Forscher keine quantitative Feldforschung durchgeführt, sondern sich ausschließlich auf Literaturquellen, sowohl Primär- als auch Sekundärquellen, beschränkt.

Um den Bereich, auf den sich die Forschungsarbeit beschränkt, bzw. die Fallstudie besser verstehen zu können, hat die Studie das Profil Tansanias kurz erläutert.

Was den Inhalt und die Struktur der Forschungsarbeit betrifft, so gibt die Studie einen kurzen Überblick über die gesamte Forschungsarbeit, d. h. die allgemeine Einführung, die Kapitel eins bis vier und die allgemeine Schlussfolgerung. Dies soll den Lesern einen Überblick über die Forschungsarbeit ermöglichen.

Historisch gesehen, gehen die SCCs auf die frühe christliche Gemeinde in der Apostelgeschichte (Apg 2,42–47) zurück. Darüber hinaus handelt es sich um ein Konzept der Evangelisierung, das aus der Theologie des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils hervorgegangen ist, bei der die Kirche als Familie Gottes verstanden wird. In Süd- und Lateinamerika sowie auf den Philippinen waren sie als Basisgemeinden (BECs) bekannt. In Nordamerika und Europa wurden sie als Basisgemeinden (BCCs) bezeichnet. Sie entstanden zwischen 1943 und 1956 in Brasilien und Chile als Antwort auf den Mangel an Geistlichen sowie den Kampf gegen Ungerechtigkeiten durch diktatorische Regime und wohlhabende Menschen. In Afrika, südlich der Sahara, führten die Umstände in den 1960er Jahren – darunter Unabhängigkeitskämpfe, politische Instabilität, Tribalismus, Bürgerkriege, Flüchtlingsprobleme sowie ein gravierender Mangel an Priestern und Ordensleuten – zur Gründung von SCCs. Daher wurden SCCs zu einer pastoralen Option bzw. Priorität. Anfang der 1970er Jahre führten zunächst die Bischofskonferenz der Demokratischen Republik Kongo und dann 1973 die Vereinigung der Bischofskonferenzen Ostafrikas (AMECEA) unter der Leitung der beiden deutschen Fidei-Donum-Priester Oswald Hirmer (später Bischof von Aliwal) und Fritz Lobinger im Rahmen des Lumko-Instituts im Süden Methoden ein, um die Bibel in den Mittelpunkt der christlichen Gemeinschaft zu rücken. Die tansanischen Bischöfe (BMKT) erklärten die SCCs 1976 offiziell zur pastoralen Priorität. Heute sind die SCCs in ganz Tansania verbreitet und spielen eine wichtige Rolle im Evangelisierungsprozess sowie bei der Umsetzung verschiedener pastoraler Aktivitäten.

Das Führungssystem der SCCs ist von einem Geist des Dienens geprägt. Ein Leiter ist ein Diener aller und kein Herrscher. Die gläubigen Laien übernehmen die Führungsrolle, während Geistliche und Ordensleute als normale Mitglieder am Leben der SCCs teilnehmen. In Tansania müssen sich Leiter des Laienapostolats auf Pfarr-, Diözesan- und nationaler Ebene zuerst als Leiter ihrer jeweiligen SCCs bewähren und von ihren Mitmitgliedern bestätigt werden, um sich um eine Führungsposition auf höherer Ebene bewerben zu können. Es handelt sich also um eine Beteiligung und Vertretung von unten nach oben (Bottom-up-Modell oder Basisebene). Eine SCC setzt sich administrativ aus dem Laienapostolat-Rat, dem Exekutivkomitee, dem Finanzkomitee und dem Schutzpatron bzw. der Schutzpatronin der Gemeinschaft zusammen.

Darüber hinaus haben die SCCs zur Umsetzung des Verständnisses der Kirche als Familie Gottes in Tansania beigetragen, da sie von christlichen Familien in der Nachbarschaft gebildet werden.

In Tansania haben die SCCs einen spirituellen und sozialen Beitrag geleistet. Der spirituelle Beitrag umfasst die Bildung idealer Familien, die Förderung von Priestern und Ordensleuten, die Unterstützung der Päpstlichen Missionswerke, die Neuevangelisierung, die Ökumene, den interreligiösen Dialog sowie Gerechtigkeit, Frieden, Versöhnung und Inkulturation. Der Beitrag zur sozialen Entwicklung umfasst das Diözesan-Selbsthilfeprogramm (DSF), soziale Dienste, soziale Kommunikation, Regierungsführung und Politik, Unternehmertum und Umwelt.

Trotz der Erfolge der SCCs in Tansania gibt es auch Herausforderungen, mit denen sie konfrontiert sind, wie beispielsweise Führungsprobleme. Eine der größten Führungsherausforderungen ist das Fehlen eines pastoralen Strategieplans für die SCCs. Wirtschaftlich: Es gibt zu viele Geldsammlungen, wodurch sich die Prioritäten der SCCs von pastoralen Aufgaben, zu denen einer Finanzierungsagentur verlagern. Ein soziales Problem ist, dass Männer und Jugendliche meist nicht an den SCC-Treffen teilnehmen.