

## Don Bosco House, 12 Clontarf Road, Dublin D03 V3P4, Ireland

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2 March 2017

Dear Friends,

Herewith the following items – *key to this entire e-mail on work in Africa and the World*:

1. Reports made to Misereor in Germany on work done in Africa on the promotion of Small Christian Communities from 1981 – present.
2. A Summary of the work done on the promotion of Small Christian Communities in Africa from 1981-1992.
3. A historical profile by various experts on Small Christian Communities in the world from 1940s to the year 2000 (with a report on the Communities following the Resurrection of Christ in the early Church, and some references that go beyond the year 2000).

I travelled extensively from January 1981 to just a few years ago. My work in Africa I had to report on annually to Misereor, otherwise the reports would never have been written. And I realise now the importance of writing about work actually being done on Small Christian Communities. *Hence the importance of any such task being recorded; where it exists it ought to be treasured.* It is like the Acts of the Apostles in the Church at its dawning. At my first workshop in Nairobi, January 1981, Cardinal Maurice Otunga asked me: 'What is the theology of these small communities, James?' 'I don't exactly know,' I replied but I will find out, which I did in dialogue with people in the groups during the years of travel that followed. The same process worked for the kingdom and spirituality. At the beginning I was sharing largely on the practical workings of the Small Christian Community: organisation, leadership, outreach, Bible reflection, meetings, social considerations and so forth. Incidentally, Cardinal Otunga's cause for canonisation has now been introduced. He was indeed a saintly man.

Obviously the methodology grew with the years. Chiefly it was *proactive*. I was largely invited by a diocese and would begin a workshop by speaking with the people about any experience they had of groups. Then I would share some thoughts with them for thirty minutes, after which I would allow them to work in small groups to consider the impact of what was said. This would be followed by a plenary session where they could discuss any points they wished to raise from the proceedings up to that juncture. This allowed me to orient the workshop along the lines emerging. There is no point in dealing with questions that are not being asked. We said the method was proactive. We didn't just talk about prayer, we did it. We just didn't speak about the Bible, we reflected together on it; our reflections weren't left in the air. We regarded it as important that we *did something practical* about what we had read. And so it went with justice, the environment, the kingdom of God and so forth. The method always used was *dialogue and consensus* which was the method used by Pope Francis in recent Synods. He once said that decisions that occur to him in the first instance are never the ultimate ones – they change and become nuanced when he consults the people of God. They become community decisions. This was the method used in the early Church up to the time of Constantine, who gave the bishops secular powers that, in short, led to the institutional model that

only commenced to be eroded by Vatican Council II. The Council placed the emphasis on *decentralisation* and not seeking solutions in Rome for matters that could be resolved locally (*subsidiarity*). This introduced a sea-change in the Church. There was great emphasis on the local situation, for instance, with the realisation that a South American format of Small Christian Communities may not be suitable for Africa, nor a Nairobi format for neighbouring Ngong.

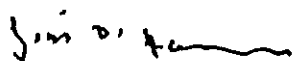
I always worked with local teams in the understanding that they would share what they had learned with those who were not able to be present. If folk were comfortable with English, French (thanks to Fr Jack McHugh CSSp) or Spanish, we used those languages, otherwise we used the local language and interpreters.

With time, people in Africa began to express an interest in what was happening in the rest of the world. Peter, leader of a Small Community in Ghana, said at the end of our workshop: 'We were like ants; we saw the little area around us, but you let us see we are part of the wider kingdom of God. What is happening in other parts of the world?' I had experienced the communities in Quito, Ecuador between Medellin and Puebla and with time would work all over the planet. I travelled to East and West Europe, all through Australia, India, China (Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China), Latin America, Africa, the United States and Canada etc. In the year 2000, I led a European ecumenical team to an International Meeting on Small Christian Communities in Bolivia. There I met experts from various parts of the world and asked them to write me accounts of the communities in their areas which they did generously. So I was able to share this information in Africa and elsewhere. Those who wrote were well known for their involvement with small communities: Fr José Marins (Latin America), Fr Robert Pelton (USA and Canada), Paul O'Bryan (Australia), Bishop Thomas Dabre (Pune, India and Asia), Revd Dr Ian M. Fraser (East and West Europe), and Roald Kverndal (People of the Sea). I wrote about SCCs in the early Church and Africa to which many Africans contributed. I actually also became acquainted with Buddhist communities in Thailand on the banks of the River Kwai just below the famous bridge. And further by Small Human Communities of varying religions in India. The Indian bishops encouraged Christians to form part of those Small Human Communities where they built a better world, or the kingdom, by constructing a village toilet. Or, perhaps, a tank to hold water in the dry season. The Christians of course already had their own small communities. Indian women were the driving force in those Small Human Communities. They were inspired by their own beliefs: Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and so on. Incidentally, the people whose names I have just mentioned above in Bolivia were conscious that that they were only writing about what they knew. There were lots of experiences of which they had no knowledge. Any accounts that may exist will, hopefully, be brought to light.

*Finally I believe it is important for persons engaged in this kind of endeavour to realise that it is God's work. In this way they will not be too buoyed up by success nor cast down by failure. Their endeavour must be to persevere in the task, convinced that it is the wave of the future. May God or Allah or whatever name you give to the Supreme Being bless all your work to build the kingdom. Was it not the priority with Jesus Christ who said: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and its justice and all other things will be added unto you'?*

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,



James O'Halloran, SDB

# **DOCUMENTS**

AFRICA (1-2)  
REST OF WORLD (3)

James O'Halloran SDB

**DOCUMENTATION CONNECTED WITH WORK IN AFRICA  
ON  
SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES  
RELATED CHRISTIAN YOUTH GROUPS  
AND  
JUSTICE AWARENESS**

**January 1981 – Present**

**James O'Halloran SDB  
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Ireland**

*DOCUMENT 1*

## Introduction

From 1981 up to the present I have been working in Africa. I was last there in 2006. Since then I have been in contact by e-mail and have sent books and materials. The following are reports which I sent from Africa regarding my work to my sponsors, Misereor of Germany. They go as far as 2003. I did some workshops after that, but I didn't have to report on them (they followed the usual pattern).

I commonly use the term 'Small Christian Community', but if I speak of 'Basic Christian Community' or 'Basic Ecclesial Community' or 'Cells', they are all the same thing – 'Church', the first step in the Church, Pope Francis and all recent Popes said that these should pour into parishes and society generally and help to form communities of communities. Actually, Basic Ecclesial Communities would be the most accurate theological term, but Small Christian Community is most commonly used. To a Brazilian gathering of Small Christian Communities with representatives from Argentina, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru in Juazeiro do Norte (2014), Pope Francis sent words of encouragement (The Tablet, 2014, pp 13-14). It was the first direct message from a Pope to the communities.

In a sense, I seem to have been meant for this work all my life. In Mill Street and Scaugh back in Kilkenny, Ireland, life was extremely communitarian. All doors were open and, in the absence of my own mother, Mrs Mackey or whoever, would check me if I didn't toe the line. Among the altar boys in the Augustinian Friary, I was forever organizing them in a species of youth club. Then I went to the Salesian College in Pallaskenry, Co Limerick and discovered that Don Bosco, the founder of the Salesians, had small Christian groups among his boys clubs, or oratories, whom he urged to be good by being cheerful and enjoying all sorts of games and activities. The family spirit was encouraged which attracted me to becoming a Salesian. As I progressed in the Salesian life, my love for this intimacy grew and I eventually ran into Small Christian Communities in Ecuador, South America. I worked there between 1970-80 and became hooked on the idea. From 1980 on I have devoted my life to them.

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## **SECTION 1.0**

**KENYA, ZAMBIA, SIERRA LEONE, 1981**

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

### A SHARING ON SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES WITH THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI

Since January 4<sup>th</sup>, I have been working quite intensively with Christian communities here in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. Following some 42 meetings, lasting an average of three hours each, and six seminars, three of which lasted entire days; and following countless conversations with priests, religious and lay people, I feel I have a reasonable picture of local realities. In this report, I share some friendly impressions with the local Church. Speaking for myself, this has been a most enriching experience; indeed I have received far more than I could hope to have given.

### ITINERARY

#### January 1981

Sunday 4	Arrive in Kenya 10.00am
	04.00pm Meeting with His Eminence Cardinal Otunga
Monday 5	10.00am Meeting with Cardinal and Deans at the Cathedral
	02.30pm Riara Centre – Meeting with community leaders
	05.30pm Ndumberi – Christian Community
Tuesday 6	02.30pm Githunguri – Christian Community Meeting
	Githunguri – Leaders’ Meeting
Wednesday 7	02.30pm Ikinu (Lioki) – Christian Community Meeting
	05.00pm Ikinu – Coordinators’ Meeting
Thursday 8	02.30pm Ngarariga – Tour of the area – <u>Don Bosco Community and Technical Centre</u>
Friday 9	02.30pm Riruta - Account of the Tanzanian Experience in Small Christian Community
	05.00pm Kangemi Community Meeting
Saturday 10	Meeting at Karen to discuss the proposed Training Centre for Small Christian Communities (known in Latin America as Basic Christian Communities or, alternatively, Basic Ecclesial Communities)
Sunday 11	9-6.00pm Zonal <u>Seminar</u> – Githunguri - 75 Leaders present
Tuesday 13	07.00pm Spiritan House Meeting
Wednesday 14	05.30pm Youth Meeting Thika (YCW)
Thursday 15	09.00am Slides on Small Christian Communities in Tanzania - Thika
	05.30pm Meeting of Leaders – St Malumba’s Parish – Thika
Friday 16	06.00pm Thika – Phase 7 – Small Christian Community Meeting



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Sunday 18	10.00am	Thika – Talk to congregation before Mass
	11.30am	Karen – Talk to congregation after Mass
	02.00pm	Giteba – Karen – community meeting
	05.00pm	Ngamda – Karen – community meeting (1 day)
Monday 19	09.30am	Nairobi East Deanery – Benedictine Monastery – Ruraka (3 hours)
	06.15pm	Kariobangi – Seminar for Leaders - 100 attend (3½ hours)
Tuesday 20	09.00am	Our Lady of Guadalupe, Ngong Road, Nairobi West Deanery
	05.30pm	Karen College (2 hours)
Wednesday 21	05.30pm	St Malumba's Parish, Thika, Seminar – 40 leaders present (3½ hours)
Thursday 22		Discussion with the Head of Thika Area and Sister Julie (2 hours)
	10.00am	Mangu Mission – Fr J Meade and Fr Samuel
	02.00pm	Fr M Drohan – Kenyatta University
	05.30pm	Kuwindi – Karen – community meeting (1 day)
Friday 23		Eastleigh and Mathare Valley – The Italian Sisters "Undugu" and Parking Boys.
	04.00pm	Visit to homes in Mathare Valley – Technical School – Fr Grois
	07.00pm - 10.00pm	Leaders Meeting – 50 present (1 day)
Sunday 25		Ngarariga – Zonal Seminar – 200 leaders present (1 day)
	08.00pm	Kenyatta University – Ecumenism (2 hours)
Monday 26	01.00pm	Makadara – Meeting with Bro Stan – Marianist Brothers (2 hours)
Wednesday 28	06.30pm	Kenyatta University – Youth Group (2 hours)
Thursday 29	05.30pm	Nairobi West Seminar – Cathedral – 40 leaders (4 hours)
Friday 30	05.30pm	Youth Meeting at the Cathedral Hall (informal)
Saturday 31		Don Bosco's Day – Free!

### February

Sunday 1		Riruta – Zone Seminar – 200 leaders present (1 day)
Mon 2-Tue 3		Writing report and taping
Wednesday 4	12.00pm	Deanery Meeting at Riara (2 hours)
Thursday 5		Dinner at Cardinal's and presentation of Report
Friday 6		Departure Zambia

### **POSITIVE POINTS OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

The Christian Communities that I have worked with have some excellent qualities. Foremost among these is their ecclesial sense: the strong realisation that they are Church. Needless to say the ecclesial character of Small Christian Communities is something that has been stressed by Pope VI and Pope John Paul II. The Small Christian Community is a cell of the universal Church and, as such, should reflect all its characteristics (faith, worship, love, service/mission, apostolic succession – ecclesiastical approval – elements of renewal....etc.)

I have also been impressed by the enthusiasm of the Christian communities. One gets the impression of a Church that is young and vibrant and, clearly the small community idea strikes a sympathetic chord in the culture of the people. It only remains to graft the Christian dimension of community on to this natural basis. A Christian community is not a cooperative which exists for the good of its members only but a group that is open to all, especially the needy, and loves without limits as Christ does.

### **SOME SUGGESTIONS**

In discussing the matter with priests involved, I (and they) have come to the conclusion that as presently constituted, good though the existing communities are, they do not fulfil all the requirements of Small Christian Community as envisaged by the Church. Commitment is lacking in many members and there is room for much greater social involvement. As of now, most, though not all, of the communities seem to be engaging in activities that are overly sacristy orientated (preparing the liturgy, teaching catechism, collecting etc.). All this is, of course, good. Yet evangelization addresses itself to the whole person and there is another, if you like, more pragmatic dimension; a dimension, however, that in terms of Redemption is totally valid. Jesus instituted the Eucharist, explained the scriptures and taught people to pray, yet, equally, he healed the sick, fed the hungry, gave sight to the blind, brought the dead back to life and raised his voice strongly in the cause of justice. These latter activities did not make Christ a mere social worker or political agitator. Far from it. They were part of the salvation which he brought to men. He came to redeem us from sin and all its effects, namely, hunger, sickness, misery, injustice, oppression, sinful structures etc. He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

Mother Theresa, for example, tends the destitute, yet she is much more than a simple social worker. She is deeply motivated by Christ. Martin Luther King strove to free his people as Moses did of old. King was no mere political agitator, but a man motivated by Christ.

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It is important that we see Redemption as the salvation of persons situated in time and place and not as the salvation of disembodied souls floating about in some vague stratosphere. It is also important that we preach a gospel that is related to our life situation and not some nebulous, innocuous gospel that touches nobody. One should not, of course, be foolhardy or, through immaturity, seek notoriety; a person can and ought to work sensibly for social justice. We cannot remain silent in the face of social evils; though to do so would in effect be to condone and be cast in the role of accomplices. A priest of God simply must preach the gospel, relate it to life and leave himself in the hands of the good God. If suffering comes his way, so be it. The Crucifix tells its own story. Woe is me, says Paul, if I do not preach the gospel.

Many fine documents have come from AMECEA. Is there not need for one on social justice perhaps? It might provide the priests and Christians of East Africa with an instrument to which they could appeal. Needless to say, such a document would not lack numerous papal and episcopal precedents.

The Church lost the solid workers of Europe in the last century through not saying anything relevant to or for them. It would be sad were something similar to happen here.

### **SMALL CORE GROUPS**

As I have already said, the existing communities are good and must be fostered and made still better. I feel, however, that there is need for another strata of small core groups to slowly grow up beneath the present communities; groups that will be composed, not of perfect or sinless people, but of committed people, people who truly love Christ and genuinely endeavor to live the gospel. Such core groups would then act as a ferment, promoting the same ideals in the existing communities and in greater parish and diocesan assemblies.

The priests readily admit that the idealism of many of those involved in the present communities is rather diluted and I also feel that they are somewhat too large to allow for full participation. Now the thinking that really makes a Small Christian Community is the commitment to Christ and the gospel. Where there has not been conversion, there can be no question of Small Christian Community. One encounters Christians all round who could grow still more in a core group; there is real potential.

### **SOME PROBLEMS**

I get the impression that in the communities' authority is not always seen in its true Christian perspective. Maybe it is even seen in terms of dominance.

There seems to exist the fear also of an unbridled enthusiasm in worship that could lead to dissident groups.

To counteract the incorrect view of authority, I have stressed the Christian notion of authority as service, emphasizing that the person who is chosen as coordinator (I do not like much the term chairman) is to see him or herself as the servant of all and resolve problems through dialogue and consensus and not by imperial mandate. Paul VI reminds us in Evangelica Testificatio that the will of God for a community is found through dialogue in the community. I have also urged that leaders be allowed to emerge slowly and not be chosen early on. This will entail the person who founds a Small Christian Community (priest, religious or lay) carrying the group for a considerable time until a suitable leader emerges.

In order to avoid dissident groups, I have emphasized the supremely important pastoral role of the priest as spiritual director, guide, friend, counsellor and resource person for the community. He is the one who will set the members on the right path should they deviate from it.

#### **CENTRE**

It would seem to me in the context of the above problems that the establishment of a centre for the formation of leaders is vital. Hence the initiative to establish such a centre at Riara is both timely and happy.

This centre should provide courses on the subject of Small Christian Community itself and on related matters (Bible, sound Christian doctrine for lay persons, social doctrine of the Church, catechetics, group dynamics, Christian leadership etc.). Formation for Small Christian Community must never cease, but be provided continuously and at various levels (beginners, mature people, advanced).

I should also hope that this centre could be a spiritual powerhouse where, like at Emmaus, Christ would be recognized in the breaking of bread and God who is Love be made visible in the sharing of the people there. And we should never separate Christ and Mary; Mary who is Mother of the Church and, consequently, Mother of the Small Christian Community. It would be beautiful if everyone who went to that centre, for whatever reason, were to come away spiritually renewed.

I have urged that the decor of this centre should not be lavish, but in all things reflect the simplicity of Christ; Christ who was not attached to material things, who was born in a stable and died on a cross, who during his earthly ministry did not have a place to lay down his head at night. To the communities I have summarised Christ as a person who lived simply and reached out to others, especially to those most in need. I strongly believe that the centre should reflect

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the image of Christ. It is the Church of the small community not the Church of the building that is becoming relevant; a Church built of people and not just stones. Perhaps the simple architecture and furnishing can reflect the Africa of ordinary people.

### **COORDINATOR**

The coordinator will obviously set the tone of the centre. Fr Paul Cunningham is a good choice. He is a man of long experience and at the same time renewed. He seems to enjoy good personal relationships with just about everybody and wins the goodwill of older men towards the idea of Small Christian Community. In addition, he appears to have great resilience and will not easily be overcome by difficulties.

Fr Paul has trudged round many many communities with me and shared in all the seminars. He has also done a considerable amount of reading and I have shared everything I know with him. Much then has been invested in him with the hope that he will be permitted to dedicate himself totally to this most important task; this priority of the East African Church. It is more than a full-time work in itself.

While it is essential that the centre has the know-how of Fr Paul to get started and become a going concern, it would be useful to be thinking of a suitable African priest to take over this role and it would be ideal if he and Fr Paul were to work together for some time.

### **CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP**

A most important spin-off from the centre and the Small Christian Communities will be a web of sound Christian leadership right across the Archdiocese. Given the political uncertainties of the days in which we live, I should have thought this highly desirable. A Church that leans heavily on expatriates is obviously in an extremely vulnerable position.

### **YOUTH**

Regarding youth and the Small Christian Community there is a problem. Particularly in rural areas it is hard for the young folk to have a voice in the communities. They are expected to listen and obey. It is of the essence of Small Christian Community, however, that all the members participate in the meetings and work. Christ speaks and works through us all. So I have encouraged the adults to share His Eminence's preoccupation for youth and incorporate

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them in their communities. In South America the basic Christian communities are attracting the young people to the Church, precisely because they are allowed to participate.

This does not preclude the youth having their own groups for their own needs and purposes (e.g., YCW, YCS etc.). Yet all Christian groups, whether youth or adult, must of their very nature be open and not inbred. In my meeting with Youth to discuss approaches to the youth apostolate (cf. Living Cells: Building Basic Christian Community by Jim O'Halloran SDB, Dominican Publications, St Saviour's, Dublin 1, Chapter Eight, p.52), I have insisted that it is their Christian duty to mend fences and foster good relations with adults. It has to be a twofold endeavor in which youth and adults strive for the same ends.

It was obvious from the same informal meeting that the youth apostolate in the Archdiocese has some serious problems that need sorting out. For the Church to alienate the young people is of course suicidal.

### **TEAMWORK**

I believe that the work of the Small Christian Community would be greatly facilitated if the pastoral agents in the various parishes were to meet regularly so as to coordinate their apostolate and work as a team. One gets the impression of many individuals doing Trojan and admirable work without much coordination. Needless to say, this can lead to inefficiency, frustration and serious oversights.

### **URBAN COMMUNITIES**

The communities seem to flourish in the rural areas and still more, perhaps, among the workers in the city. There is a problem in establishing them in urban areas where there is little sense of neighbourhood. I have suggested that the creation of constructors' groups and non-local communities may offer a solution here. It is not places that make a community, though most are, in fact, neighbourhood groups; it is commitment, so the members may come from different areas.

The constructors' group is comprised of people from strategic areas of society (education, politics, trade union, etc.) who, one hopes, will impregnate those areas with Christian values.

## **THEOLOGY**

Lastly, I understand that there is a desire locally that a theology of the Small Christian Community be written. This has deep implications for Christology and Ecclesiology and it may be too early to do this as yet. Archbishop Marcos McGrath of Panama, speaking of the Puebla documents at the Missionary Congress at Knock, 1979, said that the theological riches regarding Christ and the Church enshrined in these documents are found in the pastoral sections rather than in the parts devoted specifically to Christology and Ecclesiology. It must needs be so. The theological riches of the Small Christian Community are intermingled with the good earth of pastoral endeavor and have to be patiently mined by the speculative theologian.

As you will have realised from all the foregoing, the Small Christian Community is sustained by a rich theological tradition that has grown out of Vatican II and is not without its own precious insights, yet there is no sustained, deeply thought-out corpus of theology regarding Small Christian Community to date, which, as I have tried to explain, is understandable. This theology is currently being forged in dialectic with pastoral life and this is sound praxis. There is no point in trying to squeeze life into the confines of a theoretical system. Life and theory must mould one another. The busy Apostles acted – the Fathers reflected on the Acts. There is a Spanish proverb which sums it all up: Caminando se hace camino: It is by walking that we make a path.

## **ACTION OF THE SPIRIT**

It was impossible not to see the Spirit gently at work in the communities we have encountered here in Nairobi. This should be a source of encouragement. We must prudently anticipate and deal with problems and difficulties. They must not freeze us into inactivity though, for the greatest danger of all is to do nothing. Our faith in the Spirit ought to spur us to creative endeavour in the cause of Small Christian Community.

## **A LAST WORD**

Finally, let me say how privileged I feel and how grateful to His Eminence the Cardinal for having allowed me to share experiences with this Church during the past month. In all sincerity I can say that I have received far more than I have been able to give. I have been most impressed by the kindness and cooperation of the African priests I have met, by the openness of the various Deans and by the sacrifices of the many missionaries who have spent themselves in the service of this Church. Their white hairs explain much of the good that I have found here in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. And one of their greatest bequests is a tender devotion to the

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Mother of the Saviour and the Mother of the Church, Mary. May God and Mary bless and guide you all.

### **ADDENDUM**

I have encouraged all the communities to work effectively in the cause of Christian unity, so that Christ's prayer of his Father the night before he died, "that they may be one even as we are one" (Jn 17:11) may be realised. I also reminded them that ecumenism is not just a matter of striving for unity with other Christian churches; first of all it entails working for unity in our own Church.



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### A SHARING WITH THE DIOCESES OF NDOLA AND SOLWEZI, ZAMBIA ON SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY 1981

#### Itinerary

February	Friday 6 <sup>th</sup>	- Lusaka arrives
	Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup>	- Chifubu, meetings with 2 s.c.c.cs.
	Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup>	- Chifubu, assisted at three masses, spoke at two Chifubu, meeting with lay leaders.
	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup>	- Ndola met with Bishop de Jong
	Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup>	- Mindolo, meeting with Small Christian Community
	Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup>	- Kalalushi - Chibuluma, meeting with leaders
	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup>	- St Francis, Kalalushi, meeting with s.c.c. - Meeting with leaders
	Friday 13 <sup>th</sup>	- Mindolo, meeting with leaders
	Saturday 14 <sup>th</sup>	- Chimwemew, concelebrated youth Mass - Chibuluma, meeting with s.c.c. - Leaders meeting - Assisted at dramas of youth
	Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	- Chibuluma, two Masses - Leaders meeting - Assisted at dramas of youth
	Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	- Nchanga, meeting with C.I.C.M. Fathers - Meeting with leaders
	Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup>	- Nchanga, leaders meeting
	Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup>	- Nchanga, meeting with Mr Chita - Meeting with leaders
	Saturday 21 <sup>st</sup>	- Travel to <u>SOLWEZI</u> , met Bishop Potani, OFM. Conv. - Seminar with Youth
	Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	- Mass in Solwezi Cathedral - St Francis Mission, meeting with priests and religious
	Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup>	- Meeting with local chief - Meeting with youth group (handicrafts)

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	Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Meeting with priests</li><li>- Meeting with same youth group</li><li>- Seminar with diocesan development team, brief</li></ul>
	Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Travel</li></ul>
	Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Met Mr Foster, Head of Sikeji School, Methodist, Ikelenge</li><li>- Meeting with Fr Pio and Joe Makano</li></ul>
<b>March</b>	Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Mass at Ikelenge Outstation</li><li>- Seminar with Ikelenge leaders begins</li></ul>
	Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Seminar continues</li><li>- Public Mass and talk</li><li>- Meeting with Fr Pio</li><li>- Meeting with Joe Makano</li></ul>
	Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Seminar concludes</li><li>- Car meeting with Fr Pio</li><li>- Lwawu, meeting with seminarists</li></ul>
	Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Solwezi, animated holy hour</li></ul>
	Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Car meeting with Bro Tony Droll, Development Team and Youth Assessor, Solwezi</li></ul>
	Friday 6 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ndola, Francisdale Seminar for leaders</li></ul>
	Saturday 7 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Seminar continues</li></ul>
	Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Seminar continues – end of Visit</li></ul>

### NDOLA, PREAMBLE

One could not but be impressed and edified by the Church one finds in Ndola: the enthusiasm, the ecclesial sense of ordinary people, the lay involvement, the good ecumenical relationships, the dedicated priests..... I feel greatly enriched and extremely grateful for the experience.

### Small Christian Community

Regarding Small Christian Communities I hope that what I had to offer may have helped people to reflect upon their own situation and clarify their own ideas. I somehow feel that this was achieved, At the Francisdale Seminar in particular we really thrashed things out thoroughly. I believe that we are all agreed on certain essentials, like the need for commitment in and the ecclesial nature of the Small Christian Communities. After that (and this can hardly be stressed enough) one has to incarnate Small Christian Communities in one's own situation.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Regarding commitment: I think it is well to be aware, especially perhaps in Africa where Christianity is often in its youth or even infancy; that commitment is not something that happens with a blinding suddenness, rather it is a process, even a long-drawn out process after the initial decision for Christ has been made. The important thing is to be in via ("on the road towards").

The Small Christian Community is the "nuclear Church". Now being a nucleus has certain implications: it means that the s.c.c. must be salt and light for bigger Christian communities and even bigger human communities that may not be Christian at all. The term nucleus also suggests a reduced number.

I hope then that I succeeded, to some extent at least, in being a catalyst, where s.c.c. is concerned in Ndola. Certainly the good fathers gave me every help! For which I am grateful.

### **Additional Items**

For the rest, and there is hardly any need to labour the points, since they will be amply documented following the Francisdale Seminar, the importance of authority as service has been stressed (there is a proposal to the Bishop that the term Chairman be dropped for a Cibemba word meaning Helper, Coordinator, Facilitator); stressed also were the need for dialogue, the need to incorporate youth and to allow them, and women, to fully participate, the need for s.c.c.s to socially involve themselves in the problems of life in their countries and areas, the need to foster good relationships and cooperation with other groups (e.g., Actio, the Legion, the St Vincent de Paul Society.....)

### **CONCLUSION**

Once more I should like to say how grateful I am for the experience that I had in Ndola and for the hospitality that I received from so many wonderful priests. It would seem that there is a natural bent towards Small Christian Communities and liturgical celebration which should be availed of.

**SOLWEZI**

I should hope that the personnel of the Diocese of Solwezi may find the above sharing with Ndola helpful, at least in some respects. Indeed I feel that liaison between the two dioceses on the matter of Small Christian Communities could prove most beneficial.

In Solwezi, while there is interest in Small Christian Communities, there does not seem to have been as yet a clear option for it. It is a huge diocese and the few missionaries there have to work desperately hard "just to show the flag" as one of them put it to me. My own feeling is that Small Christian Communities would prove most helpful in just those straightened circumstances: with time and formation, it could provide a network of Christian leaders and apostles right across the vast diocese which would be of incalculable support to the harassed missionary. Such experiences as I had lead me believe that the potential is there.

Very many of the Christians in Solwezi are first generation, so what was said about commitment in the above sharing with Ndola is very applicable.

As in Ndola, I could only sincerely admire and be edified by the dedication of the Bishop, priests, religious and lay pastoral agents of the Solwezi Diocese. Sacrifices such as theirs cannot but produce fruit. And I must thank them for all their kindness.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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### **PROJECT 100-0/135**

#### **TRAINING PROGRAMME ON BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE AWARENESS IN AFRICA**

**January-March 1981**

I have just completed an intensive stint in Africa: Kenya (Archdiocese of Nairobi); Zambia (Dioceses of Ndola and Solwezi); and Sierra Leone (Archdiocese of Freetown and Bo, Dioceses of Makene and Kenema).

In the course of this journey I worked with people of every calling from University professors and students (Kenyatta University and Karen College in Nairobi and the National Pastoral Institute, Kenema, Sierra Leone) to ordinary people, quite often illiterate. I shared extensively with 7,000 people on the subjects of Basic Christian Community, Social Awareness and Youthwork and gave 20 exhaustive seminars to a total of 2,050 leaders (multipliers). What I have tried to do is to give them the tools to do the job themselves and there is every indication that this is precisely what is happening.

Above all, I plugged the dimension of Christian commitment to social justice; a dimension often, but not always of course, missing from the basic Christian communities in Africa. I also urged the bishops whom I met in East Africa to get out a document on social justice and I am hopeful that this will see the light of day in the not too distant future.

Finally, I helped plan a four-month, pan-African course to prepare native leaders (lay for the most part) to adequately coordinate Basic Christian Communities. The course will be held at the National Pastoral Centre, Kenema, Sierra Leone, during 1982.

### **Response**

I can only say that the response to the above was most gratifying. I suppose the proof of this is that I have been invited back to all the places where I have been. I have expressed my willingness to do so provided I am going back to assess what has been done – not just what they have to say. But in everyone there was the desire to proceed to action.

### **Projected Next Trip**

In late December, 1981, I hope to leave once more for Africa to do follow-up work in Kenya, Zambia and Sierra Leone and to break new ground in Liberia and Ghana. There is also an

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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institute in Lusaka which trains native sisters from all over Africa. I have not been there before but have been asked to go there next time.

### **Present Statement of Accounts**

Covering: Travel

Maintenance

Research Materials

Insurance and Visa

Office (communications)

Pocket Money

= £3,603.84

Local contribution to cover bed and board:

= DM 18,500

I would now like to request the second instalment of DM 13,000, your grant to enable me to realise the remaining part of the above project.

### **NB Change of Bank**

I have changed my account to:

Fr. James O'Halloran S.D.B.

c/o Allied Irish Bank

79 Lewisham High Street

London SE13

### **Appeal for Supplementary Funding**

Owing to rising costs of travel and just about everything else, I found I was in straitened circumstances towards the end of my trip. This meant that certain urgent invitations while I was in Africa could not be considered, and I was thrown somewhat on the generosity of local missionaries. This was no doubt also due in part to my own lack of experience of the costs involved in this sort of operation.

I AM CONSEQUENTLY APPEALING FOR A FURTHER £1,000 TO SUPPLEMENT MY CURRENT ALLOWANCE. £1,000 Sterling that is.

## **CONCLUSION**

Finally, I should very much like to thank MISEREOR for making my work possible. I have made it known to all my hosts that the work is in fact made possible by the generosity of MISEREOR.

# Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

## SIERRA LEONE 1981

Diocese	Country Venue (if relevant to identifying the target group)	Type of Session	Duration and Dates	Characterisation of Participating Group	Number of Participants	Proposed Type of Follow-up
Makeni	Makeni	Seminar	2 days Mar 20-21	Lay Leaders, Priests, Religious	40	
Makeni	Kamabai	Mass, Visit to Outstation	2 days Mar 21 Evening Mar 22	Christian Community	100	
Makeni	Makeni	Seminar	1 day Mar 23	Sisters	12	
Freetown	Kono	Seminar	Evening & Night Mar 24	10 Leaders	10	
Freetown	Kono	Day of Recollection	Mar 25	Xtian Community – 60	60	
Kenema	Kenema	Private with Fr Barry Rector, Pastoral Institute	2 hours Mar 26	-	2	
Bo	Bo	Seminar	2 days 27&28 Mar	Priests, Religious, Lay Leaders	50	
Bo	Bo	3 Masses & Homilies	3 hours Mar 29	Xtian Community	600	
Freetown	S. Leone	Leaders (Lay) Seminar	1½ days Mar 13&14	Lay Leaders	20	
Freetown	St Martin's Parish	Mass & Homily on B.C.C.	1 hour Mar 14	Parishioners	300	
Freetown		Private on B.C.C.	2 hours Mar 14	Archbishop Ganda	2	
Freetown	St Martin's Parish	Youth	3 hours Mar 15	Youth & Leaders	150	
Freetown	St Anthony's Parish	Sharing on B.C.C. – Social Justice etc.	3 hours Mar 17	Leaders	40	
Makeni	Visit: Makump	Sharing with Christian	2 days Mar 18-19	Lay Leaders and their People	500	



## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

	Sendugu Mayama Kantia Gbonko Timbo Maybeti Menthen	Communities on B.C.C. – Social Awareness etc.				
Bo	Bo	Sharing	4 hours	2 Xtian Comms	60	
Kenema	Damballa	Seminar	2 days Mar 31 - Apr 01	Lay Leaders Mn	15	
Kenema	Past. Institute	Planning	2 hours Apr 02	W. Frs Barry & McHugh,	3	
Kenema	Kenema	Seminar	2 days April 03&04	Priests, Religious Lay Leaders	30	
Kenema	Kenema	Mass & CYO – Youth	4 hours April 05	Xtian Comm	200	
Kenema	Kenema	Sharing	3 hours April 06	Xtian Comm	20	
Kenema	Pendembu	Seminar	2 days Apr 07&08	Priests, Religious & Lay Leaders	30	
Kenema	Mano Sewallo	Sharing	1 day April 09	Xtian Comm	100	
Kenema	P. Institute	Course	1 week Apr 13-17	Pan-African Leaders Group, Priests, Religious	35	
Kenema	P. Institute	Planning	3 hours April 22	Lay	3	
Freetown	Sant Anno House	Seminar	1 day Apr 25	Priests, Religious, Lay Leaders	20	

## **SECTION 2.0**

**SIERRA LEONE, LIBERIA, GHANA, ZIMBABWE, ZAMBIA,  
KENYA, 1982**

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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### AFRICAN WORK – MEMORANDUM

1982

This year I visited Sierra Leone (all three dioceses), Liberia (Cape Palmas), Ghana (Sunyani), Zimbabwe (Umtali), Zambia (Solwezi), Kenya (Nairobi). I had been to Sierra Leone, Zambia (Solwezi and Ndola), and Kenya (Nairobi) before. My brief was to promote Small Christian Communities (cf. Living Cells!), social awareness and the youth apostolate.

The tactics I employ are to visit missions and get to know the local Church at the grassroots and then meet with key figures (priests, religious and lay) for a thorough-going workshop. In all cases the local bishops did the seminar, which was a source of great consolation and encouragement for their co-workers. The footslogging round the missions is really tiring, but I now have a good knowledge of the African scene as a result of it. I don't think it will be necessary to the same extent in future.

Following on the workshops, I try to get people from the same parishes and missions to come up with practical steps so as to give effect to the seminar. They also fix an approximate date in which to return and evaluate their efforts. Very often, too, dioceses are disorganized in their apostolate and it is at these seminars that they agree on priorities. Come to think of it this happened in all the workshops.

As a result of the endeavours of the last two years, Small Christian Communities have started in Sierra Leone (all three dioceses), Ghana (Sunyani), Zambia (Solwezi); and they are starting in Liberia (Cape Palmas), and in Umtali (Zimbabwe). To the groups already existing in Nairobi and Ndola (Zambia) I should hope that my visit gave a fillip.

At the Pastoral Centre in Kenema, Sierra Leone, I helped to fashion a four months course/experience in Small Christian Communities. The first session was held this year and the participants came from 14 different countries, mostly African, yet some from as far afield as Papua New Guinea and Australia. The course or rather experience, which ended in May, was highly successful and these leaders (priests, religious and lay) have now gone back to build Christian Communities in their several countries. This particular endeavor was possibly unique in the Church today. Working in a team with Fr Jack MacHugh C.S.Sp., I helped with the first month of the project.

Also (and this is consoling from a Salesian viewpoint) the ten dioceses that I have been in contact with have now all made attention to the youth apostolate a top priority. In fact some of

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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those working for youth have told me that they are now being invited to work in parishes where previously they got nothing but cold shoulder.

Regarding social justice: there are some interesting initiatives. The Sixth General Assembly of SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar) held at Yaounde, the Cameroons, July '81, has got out a most significant document on justice (cf. Seeking Gospel Justice in Africa, Gaba Publications, Eldoret, Kenya). Next year, possibly in Zimbabwe, there is to be a Pan-African Conference on Justice with wide representation (clerics, lay, people of different denominations and religions). The project is financed by MISEREOR and the dioceses in which I work. You will understand of course that I am not claiming credit for all this, but, then I didn't do the cause any harm either!

Much of my time also goes in chatting with individuals about communities and indeed about all sorts of problems. Very often it is a case of putting some heart back into very depressed missionaries. The workshop has now so evolved that, in addition to everything else, it has become a renewal course for missionaries. And for every one seminar the team gives (I always try to work in a team), the participants give ten more.

Finally, I should like to thank the Provincial Council for having the vision to allow me to do this most relevant work. I realise that it may be a little mind-boggling for some, which is why I try to give an account of myself. And how often, in my travels, have I not heard the Salesians profusely thanked for this gesture towards the Church and the world. I should hope too that I may be helping vocations and opening up new pathways. Already I know there are people who, even in summer would welcome a Salesian to share with them on the youth apostolate. Anyway, thanks for giving me a unique opportunity in a not uneventful life!

The feedback has been universally consoling. Thank God and Mary H. of Cs!

## **SECTION 3.0**

**Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South  
Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, 1983**

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

**PROJECT 100-0/133**

**TRAINING PROGRAMME ON BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES, YOUTH GROUPS AND JUSTICE AWARENESS IN AFRICA**

**1983**

### **SIERRA LEONE**

#### **January**

- 10-21 Course at Pastoral Centre, Kenema, 30 participants (priests, religious, lay)  
24-31 Workshop, Makene – participants (priests, religious, lay)

#### **February**

- 01-06 Planned courses for 1984 (on SCC) and 1985 (for Youth Animators) at Kenema Pastoral Centre.  
07-11 Workshop, Freetown, 30 participants (priests, religious, lay)  
12 Freetown. Workshop for key Youth Leaders – 10 participants  
13 Workshop at Milton Margay Teachers Training College – 20 participants (trainee teachers and professors). Freetown.

### **THE GAMBIA**

#### **February**

- 14-17 Visiting the SCCs founded by an ex-Kenema student.  
18-20 Banjul. Workshop for teachers mainly – 35 participants.  
21-24 Mornings: Workshop for trainee catechists – 20 participants. (Banjul)  
Evenings (same venue): Workshop for Bishop (Cleary), priests, religious, lay missionaries – 35 participants.  
25-27 Banjul. Workshop. Mainly for lay persons – youth – 20 participants.  
29 Left Gambia for Zambia. Many travel problems. Journey took one week! While in Gambia made contact with Spanish Salesians.  
Called briefly at Nairobi and met some key SCC people.

### **ZAMBIA**

#### **March**

- 12-13 Session with teachers on Freire's educational method in Solwezi – 20 participants  
14-16 Visiting mission stations  
17-21 Youth Camp on Social Awareness – 40 participants – St Francis Mission, Solwezi  
21-23 Planning with the Bishop and Vicar General of Solwezi.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

- 25      Returned to Ireland for the Provincial Chapter of my order. Return journey to Zambia financed by the Salesian Order

### **April**

- 20      Return to Zambia  
24-28    Workshop in Solwezi for Bishop and 24 priests (Theology of Community, justice awareness, pastoral planning)  
30-May 2   Planned 1984 programme with Bishops de Jong and Potani

### **May**

- 02-05    Evaluated with ex-students of Kenema in the Copperbelt and Lusaka.  
Had the company of my Salesian confreres all the time I was in Zambia.

### **ZIMBABWE**

#### **Mutare**

- 11-14    Workshop given in a team with three ex-Kenema students – 40 participants (Bishop, priests, sisters, lay). An evaluation of the groups in operation.  
15      Workshop – 20 lay people  
16      Visited outstations  
17      Planned 1984 programme with the Bishop and development team.

### **SOUTHERN AFRICA**

- 20      Arrive Johannesburg  
20-31    Worked on SCC in Robertsham parish Joburg

### **June**

- 01      Meeting with Bishop Orsmund of Joburg. Planned workshop at diocesan level for March/April 1984.  
02      Motored to Cape Town  
03      Meeting with Cardinal McCann and Bishop Naidoo. As in Joburg, great enthusiasm for SCC.  
Planned workshop for Cape Town Archdiocese March/April 1984.  
04-05    Cape Town - Youth workshop on justice – multi-racial – 35 present  
07      Cape Town. Encounter with members of the Salesian Order – SCC and Pastoral Planning. 15 Present.  
08      Back to Joburg

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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- 12 Travelled to Swaziland. Set up workshop on SCC for March/April with Apostolic Administrator.
- 14 Encounter with Salesian community on SCC and Pastoral Planning – 20 present.
- 15 Return to Joburg.
- 16 Motored to Lesotho
- 17 Met Bishop and Major Religious Superiors  
Workshops planned at National level for March/April
- 18 Encounter with local Salesian community on Pastoral Planning and SCC – 5 present.
- 19 Returned to Joburg.
- 20-25 Pilot Workshop on SCC for Joburg in Robertsham and neighbouring parishes. 50 present. Multi-racial, inter-denominational.  
Meeting with Soweto priests – 12 present  
Meeting with Fr Lobinger of Lumko to plan team approach for the March/April Workshops.
- 26 Youth Encounter – 50 present – multi-racial, interdenominational
- 27 Further encounter with Bishop Orsmund to plan March/April encounter in detail.
- 28 Leave for Aachen to report to MISEREOR



## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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### **BRIEF ASSESSMENT**

This was my third and most extensive tour in Africa. In Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe I was retracing my steps, striving to confirm what had been done. In the Gambia and Southern Africa (I once worked there for nearly four years) I was breaking new ground.

#### **Strategy**

I have striven first of all to get a knowledge of Africa at the grassroots: East, West and South. This involved much arduous travel and interminable dialogue with ordinary people and groups. I am now satisfied, though, that my knowledge of realities is reasonably adequate. I then deal with multipliers (most of these too are simply ordinary people) and give them the tools with which to establish SCC. In the end of the day it is not a very complicated business. After an appropriate lapse of time I return and help them to evaluate their experience.

SCCs have way of multiplying, once started, which was why I was interested in doing something East, West and South. Gambia is getting towards the North – and I have my eye on the Sudan! Asia will have to wait a little longer!

By and large (there are occasional bumps) the reception and response I get are very good. It would seem that SCC is a reality whose time has come in Africa.

I always operate in a team. Jack McHugh CSSp., myself and sundry others join up in West Africa, and everywhere else I go, I try to assemble an ad hoc team. If one is talking about community, then it is essential that one practices it even in the giving of workshops.

I find that the people returning from Kenema and myself complement each other extremely well in our work. I create a context in which they can operate more effectively, and they reinforce what I do.

#### **Results**

It is early to talk of results. This is a time of sowing and the full fruits will only be apparent in the year 2000. But, thank God, everywhere I have been (Ndola, Nairobi, Solwezi, Mutare, Makene, Kenema, Freetown, the Gambia and Sunyani) groups are beginning and are involved in doing some encouraging things: cleaning up villages, drawing firewood and water for lepers, growing food for the old and the handicapped, working for better conditions in their factories etc. I would submit that the endeavour involved in people working on their own behalf and sharing

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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with one another is development in the very best sense. With an action/reflection/evaluation approach they will hopefully deepen their commitment and extend it into every avenue of life.

I have worked on a revised and extended edition of Living Cells with missionaries in mind. Largely the product of oft-tried workshops, it goes as near as desirable, I feel, to being a do-it-yourself manual.

Finally, I should like to thank Misereor for helping me to do one of the most worthwhile things that I have been able to do in my life – Project 100-0/133.

### **Itinerary for 1984**

**January:** Sierra Leone – Kenema Course and also Evaluation of their experiences of building SCC with ex-students of Kenema from Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Liberia.

**February:** Liberia or Ghana (Sunyani) for Evaluation. To be finalised as yet.

**March/April:** Southern Africa (South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland)

**April (end):** Zimbabwe (Mutare) – Evaluation of existing communities

**May:** Zambia – Evaluation in Solwezi and Ndola

**June:** Nairobi – to be finalized

**Note:** Regarding Equatorial Guinea, cf. enclosed letter.

## **SECTION 4.0**

**Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana and Gambia - have given generalised reports on these areas. Also a more specific report on Equatorial Guinea 1984-85.**

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12

13 August 1985

Mr Goldstein  
MISEREOR

Dear Rolf,

Greetings. Herewith report on work done and accounts for 1984-85. I thought I had better contact yourself, since we know each other and my brief is in any case Pan African. It seems to me from subsequent developments that last year's report may have been temporarily mislaid.

There are a few points I think I had better clarify:

- 1) My account to which all monies should be forwarded is:

Deposit Account  
Allied Irish Bank  
London

Budget calculations are always made in pounds sterling. For some reason or other money was forwarded this year to the Salesian account in Ireland. This caused some confusion.

- 2) In this year's budget, I have included the sum required for a stint in Ghana/Liberia. This may or may not materialize during the coming year. Bishop Owusu of Sunyani told me he would come back to me when he felt a visit could be most productive. So I shall leave it to MISEREOR to decide what to do regarding the funding for Liberia/Ghana, that is whether to grant it or hold it in abeyance pending a call from Bishop Owusu.
- 3) At the invitation of Archbishop Naidoo, I have been asked to work extensively throughout the Cape Town Archdiocese this autumn. I shall also be including Zimbabwe in the itinerary. As you see, I shall need the funds to do this work made available as soon

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
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as possible. I hope to commence in Cape Town in late October (or early November at the latest) and work through intensively to the end of December.

Thanking you ever so much,

I remain

Yours very sincerely

*James O'Halloran*

(Fr) James O'Halloran SDB

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**PROJECT 100-0/133 C**

**BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE AWARENESS**

**IN VARIOUS AFRICA COUNTRIES**

**1984-1985**

During the period since my last report (July 1984 – July 1985), I have worked in Ecuatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. I had also envisaged going to Ghana, but Bishop Owusu felt that my visit would be more helpful at a later date, when the basic Christian communities formed as a result of my first visit in 1982 will have acquired greater consistency.

As a result of the six extensive journeys that I have done in Africa, hundreds of new basic Christian communities have come into being, while hundreds of others have been animated to action and an active concern for justice. Those journeys have taken me to Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Gambia and Ecuatorial Guinea. I have been to most of these places on two, three or even four occasions in an effort to consolidate gains. I am aware that if basic Christian communities are rooted firmly at various strategic points in Africa, they will inevitably spread.

I should like to be able to give exact statistics regarding numbers of basic Christian communities, but it is quite impossible to come by such statistics in Africa. Most bishops are not quite aware how many basic communities there are in their dioceses.

### **THRUST OF WORK**

My thrust has been to seek to establish basic Christian communities where they did not exist and to animate them where they did. To do this I drew on my Latin American, First World and ongoing African experience. In going about my task, I have tried to do so in a spirit of genuine sharing. There was the concern to work with people and not for them. And by and large I have had good relationships with the bishops, priests and laity with whom I have come in contact.

Above all I have urged groups to be active in their neighbourhoods for the human betterment of those neighbourhoods. And the basic Christian communities do get readily involved in self-help projects (agricultural endeavours, primary health care, cooperatives etc.), though they do not get quite so easily involved in human rights and justice issues. I have tried to make them

aware that work for justice must be of primary concern. There is now evidence of a growing awareness of the need to strive for justice on the African continent.

#### **WORK ELSEWHERE**

Apart from the work I do in Africa, in order to enrich my vision, I also work with basic communities in the First World, notably England and Ireland and the USA. Only last week (August 5-8) I was invited to an interdenominational symposium on basic Christian communities with participants who hailed from all parts of the world. It was held at Oxford University and proved most enlightening.

There are basic Christian communities in Ireland that I personally guide and assess – just to keep my feet firmly on the ground.

#### **YOUTH AND WOMEN**

Youth and women have always been areas of major concern to me in Africa.

I work continually so that young people be fully incorporated in the basic communities (no easy matter in Africa) and that they also have their own youth groups. The course/experience for youth animators established at the Pastoral Centre, Kenema, Sierra Leone, is a great step forward in the effort to help young people in Africa.

I have also urged that women be allowed to play a full role in the basic Christian communities in Africa (again something not easily achieved on that continent).

#### **WRITING**

Finally, I have done a fair share of writing on the subject of basic Christian community: Living Cells (a book to help with the practical running of basic communities, now widely used and found helpful) and a number of magazine articles. This writing has been greatly facilitated by the African experience, for which I am indebted to MISEREOR.

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

### ITEMISED ACCOUNT OF WORK DONE

Equatorial Guinea – August 1984 (cf separate report).

Sierra Leone – January/February 1985

Date	Activity	Participants
Jan 05 – 07	Workshops/Freetown	Mornings – 15 priests and religious Afternoons – 30 lay leaders
Jan 10 – 11	Workshop/Bo	17 priests and religious
Jan 12 – 13	Workshop/Gerihun	40 leaders from villages (lay)
Jan 14 – 18	Workshop/Makeni	50 priests, religious, lay people
Jan 21 – 26	Input at Pan-African Youth Animators Course/Pastoral Centre/Kenema	30 priests, religious, lay persons
Jan 28 – 30	Workshop/Kenema Diocese	25 priests and sisters + bishop
Feb 01 -03	Meeting with Freetown Pastoral Team	6 priests, sister, lay persons

### Southern Africa

April 12 -15	Workshop/Daleside, Johannesburg	22 priests and religious
April 17 – 21	Workshop/Lesotho	12 priests and religious
April 23 – 24	Workshop/Rockbridge, Johannesburg	25 priests, religious, lay persons
April 26	Meeting/Hillbrow, Johannesburg	10 Witswaterand students in residential basic Christian Community
April 29 –May 02	Workshop/Capetown	22 missionaries, priests and religious
May 04 – 06	Workshop/Swaziland Met with bccs which had formed since last visit	20 priests and religious
May 08	Workshop/Maryvale, Johannesburg	6 priests
May 09 – 10	Workshop/Vereeniging, Johannesburg	15 priests, religious, lay persons
May 13-14	Workshop/Springs, Transvale	14 priests, religious, lay persons
May 15	Sharing/Kliptown	3 priests



## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

May 16	Workshop/Soweto	25 lay persons
May 17 - 18	Workshop/Soweto	50 youth leaders from all over Jhb. Diocese
May 19	Meeting with Justice and Peace Commission of the Johannesburg Diocese	
May 20 -21	Workshop/Cathedral Place, Johannesburg	12 lay persons
May 22	Krugersdorp, Transvaal (workshop)	20 priests, religious, lay persons
May 23	Talk/Jhb	60 sisters

### Zimbabwe

June 14 -16	Workshop/Mutare	30 youth
June 19 – 24	Various meetings with priests working in Harare and an evening with the Dominican Sisters	

### Notes:

- 1) Besides the rather official encounters listed above, there were countless informal get-togethers with individuals and groups everywhere I went.
- 2) The sessions in South Africa were attended by all ethnic groups i.e. the races were mixed.

## **Report on visit to Equatorial Guinea**

**August 1984**

**J O'Halloran and T Byrne**

**(Note:** This report already submitted by T Byrne. Included here to complete picture of year's work – July 1984 – July 1985)

### **Objectives of Visit**

We identified the following objectives of our visit: To mobilise the Christian leaders of the three dioceses of Malabo, Bata, Ebibeyin and share with them concepts related to basic Christian communities and integral development.

### **Preparation**

The visual aids which we used in our work were translated into Spanish. On arrival in Malabo we visited six villages and observed the conditions of life of the people in those villages.

We had two meetings with Archbishop Rafael M. Abuy Nze and his advisers. During these meetings we were asked to give a brief summary of the seminars. Archbishop Rafael told us he was satisfied that the content of our inputs at the seminar were acceptable to him. Bishop Anacleto Sima Ngua of Batha and Bishop Tdefso Obama Obono of Ebibeyin also requested us to give brief summaries of our inputs and they too said they were satisfied with them. It would seem that these bishops were concerned about orthodoxy. They were reassured when we pointed out the theological and ecclesiological basis for our views on basic Christian communities and integral development.

### **The Seminars**

The three seminars were attended by 178 lay people, priests and religious, (Malabo archdiocese 66; Bata diocese 60; Ebibeyin diocese 52). The seminar in Malabo diocese was held in the Major Seminary at Banaba. Fathers Ogostin Hernandez, Erginio Eteo and Angel Martin Nieto were helpful and organised the seminar in an efficient manner. The participants resided at the seminary. The participation was good during the five day seminar. The Archbishop attended the opening and closing ceremony. A summary of the seminars was given to him and representatives of the parish groups told him what they would do for the follow-up. The seminary in Bata was well prepared. Thirty people were present for the opening at 9.00am. Those who attended said that the seminar should be held in the afternoons and evenings. They

suggested that we should postpone the seminar until 4.00pm. We agreed to do so the sixty-nine people attended. Bishop Sima attended the closing ceremony and was given a summary of the seminar. Representatives of the parish groups reported on their plans for the follow-up. The seminar for Ebibeyin diocese was held at Nkwwe-Fulan. The visit of the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Donato Squiccarini, and a French visiting Prelate delayed the seminar – a delay of a day and a half. A total of 52 people participated in the seminar. Bishop Tbefonso apologized for his absence due to the Nuncio's visit.

### **Content of the Seminar**

The following topics were discussed during the seminars:

- Definition and description of basic Christian communities
- Theology of basic Christian communities
- Organisation of communities
- Commitment, with emphasis on justice
- The concept of integral development – definition and description from *Populorum Progressio*
- Paternalism and self-reliance – description and biblical reflection
- Developing people and not just things
- Basic principles for doing development work

### **Methodology**

The use of the dialogical method – the praxis approach. The participants were accustomed to the “banking” method. They showed an appreciation for the praxis method.

### **Misereor's Briefing**

We found the briefing given by Mr Nokolai and Mr Cordova very helpful. We also found the information they gave us to be accurate.

### **Evaluation**

We requested the participants to complete an evaluation questionnaire at the seminars in Malabo and Bata diocese. The following responses were given to the questions:

What is your impression of today's seminar?

91% replied “Very Good”, 9 % replied “Good”.

How could the seminar of today be improved?

2% replied "more time for discussion", 2% replied "too much discussion", 1% requested "a deepening of the topic", 2% requested "frequent brief summaries during the inputs".

Were the talks clear?

100% replied "yes".

Was there anything you didn't understand?

People usually said no but a few requested further explanations.

### **Follow-up**

The parish representatives decided to follow-up the seminars by exploring the possibilities of starting Small basic Christian Communities in their areas and by transforming existing groups into basic communities.

### **The Situation in Equatorial Guinea**

We found the situation more or less the same as described in Mr Cordova's report. However, food supplies have improved since the time of his visit. We would like to discuss the situation of Equatorial Guinea during our next visit to Misereor.

### **Gratitude**

We are most grateful to all the Sisters and Priests who afforded us cooperation and hospitality and in particular the Salesian Fathers who helped us to organise the seminars.

## **SECTION 5.0**

**Preparatory letters of Bishop Salvatore Colombo (martyred in 1989) for work in Somalia 1985-86. Letter of Fr Giorgio Bertin who succeeded him as Bishop. Plus account of work in Somalia, 1986.**

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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Letter to the Bishops in all the dioceses in which I had worked:

Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12

17 March 1985

Dear [                    ],

Greetings. As you may know, for the past four years I have been sharing on the subject of Small Christian Communities in Africa. Most of that work has been among ordinary Christians at the grassroots. During this time, at the request of various bishops, I have worked in twelve African countries, scattered all over that vast continent. Indeed I had the pleasure of working in your diocese and of making your acquaintance. This is why I make bold to share a pastoral concern of mine with you.

I have found that in Africa, because of cultural and traditional reasons – of which you will be well aware – it is often very difficult for young people to participate significantly in SCCs (Small Christian Communities). Of course some young folk are catered for in movements such as YCW and YCS, but in the end of the day, excellent though they may be, such movements reach only a small minority of young people.

My suggestion is that wherever there is an SCC of adults, it should have a Christian youth group alongside. And someone from the adult community could help, guide, and assess the young folk, but without imposing on them, allowing them as far as possible to direct things for themselves and run things for themselves. I think the Church in all parts of the world badly needs a whole network of neighbourhood Christian youth groups to parallel the SCCs. In some African cities, for example, I have found adults and young Christians working successfully together in the same SCCs. Which is wonderfully Christian.

Now even where it might be considered expedient to form Christian youth communities apart from adults, I would consider it necessary to bring the young fold together with the adults for a periodic meeting (one a month?). These joint meetings would be for sharing. In this way I would

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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hope to gradually break down barriers between young and old, so that eventually they can be fully involved in the same SCCs.

Furthermore, even where young people can be fully involved in SCCs, I would still recommend a network of neighbourhood Christian youth groups to parallel the SCCs. Then the youthful members of the parish could participate in the Christian youth groups and ALSO in the SCCs.

The reason why I would advocate their own network of groups for young Christians, even though they can fully participate in SCCs, is that young people have very special needs that are related to their time of life: needs, for example, related to career, citizenship, and preparation for marriage. These topics they require to thrash out in their own groups.

Please forgive me for presuming to share with you on this matter. My concern for the Church and for young people in this International Youth Year has impelled me to put my preoccupation to you, knowing full well your zeal for young folk. As we know, they form half the membership of the present Church and all the membership of the future Church.

May God bless you and all the good work you do.

Yours very sincerely in Christ Jesus,

*Jim O'Halloran SDB*

(Fr) Jim O'Halloran SDB

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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Correspondence with Bishop Salvatore Colombo ofm, Mogadiscio (martyred, 1989)

CURIA VESCOVILE  
Casella Postale 273  
MOGADISCIO (Somalia)

Mogadiscio, 25.11.1985

Fr James O'Halloran SDB  
Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Ireland

Dear Fr O'Halloran,

Unfortunately I could not meet you in Dublin. Thank you for your phone call to Milan. I must confess that my knowledge of English is limited and I could hardly hear you..... It was as if your voice was coming from as far as the stars.

When I came back to Mogadiscio I found your letter dated 1.10.85. Thank you for the gift of 100 copies of your book "Lining Cells". It will be surely very useful for the Seminar and for the formation of the little Christian Community in Mogadiscio.

A warm welcome to the young man from Crumlin! In any case I think it would be better for him to come after the Seminar, when you will be in a better position to judge about the opportunity of sending him. I have no doubt at all about his preparation. I only fear that our reality might disappoint him, and also discourage him: there is only one and a very small Somali-Catholic Community. We are of the opinion that his collaboration will be very helpful also for the Caritas work. I mean for our contacts with bush villages, where we want to have micro-projects of development.

I hope to see you soon in Mogadiscio. In the meanwhile I send you my best regards.

Yours in the Lord,

*Salvatore Colombo*  
Salvatore Colombo ofm



**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Bishop of Mogadiscio  
CURIA VESCOVILE  
Casella Postale 273  
MOGADISCIO (Somalia)

Mogadiscio, 17.12.1985

Fr James O'Halloran SDB  
Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Ireland

Dear Fr James O'Halloran,

With the present letter I invite you to come to Somalia in March 1986 in order to animate the workshop in Mogadiscio for a better presence in Somalia of our small Church, at the service of the Somali people.

During your stay the expense for boarding and lodging will be met by us.

Yours sincerely

*Salvatore Colombo*  
Salvatore Colomo ofm  
Bishop of Mogadiscio

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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CURIA VESCOVILE  
Casella Postale 273  
MOGADISCIO (Somalia)

Mogadiscio, 17.12.1985

Fr James O'Halloran SDB  
Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Ireland

Dear Fr James,

Thank you for your kind letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1985.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

For the proposed "Workshop on small Christian Communities" in Mogadiscio the date you proposed (March 10-16) is all right for us.

I would like to describe our situation in Mogadiscio with regard to "small Christian communities".

- a) The first thing to be said is that "by number" our Church in Somalia is really already a "small Christian community" (perhaps 2,000 christians, most of them expatriates), but living within the structures and mentality of bigger communities.
- b) There is a small number of Somali christians who have been baptized (perhaps 3 hundred). Those "attending" the Church may be about sixty. This group should have the priority attention for the workshop on small Christian communities, because these are permanent. The young in this first group are very few. Therefore we can not identify them with the SCC.
- c) The expatriate catholics in Mogadiscio may number to a thousand. Out of them about 300 attend the Church. They are distributed in two Italian speaking parishes and one English speaking community. Usually they do not stay in Somalia for more than 2 years.

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Even among these expatriates the young are very few. I think that we should study the way how the expatriates, in such a muslim society, could also benefit of the idea of SCC. So, we really welcome you. Your coming, I am sure, will be of benefit for our "small Church".

United in Christ

Yours

*Salvatore Colombo*

Salvatore Colomo, ofm  
Bishop of Mogadiscio

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Caritas Somalia  
P.O. Box 273  
Telefono 21084  
MOGADISCIO (Somalia)

3 April 1986

Our ref.: 100/H-37/86

Rev. Father James O'Halloran, SDB  
Salesian House  
St. Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Ireland

Dear Father O'Halloran,

I received your letter dated 2 January 1986 on March 13, 1986. Thank you for the New Year's greetings which as almost three months away when I got it. Now let me wish you love and peace for a joyous Easter Season.

I am sorry that you can not come soon to Mogadiscio. We are still willing to wait until you will find time for us from your already heavy schedule. Please do not hesitate to let me know whenever you will find that time when you can come.

Waiting for you in Mogadiscio.

Yours in Christ,

*Salvatore Colombo*

Bishop Salvatore Colomo, ofm

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Caritas Somalia  
P.O. Box 273  
Telefono 21084  
MOGADISCIO (Somalia)

14 June 1986

Our ref.: 100/H-68/86

Father Jim O'Halloran, SDB  
Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin, Dublin 12

Dear Father O'Halloran,

Thank you for your letter of June 2, 1986. I am very sorry to tell you that in October this year I will be in Rome for the Ad Limina visit and in Amman for the annual Episcopal Conference. Father Giorgio is in Hargeisa until the end of September. So it is not possible for us to hold a seminar even before October as there are only two priests left in Mogadiscio. Also I want to be present in the seminar too.

I am very sorry to hear about Leo Malone a marvelously apostolic and effective young man in his parish. As I have already told you before our situation is very different because it is not possible to organize more than one Small Christian Community here in Mogadiscio. I think that for the young lay missionary like Leo he must be involved in other activities.

Warmest regards to you and Father Tony Byrne.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Salvatore Colombo*

Msgr. Salvatore Colomo, ofm

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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CURIA VESCOVILE  
Casella Postale 273  
MOGADISCIO (Somalia)

Fr Jim O'Halloran  
Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12, Ireland

12/10/89

Dear Jim,

Thank you for your letter in which you expressed your condolences, sign of your Christian and human proximity, for the tragic death of our dear bishop Mgr. Salvatore Colombo.

Of course for us it has been a very difficult moment, and it continues to be. But it has been also a particular moment in which we felt really the "sense of belonging" to a great family. From the pope to very simple Christians we have received so many letters and the assurance of their prayers.

In fact never as in those difficult moments was our Church so united and so sure of living a particularly intense moment of grace and of witnessing. I myself am sure that it was from God that I have received the courage to continue without any fear: why after all should we fear those who kill the body; a whole fulfilling future expects those who trust in the Lord.

We all well remember you and the seminar you directed during the month you remained with us. We are still thankful to you, and of course in a special way to Leo Malone (please greet him) who stayed for a year with us and with the bishop.

For the time being, until Rome appoints a new bishop I am the diocesan administrator. Remember me in your prayers in order to be wise enough, not to want too much, and not to get tired too quickly.

Greetings from my confreres and the little community whom you met here and inspired.

Yours in Christ

*Giorgio Bertin*

Fr. Giorgio Bertin

Bishop (he became the new bishop to succeed Bishop Colombo)

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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REPORT FOR MISEREOR ON THE WORK IN SOMALIA (1 – 8)  
'LOCAL' BBC WORK (9)  
1986

Project No: 100-0 / 133D

Work Report 1986

Rev James O'Halloran

### November

31 Oct – 02 Nov	Travel
4 – 7	Planning Session with Bishop, priests, sisters, lay-persons
8 – 9	Parish Animation
10 – 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Visit to Baanadir Hospital and child feeding-scheme</li><li>- Visit to Forlanini Hospital</li><li>- Visit to Military Hospital</li><li>- Visit to Gandershe Afforestation Schemes</li><li>- Exploration of Local realities with a variety of key people</li></ul>
15 – 16	Animation of Parishes
17 – 22	WORKSHOP – 60 participants (Bishop, priests, religious, lay-persons. The local preparatory work had been done extremely well thereby contributing greatly to the success of the workshop. As a result of the workshop, three new Small Christian Communities were launched (one English-speaking, one Somali-speaking of all ages, and one Somali-speaking youth community) and one existing Italian-speaking community was re-vamped.
22 – 23	Animation of parishes and follow-up meeting to workshop to launch English-speaking Small Christian Community.
24	Follow-up session to launch Somali-speaking Small Christian Community (Youth).

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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- 27 Follow-up meeting to launch a Somali-speaking Small Christian Community of all ages.
- 28 Visit to hospital project at CORIOLY and visit to nearby agricultural project and refugee camp.
- 29 Accompanied the Bishop to meeting with Dr Karani, Director of Development Projects.
- 29 – 30 Animation of parishes and meeting to re-vamp Italian-speaking Small Christian Community.
- December 1 Departure.

**NOTE:** The Misereor-sponsored volunteer, Leo Malone, accompanied me to Somalia and has remained behind for the year allowed him by The Irish Times Ltd., where he is an employee. He is active in a number of development projects and is the assessor of the newly-formed Small Christian Communities. He reports that all is going well. After an enthusiastic start, the Somali-speaking communities faltered somewhat, but picked up again and are now progressing steadily. Leo envisages that by the time he leaves all the groups shall have their own coordinators in place. I know he was also looking about for a likely person to step in on the development projects. This, of course, is very much a matter for the Bishop, but it seems the possibilities are there and could be tentatively sussed out.



## **SECTION 6.0**

**South Africa, Cape Town, 1986**

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**PROJECT 100-0/133 D  
BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES, CHRISTIAN YOUTH GROUP AND  
AND JUSTICE AWARENESS**

**South Africa  
Archdiocese of Cape Town  
January – March 1986**

**CONTENTS**

- Letter to His Grace Archbishop Stephen Naidoo of Cape Town
- Itemised Account of Work Done
- Points made in an Address to the Pastoral Council of the Archdiocese of Cape Town
- Letter from the Pastoral Council
- Some Observations on the General Situation in South Africa

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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Salesian Institute

13 March 1986

Your Grace,

Herewith an account of the work done on Small Christian Communities (SCCs), Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness in the Archdiocese of Cape Town, January – March 1986.

I hope the seeds of these groups are now firmly sown. Several priests together with their people are already taking practical steps to implement them – striving to make ever more real the vision of Church as “communio”.

I should now like to offer the following suggestions for your consideration:

- that Your Grace give the endeavour strong encouragement and support;
- and that a dual strategy be adopted:
  - 1) the fostering of SCCs and CYGs,
  - 2) and paying great attention to FORMATION in these groups – this formation has to be ongoing, begin with the establishment of a group and continue all through its existence.

To this end a Pastoral Centre would prove invaluable. Nothing elaborate or expensive is called for – just some rooms and resource persons. A few people could coordinate the Centre, and then tap resource persons in the Archdiocese to give short evening and weekend courses. The subject matter could be: Small Christian Communities and Christian Youth Groups, Bible, Christian Doctrine, Justice and Peace, Social Teaching of the Church, Catechetics, Integral Development, Leadership Training, Group Dynamics, Counselling.... From such courses competent animators of SCCs and CYGs, catechists, ministers of the Word, ministers of the Eucharist etc., would be fed back into the parishes and enormously enrich the lives of those parishes. They would also be a godsend to hard-pressed parish priests.

As well as people going to such a Centre, there would be outreach to the parishes coordinated from the Centre. To have this outreach is important for the life of the Centre. It would involve sending teams out to the parishes to conduct courses and workshops. One advantage of sending out teams is that ‘in situ’ you can reach an enormous number of people. And forming

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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entire SCCs and CYGs rather than singling out persons is also more effective, since the leadership changes in these groups.

If therefore one selects some leaders for training, it should always be with the understanding that they (the planned leaders) shall go back and share their knowledge in communities and help the natural leaders in those communities to emerge. True leaders emerge and are then called upon by their people to serve.

Perhaps existing groups such as the Youth Commission, Peace and Justice, the Catechetical Commission, the Pastoral Council.... could be tapped to send teams to the parishes to conduct courses and workshops. They seem to feel somewhat lost at the moment for lack of grassroots contact.

Finally, the bishops at the recent Synod spoke of the need to make Vatican II known. Fostering SCCs and CYGs is an excellent way of doing this, because they make real the great insights of the Council.

For the rest, I should like to thank Your Grace for having me and for your generous donation towards my keep. Just to add that my work was made possible by MISEREOR and my Provincial – I know you will want to acknowledge this, so herewith the relevant addresses:

Fr J Harrington SDB  
Provincial  
Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 2 IRELAND

and

MISEREOR  
Attn Mr Goldstein  
Mozartstrasse 9  
Postface 1450  
5100 Aachen  
WEST GERMANY

Yours in Christo

*James O'Halloran SDB*

James o'Halloran SDB

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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### WORK DONE ON SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES (SCCs), CHRISTIAN YOUTH GROUPS (CYGs) AND JUSTICE AWARENESS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CAPE TOWN      January – March 1986

- Jan    15    Arrival. Brief sessions with Salesian superiors
- 17    Meeting (to plan workshop) with parish priest and assistant of Hanover Park parish.
- 18-19   Spoke on SCCs and CYGs at all the Masses in Hanover Park parish.
- 20    Meeting (to plan workshop) with parish priest of Lentegour, Mitchell's Plain
- 21    Session with an existing SCC, Lentegour, Mitchell's Plain, 15 present (lay persons)
- 22    A further preparatory meeting with the parish priest of Hanover Park
- Meeting with the representative of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council to plan session.
- 25-26   Spoke at all the Masses in Lentegour parish, Mitchell's Plain
- 28    Meeting (to plan workshop) with the Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese.
- Session with existing SCC in Lansdowne parish, 15 members (lay persons)
- 29    Morning:    Workshop (1<sup>st</sup> stage) Lentegour parish, Mitchell's Plain, 50 participants (48 lay, 1 sister and parish priest).
- Evening:    Workshop (1<sup>st</sup> stage) Hanover Park, 42 present (40 lay persons, parish priest and 1 religious brother).
- 30    Morning:    Meeting (to plan workshop) with members of the Diocesan Youth Commission.
- Workshop (1<sup>st</sup> stage) Athlone, Our Lady of the Angels Parish, 42 participants (youth).

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

- Feb 01-02 Spoke at all the Masses in Our Lady of the Angels Parish, Athlone
- 05 Workshop (2<sup>nd</sup> stage) Hanover Park parish, 22 participants (20 lay, parish priest and religious brother)
- 08 Workshop (2<sup>nd</sup> stage), Athlone parish, 45 participants (lay youth/adults), parish priest absent – mother passed away in Ireland.
- Feb 09 Spoke at all the Masses at St Timothy's Parish, Tafelsig, Mitchell's Plain.
- 10 Workshop (1<sup>st</sup> stage) St Timothy's Parish, Tafelsig, Mitchell's Plain, 60 present (lay persons, 2 sisters and parish priest)
- 11 Workshop (2<sup>nd</sup> stage), St Timothy's Parish, Tafelsig, 120 present (lay persons, youth/adults, 2 sisters and parish priest)
- 12 Workshop (3<sup>rd</sup> stage), St Timothy's Parish, Tafelsig, 50 present (priest, 2 sisters and lay persons)
- 14 Session (to plan workshop) with a representative of the Council for Religious  
Session with representative of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council
- 15 Workshop for Religious, 30 present
- 16 Workshop for Youth from the parishes of the Archdiocese, St Mary's Cathedral Hall, 50 present (Archdiocesan Youth Commission, youth)
- 17 Meeting to plan follow-up with parish priest of Athlone parish  
Meeting (to plan Workshop) with representatives of the Pastoral Council
- 19 Workshop (3<sup>rd</sup> stage) Hanover Park parish, 22 participant (lay persons, parish priest, religious brother)
- 20 Meeting (to plan Workshop) with representatives of the Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission
- 22 Morning: Session with the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, Sea Point, 120 present. (His Grace the Archbishop, Stephen Naidoo, priests, religious, lay persons)  
Evening: Workshop, Matroosfontein parish, 25 participants (priest, 2 sisters, lay persons)
- 23 Session with existing SCC, Our Lady of the Angels parish, Athlone, 8 participants (parish priest, lay persons)

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

- 24 Meeting (to plan Workshop) with representatives of the Justice and Peace Commission
- 25 Meeting (to plan Workshop) with TEAM (The Ecumenical Action Movement)
- 26 Morning: Workshop (2<sup>nd</sup> stage) Lentaguer parish, 30 present (parish priest, sister, lay)  
Evening: Workshop (1<sup>st</sup> stage) Lentaguer parish, 40 present (parish priest, 2 sisters, lay persons)
- Mar 01 Workshop, Justice and Peace Commission, Holy Family parish, Grassy Park, 14 present (2 sisters, lay persons)
- 02 Workshop, St Andrew's parish, Ocean View, Kommetjie, 65 present (priest, 3 sisters, lay persons – large youth representation)
- 05 Workshop (Stages 2 and 3), Lentageur, 35 present (parish priest, sister, lay persons)
- 08 Workshop, Salesian Cooperators, 14 present (1 priest, 6 sisters, 7 lay persons)
- 09 Workshop, St Matthew's parish, Bonteheuwel, 120 present (parish priest, lay persons – large youth representation)
- 10 Workshop, Lansdowne parish, 40 present (assistant priest, lay persons) also planning session with parish priest of Guguletu
- 11 Morning: Meeting to share ideas with representatives of the Justice and Peace Commission  
Evening: Workshop, Lansdowne parish, 40 present (3 priests, lay persons)
- 12 Morning: Meeting to discuss follow-up to workshop with diocesan youth with members of the Diocesan Youth Commission.  
Evening: Workshop, Lansdowne parish, 40 participants (3 priests, lay person)
- 15 Workshop, St Saviour's Anglican Church, Claremont, with Executive of TEAM (The Ecumenical Action Movement), 6 participants
- 16 Preached at Mass and conducted Workshop for priests and leaders of Guguletu (St Gabriel's) parish, 20 participants

### SUMMARY:

Meetings:	20
Sunday Masses:	18
Workshops	19

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Number of people reached: 7,000 approx.  
(Masses, Meetings, Workshops)

Number who did Workshops: 836

There were many casual encounters with people where SCCs and CYGs were discussed which are not included here.

James O'Halloran SDB  
16 March 1986

### **ADDENDUM**

Mar 22 – Apr 05      Provincial Chapter of the Dublin Province of the Salesians: Ireland, Southern Africa (Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa) and Malta

The final draft of a pastoral plan which took three years to elaborate was approved. I was overall coordinator of the planning. Elected representatives of our 60 Southern African missionaries were present. Strong priorities on justice and SCCs emerged in the plan (cf. enclosure giving the Southern Africa Plan). In fact the Conference of Major Religious Superiors in Ireland have adopted some of the objectives and targets from the plan, notably those on justice. The Chapter was held at Ballinakill, Ireland.



## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**POINTS MADE IN ADDRESSING THE PASTORAL COUNCIL OF THE CAPE TOWN ARCHDIOCESE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ARCHBISHOP STEPHEN NAIDOO**  
**Saturday 24 February 1986**

**THEME:** Communication through Small Christian Community

1. I would recommend a network of SCCs at grassroots so that

- your parishes become communities of communities
- the diocese a community of parishes
- the Church be seen as 'communion' – the people of God

The recent Synod of Bishops, Rome 1985 said:

Since the Church is a communion, the new Basic Communities as they are called are a true expression of communion and an instrument for fashioning a more profound communion, provided they live in genuine unity with the Church. They are thus a source of great hope in the life of the Church.

2. Community is the foundation that must be there before you can do anything about the things which concern you:

- justice and peace
- law and order
- integral development
- action for justice
- evangelization and catechesis

3. Justice has to be a major concern of the Church entering her third millennium. Justice we understand in a full sense as right relationships with God, our neighbour and the environment. The 1974 Synod of Bishops said that action (not just words) for justice is an essential part of preaching the gospel. So the question cannot be whether or not we shall work for justice. The only question is what precisely is the most effective action in our circumstances?

4. Since God is community, we need the witness of community to make evangelization and catechesis possible.
5. Small Christian Communities (basic Christian communities) are the instruments without which you will not be able to deal effectively with matters which concern you. They will be your instruments at grassroots. If they don't exist, you will be frustrated in your efforts to make contact at grassroots.
6. If Small Christian Communities were numerous throughout the Archdiocese, you would have an excellent, ready-made communications network. By means of the group the archbishop, priests and pastoral agents could get their message through to ordinary people. And more important still, ordinary people could give valuable feedback to the archbishop, priests and pastoral agents.

Where feedback is concerned, there are two pitfalls to be avoided:

- people telling the pastors what they think they want to hear
- the pastors seeing the problems through their own rose-tinted spectacles

Patient dialogue overcomes these difficulties.

7. I have heard the desire expressed in more than one place that pastoral agents should learn the language of the people: Afrikaans and Khosa. And that, when English is used, it ought to be simple – concrete examples related to the lives of the people should be given.
8. Great attention should be given to youth. They should form a vital part of the growing Small Christian Communities. They should also have their own Christian youth groups for issues that concern themselves. And these youth groups should reach out to the mass of young people. Youth are most impressed by simplicity of lifestyle, and most unimpressed by any form of authoritarianism. But while they do quite definitely reject authoritarianism, they readily accept authority as service.
9. While working in the parishes, I have heard that the very poor shy away from our churches. Maybe because their shoes are broken or their clothes torn. But our church is the church of the poor and if they stay away, an essential dimension is missing. If then people do not come to church, we must take the Church to the people and disseminate Small Christian Communities and Christian Youth Groups throughout the neighbourhoods.

10. Finally, I would urge all who wish for change to work within the church – don't cut yourself off. The fastest growing Christian Churches in Africa are the independent Churches. People are attracted by the fellowship and animated services. Unfortunately these churches are usually other-worldly and out of touch with life.

We ourselves must give our people an animated liturgy and fellowship through Small Christian Communities and Christian Youth Groups and enrich them still further by insisting on action and a burning sense of justice.

Tensions there will always be in the church. Tensions, however, can be creative and help us to do marvelous things for the Kingdom. And Paul VI reminds us that promotion of the Kingdom of God is the only absolute – the one thing that is important.

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**ARCHDIOCESE OF CAPE TOWN**

12 Bouquet Street  
CAPE TOWN 8001

Rev Father James O'Halloran SDB  
Salesian Institute  
2 Somerset Road  
CAPE TOWN 8001

Dear Father

On behalf of Fr Martin Gay CSsR and the Executive Committee of the Pastoral Council, I am writing to say how grateful we are to you for giving us such a splendid 'shot in the arm' on 22 February.

You certainly succeeded in making us see more clearly where we are and also where we should be going. Your presentation was first rate and from the enthusiasm that it engendered, we are now much more hopeful that the concept of Small Christian Communities will at last become a reality here in Cape Town.

The enclosed cheque is just a very small token of our appreciation and we hope you will receive it with our love and best wishes.

Hoping that God will continue to bless you and your work, and with renewed thanks.

Yours sincerely

*Mary E Lack*

Mary E Lack  
Secretary  
CAPE TOWN ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL

Enc: 1

## **SOME OBSERVATIONS OF THE GENERAL SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **Awareness**

The black and so-called coloured majority are aware of the 'troubles', but I don't sense a global awareness in the people of the kind that springs from conscientisation as fostered in Latin America. There seems to be little social analysis. So when the black leaders speak, they are not voicing the sentiments of the people as emerging from a conscientising process. Nevertheless, these leaders have suffered and proved themselves and they do have the confidence of the people.

Mostly, for example, the leaders are for disinvestment and the people accept their view. I must add, however, that some of the more enlightened coloureds that I talked with accepted disinvestment yet would go cautiously about it (be selective etc.,) for fear of ruining the economic infrastructure of the country.

As against this, you notice a fatalism in the ordinary people. I heard Khosa women singing: "We have suffered so much, we can take no more. We are ready to die."

There is a gulf between black youth and black adults. The youth accuse them of having passively put up with apartheid for years and announce that they themselves have no intention of doing so. That explains their facing down caspirs with sticks and stones.

### **Government and Change**

Where the Government is concerned promises of change have remained at the level of rhetoric (propaganda?). The week after P.W. Botha's speech announcing that apartheid is dead, a minister of government assured the white minority that there would be equal funding for education, but no question whatsoever of mixing the races in schools. Also the Foreign Minister, Pik Botha was almost fired for daring to suggest that a black could one day be President of the country.

## **SECTION 7.0**

**Sierra Leone, Kenema Pastoral Centre, International Sharing  
on Small Christian Communities and Youth Groups, 1988-89**

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**Inter-territorial Bishops' Conference of Sierra Leone, Liberia & The Gambia**

**PASTORAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

**Box 202 - Kenema  
Sierra Leone  
West Africa**

29 June, 1988

Dear Jim,

This circular letter is the initiation of a process of discovering if you – and others in a position similar to yours – are interested in coming together at Kenema next January for a consultation on matters of mutual interest to us all and which would enable us to pursue our programmes more effectively.

I now wish to quote in full the text of a letter I have sent to Mr Nikolai of Misereor in West Germany.

"I wish to share some ideas and proposals with you and all in Misereor. These have arisen from conversations in Kenema between Fr Tony Byrne and myself. I understand from Tony himself that you and he already had discussions on the same topic.

As a result of these discussions, I am proposing that we hold a consultation for organisers of grassroots level programmes related to Justice, Small Christian Communities and Development. We are willing to host this consultation at the Kenema Pastoral Centre before the beginning of the 4-month course on Small Christian Communities, i.e., January 2<sup>nd</sup> to January 12<sup>th</sup> 1989.

I would now like to share with you preliminary thoughts about such an event and then see if you are generally favourable to it and have other suggestions or proposals to make yourself.

The main purposes of such a consultation would be:

- a) to deal with the lack of cooperation among such groups by building up a network to ensure linkages and solidarity among people working in these areas.
- b) To overcome the tendency to work out of an individualistic viewpoint – or as a local group in isolation – through the sharing of ideas, insights and information.
- c) To strengthen the effectiveness of the leadership training programmes and of the leaders in the field by sharing a methodology which would lead to more participation and coordination at the grassroots level.
- d) To share the methods used for evaluating the programmes and to evolve better methods of ensuring effectiveness at the local level.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

- e) To analyse our situations within the structures of society, state, Church etc. and develop systems of supporting each other and promoting change in communities.
- f) To get to know each other at a personal level, leading to sharing and learning from our successes and failures in the past so as to work better towards transformation in the future .
- g) To see how we could work together to give support to all our trained leaders at the local level and provide follow-up services.

I would propose also that the consultation be facilitated by Fr Tony Byrne C.S.Sp. and Sr Bernie Okure. Sr Bernie works with the D.E.L.E.S. Programme in Nigeria and is a skilled facilitator of groups."

Mr Nikolai has replied favourably to this proposal and has stated that Misereor is ready and eager to support this venture and to defray all the costs of board and lodging and help with the cost of the air fares of those who would find themselves unable to pay the total cost.

So, I hope you will now be able to reply immediately to the following questions:

- a) Will you, yourself, come?
- b) Will you send a representative instead?
- c) Have you any suggestions to make regarding:
  - (i) Participating organisations
  - (ii) Content of consultation
  - (iii) Methodology of consultation
  - (iv) Any other relevant matters?
- d) What is the cost (in U.S. Dollars) of your return air fare?
- e) Will you need any help in paying for your ticket?

I would be grateful if you could reply:

1. To question (a) and (b) by means of a telegram or, better still a telex (our telex No. is 3311 WASLTD S.L.)
2. Please send your lengthier reply as soon as possible to the above address.

Thanking you for your cooperation.

Yours in Christ,

*Jack McHugh*

Fr Jack McHugh C.S.Sp.  
Director



## **SECTION 8.0**

**Spent a year at La Salle University, Philadelphia, doing an  
MA on Small Christian Communities and Christian Youth  
Groups, 1987-1988**

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

**Project No 610 – 001 / 708**

**Programme of Accounts for the Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 1988**

	U.S. \$	U.S. \$
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>		
Misereor Contribution	7,740	
Local Contribution	<u>12,000</u>	
		19,740
<b>PAYMENTS:</b>		
Air Fares	1,174	
Tuition	6,000	
Board & Lodging	6,000	
Books, Stationery & Personal	2,957	
Internal Transport	1,965	
Insurance	500	
Personal Living Expenses	<u>2,240</u>	
		<u>20,836</u>
<b>EXCESS OF PAYMENTS OVER RECEIPTS</b>		<u><u>1,096</u></u>

I hereby certify that the accounts shown on this page of this schedule show a true and fair view for the period of the project ending on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1988.

*Aidan James Kelly*

Aidan James Kelly

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

**Project No 100/133F**

### **PROGRAMME ON SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE AWARENESS IN AFRICA**

Ghana/Sierra Leone – January – March 1989 – Tamale, Sunyani, Kenema

Delayed 10 days with inexplicable visa problem – involved an unscheduled trip to London to sort matters out.

1989

#### **January**

- 18 Arrived Accra
- 19 Sorted out visa problems at the National Catholic Secretariate in Accra – travelled to Tamale
- 20 Reported to the Police in Tamale and visited Archbishop Dery
- 21 Travelled to Tuna for first seminar
- 22 – 28 Seminar in Tuna – 26 participants – 2 priests, 24 lay persons
- 29 Mass and Lecture at SVD House, Tamale
- 31 Session at St Victor's Major Seminary, Tamale

#### **February**

- 02 Session at St Charles Minor Seminary – meeting with Core Group for the promotion of Small Christian Communities
- 03 Parish Visitation
- 04 Parish Visitation
- 05– 11 Seminar in Tamale – 30 participants (lay persons, priests, religious)
- 12– 14 Seminar at St Victor's Major Seminary – 90 participants (students and faculty)
- 15– 19 Seminar at Yendi, 26 participants (priests and lay persons)
- 20 Travel to Sunyani
- 20 – 28 Two Seminars (2 days for priests and religious; 2 days for lay coordinators – 21 and 20 participants respectively
  - attended meetings of Small Christian Communities that had come into existence as a result of seminars given myself 7 years earlier
  - shared with pastoral agents and met with Bishop Owusu

#### **March**

- 01 Travelled to Accra
- 02 Final sorting out of visa problems
- 04 Travelled to Sierra Leone
- 05 Travelled to Kenema
- 06 – 11 Seminar at Kenema Pastoral Centre – 34 participants
- 12 – 16 Visited Small Christian Communities
- 17 Travelled to London – shared with SCCs there
- 23 Travelled to Ireland for Provincial Chapter of the Salesians

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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### **Comment**

The trip went well and there was an enthusiastic response everywhere. In Tamale I was breaking new ground, but in Sunyani, I was able to visit groups that arose from my work there seven years ago. Apart from the pastoral fruits evident in such groups, they were also active in: caring for the sick, burying the dead (of great cultural and religious significance in West Africa), repairing roads, sinking wells, providing proper sewage facilities, planting trees.... Later in St Martin's, Freetown, I found the SCCs doing similar things plus: conducting a nursery, which they also had erected, providing a playground for the nursery, and erecting a stage at one end of the playground, so that it can be used as an open-air theatre for popular educative drama etc., The SCCs are going remarkably well in this parish, which could indeed serve as a model.

Truly the SCCs are emerging as instruments for integral development and justice (the St Martin SCCs also run seminars on justice). Another pleasing feature of the SCCs, both in Ghana and Sierra Leone, is the manner in which they reach out beyond the Christian community and include people of all faiths in their action. The leader of a Small Christian Community, for example, was elected to one of the newly-formed local assemblies, in an area where the Muslims have an overwhelming majority of the population. Yet the SCCs are unflamboyant, composed of ordinary people, and for the most part are situated in rural areas or on the neglected periphery of towns.

*James O'Halloran*

## **SECTION 9.0**

**Ghana**

**(Article from the Salesian Bulletin, Ireland),  
Sierra Leone, 1989**

Recently, Fr. Jim O'Halloran spent the best part of three months sharing on small Christian communities in Sierra Leone. The following are some stray pages from his diary, many of them written

# By the light of the moon



PHOTOS: J. O'HALLORAN

provincial town in the north of Sierra Leone. It is teeming still more because of the thousands and thousands of refugees that have come in from Liberia. Some 80,000 Liberians lost their lives in the civil war there, and one in every three persons was driven into exile. Incidentally, many of the people whom I have met were loud in their praise of the stand our Salesians made in Liberia during that horrendous war.

Here in Makeni numerous vehicles bearing the names of various aiding agencies and projects from all over the world passed me by on the streets. Will we ever let these people do anything for themselves, I wondered? The idea of development and, for that matter, evangelization needs turning on its head. That is not to say that we must not hasten to the aid of the starving.

There are no refugee camps in Sierra Leone. This is because the people have opened their homes to refugees and gladly shared the little that they have with them. And the majority of these Sierra Leoneans aren't Christian. As one missionary put it to me, "Mighty!"

## SUNDAY, Feb. 3

I travelled with British Airways from Gatwick to Freetown in Sierra Leone. Beside me on the aircraft was a young Sierra Leonean going home for the 40 days commemoration of his deceased father. A most important event in his culture. If relatives do not carry out all the funeral rites punctiliously, they believe that the spirit of the dead person cannot rest, and wanders forlornly around some

cosmic no-man's land. This young Sierra Leonean intends to return from the USA when he has enough money to establish a little business. Why? Not for material benefits, but because family and community ties are still important to his people. "Family is our social security," he said.

## WEDNESDAY, Feb. 6

Today I was in Makeni, a teeming

## SATURDAY, Feb. 9

I start my first workshop on small

Christian community in St. Martin's Parish, Freetown. There are 70 participants. Something struck me that hadn't struck me quite so forcibly before. More than half of the participants are in their early twenties. However, this is not so surprising when you think about it. With infant mortality, the ravages of hard times, disease and the steamy climate it's little wonder that life expectancy in Sierra Leone is 40. So 25 would be the equivalent of our middle age.

At our General Chapter last year we Salesians were asked to concern ourselves with youth right up to their mid-twenties. In Africa that would mean the vast majority of the population.

I first came to St. Martin's with the idea of small Christian communities in 1981. Groups are now to be found in all neighbourhoods of the parish, and they combine to make St. Martin's a communion of communities. The members of the small Christian communities pray and reflect on the word of God together, feed the hungry, bury the dead, prepare teenagers for baptism, establish a nursery school for children who have previously been left to their own devices by both parents, who were forced to go out to work so as to earn their daily bread. And so on.

### WEDNESDAY, Feb. 27

A workshop in the Makeni Pastoral Centre is progressing nicely. There are 65 participants, made up of teams from every parish in the diocese, save one. We are following the usual procedure. I strive to keep input to the essentials, so as to give people a chance to relate the whole



small Christian community phenomenon to their own experience.

A wide range of vital issues relevant to community life are brought up and thoroughly aired, such as marriage, celibacy, injustice, witchcraft. Everyone lives in terror of evil spirits. My own little contribution to that debate is to point out that the most powerful spirit of all is the Holy Spirit and, if the Holy Spirit is with us, there is no need for us to fear any other spirit. This is absolutely true. However, how many people, even in Ireland, know this fact and still will avoid walking under a ladder. There's a vast difference between what we know in the head and feel in the gut.

One of the participants always chairs these discussions, so that the workshop becomes a team exercise. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say a community exercise, since all are involved in the giving of the sessions. Really, I learn so much. A curious thing is cropping up of late and challenging a few assumptions, I think. The participants are saying again and again that what they have in their villages and neighbourhoods are groups, not yet small Christian communities. There is the coming together for convenience and support, but not deep Christian bonding. I wonder might something similar not be true of the extended family?

### FRIDAY, Mar. 15

We had an intensive day-long workshop in the little village of Benduma, towards the south-east of the country. It took place in a little chapel made of slats and covered by a grass roof. It was quite an experience. The



whole Christian community was present, including the children. The village chief, a Muslim, complete with flowing garb and fez, also attended. In addition to the children within the chapel, all the remaining youngsters in the village were jostling outside in an effort to peer through the slats to see what was going on.

Every so often an adult would whoosh them all away, but they'd be right back like bees to honey. The catechist is ponderously reading the bible. Beneath the lectern a child is messing, just a little. In reality these kids are as good as gold. Anyway, the catechist snaps the bible shut with a frustrated expletive and smartly cracks the lad on the head with the word of God. After this

momentary episode, the reading proceeds with all due decorum. It's amazing what happens when one is struck by the word of God!

At the end of the day the chief, who, as we said, was a Muslim, gave a wonderful little talk. Christians and Muslims were people of faith, he said. There was a lot of unbelief on the earth and we who believe must work together for a better world. The Gulf War was a tragedy. He was thrilled with the emphasis the workshop put on community. That's what he wanted his village to be - a real community. He urged Christians and Muslims alike to go on striving to achieve an ever-increasing unity in Benduma. He admired the Christians very much. He recalled a time when there were only two Christians in the village. Now there were 100. That made him very happy. After all, the Christians were the elder brothers of the Muslims. They came first...

As this venerable man was speaking, the words that ran through my mind were those of Jesus to one of the scribes when they were discussing which was the greatest commandment of all. Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said: "You are not far from the kingdom of God." (Mark 12:34)

After the workshop a meal was provided for myself and Fr. Johannes, the African priest who was with me. All the children of the village stood about in a huge circle watching us feed. I couldn't help thinking of the lines from the lovely song *The Mountains of Mourne*:

*And while they stood talking  
of days that were gone,*



*The whole population of London looked on...*

I began to take some photos and was mobbed by the children. One little fellow took me by the hand and vigorously rubbed my bare arm to see if the white colour would come off. When it didn't, his eyes became great saucers and then he just laughed and laughed. Another little child hid in tearful panic behind his mother's skirt at the sight of me. they don't see many white men in Benduma.

Some of the very old people had never been out of the village in their whole lives, though towns were not

## **SATURDAY, Mar. 16**

This evening we are shocked by the news that rebels made an incursion from Liberia into the Benduma area and several people, military and civilian, were shot. And we were there only yesterday.

## **SUNDAY, Mar. 17**

Today I saw a confrontation between a cat and a snake. The snake is coiled up with its head poised to strike. The cat, taught as a jangled nerve, transfixes it with mesmerizing eyes. At regular intervals the

much of the road I have been dogged by what is here called a 'fresh' cold, and for all of it by a heat rash which causes one to scratch even at the most solemn moments, like in the middle of a homily. But I'm not complaining. There was nothing serious, just minor inconveniences.

On one occasion, sure enough, I had to drop everything in the middle of a talk and flee the church. Fr. Jim Carling, an English Holy Ghost priest, explained my predicament to the people with admirable brevity: "African belly." A howl of laughter followed me. So it will be wonderful to get back to some cool weather.

The sadness on my departure springs from something only too real. I mentioned the rebel attacks from Liberia earlier. These continued in the latter weeks of my work. As I departed a place, within days it seemed to fall under the influence of the rebels. I just seemed to be keeping ahead of the posse all the time. Now, as I'm leaving, the personnel of all the aiding agencies are being withdrawn right back to the capital, Freetown, for safety. So I am worried for all those I am leaving behind. Very little of this situation has got into the Western media - still one more casualty of the Gulf War.

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*It is in small Christian communities where the members know each other more personally, that true love and fraternal concern are more easily practised.*

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- Pope John Paul 11

very far away. They had their rice, potato leaves, palm oil, 'country' fish - and their God. With these they were content. Indeed, were they to have left, they would certainly have found that everything they went searching for had been left behind in Benduma.

As Fr. Johannes and I sadly bade the people farewell, they assured us that the important things we had talked about that day, they would continue to talk about endlessly by the light of the moon.

feline strikes the snake at the back of the head with lightning claw. Gradually the reptile weakens until it dies. Later I see bits of the snake lying about, and I guess there is a gorged cat somewhere. Fancy this happening on St. Patrick's Day.

## **SATURDAY, Apr. 13**

Here I am, after eleven weeks, fourteen workshops and 759 participants, ready to fly out from Freetown. I have mixed feelings. For

## **MONDAY, Apr. 15**

I came across some words of Pope John Paul 11 that I found truly affirming: "It is in small Christian communities where the members know each other more personally, that true love and fraternal concern is more easily practised." (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 15 April, 91)

## **SECTION 10.0**

**LIBERIA 1990**

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

**Project No. 100-0/133G**

**January – March 1990**

### **LIBERIA**

- Jan 04 – 07      Contact with Archbishop Michael Francis and parishes in Monrovia.
- Jan 08 -13      Workshop in St Joseph's Parish, Senkhor, Monrovia – 50 participants: lay, religious and priests.
- Jan 15 – 20      Workshop for parishes, citywide in Monrovia – 40 participants: lay, religious and priests.
- Jan 22 – 27      Two workshops (one in the day, one at night) for seminarians at St Joseph's Seminary/University, Gbarnga.
- Jan 29-Feb 02      Follow up planning sessions with people who did Monrovia workshops.
- Feb 03              One day seminar at Clay Mission – 50 participants.
- Feb 05              Depart
- Mar 16 -25      Absented myself from the Salesian General Chapter in Rome to participate in THE PAN-AFRICAN CONSULTATION FOR ORGANISERS OF COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMES RELATED TO JUSTICE, SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT held at the Pastoral Centre, Kenema, Sierra Leone.

The elements of a vision for action in Africa were hammered out here. On my return to Rome, I was able to give a report to the Salesian General Chapter on that meeting. It was at an encounter attended by the representatives of some 700 Salesians now working on the African Continent. They found the work done in Kenema most helpful and enlightening.

The work on Project 100-0/133G went well in Liberia, despite the beginnings of a civil war. The people showed great courage in attending the sessions. The risks were not inconsiderable. A number of Small Christian Communities are already functioning in Monrovia and others are being initiated. Fr Lee Cahill S.M.A. has already made a significant start in his parish and I believe we found our sharing mutually enriching.

Working in the seminary at Gbarnga was particularly valuable and deeply appreciated by the Director, Fr Jack McHugh CSSp. It means that young priests in the future will know about Small Christian Communities and be concerned with justice, of which the communities are such powerful instruments.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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There is an openness in Liberia at the moment for the implantation of Small Christian Communities. I was personally approached by all three bishops and asked to return in 1990 to carry out a thorough-going promotion in all the dioceses (cf. enclosed proposal for Project 100-0/133h). Bishop Seke sees the communities as "the only way forward". They offer the best hope for integral human development.

Action for justice (cf. Synodal document Justice in the World, 4) is proposed to all groups. Right from their foundation, Small Christian Communities are encouraged to work for the betterment of their areas and to continuously reflect critically on what they do, so as to perform ever more effectively. Indeed, small communities, composed of people who come together to build a better world, are not just confined to Christianity. They are becoming a feature of all creeds and of persons of goodwill everywhere.

## **SECTION 11.0**

### **Sierra Leone Proposal 1992**

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12

22 July 1991

MISEREOR  
(Attn. Mr Goldstein)

**REPORT**

**Project 100-0/133H**

**Programme on Basic Christian Communities and  
Justice Awareness in Africa  
James O'Halloran**

Feb 03      Left Dublin  
Feb 04      Arrive Freetown  
Feb 06      Visited Salesian School in Lungi.  
              Travelled to Makeni for a preparatory meeting with key people there.  
Feb 06 – 15      Freetown. Follow-up and support work with the 14 Small (or Basic) Christian  
                         Communities in St Martin's parish. Also Workshop with 50 participants.  
Feb 16 – 19      Freetown. Follow-up and support work with Small Christian Communities  
                         (hereafter SCCs) in the Cathedral Parish. Also Workshop with 70 participants.  
Feb 20 – 23      Lunsar Parish, Makeni diocese.  
                         Workshop with 80 participants.  
                         Workshop at Furdugu (outstation of Lunsar) with 90 participants.  
Feb 24-Mar 02      Residential Workshop at Makeni Pastoral Centre,  
                         Teams came from all parishes in the diocese. There were 50 participants.  
                         Also follow-up and support work.  
Mar 03 – 07      Work with the major seminarians at St Paul's Seminary, Makeni.  
Mar 09 – 15      Pendembu Parish, Kenema Diocese.  
                         Workshop with 30 participants  
                         Workshop at Benduma (village outstation) 80 participants  
                         Workshop at Baiwalah (village outstation) 85 participants

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

- Mar 17 – 21 Residential Workshop at the Catholic Mission in Pangoma, Makeni Diocese. There were 65 participants – teams from all areas of this immense parish – also follow-up and support work.
- Mar 21 – 28 Kenema area.
- input at the Pastoral Centre (International)
  - Workshop in the Cathedral Parish with 20 participants
  - Workshop at Blamah Parish with 50 participants
- Mar 29-Apr 5 Helped with the Easter ceremonies in St Anthony's Parish, Freetown
- Apr 01 – 05 St Anthony's Parish, Freetown
- Workshop for 10 selected leaders
- Apr 06 Departed for London, heavily laden with post and chores for missionaries and volunteers, now menaced by the rebel threat!

### **COMMENT**

My work in Sierra Leone this time consisted of ground-breaking Workshops, but also there was much follow-up and support work. The reason for the follow-up and support work is that, at a conservative estimate, there are now 300 groups in the country that are basic Christian Communities or on the way to becoming such.\* Indeed so great was the receptivity for my project that it was impossible to respond to all the calls that were made upon me.

Regarding development, there is much down-to-earth cooperation and self-help going on among these groups in educational, welfare, and agricultural projects. Not major projects, just simple endeavours. I first went to Africa and Sierra Leone on this particular project in 1981 and I have been surprised at the rate of increase of the momentum for justice over the past decade. Everywhere one is encountering a passionate desire for multi-party state (read democracy). Ten years ago, I found clergy and people somewhat timorous in these matters. This has changed. I think the work done by Tony Byrne, DELTA, myself and so many others all combined to make an impact. In Sierra Leone, for example, CCGs (Concerned Citizens' Groups) have sprung up to struggle actively, yet peacefully, for justice. The relevance of SCCs is that they are irreplaceable models and instruments for development and peace and justice at the grassroots. Indeed, I believe that small communities of any kind, not only Christian, do this.

\*While doing his doctorate (c. 2000s!) Joseph M. Healey MM gave the following statistics for Nairobi (700 SCCs) and the AMECEA region (110,000).

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Events in West Africa have convinced me that the project in which I have been engaged over the years has been truly relevant. The best investment is that made in promoting people at the grassroots. This cannot be easily wiped away by armed conflict.

In all the encounters that I had with people in Sierra Leone this year, I put the question (prophetic, as it turned out!): "What would you do if all the missionaries were thrown out?" I wanted them to explore their deepest motivations and convictions. Sadly, within days, the hypothesis became reality. Rebels poured in from Liberia and some of the very people with whom I had worked were killed (e.g., James, the young catechist in Pendembu). The missionaries have in fact been driven out of some areas, but there is the conviction that, despite everything, the small communities will continue, perhaps even grow stronger.

I am also beginning to find it a fruitful exercise to do work in seminaries. I have seen young African priests enthusiastically implement fresh insights gained there. Jack McHugh in the Makeni seminary is a Director who has fostered new approaches.

### **Proposed Project for 1992**

For 1992 I am proposing a project for East, Central and Southern Africa to be devoted to evaluation, follow-up and support work with the key people and groups with whom I have worked over the last ten years. At the end of this I would hope to have assessed much of what I have sought to accomplish; also I would hope to be in a position to make a comprehensive and objective report to Misereor, as requested.



## **SECTION 12.0**

**Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Swaziland, 1992**

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

**Project No. 100-0/133H**  
**Programme on Basic Christian Communities and Justice Awareness in Africa**  
**1992**

### **NOTE**

The stated objectives of this journey to East and Southern Africa was primarily to share with key animators of Small Christian Communities and justice awareness. This with a view to being able to assess the state of small communities and justice involvement at the moment. Through wide consultation I was also to try and gauge my own impact on the situation. Finally I was to respond to requests for sessions and workshops.

James O'Halloran

### **KENYA**

#### **Nairobi**

- Jan 18 Landed Nairobi. Meeting with APSO Field Director in East Africa, Mary Sweeney, to exchange ideas and plan a workshop for Irish volunteers to be held in Nakuru Feb 11-13.
- Jan 19 Further session with APSO Director.
- Jan 20 Meeting with Salesian community at my base, Upper Hill Road. Made contacts and set up encounters by telephone.
- Jan 21 Meeting with Maryknoll Father Joseph Healey who has been a key figure in promoting Small Christian Communities, chiefly in Tanzania and Kenya. Also organised a diocesan session with Fr Max Stetter to be held at St Balikkudembe Pastoral Centre in February.
- Jan 23 Preparatory meeting for the African Synod held at AMECEA.
- Jan 24 Public Mass and homily at Upper Hill Road. Further meeting with Max Stetter to exchange ideas and plan the Diocesan Workshop.
- Jan 25 Public Mass and homily at Upper Hill.
- Jan 26 Chief Speaker at Youth Encounter at Don Bosco Boys' Town. 1,000 youth present.
- Jan 27 Session with seminarians in Tangaza.  
Visited Salesian Theologate.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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- Jan 28 Met and exchanged Ideas with the Vicar General of the Archdiocese, Fr Joseph Makui (ex-Kenema). Also got his views regarding the diocesan workshop to be held in February.
- Jan 30 Session with Jesuits in Kangemi, notably with Fr Rodrigo Mejia who has done sterling work on Small Christian Communities and justice. Very active also in promoting Small Christian Communities of youth
- Jan 31 With the Salesians of Upper Hill Road, for the Feast of Don Bosco
- Feb 01 Session with the Salesians at Don Bosco Boys' Town
- Feb 02 Session with Fr Brendan O'Reilly, local superior, and SVD missionaries  
Visit to the Jesuits at Kangemi and attendance at local Small Christian Community meeting
- Feb 05 Session with Salesian seminarians at Don Bosco Utume – 30 seminarians and their superiors
- Feb 07 Meeting and exchange of ideas with Fr Thomas Tayil, Provincial of the Salesians in East Africa, and missionaries in from outstations
- Feb 08 – 09 Workshop at Tangaza Seminary
- Feb 10 – 11 Diocesan Workshop at St Balikkudembe Pastoral Centre, Thika, in a team with Fr Max Stetter, Michale Tanya his African assistant (ex Kenema) and Bernadette, a lady from a local parish. There were 100 participants from virtually every parish in the Archdiocese (some came from outside). A feature of the Workshop was a wide exchange of views by the participants (clerics, religious, lay and youth).
- Feb 13 Meeting with Fr Tony Byrne
- Feb 14 Session with St Balikkudembe Pastoral Team

### **ZAMBIA**

- Feb 18 Meeting with the Salesian community in Lusaka
- Feb 19 Meeting with Bishop De Jong, his Vicar General, Fr Simon Bwalya and Sr Lynne. Exchanged ideas. Planned for a diocesan workshop and other activities.
- Feb 20 Session with Fr Simon Bwalya (ex Kenema) of the Diocesan Pastoral Youth Team

### **Kalulushi**

- Feb 21 Travelled to St Joseph's Mission, Kalalushi
- Feb 22 – 23 Workshop with the youth leaders of St Joseph's Mission – 50 youth together with adult animators
- Feb 24 Session with 30 Franciscan seminarists

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

- Feb 25            Session with CICM team, St Michael's Parish  
Feb 25 – 26      Workshop with the Franciscan seminarians. Done in a team with local Teresa Mulenga and Meg, an American lay missionary

### **Kitwe**

- Feb 27            Meeting with parish workers in Kitwe

### **Chingola**

- Feb 28            Meeting with Salesian community in Chingola  
  
Mar 01            Meeting with Mr Chita, Chairman of the parish council Sts Peter and Paul Parish, and other councilors.  
Mar 02 – 03      Workshop at Sts Peter and Paul Parish – 30 participants (lay, religious, clerical)  
Mar 04            Ash Wednesday. Reflection for all the parishioners, Sts Peter and Paul Parish – 600 present

### **Kalulushi**

- Mar 05            Workshop at St Joseph's Mission – 30 present

### **Ndola**

- Mar 05 – 06      Workshop in St Kizito Parish, given in a team with local priest, Fr Simon Bwalya and a lady parishioner, Veronica – 80 present  
Mar 08            Sunday Mass and homily at the Franciscan Centre  
                      Session with 40 parish leaders  
                      Meeting with Bishop Potani of Solwezi  
Mar 10            Meeting with sisters at Nkeke Compound  
Mar 11            Stricken by malaria  
Mar 12            Though still in bed with malaria, shared with a group of Spanish missionaries, especially with Fr Gregorio who has done a lot of work with small communities  
Mar 13            Still down with malaria  
                      Shared with Fr Aidan McCrystal, Youth Pastoral Leader  
                      Shared also with Fr Pio Uitendaal, ex Kenema, who travelled right down from the Angola border to exchange ideas.  
Mar 14            Diocesan workshop programmed. Because of the malaria, for the first time in 12 years I missed out on a workshop. People came from all over the diocese of Ndola and beyond. Fr Simon Bwalya with whom I had already done workshops in a team, took my place very capably.  
Mar 15            Still in bed with malaria

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

Shared ideas with a group of Irish Sisters of Charity who visited me.  
Mar 16      Travelled to Harare

### **ZIMBABWE**

#### **Harare**

Mar 17 – 22      Stayed at Campion House and shared with the Jesuits there.  
Mar 17      Made contact with Bishop Mutume (Justice Commission of the National Episcopal Conference) and with Sr Illuminata of the National Pastoral Centre  
Mar 18      Meeting with Bishop Mutume and Sr Illuminata  
Mar 19 – 20      Workshop at the Wadzanai Training Centre – 60 participants (students and outsiders)  
Mar 21      Meeting with Fr Tom Russell OFM of the National Pastoral Centre and with Sr Perpetua of the Wadzanai Training Centre

#### **Mutare**

Mar 22      Travelled by car with Bishop Mutume. This gave us the opportunity to discuss issues of justice and Small Christian Communities.  
Mar 22 – 30      Stayed at Bishop's House and shared with pastoral leaders there. Among them was Sr Ancilla, ex-Kenema.  
Mar 24      Meeting with the Carmelite community. Visited the new Training Centre which is still being completed  
Mar 25      Organised weekend workshops with Kiltegan Fr Noel McHenry.  
Paid a courtesy call to Baroness Von Furstenberg who has devoted 30 years of her life to the mission in Zimbabwe as a medical doctor. A very impressive lady, known affectionately as Dr Von. I had lunch with her accompanied her to the Vumba Valley where she grows protea for export on a small property. She sat in the front of the car with the driver while I sat at the back with Max – her rothweiler cum dobermann. He didn't manifest any great warmth towards me!  
Mar 26 – 29      Workshops with Fr Noel McHenry at Dangamvura – with youth 30 participants – with adults 60 participants.  
Meeting also with the Kiltegan Community.

#### **Harare**

Mar 30      Travelled back to Harare and continued discussions with Bishop Mutume.  
Mar 31      A further meeting with Fr Tom Russell to plan future projects.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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### **SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **Johannesburg**

- April 01      Travelled to Johannesburg
- April 02      Contacted and set up encounters with Oswald Hirmer and Peter and Stephen Sadie, two laymen and blood brothers, who have been key workers in the pastoral field over the past decade.
- April 03      Meeting with Mons Oswald Hirmer at Lumko
- April 06      Meeting with Peter and Stephen Sadie
- April 07 – 08      Worked on my Misereor Report while things were still fresh in my mind.
- April 09      Met with Salesian communities in Daleside and Clonlea. Also met visiting Salesians from Lesotho.
- April 10      Continued work on the Misereor Report.
- April 11      Met with the National Team for coordinating Small Christian Communities at Lumko. Bishop Fritz Lobinger attended.

#### **Swaziland**

- April 12      Journeyed to Swaziland
- April 13      Visited the Refugees with Salesian Fr James Somers and also visited Fr Larry McDonnell's projects and his homes for homeless youth.
- April 14      Session on Small Christian Communities with the Salesians at the Salesian High School, Manzini.
- April 15      Evening Session with Salesian seminarists at Clonlea, Transvaal, South Africa.
- April 16 – 27      Visited the Salesian communities in Cape Town.
- April 27      Started the return journey via Johannesburg. While in Johannesburg I made contact with a friend, Mr Mabizela, who was a refugee and teacher on my staff in the Salesian High School in Manzini. He is now on the Executive of the ANC. I would hope that he will be a positive force in the new South Africa.
- May          A great portion of this month has been devoted to an extensive Report for Misereor.

## **SECTION 13.0**

**Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, 1994**

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

**Misereor**

**Attn. Herr R Goldstein  
Postfact 1450  
D – 52015 Aachen**

**Project Report (100-000/133L)  
1994**

### **KENYA**

- Feb 21 Arrived in Nairobi  
Tangaza Seminary – session with the seminarians.
- Feb 22 – 23 Thika Pastoral Centre (Dir. Fr. Max Stetter) – Workshop for priests, religious, catechists, lay leaders – 30 in number.
- Feb 24 – 27 Thika Pastoral Centre – Workshop for members of grassroots' SCCs from the Nairobi Archdiocese – there was a full capacity attendance of 45.
- Feb 28-Mar 4 AMECEA Pastoral Institute (GABA) – workshop for some 40 participants (lay, religious, clerical) hailing from a variety of African countries.

### **ZIMBABWE**

- Mar 07 Arrive Harare
- Mar 08 – 15 WADZANAI TRAINING CENTRE, Borrowdale, Harare – for 40 participants, lay and religious, mostly youthful.
- Mar 09 – 12 Rhodesville Catholic Church – evening sessions with Parish Council numbering some 20 participants.
- Mar 14 – 17 Kristimambo Mission, Rusape, Mutare – deanery meeting and sessions on SCC and Justice Awareness with a participation of 25 people, lay, religious, clerical.
- Mar 20 Gave Programme on National Radio.
- Mar 21 – 27 Driefontein Mission – workshop for leaders (lay, religious, clerical) of the Gweru Diocese. There were 39 participants.

### **SOUTHERN AFRICA**

- Apr 01 -21 Consultation and sessions with the Salesian communities in Southern Africa (South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland), particularly with candidates to the order who are based in Lesotho. The order numbers 70 members in the region, some are missionaries, some indigenous. Many are engaged in the RENEW programme which promotes Small Christian Communities and Justice Awareness.



## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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The momentum for the establishment of Small Christian Communities is increasing all the time in Africa. At the recent African Synod in Rome, Bishop Jodo Siloto of Mozambique declared that any pastoral strategy that omitted Small Christian Communities would be creating a Church without a future. And many echoed this sentiment. And Archbishop Okoth of Kisumu expressed something that Misereor and I have realised from the beginning of our project in 1981. He said "Small Christian Communities are ideal cells for promoting justice and peace, and are well adapted to the social network characteristic of the African way of life. This latter characteristic makes them good agents of inculturation." He might also have added that they are excellent instruments for development.

What is happening in Rwanda deeply questions all of us, including the Churches. The negative aspects of tribalism must be courageously challenged, because if Africans cannot reach out beyond their own tribes, the continent is going to tear itself apart. Small Christian Communities are well positioned to do the challenging. Nelson Mandela has found the formula when he tells people of varying tribes that they are all South Africans. So too must people of varying tribes be Kenyans, Zimbabweans or whatever.

I believe that groups at grassroots are the key to a solution. Not just Small Christian Communities but all groups whether secular or religious that work for a better world. Small Christian Communities should see it as their role to promote all such groups.

Nor has all the news coming out of Africa been bleak on the tribal question. In the course of the Rwanda tragedy there were Christian Hutus who sought to protect their Tutsi neighbours and vice-versa. And in many places I find people of varying, even historically quite opposed, tribes coming together in Small Christian Communities. This is of the utmost importance for the whole process of reconciliation and nation building.

In 1995 I am proposing to work more in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. In Kenya I have been requested to come and share at the AMECEA Pastoral Institute (GABA) and at the Thika Pastoral Centre currently directed by Fr Max Stetter. In Zimbabwe I shall be working at the Wadzanai Training Centre once again and with animating teams from all the dioceses. There has also been a request from the Salesians working in the Cape Flats near Cape Town itself.

The political situation in Kenya, as you will know, is tense and volatile and anything that one does to promote community and justice is well done. Zimbabwe is now opening up to Small Christian Communities. The War of Independence put them behind other countries in this respect. South Africa too is in need of these instruments of reconciliation. They also need them to challenge this new nation in the area of justice. Politicians have recently awarded themselves fat salaries, and the new government has also exported \$120 million in arms. Where does the new South Africa stand on East Timor? Will they accept financial aid from Indonesia? With what strings attached? People around the world who sacrificed so much to end apartheid are looking to South Africa to be a shining example in matters of justice.

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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James O'Halloran SDB  
Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
DUBLIN 12

Tel: +353 1 4555605

4 September 1994

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**Project No. 100-0 / 133H**  
**Project Budget and Request for Payment**  
**Plan for February/March/April 1994**

I have been requested to do workshops on Small Christian Communities and Justice Awareness in Nairobi (Thika Pastoral Centre), Zimbabwe and South Africa (Johannesburg) in the period February/March/April, 1994.

In Kenya there are special sessions for priests of the Archdiocese of Nairobi and sessions which are open to all. The laity are eager and open where Small Christian Communities and Justice Awareness are concerned. The clergy sometimes have difficulties and the Archdiocesan organisers feel that sessions, which would give them an overall picture of what is happening in the world regarding these areas would be most helpful.

In Zimbabwe, resulting from two winter schools and a catechetics week the whole issue of Small Christian Communities figured prominently as "policy". There is the request now for sessions on the subject with key pastoral workers in the country with a view to implementing the policy.

The Church in South Africa is widely organising itself on the basis of Small Christian Communities. However, the initiative has come somewhat from the bishops. An effort has to be made to help people make the initiative their own. This is not a problem for black people. They are already family and community minded. It is more difficult with whites.

In the **Report for Misereor on Project 100-0/133: Programme on Basic Christian Communities and Justice Awareness in Africa, 1981-1992**, by James O'Halloran, I pointed out that seminarians are key people and I gave my reasons in the report. Basically these groups need help. While doing this I also said that contact should not be lost with grassroots endeavour. I also pinpointed Zimbabwe as an area that needs special assistance with Small Christian Communities now that the people there are beginning to realise their potential, not least as indispensable instruments for development and justice. As you will have seen, the project outlined above is directed at the needs I identified in the report.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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Finally I should like to thank MISEREOR for all the backing it has given this immensely important endeavour down the years. I have striven to respond to that generosity with dedicated service.

James O'Halloran SDB  
5 November 1993

## **SECTION 14.0**

**South Africa**  
**(Detailed account of work done in Tzaneen Diocese)**  
**1997**

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

**REPORT ON VISIT BY FR JIM O'HALLORAN, SDB TO THE DIOCESE OF TZANEEN, SOUTH AFRICA  
12/02/97 – 04/03/97, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

### **1. Meeting with Priests at AMPC on February 13**

Attendance: Bishop Hugh Slattery

Frs Philemon Thobela  
Andre Stephan  
Raju Edathinattu  
P.J. Fitzgerald

Frank Gallagher  
Frank Bray  
John O'Brien  
Bill Fleming

Donie McCarthy  
Pat Galvin  
Sean Horgan

Srs Pam Pegler - AMPC  
Rena Condron - AMPC  
MSc Student - Jonas  
Fr Jim O'Halloran SDB

Jim briefed the gathering on the input 'The Church as Communion' which he hoped to give to the various groups he would meet over a period of 3 weeks.

Topics were: Bonding, the Kingdom of God and its Justice, Contemplation; Reality/Action; Leadership, Decision Making and Meetings.

- 2. SCC's visited:** Dwarsriver – Ramokgopa  
Nwabitsi - Bonn  
London – Enable

- 3. Groups** Phalaborwa – Namakgale

This was a 2hr Meeting with various Church leaders from the area.

The input dealt with Bonding, Contemplation and Reality in a condensed form.

**Louis Trichardt** – Kutama. This 2hr Meeting took place in a home in Kutama and was very well attended by SCC members and leaders from the area and by Fr Andre and Deacon Philemon.

**London:** Khutsong (2hrs)

This meeting was attended by Fr Pat Galvin, Deacon Emmanuel Mohala, Pastoral Workers Jackson Malomane and Alfred Malepe, Srs Clara and Norrie, Nurses from the Clinic and other workers from the Mission.

**Turkey:** (2hrs) The Meeting was attended by Fr Pat, Deacon Emmanuel Mohlala, Jackson, Alfred Malepe, Sr Norrie and various leaders and members of SCC's.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

In both Meetings, Jim gave input on the 3 main points: Bonding, Contemplation & Reality.

### **4. Workshops: 1) AMPC Feb 21-23**

32 Participants from 8 Parishes:

London	Phalaborwa
Dwarsriver	Scholastica
Nwabitsi	Ofcolaco
Duiwelskloof	Nzhelele

### **2) Louis Trichardt: Feb 28-March 2**

38 Participants from 5 Parishes

Louis Trichardt
Nzhelele
Dwarsriver
Duiwelskloof
Scholastica

These Workshops dealt more fully with Bonding, the Kingdom, Contemplation and Reality/Action.

Other topics covered were: Leadership, Decision Making and various formats for meetings.

Practical sessions occurred throughout the Workshops.

### **5. Meeting with Priests at AMPC on 04/03/97**

Attendance: Bishop Hugh Slattery

Frs Philemon Thobela	Andre Stephan
Frank Gallagher	Frank Conlisk
Frank Bray	Martin O'Connor
Pat Galvin	

Srs Pam Pegler and Rena Condron – AMPC  
MSc Student – Jonas  
Fr Jim O'Halloran SDB

Priests were given a feedback on activities since the last Meeting.

Jim commented that the feedback from participants in the Workshops was very positive. Because of this every effort should be made to build on the present enthusiasm and not miss the opportunity.

Following these comments the priests were asked to make suggestions as to how we might respond to the enthusiasm and expectations aroused as a result of the sessions.

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

In sharing the following emerged:

- priests present had no problem with Ave Maria Pastoral Centre (AMPC) staff working in parishes with those who had attended the Workshop.
- Some difficulty was voiced on what are priorities in the Diocese and the need to know what is ultimately foundational.
- The need to capitalize on the present enthusiasm by practical follow-up.
- More cohesion is needed with the Ave Maria Pastoral Team; there is a need for greater integration.

In response Jim opened up other possibilities for the Diocese. A Diocesan Pastoral Plan is important so that the foundational priorities could be identified. This would be a means whereby priests and pastoral workers could be at one in their apostolic endeavours.

The first step in this pastoral planning would be the laying down of a network of SCC's, and other groups at grassroots. Such groups, because of their commitment and formation, could then in dialogue provide valuable contributions towards the making of such a pastoral plan.

**Bishop's Remarks:** The Bishop spoke of the tension between the church as institution and the other charismatic elements of the church. This need not deter us – in fact it could be a creative force. He regarded the SCC's as the underpinning of our efforts to implement the vision of Vatican II.

6. The period spent by Fr Jim O'Halloran in our Diocese was highly appreciated by all and very especially by myself. Because of the many new insights he shared with us I feel we will go forward with new enthusiasm and deeper commitment to this way of being church.

*Sr Lena Condron OSF*

Diocesan Animator for SCC's



## **SECTION 15.0**

**South Africa, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe 1996-97**

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**Fr James O'Halloran SDB**

**Programme on Small Christian  
Communities and Justice  
Awareness in Africa 1997  
(Project No. 100-0/296)**

**Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Ireland**

**Programme Accounts for  
work done in the Years  
1996 and 1997 as per  
Reports**

**Accountant  
Ms Pauline McDonnell  
3 Sycamore Avenue  
Kingswood Heights  
Dublin 22**

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

**Project No: 100-0/296**

**Programme on Small Christian Community and Justice Awareness in Africa – Workshops and Sessions in South Africa, Ehtiopia and Zimbabwe, 1997**

(NB The first part of this report deals with the work done in 1997. The second part (i.e., the *Financial Statement*) covers 1996 and 1997, because the payment for both years was made together. The report on the work done in 1996 (Cape Town and Port Elizabeth) is already in your possession).

### **South Africa**

#### **February 1997**

- 1-6 (Getting Ethiopian visa in London).
- 8 Arrive Johannesburg.
- 9 Workshop at Tembisa, Pretoria (65 participants lay, cleric religious).
- 10 Planning meeting with Fr Dick Broderick regarding forthcoming work in Tzaneen.

#### **Tzaneen Diocese**

- 12 Journey to Tzaneen
- 13 Workshop to mentalize priests in the Diocese of Tzaneen.
- 14 Meeting with the Pastoral Team of the Diocese.
- 15 Meeting at Ofcaloco (laity, clergy, religious – 20 participants).
- 16 Meeting and Eucharist at Sekgopo – 200 participants.
- 17 Strategy Meeting with Bishop Slattery and the Diocesan Pastoral Team.
  - attended and shared at a basic Christian community meeting at Ramakgopa.
- 18 Meeting with Bishop and Counsellors of the Diocese.
  - attended and shared at a basic Christian community at Lenenye.
- 19 Basic Christian Community in Dwarsriver (20 participants).
  - Alpha Course in Tzaneen (25 participants).
- 20-23 **Diocesan Workshop** at Mooketsi done in conjunction with the local pastoral team – 32 participants, lay animators.
- 24 Evaluation of the workshop with the pastoral team.
- 25 Seminar at Phalaborwa (60 participants, laity, religious, priest).
- 26 Seminar at Luis Trichard (38 participants, laity, priest).
- 27 Three sessions at London Mission – 93 participants - lay, religious, priest.
- 28-Mar 2 **Diocesan Workshop** at Luis Trichard (42 participants – lay, religious, clerics). Again done in conjunction with diocesan pastoral team.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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- 4 Diocesan session to report on and evaluate the work done, also to plan for the future (25 participants – Bishop, laity, priests, religious).
- 5 Session with the Comboni Fathers at Witbank.
- 7 Session with Bishop Slattery to discuss strategies regarding Basic Christian communities and justice awareness in the diocese.
- 9 Follow-up visit to St Scholastica Mission. Session with youth (34 participants).  
- session at Muwaweni (100 participants, laity).
- 12 Visit to Malulele Mission and two neighbouring refugee settlements.
- 14 Meeting with youth leader from Sekgopo.
- 15 Further session at Muwaweni (100 participants). Visits to outstations at Magoro and Rotterdam.
- 18 Basic community meeting at Lenyenye (25 participants).
- 20-25 Easter spent with youth at the Don Bosco Catholic Youth Centre, Johannesburg (40 participants).
- April 1** Departure.

### **Ethiopia**

- July 1-12** Course at Adigrat (52 participants – seminarians, sisters, laity, priests).
- 14-20 Follow-up work to the course at the Adua Salesian Mission.
- 23-7 Similar work at the Salesian Makelle Mission.
- 25-30 Sharing with Salesian community and novices in Addis.  
- meetings with diocesan personnel in Addis.  
- Cardinal requests a national summer school on Basic Communities and Justice Awareness for July 1998.

### **Zimbabwe**

**August 2** Arrive Harare.

- 3 Planning with Fr Kyran Murphy, National Pastoral Director.
- 4-8 **National Winter School in Harare** (65 participants - lay cleric and religious).
- 11-15 Visit to **Tzaneen, South Africa**, to evaluate with the Diocesan Pastoral Team the steps taken to implement the February workshops.
- 18-22 **National Winter School** in Bulawayo (96 participants, Archbishop Karlen, V.G., laity, religious, priests).
- 25-30 Evaluation and Planning with the National Pastoral Director. Media work with Fr Oscar Wermter S.J. (cf. enclosures).

**September 1** Depart Harare.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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### **Comments on the Work**

#### **South Africa**

There were small Christian communities already existing in Tzaneen, but they needed a fresh impetus and a vision. I worked on these issues together with the Diocesan Pastoral Team entrusted with the promotion of small (basic) Christian communities. I thought it important to empower and work with this local team consisting of a sister and two lay persons. The relevance of the communities to justice, peace, and development was dealt with in the course of our sessions. Ideas on justice and development were taken to the national assembly and very much appreciated there. We encourage basic Christian communities to promote other basic Christian communities, of course, but also to uphold any group, whether of a religious nature or not, that is doing anything for the betterment of society. I made a quick visit by bus to Tzaneen six months later while working in Zimbabwe, and I must say the team was making notable progress in animating and extending groups. Bishop Slattery is very supportive. His diocese is quite needy.

#### **Ethiopia**

I found that the whole idea of small (basic) Christian communities was new to Ethiopia. The Orthodox Church is very traditional and focused on liturgy and prayer rather than on justice. The local Roman Rite also needs to be awakened on the issue of justice. The course given at Adigrat was a start. The young priests, seminarians, sister and lay persons who attended were open to the vision of Church and world with small communities model. There are Christian groups, the *mehaber*, going back hundreds of years upon which something might be built. The Cardinal, Paulus, spoke to me regarding this and asked that we do a Summer School on the communities next July ('98) in Addis. I feel he was enthusiastic, because he walked through the wet and the mire to bring me to the lay person in charge of the laity office to talk about this. The seminary is also keen on doing something. All this is a wholesome development, because the Church in Africa realised at its Synod of a few years ago that the small Christian communities are at the heart of much of what it wants to do for the continent in terms of evangelization, justice and peace, development, education, inculturation, morality...

The people who did the course in Adigrat are already making a humble start on the small communities.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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### **Zimbabwe**

At this stage I have shared on small (basic) Christian communities, justice and development in every diocese of Zimbabwe, and groups abound there. In both Summer Schools ('97) I worked in conjunction with local teams. It proved necessary to sharpen up the vision and there was quite an exchange on the practicalities of development. However, a government official, who works in the area of development, encouraged me to keep up the good work, because, where the communities existed, they offered an excellent basis for development. Another, who gives seminars on self-reliance, told me that two-thirds of the work in this respect is already done by the communities before he gets to them.

## **SECTION 16.0**

**Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, 1998**

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**Fr James O'Halloran SDB**

**Programme on Basic Christian  
Communities and Justice  
Awareness in Africa 1998,  
Plus Request for Payment  
of Remainder of Grant  
(Project No. 100-0/297)**

**Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Ireland**

**Budget for Remainder of  
Grant for above Project**

**Accountant  
Ms Pauline McDonnell  
3 Sycamore Avenue  
Kingswood Heights  
Dublin 22**



## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**Report on Project 100-0/297**

**James O'Halloran SDB, 1998**

**Wadzanai Training Centre, Harare, Zimbabwe**

**May 01 – May 31**

Gave a course (12 hours per week) to some 50 students and staff. The students, who are mostly youthful pastoral workers (clerical religious and lay) hail from all parts of Zimbabwe and will return with their knowledge to those places.

Some years ago we set up pilot communities in this institute, so that the students could learn by doing. Currently there are five such groups operating within the training centre, and the staff find them a great help to the functioning of the centre. Furthermore, past students have set up similar awareness groups within the University of Zimbabwe. As you know, the students within the University have their own just grievances to address at the moment, apart from the wider issues that are arising in the country (land distribution, and the massacres that occurred in Matebeleland in the early eighties, accounts of which became officially known in 1997). I think it is a wonderful opportunity to be able to share on the subjects of basic communities and justice awareness with these young people. I also strive, through the participative methodology that I use, to make of the course a significant experience in adult education. I have a preoccupation to empower local people, in order that they will carry on by themselves.

### **Anglicans and Methodists**

While at Wadzanai, I also gave a two-day course to a united group of Anglicans and Methodists. They asked for it, and I felt that people who had made such a splendid ecumenical gesture were worthy of help. They were about 40 in number.

### **Consultation**

As always, there were many hours of one on one consultation in the course of my time in Zimbabwe.

### **Visa Request**

Spent the days from June 1-5 in London, procuring a visa for Ethiopia. Left on morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>.

## Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016

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Ethiopia National Summer School,  
Addis Ababa  
July 13 – 18

There were 60 participants, hailing from every diocese except Adigrat (I gave a Summer School there in 1997). There was a good mixture of lay people, religious and priests present. Bishop Leonardus Dobelaar, who is in charge of pastoral matters in Ethiopia, put in quite an appearance at the sessions, and the Cardinal, Paulus of Addis Ababa, came in person to close the Summer School. The participants were most happy with the workshop, and came up with lots of practical suggestions for establishing basic communities in their various dioceses. Naturally, though the people were somewhat fearful, the whole issue of the impending war surfaced in group work. I told them it would be surprising if they weren't to raise the issue, because action for justice is an essential part of preaching the gospel (*Justice in the World*, Synod of Bishops 1971). Despite propaganda to the contrary on television, nobody, whether Ethiopian or Eritrean wants war. But my fear is that, for whatever reason, the politicians do want it. The Bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea, to give them their due, have written a public letter to both governments to desist from conflict. As of now, Eritreans are being deported from Ethiopia and Ethiopians from Eritrea, families are being split and there are violations of human rights. Mary Robinson, the European Commissioner on human rights, has in fact intervened. Although the bishops have spoken up, they don't seem as bold as their counterparts in Kenya, for example. The Church in Ethiopia is extremely traditional and has a way to go in these matters, I feel. Of course it was rather like that in Kenya when I first went there in 1981. I hope I may have contributed a little to the change; the basic communities certainly did. The younger folk are open to change and will, no doubt, be more forthcoming. I thought one young man on the Summer School hit the nail on the head, when he said, "We have had thirty years of war and famine. That's enough. We must have peace now." Amen to that!

Basic communities are in their beginnings in Ethiopia. However, there is a whole network of traditional groups called the *mahaberat* and some of those who took part in the Summer School believe that the basic communities can be built on these. They already do much to link people together.

## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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### **Summer School at St Francis Seminary, Addis Ababa, for Newly Ordained Priests and Deacons, July 19-24**

Following on the previous Summer School, I was requested to do this one for these young men, who because of commitments, were unable to attend the first. I have to say that they were a very pleasant and impressive group, who responded well. Their concerns were the same as their colleagues of the other course. I arrived back in Dublin on 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Consultation**

Again, as in Zimbabwe, many individuals came to consult me about basic communities and justice awareness.

I arrived back in Ireland on July 26<sup>th</sup>.

*Jim O'Halloran*

28-07-1998

## **SECTION 17.0**

### **South Africa**

**(Small Christian Communities and AIDs pandemic) 2001**

# Glad Tidings of Small Communities



PHOTO BY FRANK O'HALLORAN

*Fr Jim O'Halloran SDB was in Africa recently, running workshops for small Christian communities. While the world suggests 'safe sex' and condoms as a solution for Africa's AIDS pandemic, Fr Jim found the members of the Christian communities adamant, that ultimately the solution lay in fidelity to one partner in marriage and discipline among young people.*

When you look at a mountain, you see what is above ground. What you don't see is the vast foundation of that mountain below ground. An African man made this perceptive remark in a workshop held in March 2001 in the diocese of Tzaneen, South Africa. He was referring to the AIDS pandemic and implying that, owing to widespread denial, the true extent of the dire disease was being hidden. Indeed the devastating statistic is that one in every five South Africans is HIV positive. Yet rarely is AIDS given as the cause of death; there is much shame surrounding the issue. It is the leprosy of modern times, and those stricken are often

shunned. Tuberculosis, malaria, or some other malady is blamed for someone's demise. It is never AIDS! One missionary paid monthly visits to an elderly lady in order to give her the sacraments. What she never told him was that in an adjacent room her daughter was dying, in the final throes of AIDS.

This lack of openness is, of course, lethal. It means that the plague is allowed to spread unchecked. There is a consensus that the malady is largely men driven, but their promiscuity goes unchallenged. They are hard to reach, do not readily come to workshops, and, to make matters worse, are often on the move for reasons of work. My hus-

band is away for three months at a time,' said one desperate woman. 'What is he doing during the time he is away?' In the current environment the women are the victims. 'We are under a death sentence,' said the same woman. Then the problem was made worse by President Mbeki's extraordinary statement that there was no connection between being HIV positive and full-blown AIDS.

## THE GOOD NEWS

The foregoing is the sad news. Now for some good news. The Church is acting effectively to combat AIDS, and small Christian communities are playing no small part in this. There have been notable programmes in

places like Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa to counter this dread disease. These programs involve prevention, primarily through education, yet are also attentive to the needs of the stricken. So great is the pandemic, that the normal health services are overwhelmed; society in general has to be involved in the solution to the problem. We find members of small Christian communities visiting the sick, getting the ill to hospitals or mobile clinics, burying the dead, helping the infected carry on life as best they can - even doing some crafts or gardening for profit.

#### CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

My own hands-on experience of this endeavour was in Tzaneen, South Africa, the diocese whose bishop is Tipperary-man Hugh Slattery from Nenagh. There is a team set up to deal with all aspects of the problem: medical, psychological, sociological, and spiritual. I found myself partnering a local African man, Mohashie, on the spiritual issue, and that was enriching. We conducted over twenty workshops, reaching some 800 people in the course of our work. What we explored with these folk, many of whom were members of small Christian communities and youth groups, was how a Christian spirituality could help to prevent AIDS in the first instance, and, then, console those already stricken. The government is of course taking its own measures to combat the pandemic. A widespread distribution of condoms would be part of it. We found the members of the Christian communities adamant, however,

that ultimately the solution lay in fidelity to one partner in marriage and discipline among young people.

This stance of the communities is radical and counter-cultural. Which is fitting, because Africa is faced with the stark choice of either life or death. I believe it will choose life, and that a new Africa will emerge from this darkest hour. In other words the continent must overcome this Calvary to rise gloriously from the dead, as Jesus did. Since we were working all over the Easter season, this metaphor was very much in my mind.

#### PROVIDENTIAL CHOICE

For the past thirty years, small Christian communities have been growing in Africa. Indeed the African Synod of Bishops, 1994, chose Family/Church, articulated through small Christian communities, as their appropriate model of Church. There are thousands and thousands of these communities in Africa. Now given the important role they are playing in combatting AIDS, one can see that the hand of Providence was clearly at work in their proliferation.

#### DRIVING PARENTS TO MASS

The leap from Tzaneen to Crumlin (Dublin) is a huge one, but the link is small Christian community. One such community and some associated groups have been linked to the Salesian House for well-nigh twenty years now. In the beginning the small community was composed largely of recent school-leavers. All were single and carefree. With the years, however, they started getting

married and having families. Quite a number of marriages emerged from the various groups, and, thanks be to God, they are forming happy Christian families. However, a problem arose. The youth model on which things thrived for a number of years eventually wore thin and did not suit any more. As children came along, finding time for meetings became a problem.

One of the ways in which this was solved was to have a children friendly Mass once a month. Once a month, because we did not want to take people out of their parishes too much. Following the Mass we have tea together and some goodies for the children. So successful has this venture been, that we have the paradox of children driving their parents to Mass (bringing up parents today is not easy!). We must be doing something right here. All those adults who come are our friends, sharing our concern for young people, and are really part of our Salesian Family. May not this be the Salesian Congregation of the future: vowed religious and lay people all committed together in Don Bosco's Project for the welfare of young people.

I felt moved to share this idea, because it could be implemented in any place where we have a religious community. Also those attending such a Eucharist could be encouraged to prepare the gospel of the Sunday in question in their families beforehand. Some neighbouring families might even come together for this purpose. Give it a go! ■

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## **SECTION 18.0**

**Malawi and South Africa  
(Mission on behalf of APSO – Irish Government Agency  
for Short Service Overseas)  
2003**

**Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth  
Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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**APSO**

Bishop's Square  
Redmond's Hill  
Dublin 2 Ireland

Fr Jim O'Halloran  
Salesian House  
St Teresa's Road  
Dublin 12

7 February 2003

Dear Fr Jim,

**Re: SSO Assignment: Malawi & South Africa**  
**Dates: 28 February – 10 May 2003**

Thank you for undertaking this SSO assignment.

APSO provides pre-departure training, and financial support and basic back-up for you while you are overseas. APSO is not your employer and does not assume the responsibilities of an employer. You will be assigned to work in a specialist capacity with an overseas employer to whom you will report. APSO's role is confined to arranging (through training and funding) and facilitating (through the sponsoring agency here) this assignment, and has no further role in relation to your employment and in particular assumes no responsibility for loss, injury or damage occurring during your assignment. In this regard, you should pay particular attention to the insurance cover provided. You should satisfy yourself that the insurance arrangements provided are sufficient for your purposes.

APSO agrees to pay to you the following amounts:

€63.48 per day to cover out of pocket expenses including food, private phone calls etc.

€761.84 Pre-departure Grant. This amount is a contribution towards pre-departure expenses including inoculations, visas etc and is only paid once per annum.

APSO will also cover the cost of a return air ticket and travel insurance cover.

Please contact the Tropical Medical Bureau, 34 Grafton Street, Dublin 2 (Tel: 01 671 9200) or Mercer Medical Centre, Stephen's Street, Dublin 2 (Tel: 01 478 1167) who will advise you on



## **Work in Africa on Small Christian Communities, Related Christian Youth Groups and Justice Awareness : January 1981 - 2016**

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vaccinations. We strongly advise consultation with a specialist tropical centre rather than reliance on a local pharmacist or general practitioner.

There are special Social Welfare provisions for overseas workers, which are explained in the leaflet "Social Welfare Regulations for Volunteer Development Workers". This scheme is relevant if you are under 66 years of age. However, if you are over 66 years of age or currently paying PRSI through employment or a pension, this will not apply to you.

All Specialist Service Overseas assignees are requested to submit a report at the end of their assignment. Please send me a copy of your report within one month of your return home. Whenever possible we also arrange a short debriefing in APSO.

Please ensure that you leave no outstanding debts upon completion of your assignment. APSO cannot be responsible for making payments on your behalf to cover these debts.

I wish you well in your assignment.

Kind regards,

*C Lathrop*

C. Lathrop  
Specialist Service Overseas

Encs: Cheque to cover costs agreed  
Report Form

## **SECTION 19.0**

## **CONCLUSION**

## **CONCLUSION**

At the end of all these endeavours, I would tend to summarise my vision in the light of the kingdom like this. I start with these Small Christian Communities. If one is to reach out successfully, you must be sure of your identity, so within my own Church I would be fostering the Small Communities and other helpful groups. Beyond it, I would encourage small groups of all kinds, whether religious or civic, that are doing anything to build a better world, or the kingdom. And I would have them ALL support one another in any way they can while not neglecting their own work in so doing. Here Thomas Merton's statement that 'we are all one' becomes relevant, and that our differences, though serious enough and demanding attention, are not to be compared to this overall unity. This provides a way of building up creation, motivated by Small Community and Group together with the spirituality that inspires them. As for the depths of the spirituality and love that underlies this vision, I feel at a loss for words to describe it.