

AsIPA B: Training for Small Christian Communities

B/11

MINISTRY AND MISSION IN SCCS

(This session can be divided into two or three parts to allow for reflection on actual needs and situations and to allow for good planning and launching of new ministries)

Introduction

In our Small Christian Communities we would not like to have only one or two leaders who organize all the others to do the various tasks of the community. We prefer to speak about 'emerging' leaders who come forward when there is a new task or there is someone needing to be replaced. These emerging leaders take responsibility for a particular work or ministry for a fixed duration.

In some of our SCCs the same people have been burdened with leading the community for many years. They call the members together for meetings, they facilitate the Gospel Sharing, they represent the SCC in the Parish Pastoral Council and they also call all the members when someone dies and the family of the deceased requests for prayers. There is no end to the variety of jobs these two leaders are called to do. The result of this kind of multi tasking leadership is :

1. No one wants to be a leader because it is too demanding and difficult.
2. Many members remain passive and wait to be told what to do and how to do it.
3. Many gifts and talents in the community are left untapped and many needs remain unmet.
4. The leaders get tired and burnt out which leads to fewer meetings and a dying community.

In this session we would like to look at the way leadership and ministries can grow in our SCCs.

A. WHAT IS EMERGING LEADERSHIP?

Read this story and reflect with the help of the questions that follow:

Monica was a very quiet member of her SCC. She was regular at meetings and whenever possible she would come with her husband Tony. They were sometimes willing to host the meetings in their home too. One day, during the meeting (In step 6 of Gospel Sharing) someone raised the sad case of a young woman who was looking after her elderly mother and was now down herself with a very debilitating illness and was not able to afford house help. When Monica and Tony heard this they felt the Spirit move them to offer to reach out in many small ways to this sick woman and her family. When they began to visit her and attended a training workshop on pastoral care of the sick, they in fact began the 'ministry to the sick' in their Small Christian Community. They continued to care for this woman and later one more sick person was added to their visits. They 'emerged' as leaders in the ministry to the sick. As this community was rather small and other members were busy with their own ministries, this care of the sick was mainly the work of Monica and Tony. After some time, they moved into another ministry and introduce others to this work.

Questions for reflection:

- a. What can we understand about 'emerging leadership' from the story above? Why do we say 'emerging'?
- b. What features do you find in the story about emerging leadership?

Supplement

- We can speak of emerging leadership when someone comes forward in the community to offer their service for a particular need that has arisen. It can also happen that the community are aware of the particular gifts of this person or couple and suggests they should be the ones to take on this responsibility.
- The other features in the story are: 1. Training is an integral part before taking on a ministry. 2. Leading in a ministry is always with a fixed duration so that others will have a chance at serving and those in the ministry can experience other ways of serving. (Rotating leadership)
- Doing a particular task in your BEC/SCC like visiting the sick does not mean you have to take care of all the sick in your neighbourhood but only as many as you can practically manage at the moment.

CREED OF EMERGING LEADERS

Read altogether

“As emerging leaders we believe that:

- a. Everyone has gifts that need to be activated in the community. Everyone can take the lead in some small way.**
- b. We can respond to the call of God to serve the least of my sisters and brothers’ in many small ways right here in our neighborhoods and families.**
- c. We share in the mission of Christ in our own unique way while serving church and society.”**

A. WHAT IS MINISTRY?

a. *Read the following text and try to discover some aspects of ministry and its meaning.*

i) Ricky lives in the Philippines. He lives near a river which every year for the past five years has overflowed and caused severe flooding and damage to his village. Through a parish programme he discovered that the flooding was partly due to the illegal felling of trees for timber by a foreign company just up river. The company had abandoned the site and it was now a wasteland. He spoke with his SCC members and they decided that they would spend one Saturday a month planting seedlings of their native trees in that wasteland.

ii) Mona lives in Singapore. She lives in a mature housing estate where many families are made up of only the elderly parents with all their children grown up and living elsewhere. She belongs to a Small Christian Community in one of the housing blocks. She lives on the 10th floor. She is aware of at least two elderly couples in her block who have difficulty with simple household chores and the weekly marketing etc. She spoke with her SCC and suggested that there must be more such people in other blocks. Her community then decided that they could ask two members of their community to serve as regular visitors and helpers for some of these elderly persons. Mona offered her services and joined the ministry to the elderly.

iii) Fatimah lives in India. One day when she was returning from a visit to the spice market she noticed some children playing in a side street. They looked very poor with their ragged clothing and skinny frames. She wondered why these children were not in school as it was a weekday. She spoke with her BEC/SCC about this observation when they next met and two from her community decided to go and find these children and find out why they were not in school. They later discovered that these

children were not able to read or write and were passed the age of normal schooling. Since Fatimah was a retired teacher herself she worked with her team mate to visit these children and invite them for an hour or two each week to learn basic literacy. They managed to gather 5 children within 3 weeks and started a small class every week. In this way the ministry to street children started.

Question for Reflection

What do these three stories of people who began a new ministry tell us about the meaning of ministry?

Supplement

- Ministry can be seen as the result of being a good shepherd. The good shepherd constantly ministers for the well-being of the flock.
- Ministry can also be the result of being a good steward. We know that all of creation is not ours but is given in trust. Therefore we have the obligation to take good care of it.
- It means doing a service because we care, we feel compassion and we know that a follower of Christ acts with the heart of Christ.
- Ministry is what we do when we are on mission to make the world a better place, reduce poverty, loneliness, oppression.
- People who minister as Jesus did, build the kingdom of God. One who ministers is one who serves.
- Not all services are ministries. When an action is for the purpose of serving mainly one's own interests we cannot call it ministry.

A. New ministries needed in our community

*Reflect as a whole group on the question below with the help of the list given.
If you find the list is not helpful, make your own list.*

**1. What are the tasks or outreach works we are already doing in our BEC/
SCC on a regular basis?**

Ministry	Yes	No	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly
1. Visiting the sick						
2. Caring for children						
3. Caring for the elderly						
4. Visiting poor families						
5. Organising the youth						
6. Caring for the environment						
7. Journeying with the bereaved						
8. Catechizing						

catechumens

9. Organizing
home
catechesis

10.
Volunteering in
homes for the
aged or sick

11. Running a
parish project

12

13

14

2. Ministries required in our community and neighbourhood

a. What are the short term needs of our own community?

For example, a member of our group needs someone to take care of her elderly mother for a couple of hours while she goes for her own medical appointment, or someone needs a child minder for a day because of the school holidays and she has to work.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

b. What are the long term needs in our own vicinity

For example – garbage is not collected regularly, drainage is a big problem in our immediate vicinity which creates the problem of malaria or dengue.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

c. What are the short term or long term needs of our neighbours?

For example - Are there elderly housebound? Are there latch-key children? Are there people with no food or school fees? Are there unemployed youth?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

d. What are the needs of our parish?

For example - Are any of us able to catechize adults or children? Give professional counseling? Give free medical or legal aid? Provide gifts at Christmas time for needy children etc.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

e. What are the needs of society – just name one or two serious problems which you can find existing in your own area too.

For example - youth unemployed or a dengue epidemic, or national elections coming soon and a heavy campaign in your area.

1 _____

2 _____

Once you have made a list of all the needs, try to put them into three columns:

What we can do now	What we can do later	What we can never do
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1. _____	_____	_____
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2. _____	_____	_____
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3. _____	_____	_____
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4. _____	_____	_____
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5. _____	_____	_____
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Take Note

We should be very careful not to overburden the community with too many tasks at the same time. We do not need to solve all our problems or the problems of our neighbours in a week or two. We should only take on those tasks that we can do regularly and we can sustain without any strain to members.

Choose one or two tasks and ask the following questions of the group:

1. Who will be responsible for this task? (Let leaders 'emerge')
2. What training do we need before we begin? Whom can we ask for help?
3. When will we start? (After the training if possible)
4. What plan is needed?
 - a. Check with the parish for information on this ministry. The training available at parish or diocesan level, the historical details you may need to know about this ministry; the permissions or letters you may need to go out in the name of the parish etc.
 - b. For how long will this team of two or three be responsible for this ministry. A time frame should be given so they know they will serve for one or two years at the most.
 - c. The whole community should know about this new ministry and should feel co-responsible for the work of this team as they are sent in the name of this community.
 - d. Regular reports on the team's work can be done in Step 6 of the Gospel Sharing.

Make a plan and commission the two or three members chosen for this task with the following prayer:

Lord, you sent out the 72 disciples and told them not to be concerned too much about what to take or what to say. These two servants of yours wish to serve you in the ministry of _____ and they entrust their work and lives to you. We ask your blessing on them, we ask fervently for you to send them your Holy Spirit so that everything they do or say comes from you alone.

We send them Lord in your name and bless them. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Repeat this process for each new ministry. Do not create too many new ministries unless you can accompany and assist all of them with training and follow up support.

A report of any new ministries should be made immediately to the parish so that appropriate training can be designed and budgets if financing is needed.

Close the session with a prayer or hymn.