

# The Role of Church Activities in Sustaining Basic Ecclesial Community (B.E.C.) at the Archdiocesan Shrine of Sto. Niño Parish: A Case Study

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**Abstract**—This study examined the role of church activities in sustaining the Basic Ecclesial Communities at the Archdiocesan Shrine of Sto. Nino Parish in Midsayap, Cotabato. This research employed a case study approach to deeply examine the B.E.C. and its activities. It involved face-to-face interviews with 13 participants, including B.E.C. leaders and members from seven local chapels. A self-made questionnaire underwent face and content validation to ensure its veracity. Data were analyzed using mean and thematic analyses. The findings indicate that Bible studies, common reflections, and supportive leaders were instrumental in encouraging B.E.C. members to actively participate. The factors identified that influenced continued participation by B.E.C. members underscore the essence of leadership support as well as motivation by colleagues, a flexible timeframe among them, and fostering unity in society. Furthermore, parish activities, such as encouraging participation in B.E.C. groups, play a critical role in promoting community development and spiritual nourishment for its members. To improve the B.E.C. program at the Archdiocesan Shrine of Santo Niño in Midsayap and address the challenges identified in the study, the parish could implement several key recommendations: establish clear communication channels as one way of enhancing awareness and inclusiveness about BEC activities among parishioners, which can be achieved through organizing orientation workshops or introducing feedback mechanisms through which information reaches the public garnered from such activities; building relationships through formation programs; praying as a community; and encouraging continuous growth to stay invested in BECs. Parish leadership should provide pastoral support, financial aid, training opportunities, performance evaluation, and spiritual guidance towards the empowerment of BECs.

**Keywords**— Basic Ecclesial Community (B.E.C.): Involvement: Leadership: Participation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church has been undergoing a process of renewal and reform in recent years, with a renewed emphasis on synodality and participation. One key aspect of this renewal is the promotion of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), which are small faith communities that gather regularly for prayer, reflection, and action (Picardal,1995). Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC), often referred to as "Christian base communities," are small gatherings of individuals who come together to deepen their faith, share their spiritual journey, and engage in acts of social

transformation. These communities serve as spaces for reflection, prayer, and action, allowing laypeople to take ownership of their faith and contribute meaningfully to the life of the Church. By emphasizing the importance of dialogue, shared decision-making, and solidarity, BECs empower individuals to live out their Christian vocation in a communal setting (Picardal,1995).

BECs have played a significant role in the Catholic Church as grassroots movements that foster faith, community, and social action. These small groups, rooted in the principles of solidarity, justice, and inclusivity, have emerged as vital components of the church's mission to engage and empower its members. BECs are characterized by their simplicity, informality, and focus on the gospel message of love, justice, and solidarity. Lay leaders, trained and supported by the local church, typically lead them, often undertaking social and pastoral projects that cater to the community's needs. The importance of BECs lies in their ability to create a sense of belonging and community among their members, as well as foster a deeper understanding of the church's evangelization mission.

The researcher undertook an exposure program at the Archdiocesan Shrine of Sto. Niño Parish, Midsayap, North Cotabato. Throughout his immersion period, he was motivated to learn more about the many faith traditions, leadership styles, and different programs and activities conducted in the parish which led him to conduct this case study.

### 1.1 Research Questions

The study examined the Basic Ecclesial Community (B.E.C.) formation programs and activities conducted within the parish of Santo Nino in Midsayap, Cotabato. It aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What B.E.C. formation programs and activities are conducted in the parish?
2. How are the B.E.C. activities being sustained in the parish?
3. How did the church activities help in sustaining the B.E.C.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to thoroughly investigate various religious traditions, theological underpinnings,

leadership styles, and parish activities and their role in sustaining the BEC. The study, which focused on seven chapels in the Santo Niño Midsayap district, was held in the Archdiocesan Shrine at Santo Niño Parish in Midsayap, North Cotabato. There were thirteen participating, seven of them female and six of them male. This study used a case study methodology to investigate the B.E.C. and its operations. Face-to-face interviews with participants utilizing a validated interview guide questionnaire were used to collect data. The data was interpreted using thematic analyses, which improved the researcher's knowledge of BECs and their function in the parish community.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

RQ 1. What B.E.C formation Programs and Activities are conducted in the Parish

All 13 respondents identified the 7 Steps in Bible sharing as the only visible program conducted by the parish in their BEC.

Parish-based religious community activities can range widely based on the traditions, needs, and means of that particular community (Picardal, 2017). Some common

gatherings that an ecclesial community may host in a parish are as follows: Worship Sessions are the main attraction in any parish. These services include Sunday Mass, weekday Mass, special holiday services, and sacramental occasions like weddings, christenings, and funerals. prayer gatherings Prayer groups are often organised by ecclesial communities for a number of reasons, such as intercessory prayer for the sick or for particular needs within the parish or community at large. Parishes can also take part in evangelization, which is the act of reaching out to people who have never visited church or who are not practicing Catholics. Additionally, they have the ability to support missionary efforts both locally and abroad. Curriculums for teaching: These provide training in the Catholic faith and can include opportunities for adult continuing education as well as catechetical classes for children preparing for their First Holy Communion or Confirmation. These activities promote a sense of community and spiritual advancement in addition to supporting the church's mission to help others and spread the gospel.

RQ 2: How are the B.E.C. activities being sustained in the Parish?

TABLE 1. Sustenance of BEC participation in the parish.

	CODE	THEME
RESPONDENT#1	“Na mentain namo diri sa amo ang GKK ang mag participate sa kalihukan sa Parokya kay tungod sa partisipasyon sang miyembrogag sa leader sa amo ang GKK mga active kayo always mag coordinate sa iyang mga miyembro.”	Active participation
RESPONDENT#2	“Deri sa GKK namon kay taga is saamon gina encourage gid nga mag cooperate amo na nga kong ano ang programa nga gina hatag deri saamon GKK ara ang tanan para mag suporta.”	Cooperation
RESPONDENT#3	“Sa amon nga GKK kisa di man gid kami maka participate sa mga activity sa Parokya kay layo man deri saamon kag budlay ang dalan amo nan ga kisa lang kami maka participate.”	Cannot participate regularly due to the distance
RESPONDENT#4.	“Dito saamin always talaga kami maka cooperate sa mga activity ng parish lalo na kasi ang leader di nya pinabayaan ang kanyang miyembro na mag remind para sumali kahit na busy ay mag kaisam padin.”	Responsible leadership Cooperation
RESPONDENT#5	“Kis ah wala gid partisipasyon kong sino lang always active amo lang na anga maka cooperate talagsa lang indi gid ma sustain kayo.”	Inconsistent participation
RESPONDENT#6	“Na sustain namon nga mag participate sa mga kalihukan sa Parokya kay tanan naga binuligay”	Sustained participation
RESPONDENT#7	“Kaykami abi deri gina mitingan dayon namon kag planuhan kong ano amon buhaton kag gina encourage gid sang leader ang matag isa nga mag cooperate.”	Responsible leadership Encouragement Cooperation
RESPONDENT#8	“Na sustain namon nga mag cooperate kay ara ang supurta kag tinabangay sang matag isa saamon.”	Cooperation Support
RESPONDENT#9	“Kisa abi naka depindi sa leader kay kong wala naga participate ang leader wala participation nga matabo kay wala may naga lihog kisa lang man nga mag participate di saamon”	Depends on leader
RESPONDENT#10	“Kay may ara participation kag cooperate ang tanan amo nan ga ma sustain gid ang mga activity nga gina hatag sang parish”	Participation Cooperation
RESPONDENT#11	“Lagyo abi ang mga balay balay di amo na di maka attend ang iban amo na nga di ma sustains “	Geographical distance
RESPONDENT#12	“Talagsa lang man maka participate di saamon kay halos tanan busy sa trabaho”	Busy
RESPONDENT#13	“Basta mag binuligay lang kag active sapag cooperate ma sustain gid ang programa para man gihapon ni sa aton kaayuhan sa aton nga gagmay kristuhanong katilingan.”	Cooperation

Table 2 describes how the B.E.C. maintains participation and cooperation in the parish's activities. Respondent 1 states that they are actively participating. Respondents 2, 10, 13, and 4 reiterate that they maintain participation because they encourage and assist everyone in taking part and cooperating. Respondents 3,5, 9, 11, and 12 state that they are not consistent in terms of participating because of the distance and busy schedules at work. Respondents 4 and 7, however, report that it is because their leader is so responsible, particularly in reminding and encouraging their members. Respondents 6 and 8 state that they maintain unity.

It is imperative to implement multiple critical methods to maintain the continuity and efficacy of Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) programs within a parish. Here are some strategies for maintaining BEC operations: (Nadeau,1999.) First is pastoral support. Make certain that BEC activities have regular pastoral support from the parish priest or pastoral personnel. This entails providing BEC members and leaders with direction, support, and spiritual leadership. The next step is regular communication, which ensures that there are open lines of communication between members, BEC leaders, and parish leadership. Make sure that everyone is aware of any

essential updates regarding BEC activities, such as schedule changes or future events. Make use of a range of communication channels, including social media, parish websites, bulletin announcements, and newsletters. The next step is integration with parish life: to promote cooperation and synergy, and integrate BEC initiatives with the parish's larger activities. To foster a sense of cohesion and common purpose among the parish community, encourage BEC members to get involved in parish-wide events and ministries, and vice versa. Next is Financial Support: Set aside enough cash and resources to support BEC programs, such as buying Bible

study materials, planning retreats or workshops, and paying for outreach projects. So that the events can continue and be viable in the long run, encourage BEC members to make regular financial donations. By putting these methods into practice, parish leaders can help to support the establishment and vibrancy of basic ecclesial communities within the parish. This will create a lively and engaged faith community that is dedicated to living out the gospel in their daily lives. RQ. 3. How did the church activities help in sustaining the BEC?

TABLE 2. Helpfulness' of church activities in sustaining BECs as perceived by respondents

	CODE	THEME
RESPONDENT#1	“Maka tabang syag dako sa amo a labi na sa GKK kay tungod sa ing-ani nga mga programa sa Parokya naga lambo ang GKK kay makita nga naga participate ang matag miyembro.”	Fosters participation
RESPONDENT#2	“Dako gid ang iya nga bulig sa amon nga GKK kay bisan layo sa parish maka cooperate gyapon kami sa mga aktibidad kag kalihukan sa simbahan bisan nga deri lang kami sa GKK.”	Fosters participation
RESPONDENT#3	“Oo naka bulig gid sya saamon nga GKK kay pariho dati kis ah lang mag tambong ang mga iban nga miyembro lalo na kong may mga himoon kami sa simbahan. tungod sa mga gina hatag sang Parokya nga programa daw na buhian ang amon GKK nga mag participate.”	Fosters participation
RESPONDENT#4.	“Nakaka tulong sya sa GKK for example ang 7 step kasi kagaya nalang sa malayo ang lugar or may mga sakit di na maka simba maka rinig padin sila ng Gospel dahil sa mga Bible service ng mga miyembro ng kanilang GKK kagaya dito saamin maraming mga matatanda at may sakit na di na maka simba.”	Bring the Gospel to peripheries
RESPONDENT#5	“Naka bulig man sya saamon kaso kisa abi indi active ang iban nga miyembro kay busy pero kong sa tood lang damo tani ma himo ang mga programa kong active ang iban nga miyembro.”	Contributes a lot
RESPONDENT#6	“Naka bulig sya saamon nga kay amo gani ni layo kami sa parish pero maka cooperate kami gihapon tungod sa gina hatag sang Parokya “	Cooperation
RESPONDENT#7	“Maka bulig sya aamon ah kay pariho sa mga prayer dati wala gid tamon ti naman-an kong ano ang mga proper subong daw ok ok na”	Strengthens faith
RESPONDENT#8	“Halin satong may mga programa na sa GKK halin sa Parokya dako tana iya nga bulig kay daw nag bag o ang tanan nga miyembro”	Transforms members
RESPONDENT#9	“Dako sya nga bulig saamon kay ma orient gid ang tanan nga mag participate kag mag sali sa mga prayer”	Fosters participation
RESPONDENT#10	“Naka bulig sya saamon kay naga active na ang iban naga Sali na sila lalo na sa 7 step namon”	Fosters participation
RESPONDENT#11	“May na bulig man sya pero amo ni wala masyado partisipasyon”	Fosters participation
RESPONDENT#12	“Maka bulig sya nga ma educate ang GKK kasi wala man gid active di”	Educating members
RESPONDENT#13	“Maka hatag abi motivation ang mga programa para sa GKK kay pramag participate pa sa dako nga kapilya”	Motivation

Table 3 illustrates how parish activities support their B.E.C. Respondent 1 says parish activities help them establish and expand their GKK; Respondents 2, 3, 9, and 13 say parish activities help them become focused, active, empowered, and grow in terms of their participation. Respondents 4 report that parish activities help them continue to hear the gospel; Respondents 6, 7, 8, and 12 stated that parish activities help them become educated about how to continue cooperating; Respondent 10 says some of their members are now active; and Respondent 11 says their participation is too small.

Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) have emerged as a vital means to empower the laity and encourage active engagement in church affairs in the 21st century (Justme Catholic Faith, 2015). These smaller religious groups function autonomously and adhere to specific models of community living, worship, and communal Bible study. The essence of BECs lies in fostering a sense of community among their members, typically families, who come together for spiritual growth and mutual support. To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of BECs, church groups must look beyond their internal dynamics and engage with the broader community outside the church walls. By intertwining church activities

with the everyday lives and work of its members, BECs can create a strong foundation for a cohesive and supportive social network. These communities offer a practical and resourceful approach to nurturing a sense of belonging and camaraderie among individuals, countering the dehumanising effects of capitalist market forces. In times of hardship, families find solace and become interconnected within BECs, which mitigates feelings of isolation and fosters a culture of mutual assistance and shared experiences within the community.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the Basic Ecclesial Community (B.E.C.) program at the Archdiocesan Shrine of Santo Niño in Midsayap and address the challenges identified in the study, the parish could implement the following key recommendations:

1. Enhance communication and outreach programs such as establishing clear communication channels such as newsletters, social media, or text messaging can inform parishioners about B.E.C. programs, activities, and events.

2. Organising orientation workshops will help introduce parishioners to B.E.C. programs and their benefits, fostering deeper understanding and greater participation.
3. Regular feedback and evaluation via surveys or suggestion boxes can gather parishioners' input on B.E.C. activities, enabling continuous improvement.
4. Through sessions and ongoing mentorship, B.E.C. leaders will be trained and supported to effectively lead and motivate their communities.
5. Financial assistance and resource allocation, such as creating a centralized fund to support B.E.C. programs, will ensure equal access to resources across all chapels.
6. Inter-chapel events and activities can foster community building and collaboration, enhancing unity and shared purpose.
7. Flexible scheduling and accessibility, including alternative formats like virtual meetings, can accommodate diverse needs and time constraints, allowing for broader participation.
8. Providing ongoing spiritual formation and guidance through prayer groups, Bible studies, and retreats will support B.E.C. leaders and members.

For future studies, the researcher recommends conducting similar research using a larger population using mixed method to improve the reliability of the findings.

IV. CONCLUSION

The unanimous response from all 13 respondents emphasizing the sole visibility of the 7 steps in the Bible sharing program within their respective Basic Ecclesial Communities (B.E.C.) underscores the significant role of Scripture study and communal reflection in the parish setting.

Factors affecting the continuous existence of BEC were because of the participation of the members and their cooperation in parish activities. Respondents who always take part in BEC activities identify supportive leaders thus emphasizing the importance of accountable management in promoting active participation. However, various challenges, such as geographical location and work engagements, have an impact on the consistent involvement of some respondents, necessitating flexible timing or alternative ways to reach others in diverse situations. Additionally, some respondents' emphasis on togetherness speaks to fostering a united community spirit within B.E.C., which can promote cooperation and sustain efforts over time.

Parish activities help support Basic Ecclesial Communities (B.E.C.) such as their frequent attendance in the eucharistic celebration, faith formation, and retreats and recollection programs. These church activities were identified as providing spiritual nourishment to the members of the BEC.

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide Questions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the programs for B.E.C. that you see being implemented at the Archdiocesan Shrine of Sto. Niño Parish?

2. How are the B.E.C. activities being sustained in the Parish?
3. How did the church activities help in sustaining the BEC?

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