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Increasing the Knowledge of Church Citizens through Education on the Importance of Unity of Service as a Foundation for Spiritual Growth

Yane R. Maahury*, Berthin S. Banga, and Yohanna Ristua
Sentani State Protestant Christian Religious College, Jayapura, Indonesia
*yanemaahury82@gmail.com

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Abstract

Some congregation members consider church service the responsibility of the Pastor, the Congregation Council, the Working Board of the Congregation Council, the Church Holidays Committee, or specific groups due to a lack of understanding and awareness of the concept and importance of service unity. Through community service activities at the GKI Syalom Siba Congregation, Sentani, lecturers from the Theology Department of STAKPN Sentani showed dedication to answering the congregation's needs. As a foundation for the spiritual development of the GKI Syalom Siba congregation, Sentani, this community service activity aims to enlighten the congregation on the importance of service unity. The community service activities were conducted using a lecture and question-and-answer format. The congregation of GKI Syalom Siba participated actively and enthusiastically during the activity. The lecture and question-and-answer methods were effective, and the delivery of simple and easy-to-understand materials contributed to the success of this community service activity. Thus, within the framework of congregational unity at GKI Syalom Siba, Sentani, this activity not only increases the intellectual acumen of the congregation but also becomes the basis for its spiritual development. The community service activities not only enrich the knowledge of the congregation but also provide a solid foundation for the spiritual growth of the Pastor, the Elemental Management Board, and the Congregation, totalling fifty people in the context of the unity of ministry at the GKI Syalom Siba Congregation, Sentani.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of GKI Syalom Siba, Sentani, there is a drive to increase church members' knowledge through education about the importance of unity of service as a foundation for spiritual growth. This is reflected in the church's strategic efforts to strengthen relationships between congregations and build unity in service.

Such education can involve various aspects, such as an understanding of biblical principles related to the unity of the ministry, the role of each member in building a spiritual foundation, and its positive impact on individual and collective faith growth. This effort aligns with several church initiatives, such as the introduction of the campus, the digitalization system of church management, and ministry programs aimed at enhancing the congregation's faith growth and spiritual life.

The community service team of the Theology Department of STAKPN Sentani sees the efforts of the GKI Syalom Siba Congregation, Sentani above, so it is necessary to provide an understanding to the congregation regarding the unity of the body of Christ as a foundation in serving, based on 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31, being a focus for improving spiritual life. The impetus to understand and live this concept also comes from the results of research that noted the positive impact of understanding the unity of the body of Christ on church ministry (Kusumawanta & Kii, 2023; Selvianty et al., 2023; Tamoes & Sailendra, 2023).

Unity of service in the church plays an important role in the congregation's spiritual growth. Through unity of service, church members can support each other, build close relationships, and work together to advance the church's mission (Baskoro & Arifianto, 2021; Hutapea, 2013; Malatuny, 2020). This means that a deep understanding of the importance of unity of service as a foundation for spiritual growth can motivate church members to be actively involved in church services.

Some problems that also arise in the GKI Syalom Siba congregation, Sentani, include the following: First, church members lack knowledge and understanding about the concept and importance of unity of service. Some church members think that church services are only the responsibility of the Pastor, the Congregation Council, the Elemental Serving Board, the Church Holidays Committee or certain groups so not all church members feel actively involved. Proper education about the unity of ministry can help change this perception and encourage active participation from all church members.

Secondly, limited resources affect the implementation of church ministries, such as a lack of funds, limited facilities, and a lack of faithful volunteers who serve God. This can affect the church's ability to provide adequate education on the importance of unity of service. Identifying and understanding these constraints can help in designing appropriate strategies to increase church members' knowledge.

Third, the unity of ministry allows each congregation member to use their spiritual gifts. However, in a supposedly organized ministry, congregation members do not develop and use their gifts to build up and serve one another. This has not enhanced deeper spiritual growth and strengthened strong relationships with God and others.

As a concrete implementation, lecturers of the Theology Department of STAKPN Sentani carried out community service activities at the GKI Syalom Siba Congregation, Sentani, showing a commitment to responding to community needs and building the unity of the body of Christ in service. This community service activity aims to educate church members about the importance of service unity as a foundation for the spiritual growth of the GKI Syalom Siba congregation, Sentani.

Congregation members can learn and teach one another through education about unity ministry. In this context, knowledge and understanding of biblical teachings and principles of faith can be broadened and deepened. This education can strengthen faith and enrich the spiritual growth of the congregation as a whole. Building unity in the body of Christ in the church is also recognized as an essential principle in church ministry at large (Kadarmanto, 2018; Kaway & Ronda, 2013).

Moreover, congregation members can develop a better Christian character through service unity. (Mawikere, 2018; Sutoyo, 2012).. Service with love, humility, and faithfulness strengthens spiritual growth and forms a more Christ-like (Gulo, 2021; Pradita & Veronica, 2023; Sinar et al., 2023). In service unity, congregation members can learn to overcome egoism and practice the principles of love and service taught by Jesus.

This community service activity aims to enlighten and educate the congregation on the importance of service unity as a foundation for spiritual growth. In the Christian tradition, spiritual growth refers to developing and expanding a person's devotion to God and their

spiritual relationship with Him. A change in character to be similar to Jesus Christ is accompanied by increased faith, understanding of God, and spiritual development.

METHOD

The implementation of the community service activities at GKI Syalom Siba, Sentani uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the PAR (Participation Action Research) method. Through the PAR method, the community service team defines the problem. It conducts additional research to explore relevant data that can be immediately implemented as a solution to the identified problem. (Kosasih, 2019). By finding workable solutions to the issues at hand, the PAR method brings the research process into collective interests (Rahmat & Mirnawati, 2020).

The team actively involved relevant stakeholders in the implementation process to encourage critical reflection on the context, as the rationale for conducting PAR is to achieve the desired change (Supriyatno, 2020). The team assumes an important role in contributing to designing and implementing action plans derived from the research findings. It has relevant knowledge regarding the social system (community) under study. Stages in the PAR method include initial mapping and building relationships with the community, participatory mapping, developing movement strategies, implementing change actions, evaluation, and reflection.

This activity was held at the GKI Syalom Siba Congregation, Sentani District, Jayapura Regency, Papua, on Thursday, April 20, 2023, from 10:00 - 13:00 WIT. Attending participants comprised Pastors, Executive Board Elements, and Congregations totaling fifty people.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the activity, the community service team explained the material to the GKI Syalom Siba congregation, Sentani. A team of competent lecturers explained the material according to the community service theme, which is detailed through three sub-themes, including First, the implementation of church service patterns that refer to the service patterns of the early church according to Acts 2: 41-47 about the growth of members of the body of Christ. The activity of presenting material on implementing church service patterns is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The speaker presenting the material

Some important points about the way of life of the early church as in the study of Patandean & Iskandar (2022), among others:

1. The early church grew spiritually by persevering in the apostles' teaching and fellowship. They continued to study God's word.
2. The congregation lives in unity and togetherness. They uphold a sense of shared belonging and sharing.

3. The congregation held a love feast as a form of togetherness and care for others. They ate together with joy.
4. The lifestyle of the early church is considered effective for the church today. It can support the growth and unity of the body of Christ.
5. Implementing the lifestyle of the early church in today's church can be done through congregational discipleship, evangelism training, and training to share life and serve others. The goal is for the congregation to grow closer to God and spiritually.

All of the above descriptions are necessary in the life of the congregation of GKI Syalom Siba, Sentani, given the importance of setting a good example in the context of early Christianity. The congregation of GKI Syalom Siba was very serious about following the material provided by the community service team. They realized the importance of the church's role in service through example to increase the congregation's faith. This can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2 The congregation of GKI Syalom Siba, while following the material provided by the community service team about the importance of the role of the church in service

Secondly, the community service team explained the importance of GKI Syalom Siba's role in services that include:

1. The church is a tool for knowing Christ and His works. The church has an important role in helping every church member know Christ and recognize His works. Through church services, church members can experience spiritual recovery (Ritonga, 2020).
2. The church is a place of spiritual nurturing because members can be nurtured and encouraged to grow spiritually. To facilitate the expansion of faith in the body of Christ as a whole, the church also offers opportunities for teenagers and youth to be involved in church ministry (Lie, 2021).
3. The church is a place of service and empowerment. It provides opportunities for its members to engage in church and community service. Through church service, members can develop their talents, teach, do missionary work, and do other church work. These services help church members help each other and build better community relationships (Tuai, 2020).
4. The church is a place of faith formation because it is responsible for providing faith formation to its members, especially teenagers. It is important for the church to direct resources, time, and attention to the congregation's spiritual development. By providing a place for the congregation and fulfilling the responsibilities, the church can produce congregation members who are maturing in Christ (Sembiring, 2018).

5. In order to realize God's mission in the world, the church functions as a collective space for collaboration and cooperation. This collaboration includes spiritual cooperation, networking for transformation, and collaboration in implementing community service programs. Churches can positively impact an increasingly complex and diverse society by embracing collaborative efforts with other congregations (Silitonga, 2023).

Third, the community service team explained the sub-theme on the unity of service, which is the foundation of the spiritual growth of the GKI Syalom Siba congregation, Sentani, concerning several aspects, including:

1. In Christianity, spiritual growth is a priority for church leaders and ministers. Organized and unified ministry positively impacts the faith development of individuals and the congregation (Santo & Arifianto, 2022).
2. Active involvement in church services greatly influences spiritual growth. Church service shapes morals and contributes to adult Christian religious education, creating a supportive environment for faith growth. (Tumanggor, 2022).
3. Cell groups play an important role as a form of small ministry unit within the congregation. In cell groups, members unite in prayer and unity, providing spiritual support for spiritual growth. (Padang & Abstract, 2019).
4. Creative and innovative pastoral care builds a foundation of Christian faith that is theologically realistic, bridging the spiritual and humanistic sides to support spiritual growth. (Santoso et al., 2021)
5. Discipleship, as a form of ministry, plays a significant role in the congregation's spiritual growth. Spiritually mature congregation members can be actively involved in discipleship ministries, reducing the burden on the church and supporting faith growth (Harita, 2020).

After presenting the material, the community service team encouraged the congregation to engage in a question-and-answer segment. The congregation was allowed to ask questions, express opinions, or clarify the material presented during this session. The Q&A session on the role of GKI Syalom Siba in ministry is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Q&A session

During the activity, the congregation enthusiastically followed from start to finish, actively discussing or responding quickly related to the material explained by the community service team. After the activity ended, the community service team distributed questionnaires to the participants to get feedback on their understanding of the material presented.

Based on the evaluation results, the community service activity with the theme "Increasing the Knowledge of Church Citizens Through Education About the Importance of Unity of Service as a Foundation for Spiritual Growth" is very relevant and answers the needs of the ministry in the GKI Syalom Siba Congregation, Sentani. The knowledge provided by the community service team in this activity is very useful. The team succeeded

in explaining the sub-themes about the implementation of service patterns, the role of the church in service, and the unity of service, which is the foundation of spiritual growth for the congregation, so that they could easily understand it.

The lecture and question-and-answer methods used during this activity were very effective. The question-and-answer segment is very interactive and facilitates the congregation's understanding. Therefore, the congregation of GKI Syalom Siba benefited from the community service activities carried out by STAKPN Sentani Theology lecturers because they educated the congregation on the importance of service unity as a foundation for spiritual development.

CONCLUSION

The community service team of the Theology Department of STAKPN Sentani carried out activities at the GKI Syalom Siba Congregation, Sentani, focusing on the importance of service unity as a foundation for spiritual growth in responding to the congregation's needs. The community service team elaborated on each sub-theme well on the implementation of the early church's service patterns that were diligent in teaching, living in unity, carrying out the communion of love, and having a lifestyle that is considered effective to be applied in today's church.

The sub-theme of the GKI Syalom Siba church has a vital role in ministry, including being a tool to know Christ, a place of spiritual nurture, a place of service and empowerment, a place of faith formation, and a place of cooperation with other churches to carry out God's mission. Aspects of ministry unity, such as the priority of church leaders, active involvement in church ministry, the role of cell groups, creative pastoral care, and discipleship, are considered the foundation of the spiritual growth of the congregation of GKI Syalom Siba, Sentani.

The congregation of GKI Syalom Siba showed high enthusiasm and actively participated during the activity. The community service activities provided benefits, with the material presented clearly and easily understood, as well as effective lecture methods and question-and-answer sessions. Thus, this activity not only enriches the knowledge of the congregation but also provides a solid foundation for the spiritual growth of the Pastor, the Elements Management Board, and the congregation of fifty people in the context of the unity of service at the GKI Syalom Siba Congregation, Sentani.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This article results from a collaboration between three authors with the following distribution of contributions: YRM contributed to the introduction and methods sections. BSB contributed to preparing the results and discussion section. YR contributed to drafting the conclusion and references sections.

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AUTHOR PROFILES

Yane R. Maahury
Email: yanemaahury82@gmail.com
Expertise: Theology
Affiliation: STAKPN Sentani
Google Scholar:
https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=ExvGgbAAAAAJ
Sinta: https://sinta.kemdikbud.go.id/authors/profile/6904965

Berthin S. Banga
Email: berthinbanga3@gmail.com
Expertise: Theology
Affiliation: STAKPN Sentani
Google Scholar:
https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=DfjE8P4AAAAJ
Sinta: https://sinta.kemdikbud.go.id/authors/profile/6748012

Yohanna Ristua
Email: yohannaristua90@gmail.com
Expertise: Theology
Affiliation: STAKPN Sentani
Google Scholar:
https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=_V2jwvYAAAAJ
Sinta: https://sinta.kemdikbud.go.id/authors/profile/6915537