

Transformation of Christian Mission in the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract— Before Covid-19 came and affected pastoral life, the world was busy with the millennials, which would turn off many activities that did not adapt to the world of 4G technology; even the world was heading for 5G. The church must think about its mission. The church must rethink its mission and begin to reshape its mission into postmodern adaptations. But unexpectedly, Covid has killed nearly everyone including existing services. In this study, the author collects data and facts from the field and missions data globally and in Indonesia and how the Indonesian churches respond to them. The church's mission and the draft of the Great Commission will never fail. A total change in the world of missions must be considered in outreach in Indonesia filled with Millennials and Generation Z. This research contributes to churches rethinking the concept of mission and thinking about outreach to millennials and Generation Z controlled by 4G technology. Still, the church also does not forget to reach out to neglected tribes spread across Indonesia.

Keywords— *transformation of mission; unreached people group; millennial; generation Z; reshaping mission*

I. INTRODUCTION

The world in the twenty-first century is known as the era of millennials—the era of 4G and heading to 5G. The world seems global, fast, innovative, boundaryless. The lines between family, ministry, work and the rest of life continue to blur. Yuswohadi et al. wrote a book entitled "How Millennials Kill Everything" that tells the story of the tragedy of the loss of various things resulting from a disruption called Millennial Disruption [1]. This book was initially considered normal but went viral on social media. Because of the virality of this topic, they finally found out and collected how cruelly the millennial generation "slaughtered" products, services, and industries. Incidentally, the millennial generation's phenomenon of "murder" is a global phenomenon, so there are many articles on this topic in various international media. This phenomenon also impacts the church today. In Asia and Indonesia especially, spirituality, pluralism, relativism, altruism, and postmodernism cause the church's mission shifting [2]. Millennials with the technology of 4G and

postmodernism cause the decline in religious spirituality, disorientation from pluralism, the power to provide information through visuals due to blurred reality and imagination, the emptiness at the core of culture, and a shift in emphasis to a newer state. Therefore, the church needs to capture and understand how culture works. Furthermore, it is required to reach a cultural paradigm with the gospel message and challenges the church faces. But before the church takes action and reshaping the mission, Covid-19 kills everything. Covid is changing the way everyone lives in socializing; the environment most used for a living has rapidly shrunk into homes. Businesses, schools, and religious services all move quickly online. No one knows precisely how long these physical and social restrictions will last-or what the short and long-term impacts on spiritual life are [3]. Environment, culture, economy, and the survival of "us" as humans and many species are interrelated. We need to look at the current health crisis and our response to see that the usual path has changed. Distance learning & web-based business to online worship, reflecting the connection to change survive or die.

Data and facts of the mission field show the global population today heading to 7.84 billion [4] consisted of 17,406 people groups; 7,401 unreached people group with a total of 3.27 billion or 42.5% [5]. Only one-third of the global population heard about the Goodnews. This means the church in average condition still has the homework to finish to preach the Goodnews to the end of the globe. Still, the Covid-19 has the main factor in slowing down the church to complete the Great Commission.

II. METHOD

The library research and web research are carried out by collecting data and scientific writings. The object data collection is literature or studies to solve a problem and an in-depth critical survey of relevant library materials. Literature review refers to studying the concepts and theories used based on the available literature, especially from articles published in various scientific journals [6]. Thus, literature review serves to build concepts or ideas that form the basis of studies in

research. The data collection method of this research is taken from the data source, which means the data source in the study is the subject from which the data can be obtained. Besides that, as part of Globe Serve UUPG 500 researcher and executive committee of GCPN (Global Church Planting Network), the author has an intense discussion regarding the mission approach during the pandemic. The debate and discussion is a valuable data resource.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Data and Facts

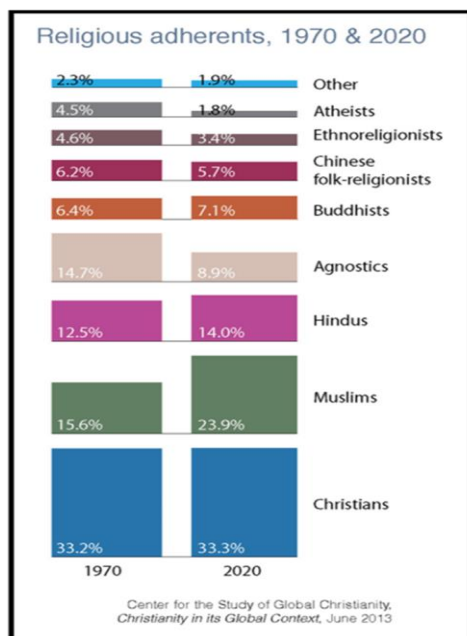


Figure 1. Center for the study of Global Christianity Christianity in its Global Context, June 2013[7]

The prediction data was posted by the Gordon Cornwell university shown the comparison of religious adherents in 1970 and 2020. The data showed no change in Christianity. In 1970, Christianity was only 33.2% of the population, and in 2020, the data is established Christianity only 33.3% [7].

So in fifty years, Christianity only gained 0.1%. So actually, the church is failing to share the Goodnews. Most religions show increasing in numbers significantly, predominantly our Muslims, the Ishmaelites, except Christianity. The foundation of *Bilangan Research center*, known as BRC Research in the Indonesian Church, about three years ago uploaded a number of its findings related to the latest developments in the church in Indonesia. This evangelical institution surveyed 4,394 church leaders spread across 34 cities/districts in Indonesia. This research was

conducted across denominations in several groups of Protestant churches.

Several things need to be considered carefully regarding the development of Christianity in Indonesia. First, the growth of each church in Indonesia is not too fast. No explosive growth. As much as 42.3% of church growth in Indonesia is due to migration from other church congregations, called cannibalism. Family growth due to childbearing 28.1%. The remaining 29.6% of change comes from outside the church environment. In the last ten years, 34.9% of churches have only started one new church. But this case is different from the Indonesian Bethel Church or GBI. According to Widjaja et al., in the year 2020 for GBI adding of 659 new churches. So there are fruits in the unfruitful season [8].

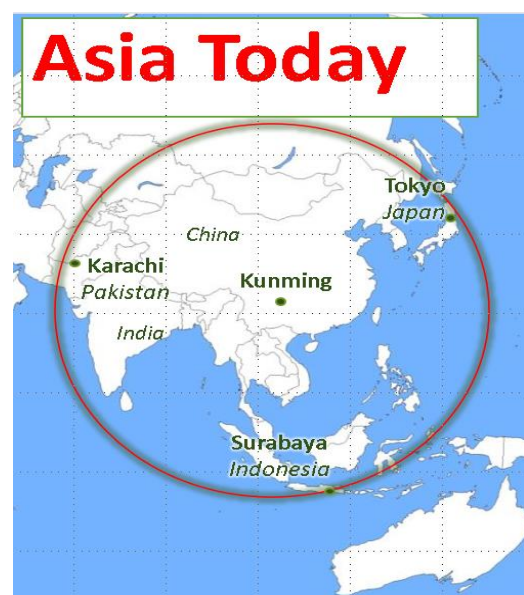


Figure 2 Global mapping International [9]

In 2018, a department of One Challenge (OC International) was established. The Global Research Team of the One Challenge first identified the Kunming Circle in 2004 and recently developed these infographics. The Kunming Circle represents the area within 2,400 miles (3,750 km) of Kunming, China. Although this area covers less than a tenth of the globe's surface, it is home to more than half of the people on earth, but only about one-eighth of the Christians [9]. Asia is home to 60.3% of the world population consist of 4,789,917,000 and home of 7,688 people group, and the number of an unreached people group is 5,621 total of 2,839,316,000 (59.3%) of the total Asian population.[5] The above data of Gordon Cornwell and the Kunming Circle will help people gain a proper perspective on the world in general and "challenge unhelpful misconceptions about the world." Therefore, this perspective can guide our engagement in Great Commission Work.

B. Indonesian Census and beyond

Indonesian Statistic Bureau published data of Indonesian population increased 32.56 million from last data 2010. Which today's population is 270.2 million.[10] According to Indonesian People Network[11], the tribe of Indonesian is 781 people group, out of that 130 unreached people group. Out of 130 UPG's, there is 35 Un-engaged Unreached People Group (UUPG). This unreached people group scattered all over the main islands of Indonesia until to trim part of remote islands.[12]

In this census, the statistic bureau divided by six categories of the population: pre-boomer the people of Indonesian born before 1945, they are 5.03 million of the population (1.87%), baby boomers born 1946-1964, they are 31.01 million population (11.56%), Gen X (generation X), born 1965-1980; they are 58.65 million (21.88%), Milineal born 1981-1996 cover 69.38 million (25.87%), Gen Z (Generation Z) people who are born between 1997-2012). Generation Z is the highest population in Indonesia. They are 74.93 million (27.94%) and Post generation Z people born from 2013 until today. They are 29.17 million people (10.18%).

Of the two categories, Millennials and Generation Z are the majority of Indonesia's population. For this, the church must pay attention.

C. Covid-19 and the Indonesian Churches

COVID-19 is a disease outbreak that originated in China, spreading rapidly throughout the world. The spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia in early March 2020 causes much destruction. Everything must do from home [13]. Government regulations have restricted social gatherings, including worship in churches, to break the chain of the spread of this deadly plague[14]. The impact of COVID-19 touching the religion in various ways, including the cancellation of worship of different faiths, the closure of Sunday schools, and the cancellation of pilgrimages, ceremonies, and festivals[15]. Finally, worship was held online by adopting internet-based technology to carry out worship in their respective homes. Everything was starting from home, including the church.

The concept of a home church or house church is not new in the Christian world because its prototype can be found in the worship pattern of the early church. There is no fixed definition for the term house church so that that understanding can be built from the church phenomenon, the apostles' house in the Apostles' Acts. Although the Acts of the Apostles themselves do not provide a clear definition of this concept, at least that understanding can be understood in several ways by the early church in Acts of Apostle. Djefry Hidajat mentions that the church in the New Testament is the church House; because the house is a social, economic, and religious unit [16]. That is why the apostle's worship activities and spiritual teachings about the Christian faith are usually held in houses.

The church must look at this time of suffering as an opportunity to renew the concept of the church and church mission. We need to transform our mission and contextualization the Gospel for the sake of the Kingdom. The content of Goodnews never changes, the context can be hybrid, and the container depends on the situation[17].

D. Challenging for Mission in the Pandemic Era

The pandemic that is still going on will affect the way and purpose of people in doing their mission. Social distancing or physical distancing, causing the church services to be shifted to be more socially distancing friendly. The sending and straightforward task seems difficult to be done nowadays. The best way to do the mission through social media in this pandemic era is the most appropriate way to do it. The media are pretty influential in communicating messages, especially to Millennials and generation Z. Half of the Indonesian population today is these generations. To do the mission through digital media and the internet will allow the churches to reach people by the Gospel wherever they are [18]. We must admit and realize that this digital media and virtual ways have become a part of society in this era. In the news published by Kompas, it is said that the internet users from 2021 reach 202 million, so there was a 15.5% raise that is 27 million users, compared to 2020. Almost all internet users in Indonesia use mobile devices for internet access. The mobile internet users in Indonesia reached 171 million, or 98 percent of the total internet users [19].

This modern pestilence phenomenon has stimulated the church to practice a worship strategy, not limited to conventional patterns, such as meeting and worship in houses. When the Babylonian army destroyed the temple of God that Solomon founded, it changed the way view through the centuries the Kingdom of Judah, which made the temple of God in Jerusalem as pride and worship center. Destroyed the temple of God, the nation of Judah was forced to rethink the essence of their worship. The tribe of Judah concludes in prayer, not offering, but obedience (1 Sam. 15:22). The exile to Babylon made different paradigms in worshiping God's people: focus on rituals (sacrifice offerings) shift to obedience (teaching the word) [20]. Worship together on a large scale now is worship on a smaller scale. The modern church, especially churches that have implemented cell groups well, is not too difficult to implement this system of worship in houses.

The use of digital technology in worship does not eliminate the essence of worship because the church is a community, and fellowship is built on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ. The house church in apostolic times can be implied in the form of a digital church today[21], the era of digitization. The essence of worship, the growth of faith in personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, thus producing the fruit of faith, both in the form of maturity and a decisive soul winner. So, the following implication that cannot be separated from

this house church is to carry out the mission of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

In the context of today's digital era, where churches are now created virtually [22] through digital worship, at least it has become an expansion of the Kingdom of God. Territorial and geographical boundaries do not limit the digital church because internet technology has allowed you to express the form you want to build and serve today's digital society. In today's digital era, the world has brought people very familiar with gadgets, so that daily consumption is what is done in the virtual world. On the one hand, live streaming services have become an option for each person to choose worship and direction. Other than that, streaming services can be enjoyed by anyone willing and interested in enjoying them without being a Christian. Johnston and Mandryk said that the internet is changing the way the world communicates. The preaching of the Good Tidings virtually is a facility that great gives tremendous meaning to gospel preaching [23].

IV. CONCLUSION

The fields are white and ready to be harvested. Looking at the existing data from the time of Jesus until today, the area is too broad, but the workers are few. It is true what is written in the biblical texts in Luke 10:2 He was saying to them, "The harvest is abundant [for there are many who need to hear the good news about salvation], but the workers [those available to proclaim the message of salvation] are few. Therefore, [prayerfully] ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest. In this case, workers are needed, but the church must also be transformed in mission during the pandemic. The suitable method in the task so that outreach can be maximized.

The mission of the church today:

1. Churches need to rethinking and reshaping the concept of mission: the digital world, especially Millennials and Generation Z, need to be considered
2. Contextualized the Gospel; Content never change, Hybrid in the Context and New Platform to survive (container)
3. The church must look at this particular moment as a new opportunity. It is an extraordinary mission

To do the mission in the pandemic era does not change the essence of Christian mission through the Gospel. Therefore, the task in the pandemic era could still be done.

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