

STRATEGY TO PLANTING AND GROWING A NEW CHURCH IN THE ERA OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract - Today the church is starting to develop in terms of worship and in terms of teaching because a wider world can be reached through technological advances. Whatever form, model, and system developed in the management of the Church, it must adhere to the basic and essential ideas of the Church according to the Bible. The research used in this paper is a literature study method, which is a study used to collect information and data with the help of various materials such as books and journal articles. In the current Covid-19 pandemic, churches are very dependent on digital media for plant survival and church growth. This research provides a new contribution and perspective for the church about ministry in the pandemic era. This research provides new information about ministry development, evangelism and discipleship in the church.

Keywords: Church management, church planting, church growth, covid-19 pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

The challenges faced in evangelism should not discourage the preachers Gospel, let alone stop evangelism activities. Difficulties, obstacles or whatever the reason should encourage evangelists or God's people to surrender to God while looking for suitable models to exist in evangelism. Passion for winning souls for Jesus Christ which is worked by the Holy Spirit into strength to continue to be zealous in evangelism (Hannas, Rinawaty, 2019) . The definition of "evangelism" can be understood as: A task to announce or preach the good news, and or the news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Task This is done by calling it like a messenger of a king who is proclaim a decree, that is, with a loud and firm voice, and it can also be done by teaching as to a disciple, and by testifying on the basis of what experienced by the evangelist. The mission of evangelism is indisputable and or neglected because the news concerns the safety of the souls of many loved ones order giver. (Stephanus, 2019). Whatever form, model, and system developed in the management of the Church, it must adhere to the basic and essential ideas of the Church according to the Bible. (Haryanto, 2014). The church develops a discipleship process to help, direct and manage the results of evangelism and strengthen new believers into the fellowship. (Stephanus, 2019).

For 2,000 years the Church of Jesus Christ has grown and expanded to every continent. Jesus said, "I will build My Church" and it is true that He did. But looking at a 2,000 year period, it's pretty clear that Jesus didn't always build His church the same way. (Wagner, 2001). Peter Wagner says, Jesus Christ founded His church in a special way in Rome, before the Age of Emperor Constantius, then did it another way after, another way in the Middle Ages, and so different ways of the Reformation. church, European colonization and post-World War.

During the Covid-19 pandemic in the world, church services began to be held online. Churches around the world, including Indonesia, also operate online church activities and services. The evangelism movement is also mostly done online because it is not possible to do it conventionally like before the Covid-19 outbreak. The churches continue to carry out evangelistic movements, of course,

this is not just a temporary movement and is a formality. DW Ellis explains that evangelism is an effort to proclaim: Jesus Christ as Savior, so that everyone who is evangelized will receive Him, be obedient and serve Him, and live in the fellowship of His church. (Hannas, Rinawaty, 2019). In research conducted by Marde Christian Stenly Mawikere to the Baliem tribal community in Papua with the title Contextual Evangelization Approach to Baliem Papuan people said that the contextualization approach is one of the most appropriate and proven approaches in spreading the gospel. (Mawickere, 2018). Therefore, in an effort to plant for church growth during the pandemic, the church must carry out contextualization and be relevant to the circumstances at hand. The real situation is that everyone is afraid to gather in large numbers, so that church services through online media are the only way to do it. the only way to keep teaching and spreading the gospel. There is no single way to testify of Christ. (Antonio, 2020). Evangelism and church planting services can be done through many social media applications because that is the way people today convey information that they think everyone should know.

II. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative, to provide a practical overview of church planting and growth in the Covid-19 pandemic era. Researchers collect information by conducting a literature review of related books or journals to collect information relevant to the topic or problem that is the subject of research.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The church is not a community unit formed by access to social dynamics so that it is always left in a state of continuous flux-change, adhering to biblical ideas must still be pursued. That is, it is very important for church pioneers to give full attention to the right basis and motivation in building a Church according to the Bible. A healthy church must be built and called by Christ as a solid foundation, as Matthew 16:16-18 says. Evangelism and discipleship efforts must be carried out simultaneously so that all church members can continue to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The discipleship takes place specifically with different teaching models typical, consisting of parables, examples, arguments, questions, and short statements and firm. In line with this discipleship, God performed signs and miracles for demonstrating His power and power over nature, disease, life and death. God did it all in the presence of the disciples and the world. Church as community of believers should follow the same pattern of teaching and discipleship implemented by God with various modifications according to the context of the times and culture as well as human struggle. Even though the external challenges are overwhelming from various aspects, the church must be of one mind to diligently teach all the truths of God, good through religious rituals, discipleship, as well as personal and personal faith experiences institutional. Because in such a state, God is with His church and declares His power as tangible evidence of His presence in this world in the midst of the development of other religions. (Stephanus, 2019).

The church is not only an organism in which God's churches complement each other as a unified body of Christ to fulfill God's vision of His people, but also an organization in which growth through planning, execution, and control is needed to be an effective organization. The church must be able to produce students or congregations who have high quality in their faith. Disciples take root, grow and bear fruit in union with Christ. God's Word is received by faith, studied diligently, practiced wisely, and shared with others by the power of the Holy Spirit. They not only have sufficient knowledge of God and Christ, but they have the conviction of faith firm and firm that only Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Savior for mankind, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they do the word of God in everyday life. The witness lives in the unity of the body of Christ in the midst the world is a testimony that encourages others to know what is happen to them and lead others to come to know Christ. Live testimony like that it is important to improve the quality and quantity in the midst of life multi-religious society. (Stephanus, 2019).

Church Strategy and Management

In planting a church, a good strategy and management is needed, so that all of its implementation can run well. Management as a process of achieving goals basically contains activities that are carried out systematically. Order in the church can be a very useful tool for achieving church growth. "The focus of church management is how the church is managed, controlled, and treated skillfully. (Warren, 2005). Initially, the term "management" comes from the verb "to manage" which means "to control". (Wagner, 2001). So, a simple definition of "management" is dealing with, managing or controlling the effective use of resources to achieve goals. This is the proper function of management towards the growth of the Church. The management of the church must be carried out in a good and correct way and in its implementation needs to be placed on the basis of faith and humility to God and ask for His help, guidance, and wisdom so that church management can run well. God's power is needed because there are "many factors that hinder or facilitate the implementation of management. These factors can come from inside and outside the church, predictable or unpredictable. (Wiyono, Sukardi, 2010). In the end, everything that has been planned and carried out by the Church as the body of God will be accounted for in advance to God. Furthermore, every work carried out by the commission, board, or other team must be evaluated and accounted for to oneself and the congregation through the media of an open board meeting or congregational meeting.

Church Planting Principles and Strategies

A. *Location*

Location is an important decision in starting and growing a church in an area that does or does not have a church. The site selection strategy of establishing a church provides an opportunity for every church pioneer to reach people around the world who have not been reached by the gospel. Therefore, in planting a church we need to pay attention to the location where we will plant the church. In determining the location, the first thing to consider is who will be our target. (Peter, 2013). Because people have so many differences, it is impossible for one church to reach everyone. We need to find out what kind of people live in our area, decide which groups we can reach, and then find an evangelistic style that fits our goals. When we plan our evangelistic efforts, we always have a specific target in mind. The Bible defines our message, but our target determines when, where, and how we deliver it. The second thing that needs to be considered in determining the location of a pioneer church is the geographical and demographic location. (Jantje Haans, 2019). A church planter can start with a geographic location, which requires the pioneer to go to the area and conduct a feasibility study to find a possible target audience and find out where the target audience is and likely areas after. Pioneers will know the demographic facts of the area.

B. *evangelism*

Jesus Christ gave the commandment to follow Him which is why He said He would make His followers fishers of men. His final command on earth to His disciples was that the church would be a witness for Christ to the ends of the earth in Acts 1:8. (Kennedy, 2006). Furthermore, according to Kennedy, the main and clear principle is that the Church is a body under the leadership of Jesus Christ to spread the gospel to all the world. John Eckhardt (in Peter Wagner: 2001) explains that an apostolic church is needed to fulfill the Great Commission. This commission includes more than just evangelism where nations must also be approved, people must be healed and set free, churches must be planted, elders in the church must be formed and saints must be equipped for the work of ministry. (Wagner CP, The New Apostolic Churches, 2001). Therefore the church needs restoration. In the digital world, namely the Covid-19 era, it is clear that evangelism to the ends of the earth can be done from home. Internet allows one to reach other people in any hemisphere. Therefore, it is important to manage the evangelism system clearly regarding evangelism. Leaders and managers can see what things are supporting the growth of this church. For example, the method of evangelism that will be

carried out can be in the form of creating spiritual content, targeting non-believers. The media used can be Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube. The creation of such evangelistic content can be scheduled at regular intervals so that this evangelism runs consistently. It is better if the speaker who shares God's word is a servant of God who has mature faith and has expertise in his field, therefore the selection and scheduling of speakers needs to be done.

Church Growth

Church growth is no longer a foreign term in the sphere of believers. But where did the term come from? The term "church growth" comes from McGavran, which means "anything that includes bringing people who are not personally related to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and bringing them into responsible congregations." C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Malang: Wheat Mas, 1997) (Wagner CP, *Your Church Can Grow*, 1997). Church growth cannot be produced by humans because only God makes the church grow. It is God who breathes new life in a valley full of dry bones. Through the Holy Spirit, church growth and revival can be achieved. God wants His Church to grow and use humans as His partners (1 Cor. 3:9). God also uses church pioneers to plant new churches and expand His work on this earth.

In building a house, such as in Moses' tent, the activities are reading the Torah and praying. The prayers that are said are not prayers that are selfish but for the nation, for others, and prayers that aim to see God for real. (Crawford, 2005). It expresses the importance of everyone to care for others and not just themselves. Through this, God's glory is revealed, that all His people love each other and seek God's mercy through every worship and whatever we do. Church growth means sincerity towards God. Growth must include both quantitative and qualitative. (Ndjau, selan, 1998) Today, the Church must grow rapidly. Rick Warren says in his book "God sends a church growth movement when His people are ready to accept that growth. (Warren, 2005). In order not to rely solely on the Holy Spirit to develop God's Churches, there are some preparations His Church must make to receive church growth. The Church must not be in the comfort of stagnation and assume that the Holy Spirit will continue to bring growth even if the Church does nothing. So in essence, achieving church growth requires harmony between human efforts and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Quality Growth Through Cell Group Management

Fellowship groups, in some churches, are also called cell groups. Biologically, a cell is "the smallest structural unit of an organism capable of functioning independently. (Comeskey, 1998) Just as the cells that come together to form the human body, the cells in the church also combine to form the Body of Christ. "Cell group ministry is not just a program within the church, but the core of the church itself. (Comeskey, 1998). Pastor of Faith Community Baptist Church in Singapore, Lawrence Khong said there is a big difference between a church that has cells and a church of cells. Because through these cell groups training, discipleship, evangelism, and a life of prayer and worship are carried out. "The ultimate goal of each cell group is to articulate itself as it grows through evangelism and conversion. (Wiyono, Untung, Sukarno, 2010). When a group of cells makes themselves exclusive and refuses certain people to be included in them, that group is dying because it goes against the nature and purpose of the creation of the cell group.

A healthy group of cells is a group that produces "daughter cells" which will later split with "mother cells" and then manage their own clusters and regenerate other "daughter cells". Propagation through this cell group will help church growth occur more quickly and effectively because it is very thick with the implementation of discipleship and the Great Commission. The principles in this cell group are in accordance with God's will for His Church where the Church reaches out to the outside world containing those who do not know it to be further assisted in conversion to God. Based on the description above, cell groups have proven vital for church growth during the Covid-19 pandemic. This of course requires a good management role so that cell group services can still be carried out

through digital media. In practice, social media groups like Whatsapp can be an efficient platform for mobile group members to stay connected and connected. Services in online cell groups can still be done like in-person cell group meetings. With a monthly ministry schedule that includes worship leaders, speakers, and intercessors, it will keep the online cell group running more regularly.

Not only that, the relationship between members can be maintained, even increased in intensity by contacting each other which can be done at any time without being affected by time and distance. Along with that, there may be problems that occur with this online mobile group service, such as limited mobile data so that some members cannot join the service. However, this is an opportunity for other members to share their love and care for their brothers and sisters who need help. The cell leader or treasurer can collect cash from its members which will be used to help provide the cellular data other members need, so that each member, without exception, can join cell group services and grow spiritually.

Basic Principles in Planting New Churches in the Era of the Covid-19 Pandemic

1. *A church planter must have confidence that he has a calling to do church planting and planting.*

The process of planting and planting churches is a process and a tough calling because it will face many challenges or obstacles. The Bible gives clear and very accurate testimony of how the apostle Paul experienced it. 2 Corinthians 11:24-33 (NIV). Five times I was beaten by the Jews, every time I was hit forty less, three times I was beaten, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, day and night I was adrift in the middle of the sea. In my travels I have often been threatened by floods and dangers of robbers, dangers on the part of the Jews and on the part of the Gentiles; danger in the city, danger in the desert, danger in the middle of the sea, and danger on the part of false brethren. I toiled a lot and worked hard; often I don't sleep; I am hungry and thirsty; many times I fasted, cold and naked, and, not to mention many other things, my daily business, which was to care for all the churches. If someone feels weak, don't I feel weak too? If anyone stumbles, won't my heart break with sorrow? If I have to boast, then I will boast of my weakness. God, the Father of Jesus our Lord, who is praised forever and ever, knows that I do not lie. In Damascus the governor of the king Aretas sent to guard the city the Damascus people to arrest me. But in a basket I was lowered from a window outside the city walls and thus I escaped from his hands. that is, to care for all the churches. If someone feels weak, don't I feel weak too? If anyone stumbles, won't my heart break with sorrow? If I have to boast, then I will boast of my weakness. God, the Father of Jesus our Lord, who is praised forever and ever, knows that I do not lie. In Damascus the governor of the king Aretas sent to guard the city the Damascus people to arrest me. But in a basket I was lowered from a window outside the city walls and thus I escaped from his hands. that is, to care for all the churches. If someone feels weak, don't I feel weak too? If anyone stumbles, won't my heart break with sorrow? If I have to boast, then I will boast of my weakness. God, the Father of Jesus our Lord, who is praised forever and ever, knows that I do not lie. In Damascus the governor of the king Aretas sent to guard the city the Damascus people to arrest me. But in a basket I was lowered from a window outside the city walls and thus I escaped from his hands. that I'm not lying. In Damascus the governor of the king Aretas sent to guard the city the Damascus people to arrest me. But in a basket I was lowered from a window outside the city walls and thus I escaped from his hands. that I'm not lying. In Damascus the governor of the king Aretas sent to guard the city the Damascus people to arrest me. But in a basket I was lowered from a window outside the city walls and thus I escaped from his hands.

2. *Spiritual Preparation*

A servant of God or a bearer of good news must be a person who fulfills all his activities with prayer. Prayer is an ongoing communication with God. An evangelist must not separate himself from the life of prayer. Prayer is the main way before anything is done in the life of Christians. Church ministry and planting is a work in a spiritual dimension, therefore the process must begin in a spiritual way.

3. *Don't be tempted to grow fast.*

The process of planting and planting a church is not an easy process, therefore a minister or evangelist must keep his heart away from the desire for quick success. A servant or evangelist must be diligent and patient like a farmer waiting for the precious fruit of his land and he is patient until the fall rains and spring rains fall. James 5:7. An evangelist must limit himself so as not to be trapped in ways that are not in accordance with the principles of truth and are detrimental to the kingdom of God in planting and planting churches.

4. *Cadreization Process*

An evangelist must regenerate leadership by means of regeneration. A good and successful leader is a leader who is able to produce other leaders. Members of the body of Christ must be equipped to do the good works that God has provided. The Bible clearly says: Because we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared beforehand, he wants us to live in them. Ephesians 2:10.

5. *Mastering Technology*

Technology-based services are not an easy task, but that doesn't mean they can't be done. An evangelist who will educate himself through network-based ministry must equip himself with knowledge and skills in technology and information. Mastery of technology and information must be a point that should not be underestimated.

IV. CONCLUSION

In supporting church plants and growth, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, churches need to clearly see media opportunities and manage them optimally so that their functions can run optimally. In this case, the management role is needed, namely how to organize and carry out services to the congregation through the use of digital media. In principle, church planting and growth, both pioneers and involved members must have a strong life in prayer, have souls as evangelists to win unreached souls. So that the pioneers that we do will experience extraordinary growth and all of that is to glorify God.

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