

The Role of Pastors to Care for Their Congregations Both During Covid-19 Outbreak and After

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Abstract:The role of pastors is very important to meet the needs of the congregation in the Covid-19 period and after. The formulation of the research problem is what pastors should do during a pandemic and afterwards for the congregation. The method to answer this problem formulation uses a qualitative approach by collecting several journals, books and Bible verses related to the formulation of the problem, then looking for similarities that allow it to answer this research problem. Thus, the correct answer is obtained and can be used as a guide for pastors during the Covid-19 period and after. There are five things that pastors can do from the results of this research that can meet the needs of the congregation both spiritually, the soul and physically.

Key words: Pastor's Role, Covid-19, Spiritual Needs, Needs of the Soul, Physical Needs

I. PRELIMINARY

During the current Covid-19 pandemic, there is a pattern of life that is different from before. So it is in the church. Pastors have difficulty how to keep paying attention and meeting the needs of their congregations properly. A church whose number of members is still small, of course, the problem is not too big compared to a church with thousands of members. However, there is a common problem, namely how the most effective way for the congregation to be shepherded properly in this pandemic condition.

Some pastors don't know what to do in this time of pandemic. They want to make visits to the congregation, but the conditions are not possible. They made phone calls to the congregation, but it didn't have a significant impact. Especially if the congregation has problems related to family relationships or financial problems or other problems that require special handling. This is the real problem for pastors who have the heart of a shepherd in this time of the pandemic.¹

In addition, the post-pandemic is a new challenge. Pastors must prepare strategies to have an impactful role for their congregations. The role of the post-pandemic pastor certainly has to be prepared from now on. If during a pandemic, pastors can play an effective role in caring for their congregations, then after the pandemic, the adjustment will be faster.

For this reason, this research was conducted to answer what

pastors should do during a pandemic or afterwards for their congregations. So that the results of this research are expected to be a guide for pastors or church administrators who are called to be a pastor.

II. METHOD

In order for the research results to be excellent, the researchers collected several journals and books related to the formulation of the problem, then looked for similarities that could possibly answer this research problem. Apart from that, it is hoped that extracting verses in the Bible that have similar problems and solutions is also hoped to be able to answer the formulation of this problem. The results and discussion are described using a descriptive method, so that they are presented clearly and straightforwardly, and finally a conclusion is obtained that answers the problem formulation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A pastor is required to prioritize the congregation that God has entrusted to him. When a pastor performs his pastoral role and function, he is manifesting his love for God. Jesus equates love for Him with the shepherding of His sheep, as written in John 21: 15-17: After breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter: "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these people?" Peter answered Him, "Yes, Lord, You know how much I love You." The Lord Jesus asked this question three times. This shows that the Lord Jesus is serious about the task of shepherding. Jesus Himself dedicated His life to shepherd those whom the Father entrusted to Him.²

After receiving the shepherding assignment given by God, a Shepherd must do it right, according to the Word of God. The Apostle Peter reminded elders to shepherd with the right attitude as written in 1 Peter 5: 2-3: "Feed the flock of God that is in you, not by force, but voluntarily according to God's will, and not because you want to profit, but with self-dedication. Do not act as if you want to rule over those who are entrusted to you, but be examples to the flock."³

In the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, of course this shepherding must continue and be carried out in an effective

²Dorus Dolfinus Buinei, 'Applying the Servant Leadership Qualification according to Mark's Bible for the Pastor of the GPdI Congregation in the West Waropen Region, Papua', *EPIGRAPHE: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan Kristiani*, Vol 4, No (2020), 23.

³Markus Sudjarwo, 'Applying the Pastor's Integrity According to the Pastoral Letters', *EPIGRAPHE: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan Kristiani*, Vol 3, No (2019), 175-76.

¹Sandlana N. S. and Majokweni O, "Religion as a Protective Mechanism for Families Affected by HIV/AIDS," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* Vol 4 No 1 (2013): 269.

manner and adapted to the situation and conditions. There are several things a pastor should do during a pandemic or after. Pastors must look holistically at the needs of their congregations. These needs include spiritual, mental, and physical needs. Thus, the shepherding must fulfill these needs.⁴

Spiritual Needs

During the Covid-19 pandemic, of course the spiritual needs of the congregation will continue to increase. This spirituality is related to perseverance, a deeper appreciation of faith, a harmonious relationship with oneself, others and God, as well as daily experiences with God. Of course this spiritual need must be fulfilled properly, so that their spiritual life remains good.⁵

During the pandemic and afterwards, pastors have a very strategic role in being able to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation. They can meet this need by maximizing their role as pastors of the church. However, before being able to fulfill the spiritual needs of the congregation, as a pastor, he must first have a good spiritual life. An intimate life with God, full of God's words, has a lifestyle of worshiping God every day, so spirituality is ready to help the congregation.⁶

Needs Of the Soul

The soul consists of feelings, wills and thoughts. So the need for souls is to have a heart and mind that is filled with peace from God. During the Covid-19 pandemic and afterwards, the congregation was in an uneasy and fearful condition. They are facing uncertainty in front of them that they cannot control. So as a pastor, he must do his part to provide peace to his congregation. In this case too, before a pastor can help his congregation, he himself must have experienced serenity from God. He must be able to give his life completely to God. With such an attitude of heart, the calm and peace that is accomplished by the Spirit of God will overwhelm his heart and mind. Thus they will be able to help the congregation who is in trouble.⁷

Physical Needs

In the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, many congregations experienced financial difficulties. Likewise health problems, they face constant fear for their health. So that they are physically vulnerable to illness due to stress. Thus, pastors must pay attention to and help the congregation

both financially and in relation to their physical health. The role of the pastor as a shepherd must also be sufficient for the physical things that the congregation needs during this pandemic.⁸

The Role of Pastors in Caring for the Congregation during the Covid-19 Period and After

The pastor's role to meet all the needs of the congregation is the right way for a pastor to care for his congregation. Spiritual, soul and physical needs are basic needs that require serious handling. Especially during a pandemic like today, all pastors must not only think about one part of their role, but must be more comprehensive. The role of the pastor holistically in difficult times is awaited by his congregation.⁹

The role of pastors as shepherds is exemplified by God in Ezekiel 34: 12-16. In these verses, Allah describes Himself as the Shepherd who is responsible for His people. He brings His sheep to the places where there is sufficient food, a good place to rest, the lost and stray sheep, He seeks and brings home, so that the wounded and the sick are bandaged and given strength, while the healthy and fat He is protect. From God's example, the role of the pastor is to be a pastor who cares for all the needs of his congregation.

Therefore, from several previous scientific works, researchers found several roles of pastors that should still be carried out during this pandemic and after.

The first role is to provide spiritual food for the congregation. The giving of spiritual food is one of the duties of a pastor. He must give God's words rightly and correctly, so that the congregation has strong faith, an intimate life with God, and good relationships with others. During the Covid-19 pandemic, pastors can convey the message of God's word to their congregations in various ways that are considered effective by each pastor according to the conditions and situation of the congregation. Some use technological means (What app, FB, IG, Youtube, etc.) or conventional methods (doing worship on site by keeping a distance). The most important thing is that all the congregations receive spiritual food, namely the Word of God, which makes the spiritual needs and souls of the congregation fulfilled.¹⁰

The second role is to provide special care for the congregation, namely through pastoral counseling. Pastors must know counseling techniques on how to help congregants who are experiencing anxiety, stress, and depression during the Covid-19 period or after. Pastors are able to provide assistance to congregations who are experiencing such problems so that they are more aware of themselves and the problems at hand, and are able to make the right decisions to

4P. Schuiling, "Taking Care of the Shepherd: A Guide to Pastoral Well-Being," *Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences* (1996).

5Anton Ishariyono²) David Eko Setiawan¹), 'THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE MINISTER OF CHRIST AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SERVANT OF THE LORD TODAY!', *Pengaruh: Jurnal Teologi Kristen*, Volume 2, (2020).

6Ajith Fernando, *Christian Lifestyle, the Bible Is the Word of God* (Kalam Hidup, 2002).

7R. Berhita, 'THE ROLE OF THE SHEPHERD OF THE CHURCH OF THE CHURCH OF THE TABERNACLE OF Gospel of the Congregation in the Development of Holistic Services in Yogyakarta, Sahaduta', *Jaffray*, Vol. 12, N (2014), 274-78.

8Ibid.

9P. Schuiling, "Taking Care of the Shepherd: A Guide to Pastoral Well-Being."

10Christine Fuceria Ginting, 'The Concept of Pastoral Leadership Based on 1 Timothy and Its Application to the Spiritual Growth of the Church', *PNEUSTOS: Jurnal Teologi Pantekosta*, 2018.

get out of those problems, and are able to face life better.¹¹

The third role is to pray for the congregation every day. Prayer overcomes every problem and struggle. When a pastor prays for his congregation, he is actually doing pastoral ministry, protecting his congregation from things that can make them fall into sin or temptation. Thus, the pastor can encourage his congregation to live in prayer, because he himself has done it. And finally the congregation can be encouraged to pray for other fellow congregations. So that all congregations become a growing and strong congregation facing problems, especially during the Covid-19 period and after.¹²

The fourth role is to provide the means for the congregation to grow in a small community of believers. During this pandemic, the most likely thing to continue is to form a small community of 8-12 people who can continue to communicate and pay attention to each other. This can be done on the internet, using various existing media such as Zoom, What app, Google Meet and others. In this group it is possible to convey the word of God, counseling, share testimonies and serve one another. And of course because of their relatively small number they can also care for each other, so that if there are some of them who are lacking materially, then they can know about it and can help each other.¹³

The fifth role is to form a social team. Of course, during the pandemic and afterwards this will have an impact on the global economy. And one of them that might be affected is the church. Therefore, as a pastor / pastor it is impossible to turn a blind eye to this, the pastor must prepare a special team called the social community team. This team should continue to provide support for both the congregation and the surrounding community who are really affected by the pandemic. For congregations who are part of God's family, the church should provide for their needs until their condition has improved. This will show the real role of the pastor in meeting the needs of the congregation not only spiritually but also soul and body.¹⁴

Of course there are many other things that pastors can do to help their congregations during the Covid-19 period and after, but if the five roles presented in this journal are carried out seriously, they can fulfill all the needs of the congregation.

IV. CONCLUSION

During the Covid-19 pandemic, it has had a huge impact on the life of God's congregation. However, they still need

fulfillment of their needs spiritually, mentally and physically. Therefore, the role of a pastor or shepherd must be able to continue to meet these needs both during the pandemic period and afterwards.

As for the results of the discussion, it is concluded that the things a shepherd should do during the pandemic and afterwards include: first, providing spiritual food for the congregation that can meet their spiritual needs, second, providing special care for the congregation, namely through pastoral counseling, , third, to pray for the congregation every day, fourth, to provide the means for the congregation to grow in a small community of believers, fifth, to form a social community team to help especially the congregation who are deprived during the Covid-19 period and beyond.

Thus, the results of this study can serve as guidelines and assist pastors or shepherds in shepherding congregations during the Covid-19 period and after. And it can be a reference for other researchers to conduct more in-depth research, especially with regard to the role of pastors in evangelism and holistic faith formation.

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