

Pastor and the Congregation Survive In This Pandemic Time

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Abstract: The pandemic period is a difficult time for pastors and congregations. However, they must survive and be a blessing. Therefore, this research is intended to answer how the pastor and congregation can be well maintained. To answer the formulation of this problem, the author conducted a qualitative research method with literature research. From this research, it is hoped that it will help churches that are facing crises both spiritually and financially, so that both pastors and congregations are well-maintained. In this study, the role of pastors and congregations is very important and that can make pastors and congregations well-maintained even during this Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Pastor; Congregation; Survive; Pandemic

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2019 Corona Virus pandemic, known as Covid-19, has hit the world since December 31st, 2019 and has claimed a significant number of lives. The spread of Covid-19 pandemic to Indonesia started with an initial transmission on March 2nd, 2020 (Wikipedia, 2020). Covid-19 has resulted in significant changes in various fields, including economy, education, tourism, social and culture. The government therefore felt the need to control it by issuing Law Number 6 of 2018 article 53; concerning Health Quarantine, which contains restrictions on residents from outside the area to enter a certain area, in order to prevent the spread of the disease (Syafrida, 2020). To limit the transmission of Covid-19, all levels of society are expected to comply with the regulations and policies set by the government in order to maintain the stability of the country (Syafrida, 2020).

Government regulation on quarantine, to control the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, has resulted in a very limited physical and social interaction in the community. Hence, Media liaisons is absolutely necessary to maintain good and clear communication (Potensi, Social, Agung, Indra, & Satya, 2020). Technology has played a key role during the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain communication and to convey information in various fields, such as education, work, and worship to ensure all activities continue to run well and smoothly (Abdul Latip, 2020).

Church as a community of believers is obliged to comply with all regulations and policies issued by the government and to implement them properly. Therefore, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) urges all church leaders to develop a format of worship that can accommodate all levels of the congregation that can be done in their own homes during the pandemic (Silitonga, 2020).

Churches must be able to adapt to their respective environmental conditions by utilizing digital technology, internet networks, electronic media and the available social media (Silitonga, 2020). Pastor, as a church leader, plays a very important role to avoid social conflicts between the congregations. Pastor is the determinant for the congregation (RAJAGUKGUK, 2019) to ensure both the pastor and the congregations can survive during the pandemic.

This pandemic has also caused considerable economic problems and has an impact on pastors and congregations. Pastors who only rely on congregational offerings, of course during a pandemic like this will face difficulties to meet the needs of themselves and their families, as well as the workers who work in the church. Likewise with the church, they certainly face the same thing. Economic, spiritual, health and other problems are common problems for them. Therefore, how to be sufficient for pastors and congregations is something that needs serious answers (Yanto Paulus Hermanto, 2021b).

To find out more about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on church activities, the author has contacted the pastor and congregations of several churches to make an analysis. There are pastors who have difficulty serving their congregations, as well as congregations who do not understand and understand the financial difficulties faced by their pastors. Under these conditions, both the pastor and the congregation need to have good information from other parties. The parties in question are researchers who pay attention to this problem and publish it appropriately.

Since the government imposed the Guidelines for Large-Scale Social Restrictions and the prohibition to worship in church buildings, the pastor and the entire congregation have worked hard to find the best solution so that worship can continue by following the health protocols set by the government. The pastor of the congregation certainly has the determination that the spirituality of the church must be maintained and the physical needs of the church can also be fulfilled. Thus, there are two things that the church targets, namely; how the spirituality of the congregation can be served properly and the physical needs of the congregation can be met during this covid-19 pandemic. But on the other hand, the congregation must also pay attention to the needs of the pastor. They, as pastors during a pandemic, of course experience limitations in accepting offerings, so they need support from their congregations.

Such conditions are certainly experienced by all churches in various places. For this reason, the researcher intends to examine how to keep the pastor and congregation well-maintained during this pandemic? Of course, this research is different from previous studies that discuss shifting the perspective of pastoral theology with virtual services during the present and future pandemic (Harmadi&Budiartman, 2021), the role of pastors in caring for the congregation during the pandemic and beyond (Yanto Paulus Hermanto, 2021b), and the challenges of pastoral ministry of God's servants in today's era (A. Gunawan, 2020). This study aims to contribute to pastors of congregations and congregations in responding to government regulations regarding large-scale social restrictions and to find out the methods and steps that the church must take so that pastors and congregations can survive this pandemic period while still having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. METHOD

The author tries to conduct research using qualitative approaches and descriptive methods (Sugiyono, 2018) through the collection of journals and books related to the problem being studied, namely how pastors and congregations survive in difficult times. These books or journals are taken into consideration to answer the formulation of the research problem. In addition, the researcher also observed several churches that were still surviving in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and conducted online interviews with several pastors and congregations in different churches. So that it can be seen how both pastors and congregations can be maintained during this pandemic. Thus, from both sides, both research through literature and direct observation can be concluded, how pastors and congregations survive during the pandemic.

The author tries to observe all books and journals regarding the role of the pastor. From these results, the author tries to sort things out that can be used as a source of answers to this research problem. The author then also observed all the books and journals regarding the obligations of the congregation to the church, especially to the pastor of the congregation. From these results, the writer sorts out all the obligations of the church related to the care for the pastor. Thus, researchers can answer the formulation of the research problem both from the pastor's side and from the congregation's side.

In addition, the author also observed and interviewed several churches that had performed their duties and roles well. Both the role of the pastor who can meet the needs of the congregation and the congregation who can meet the needs of the pastor of the congregation so the answer to this research problem is more complete.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *The Role of the Pastor*

A shepherd has a role to care for or care for his flock. Shepherd in Greek is *poimen*, which means guardian of the

sheep. Thus, a church pastor is someone who has a call to care for, nurture and protect the congregation to remain in a close community or fellowship in God (Buinei, 2020). The pastor of the church is an office appointed by God and accepted as a calling with sincere love for God and others.

In the Jewish tradition, shepherding is a noble occupation. The word shepherd is written 67 times in the Old Testament and 17 times in the New Testament. The first shepherd recorded in the Old Testament Bible was Abel (Genesis 4:2) and in the Psalms David (Psalm 23:1-6; 78:70-72). In the New Testament; shepherds, apostles and teachers, chosen by the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus raised them up for a noble purpose. For example: The Lord Jesus told Peter regarding the task he wanted to be assigned to him. The task is to be the pastor of the church. (Tafonao, 2018). This shows that the role of a pastor is very important in the eyes of God and the congregation

A shepherd is a person chosen by God to shepherd God's congregation, not because of his own will but God's will. Therefore, a shepherd must carry out his duties with full responsibility. He is responsible to God and of course to the local church management (Soerjantoro et al., 2020). Example in the Old Testament: God chose Moses to free and lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land, the Land of Canaan. Moses carried out his duties with full responsibility, although he initially refused. But God gave confidence to Moses that He himself had called and if He called, He was responsible for accompanying and succeeding the entrusted task (Exodus 3:1-22) (Soerjantoro et al., 2020). Thus, the pastor does not need to worry or be afraid in carrying out his duties, because the one who gives the mandate or call will be responsible for the life of the pastor of the church.

A shepherd is someone who is trustworthy, loving and can carry out his duties according to God's will. 1 Peter 5:1-4 describes the pastor's character that makes him different from other human leadership, because Christian leadership is leadership that is motivated by love and service. Such a character must appear in a church pastor, so that the congregation will trust their pastor and this is a big capital in shepherding the congregation more effectively (Rupa', 2016).

In the Gospel of John 10:1-18, Jesus states that He is the good shepherd for His sheep. In this case, Jesus wants to teach about His personality that must be imitated by church pastors (Situmorang, 2019). Jesus set an example, how to be a good shepherd, who cares for and cares for His flock with all his heart and is willing to sacrifice His life for His sheep (John 10:11). In this verse Jesus emphasizes that a shepherd's attention should be on his flock. This statement of Jesus was conveyed so that His disciples, who would later become shepherds for God's people, were aware of their duties and roles as pastors of the church (John 21:15-17) (Ipaq, 2014). The role of a pastor must be an example or role model for the congregation, especially in terms of caring and nurturing. This relates to pastoral duties such as; care, observers, providing

comfort, counseling and others. All of this must work well and sustainably for the entire congregation.

A pastor must also have good shepherding qualities, not only by gathering people for worship, but more importantly the safety of their lives (Sihombing&Sarongallo, 2019). A shepherd must believe that the congregation he pastors truly believes in Jesus and has experienced the new birth. This is also an important role of the church pastor and must be carried out seriously (Soryadi&Hermanto, 2019) (Yanto Paulus Hermanto, 2021).

The pastor of the congregation together with the elders, leads the congregation in carrying out the vision and mission of the church that has been set. The role of the shepherd is to lead and direct so that the vision and mission are achieved (Less, 2005). Likewise, church programs should be made jointly between pastors, administrators and congregations to be able to achieve the church's vision and mission (Ginting, 2018).

The pastor who is responsible and called to his ministry will carry out all these roles with joy, willingly and wholeheartedly. The shepherded congregation will be well looked after; their physical, spiritual, character, personality and behavior so the role of the pastor can meet the needs of his congregation. Even in difficult times such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the congregation will still survive, even having increased spiritual growth. Such a pastor will naturally be loved by God and his congregation. Likewise with the congregation they shepherd, they will take good care of the pastor's life.

2. *The Role of the Congregation*

The church is not a building or a magnificent building where Christian's worship, but a spiritual activity of a group of believers who have the same vision in doing; fellowship, evangelism and formation (Wahyuni&Waani, 2020). This is emphasized by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Romans 16:5, who greets Epenetus as the church.

The congregation in a local church is someone who has believed and accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit regenerated him and made him part of God's family. Then as a proclamation that his old life has been buried with Christ, the person is baptized and becomes a member of the local church that has baptized him (Harefa, 2020) (Sitanggang& Diana, 2019). Thus, the congregation is part of God's royal family on earth, especially in the local church where he was baptized and his role as a congregation began.

The next obligation of the church after baptism is to learn to do God's will, as salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Congregants who do God's will will be role models in society (Wahyuni & Waani, 2020). This happens because the congregation experiences spiritual, personality, and behavioral changes (Yanto Paulus Hermanto, 2021) (Sairwona, 2017). As

a result, the congregation will continue to grow and they will become people who care about others, their pastors and God.

The role of the congregation towards the local church includes several things including; faithfully worshiping, faithfully giving special offerings and tithing, faithfully supporting the vision and mission of the local church, and supporting programs designed by the church (Edhi Nugroho, Hermanto, & Abraham, 2020). Thus, the congregation who already understands and understands their role as part of God's family will play an active role in their church.

The growing congregation will be faithful to worship in its local church, where it gets good care from its pastor. This role as part of the family of God will be seen in close fellowship with fellow believers. This fellowship is carried out in religious services as well as in worship in small groups (komsel). (Siregar, 2021) In this fellowship, the congregation will build and strengthen one another. So that they become a strong family and continue to grow spiritually and understand their role as a church.

A growing congregation will realize the obligation it has to perform. The same is true in giving special offerings and tithing (Mal. 3:8). They will do so obediently and gladly to return God's property (tithe) and make special offerings willingly. Thus, the church as a representation of God's house will be provided with sufficient food through this special offering and tithing. With this collection of offerings, it is hoped that all the needs of the pastor of the church will be met and maintained even in difficult times.

In addition, the role of the congregation should be to support the vision and mission of the local church and assist the implementation of its programs in order to achieve the vision and mission. For this, the congregation can help through its participation in running these programs. By carrying out the programs that have been designed, the congregation can play an active role, so that the goals set can be achieved.

All in all, the role of the church as described above is biblical and that is exactly what God is asking for. If the congregation carries out its role properly and responsibly, then the church will surely grow and fulfill all its essential needs.

3. *The Pastor's Relationship with The Church*

The pastor is a church leader who is responsible for the growth of his congregation in various situations, especially in times of crisis. This Covid-19 pandemic period is a challenge for the leadership of a pastor to be an example and role model, so that the congregation the pastors survives, while still having faith in the Lord Jesus (Buinei, 2020). The attitude of a shepherd who feels that being a pastor is a call from God will enable him to face responsibility in any situation (Soerjantoro et al., 2020).

The ministry of a pastor in shepherding the congregation is different from his ministry in evangelism. As a pastor, he must care for each of his congregation with love; feed them spiritually and teach them to live according to God's

Word, as it is written in Psalm 23 (Santoso, 2020). Christian love is Agape love or true love, that is, love that is self-sacrificing, even in the worst of circumstances. Agape love is selfless and able to forgive the faults of others. This Agape love is what God wants from each of His children, both towards God and fellow human beings (Tafonao, 2018).

On the other hand, the church must love and obey its shepherd, so that the pastor can take care of the soul of his congregation and carry out all his responsibilities without being filled with complaints (Hebrews 13:17) (Tedjo, 2020). Congregations who are obedient to be led and faithful in a local church will have a balanced spirituality (Sihombing & Sarongallo, 2019) and the willingness of the congregation to be led is the success of a pastor (Buinei, 2020). This relationship is like a father to his child who continues to have a loving relationship.

In addition, the relationship between the pastor and the congregation should be based on friendly relations such as the example given by the Lord Jesus, by addressing his followers not as servants, but as friends (John 15:14-15) (Santoso, 2020).

The relationship between the pastor and the congregation is good; like a father and his son, as well as friends who help and support each other, enabling the pastor and the congregation to survive in the conditions and situations that occur. They will support each other when they experience difficulties during the current covid-19 pandemic. (Widiyanto, 2020)

4. Pastors and Congregations Are Well Maintained During the Pandemic

Pastors who carry out their roles well and consistently will grow the spirituality of their congregations. Such pastors will be responsible even in difficult times. He will continue to care for, maintain and care for his congregation as best he can. A shepherd will feed, pay attention to their needs and accompany them even in difficult times, of course this has more to do with spiritual matters, although it can also be related to the physical congregation. A shepherd who has an attitude and does his role well towards the congregation, then such a shepherd will not lack anything. Physically it will be fulfilled and spiritually it will increase.

As was the case in the early church, the apostles took the congregation's needs seriously. They preach God's word regularly, make disciples, perform healing ministries and pray for every congregation in trouble (Acts 2:42-47, 3:6-8, 9:34). The same is true of the church during this pandemic, because the church's presence in the world is an extension of the Kingdom of God. The church must be pro-active, so that the church's goals in carrying out; Worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship and teaching can be achieved, according to the function and mission of the church (Kharisma, 2019).

In the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, church pastors should continue to serve the needs of their congregations through; delivery of God's word, holy communion and

making disciples by holding; fellowship, cell community and regular online Bible study, as is done in onsite worship. All these services can be followed by each congregation from their respective homes using internet technology (Irwan Widjaja, Gunawan Marisi, Tua Togatorop, & Hartono, 2020). Shepherds also perform intercession by praying; congregations who are sick and who have problems or difficulties, so that the congregation can remain calm and enthusiastic in facing their struggles.

The congregation that experiences spiritual growth due to its optimal pastoral role is expected to perform its role well. The congregation will faithfully worship, faithfully give special offerings and tithes and be involved in carrying out church programs to achieve the vision and mission that has been set. Thus, the congregation will become people who support the church and indirectly maintain the continuity of the pastor in meeting the basic needs of the church.

God wants each congregation to have a responsibility to maintain the unity of the church and all believers can live in harmony by focusing on similarities, not differences, so that divisions can be avoided. Every church of God has; salvation, life and the same future, therefore God wants all His congregations to live by loving and helping each other (Warren, 2004). Therefore, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the congregation must do its part through: Firstly, moral and material support to the pastor, by regularly giving offerings; weekly, monthly, tithing, special, order church needs and daily needs; food/drink, adequate housing, children's school fees, can still be met. Secondly, the willingness to make sacrifices, so that they can help each other among God's fellow congregations, as God's family. Lastly, remain faithful in the local church and do their part willingly and submit to the pastor for the glory of God.

IV. CONCLUSION

Pastors who carry out their roles wholeheartedly and are willing to sacrifice themselves will be loved by God and their congregations. With a responsible attitude, the congregation will certainly pay attention to the life of the pastor, both basic needs and the church.

The congregation that grows as a result of its pastoral role is expected to be able to participate in several things: First, in public worship and komsel; second, giving special offerings and tithes to the local church where he is growing, and supporting the vision and mission that has been set.

In this time of Covid, it is better for pastors and congregations to be more proactive in carrying out their roles. When the pastor and congregation perform their roles well, the pastor and congregation will survive and even remain a blessing to others.

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