

## Cross-Regional Pastoral and Social Services: Banda Aceh, Sabang and Medan Missions

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines pastoral and social implementation as part of cross-regional evangelistic missions in Banda Aceh, Sabang, and Medan. This approach is designed to reach communities with diverse social, cultural, and geographic backgrounds, especially areas with strict religious regulations and marginalized communities. Pastoral services are focused on strengthening the faith and spiritual needs of congregations in areas with limited worship facilities, while social services are directed to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, scavenger children, and inmates of correctional institutions, through the provision of real assistance and moral support. Results show that ministry strategies that involve direct interaction, need observation, and collaboration with local churches are effective in strengthening faith and having a positive social impact.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The term "Mission" comes from the Latin word *missio*, from the root word *mittere*, which means to send or dispatch. In Greek, it is *apostello*, which signifies sending with authority from the sender, namely God, to achieve His desired goal. (Suprandono, 2025) Mission is a manifestation of God's love that is embodied in the church's ministry to reach unsaved souls. The implementation of mission is not only the responsibility of pastors or church workers, but must be carried out by every Christian individual as part of their commitment to faith. According to Ellis, the essence of mission includes three main aspects: proclamation of the gospel, witnessing through one's life, and serving others with love (Ellis, 2005). Therefore, preaching the gospel must be based on personal transformation that results in witnessing through one's life as a disciple of Christ while serving others with love.

The mission is also known as the Great Commission of Jesus as stated in Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, even to the end of the age." God's mission began with the incarnation of Christ and culminated in His death on the cross, which applies to everyone who believes in Him. This good news needs to be conveyed to all of God's creation in the world. Before His ascension, Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the gospel of salvation. The Great Commission includes Christ's authority, universal scope (all nations), high standards for discipleship, a comprehensive process (baptism, teaching, commissioning), and the promise of His presence throughout the ages. (Suprandono, 2025) The gospel is the main theme that is the goal of a mission. The gospel is good news that ensures salvation, news that contains incarnational, redemptive, kingly, powerful, cross-bearing, and crowned values. (Giawa, 2025).

Pastoral and social ministry is one of the strategies or outreach programs carried out by the church, especially to reach people in areas and regions with different social and geographical characteristics, such as Banda Aceh, Sabang, and Medan. Pastoral ministry is important as a tangible expression of Christ's love in response to the spiritual needs of the congregation. The church has a strategic role in its ministry to bring God's love by accompanying the congregation in facing all of life's problems, both in an individual and community context. As Beek explains, pastoral ministry is synonymous with the role of a shepherd who is responsible for guarding, caring for, and protecting his flock. The meaning of pastoral is closely related to the image of a shepherd who has a responsible attitude in serving others, including guarding, caring for, protecting, and helping them. Thus, pastoral ministry can be interpreted as a form of shepherding ministry that is reflected in concrete actions towards others (Beek, 2007). Psalm 23 declares that God is a good shepherd, describing the shepherd as a figure who is attentive and caring towards his sheep. The good shepherd is also reflected in Jesus as recorded in John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

This cross-regional pastoral and social service is particularly interesting because it is carried out in two regions with very different characteristics, cultures, and social structures. Aceh is known as the “Veranda of Mecca” due to the strong Islamic values in the region and its long history as a center for the spread of Islam in Indonesia. Since 2002, the Aceh government has implemented Islamic law through Law No. 44 of 1999 and Law No. 11 of 2006 on the government of Aceh. The province of Aceh is a province that has regional regulations (qanun) on the comprehensive implementation of Islamic law. These qanuns not only regulate family law (marriage and inheritance) and economics, but also regulate jinayah (criminal law) as stated in Qanun No. 5 of 2000 Article 5 paragraph (2) and also diyani law which covers worship and morals. (Kamil, 2007) Qanun Aceh Number 8 of 2014 concerning the principles of Islamic law states that Aceh, as part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, has special privileges and autonomy, one of which is the authority to implement Islamic law, while upholding justice, benefit, and legal certainty. Furthermore, in Chapter 1, General Provisions, Article 1, paragraph (15), it is also written: Islamic Sharia is the guidance and rules of Islamic law in all aspects of life. (Qanun Aceh, 2014) Similarly, the island/city of Sabang, which is part of the province of Aceh, implements Islamic Sharia regulations and laws. (Aceh Islamic Sharia Agency, 2018).

Medan is famous for its ethnic and cultural diversity. It is the city with the largest population in Sumatra and the fourth largest in Indonesia. It is also known as one of the seven largest Christian areas in Indonesia. Most Christians are from the Batak tribe (mainly Toba, Karo, Simalungun, Pakpak, and a small number of Angkola and Mandailing), Nias, and Chinese.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS**

The ministry model we implement in Banda Aceh, Sabang, and Medan uses a direct approach and ministry method that focuses on face to face interaction, both in serving communities and groups and directly to individuals, with a focus on spreading the gospel or good news. The following is a detailed and chronological description of the implementation of each activity in each location:

### ***Banda Aceh***

1. Thursday, September 25, 2025, 17.00 - 18.30 Pastoral and Fellowship Service at Yon Armed 17/Sigli Banda Aceh, Meeting with the new DanYon Major Arm. Denapoleon Jayakarta and Staff, discussed the permission to worship and the difficulties of special members who are Christians to perform worship. The reasons include the absence of Christian worship facilities/churches within the battalion and the distance from the Armed Battalion headquarters to the nearest church (Distance: 3 hours drive).
2. Thursday 25 September 2025 at 19.30 - 21.00 Pastoral service : worship at Yon Armed 17 / Sigli Banda Aceh. Participants: 19 people (13 men, 3 women, 3 children). Direct interviews with 2 members after finishing the service (Letda. Arm. Enrico Sitanggang and Prada.Arm. Iwan Sitanggang).



**Figure 1. Pastoral Ministry and Fellowship at Yon Armed 17/Sigli Banda Aceh, Meeting with Danyon is the New Major Arm. Denapoleon Jayakarta and Staff, Worship at Yon Armed 17/Sigli with Members, Wives and Children**

### *Sabang Island*

1. Friday, 26 September 2025, 13.00 - 15.00 Pastoral service at Sabang prayer communion. participants: 18 people, mostly mothers and the elderly. Direct interview (Mrs. Elvi Sitorus, civil servant of the Sabang social service and Mrs. Theodora Handoko, chairman of the Sabang prayer fellowship).
2. Friday, 26 September 2025, 16.00 - 17.30 Visit and Pray at Kilometer Zero Indonesia, Sabang Island.



**Figure 2. Pastoral Ministry at the Sabang Prayer Fellowship, Followed By Fellowship and Direct Interviews (Mrs. Elvi Sitorus, A Civil Servant of the Sabang Social Service and Mrs. Theodora Handoko, The Chairperson of the Sabang Prayer Fellowship)**

### ***Banda Aceh***

1. Saturday, 27 September 2025, 10.00 – 24.00 Pastoral service, visits to Christian communities (Christian families) in Meulaboh, Woyla Banda Aceh and surrounding areas.
2. Saturday, September 27, 2025, 19.00 – 21.00 Pastoral service: youth worship of the Banda Aceh Parousia Church. Participants : 13 people, 21.00 – 23.00 Fellowship with youth and pastoral staff of the Parousia Christian Church Banda Aceh.



**Figure 3. Pastoral Ministry: Youth Worship of the Parousia Church and Fellowship with Youth and Pastoral Staff of the Parousia Christian Church of Banda Aceh**

### ***Banda Aceh***

1. Sunday, 28 September 2025, 10.00 – 12.00 p.m. Pastoral service: worship at the Parousia Christian Church of Banda Aceh. Participants: 27 people, followed by fellowship and lunch together at 12.00 – 13.00.
2. Sunday, September 28, 2025, pkl. 14.00-15.00 Pastoral service: fellowship and prayer for the pastor and wife of one of the churches in Banda Aceh.



**Figure 4. Pastoral Ministry: Public Worship And Fellowship With Pastoral Staff and All Congregations of the Parousia Christian Church of Banda Aceh**

### ***Medan***

1. Monday, 29 September 2025, 15.00 – 17.00 Pastoral and social services (worship and distribution of food as well as the provision of scholarships or assistance for education), Rumah Berkat Tangan Kasih Orphanage, East Pasar Merah Tengah, Medan. Participants: 22 children from toddlers, elementary, junior high, high school and 2 college students.
2. Monday, 29 September 2025, 18.00 – 19.00 Pastoral and social services (praying and distributing food as well as cash assistance for operational funds) Eklesia Orphanage, Pulo Brayan Bengkel, Medan. Participants : 12 people (toddlers – elementary).

3. Monday, 29 September 2025, 19.00 – 20.00 Pastoral service: praying for the sick pastor of the Parousia Christian Church in Medan.
4. Monday, September 29, 2025, 21.00 – 22.00 Pastoral service: praying for the children of teenagers and youth of the Parousia Christian Church of Medan, Participants: 9 people.



**Figure 5. Pastoral and Social Services (Worship and Distribution of Food as Well as the Provision of Scholarships or Assistance for Education): Home of the Blessing of the Hand of Love Orphanage of East Medan Red Market**



**Figure 6. Pastoral and Social Services (Praying and Distributing Food as Well as Cash Assistance for Operational Funds) Eklesia Pulo Brayan Orphanage Bengkel Medan**



**Figure 7. Pastoral Ministry: Praying for the Sick Congregation, Parousia Christian Church Medan**



**Figure 8. Pastoral Service: Praying for the Adolescents and Youth of GK Parousia Medan**

### *Medan*

1. Tuesday, 30 September 2025, 09.00 – 12.00 p.m. Pastoral and social services (worship and distribution of food/basic necessities): Tanjung Gusta Medan class IIA women's prison. Participants: 59 people.
2. Tuesday, 30 September 2025, 15.00 – 17.00 Pastoral and social services (worship and distribution of food/rice boxes as well as cash allowance assistance) of the Tanguk Bongkar Medan scavenger settlement. Participants: 126 scavenger children.
3. Tuesday, 30 September 2025, 10.00 – 20.00 p.m. Pastoral service: worship at Yon Armed 2/KS Deli Tua Medan. Praying for the Armed Forces soldiers and their families (wives and children). Pkl.20.00 – Pkl.21.00 Fellowship and dinner with the family of Yon Armed 2/KS Medan.



**Figure 9. Pastoral and Social Services (Worship and Distribution of Food/Basic Necessities): Tanjung Gusta Women's Prison Class IIA Medan**



**Figure 10. Pastoral and Social Services (Worship and Distribution of Food/Rice Boxes and Cash Allowance Assistance): The Scavenger Settlement of Tanguk Bongkar Medan**



**Figure 11. Pastoral Service: Worship at Yon Armed 17/KS Deli Tua Medan, (Praying for The Armed Soldiers and Their Families (Wives & Children))**

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Mission and evangelism are an essential part of Christianity, one of the main tasks of the church for the life vocation of every believer in Christ. Mission and evangelism are calls to proclaim the message of salvation that can only be found in Jesus. Everyone who believes in Christ is obliged to carry out the commandments and the call of evangelism with compassion for souls who have not been saved and are still shackled by the power of sin. In the midst of the life of the Indonesian people who have diverse cultural backgrounds and characteristics and different geographical locations. Mission and evangelism will be challenges in themselves that are not easy to apply, special strategies, careful planning and the right approach are needed so that the gospel can be accepted, one of the strategies is pastoral ministry and social service.

Pastoral services are very important to reach and meet the spiritual needs of spirituality, especially in areas where the majority of other religions (other than Christianity) are present, especially in Banda Aceh and Sabang Island which adhere to strong Islamic sharia law. The results of the pastoral services that we carried out in Banda Aceh and Sabang received quite a positive response and had an impact on strengthening the faith and spirituality of the congregation there, such as the worship service that we carried out in Yon Armed 17/Sigli, in the interview session with two members of the congregation who participated in the worship showed a positive response and impact, they felt blessed and strengthened in faith and committed to continue to be faithful in worship even in the midst of difficulties due to availability places of worship and the limitations of servants in the area. Likewise with the pastoral ministry at the Sabang prayer fellowship where the majority are mothers and the elderly, they

are very grateful and enthusiastic to participate in every session in worship and prayer fellowship. In an interview session with two fellowship members, they expressed their gratitude to be served and visited by our team because it is rare for them to worship with evangelists from outside the region because of the considerable distance, Sabang is the westernmost region in the Republic of Indonesia. In addition, their enthusiasm in worship inspires us to be more active in pastoral ministry and evangelism.

Social services are one of the parts and strategies that are quite effective in mission and evangelism for soul outreach, this strategy must be carried out in a structured manner and requires deep observation to be on target and have an impact on the recipient. Social service is a tangible form of our concern for people in need. Social services are not only in the form of material assistance, but can also be moral support, education and coaching to the surrounding community so that they can live better. In Luke 4:18 Jesus declares that He has been anointed and that the Spirit of God is upon Him to preach the good news to the poor. This verse is a manifestation of His ministry, Jesus emphatically states that His presence in the world is related to the liberation and restoration of the oppressed (including the poor). Jesus in His ministry did not only speak of the poor, but Jesus did tangible actions in his social ministry such as feeding 5,000 people, 4,000 people, healing the sick and demon-possessed, praising the offering of the poor, including teaching about love for others, also teaching to care for those who were hungry, thirsty, naked and imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46). This proves that Jesus' ministry has always combined the preaching of the gospel with social service and the defense of social justice. The results of the social services that we carried out to the inmates in women's prisons, orphanages and scavenger children in the city of Medan received a positive response and impact, as seen from the enthusiasm of the worship participants in the women's prison, the interaction between the servants and worship participants/congregations was very good and the worship atmosphere was very solemn and full of surrender was seen when the participants increased the praise and worship of God. At the time of the news of the Word, the participants' response looked attentive, as well as at the time of the altar call or the call to the altar to pray, most of the participants came forward with enthusiasm, as well as during worship and the distribution of food aid in the settlement area of the Tanguk Bongkar scavengers in Medan, the children were so enthusiastic in participating in the worship and distributing food aid and scholarships for education.

### ***Cross-Region Analysis***

Indonesia is a large country, with a diversity of different cultures, ethnicities, customs and religions. This condition is a challenge as well as a great opportunity in the implementation of mission and evangelism. With more than a thousand ethnic groups and hundreds of regional languages and the majority of the population being Muslim, mission and evangelism must face various challenges and obstacles that are not only social and cultural but also the laws and regulations that apply to each region. Nevertheless, there is considerable space to spread love and salvation through the gospel in the land of Indonesia. (Fernando, 2023) Likewise, the cross-regional missions and pastoral services that we carry out face many challenges and obstacles that must be faced, especially in the Aceh and Sabang areas that apply Islamic sharia law, one of which is the regulations that regulate the spread of religion, regional regulations and regulations often have strict rules regarding religious activities, both related to the construction of houses of worship or other religious activities (such as worship or prayer fellowship). Many regions in Indonesia have very strict regulations on the establishment of new places of worship, which require churches and missionaries to have permission from the local government and communities. (Anouw, 2022) This can be one of the obstacles in evangelistic ministry efforts and efforts to reach the soul. In fact, sometimes this causes social tension that can damage harmony between religious communities. In addition, some regions in Indonesia have a long history of conflicts between religious communities which makes the spread of the gospel very sensitive. The lack of trained human resources and limited funds are also one of the obstacles and difficulties faced, especially for remote areas with minimal access to transportation. But despite the difficulties and obstacles and challenges we had to face, we had a wonderful experience that continued to fuel our spirit to continue on missions and preach the good news until God's plan for the world was fulfilled that people of every tribe, nation and tongue stood before the throne of God, worshipping the Lamb forever and ever (Revelation 5:9).

Spiritual needs are basic needs needed by every human being. Spiritual or social needs in each region can vary, as well as in the regions of Aceh, Sabang and Medan. Aceh and Sabang need spiritual support that can be applied through holistic and sustainable pastoral ministry. With the condition of the area with minimal places of worship and a lack of qualified evangelizers or teaching staff, Christians there must be satisfied with worship and makeshift fellowship in the houses of the congregation. Therefore, periodic spiritual support is needed to meet the spiritual needs of the people through missions and pastoral ministry. In contrast to Medan which has a densely populated area and with various problems such as those experienced by big city people in Indonesia, especially social and economic problems, such as a lot of unemployment that results in poverty and crime or high crime rates, the people of Medan city are more in need of spiritual needs and at the same time real and direct social assistance to ease the burden of life experienced. This is what we do during missions and pastoral ministries in the city of Medan. The logistics strategy and ministry strategy that we carry out is to make observations or reviews in advance of each place or

location that we will visit, record and listen through direct interviews what their current needs are by involving churches in the region so that the ministry can run well on target and the impact can be felt for those in need.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Indonesia with its diversity is home to religious traditions that have existed for centuries. In this context, cross-regional missions and pastoral ministries are an interesting phenomenon and at the same time a great challenge and opportunity to be carried out in all regions in Indonesia, apart from the complexity of the problems that must be faced in a multicultural and majority Muslim society at the time of mission and evangelism, Christians must be well aware that mission and evangelism are very crucial and important things as well as the main task for the church in carry out the great commission of Jesus. Missions, evangelism and pastoral ministry accompanied by direct social activities are excellent strategies to be carried out in order to reach souls in need of a helping hand. God calls all believers to play an active role and take part in supporting the gospel message to the unreached, especially in remote or under-educated areas such as Aceh, Sabang and the marginalized in the city of Medan, this pastoral and social ministry must be based on love as taught by Christ Himself. It is a call to all believers. The form of participation can vary depending on each believer but all must be faithful in prayer, all must financially support the mission and message of the gospel, and some must take a step of faith and leave.

Missions, pastoral and social ministries in these three different regions can be carried out well and successfully reach souls effectively because they are carried out with careful preparation and planning and continuous observation involving local ministers and churches who have detailed knowledge of the conditions of the community and the geographical location of the area we are going to visit, thus indirectly this mission and evangelism can be carried out together as a unity in the body of Christ, working together to win many souls and carrying out the great commission brings those who do not know Christ to be saved and transformed into disciples of Christ. From this pastoral and social mission and ministry we draw the conclusion that it is not religion that guarantees that a person can be better, nor does the many rules make a person good, but the love of Christ that enters into the heart and leads us to be more righteous. True change is not born from the multitude of rules, but from the love of Christ that lives in our hearts, as His love works our lives inevitably change through a process from the inside out.

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