

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Indonesia, a country composed of 13,700 islands with five of its main islands being Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua, has roughly around 268 million people spread across its 1.9 million square miles of land. There are as many as 300 ethnic groups found within Indonesian communities, with the majority being Muslims. The statistics show around 87% of people, or around 210 million people are Muslims. In fact, Indonesia is the largest Muslim population country in the world. Other religions, such as Christians are only accounted for less than 10% amongst other minority groups.¹ Hence, maintaining peace is essential to ensure the unity in diversity.

Peace is a global issue. Accordingly, as a global issue, it requires global effort which involves local engagement with local actors, in this case, the social programs of religious groups. Even so, conducive participation from state and non-state actors are essential in progressing toward the common goal. Especially in Indonesia, where there is a disparity between the majority and minority religious groups. With that said, peace is fundamental to maintain harmony between all religions in Indonesia because without peace, the sound implementation of democracy would never be achieved.

¹ World Population Review. "Indonesia Population". *World Population Review*, September 25, 2018. Accessed February 22, 2019. From <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/indonesia-population/>.

During the early times, Indonesian people managed to live peacefully and respect one another by having a high level of religious tolerance. As all religions should be, they all have reasons to worship whoever they believe and a valid path towards God. At the end of the 20th century, major cases of religious conflicts started to gain national and international attention. Most of these cases are mainly besets between the Muslims and Christians and were driven by retaliation motive caused by the first few attacks and former victims. Since the 2000s, there have been countless attacks and numerous holy sites' burnings, some major ones happened around Sulawesi (Poso) Island and Ambon in Molucca Islands as early as the 2000s.² The most recent case of religious conflict was in May of 2018, which happened on May 13th until May 14th, leaving 15 casualties in the event.³

Having said that, Christians, which made up of only 10% in Indonesia, has The Communion of Churches in Indonesia, called the PGI (*Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia*). Such congregation incorporates many churches under its giant umbrella, with 89 members, compromising of other smaller Protestants churches nationwide, claimed to represent 80% of all Christians in Indonesia.⁴ All in all, the congregation caters as a platform for all of these churches to have a solid framework and unified beliefs in their local operations.

² Hays, Jeffrey. "Christians and Muslim-Christian Violence in Indonesia." Facts and Details. July 2015. Accessed February 25, 2019.
http://factsanddetails.com/indonesia/Minorities_and_Regions/sub6_3a/entry-3995.html#.

³ Lamb, Kate. "Indonesia Church Bombings: Police Say One Family and Their Children behind Attacks." *The Guardian*, May 13, 2018. Accessed February 22, 2019.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/13/deaths-bomb-attacks-churches-indonesia-surabaya>.

⁴ "Sejarah Singkat PGI." Website PGI. February 26, 2018. Accessed February 22, 2019.
<https://pgi.or.id/sejarah-singkat/>.

In the tumult of religious conflicts, one religious group in particular, GKPB, also known as *Gereja Kristen Perjanjian Baru* (New Covenant Christian Church), is a local district church that has been implementing its social programs in advocating for peace. In Christianity, people are being taught to show compassion and love through their actions and to serve others as one may serve themselves. According to the Holy Bible, in the book of Isaiah 2:4, it is clearly stated that “He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples... Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”⁵

GKPB programs have been involved in nurturing the living quality and providing moral support for communities in need; which involves many aspects, such as dental checks, general health consultation and check-ups, nail and hair trimming, thrift market, and many more.⁶ Christians are taught to serve others and to “Love one another,”⁷ and the church feels obligated to serve the communities, along with participation from church members, to implement these programs that is congruent with their role in peace-building.

The programs started before the 2000s, and while some have been put on hold, other social programs are still in operation until today. The sustainability of these programs can rejuvenate others churches in advocating their role in evangelism. Since Indonesia is not the only country with diversity, other countries such as Africa, Bangladesh India, Myanmar, and many others are also experiencing

⁵ "BibleGateway." Isaiah 2:4 NIV - - Bible Gateway. Accessed February 25, 2019. [https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah 2:4&version=NIV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%202:4&version=NIV).

⁶ Swardi, Tonny. (Senior Pastor, New Covenant Christian Church). Interview by Tobias Febrian. February 25th, 2019. In discussion regarding GKPB programs.

⁷ "BibleGateway." John 13:34-35 NIV - - Bible Gateway. Accessed February 25, 2019. [https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John 13:34-35&version=NIV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2013:34-35&version=NIV).

the pervasive nature of religious conflicts. That being said, GKPB's programs and strategies can be applied as a model for other religious groups around the globe in achieving peace.

In addition, there are also other programs done by other churches in Indonesia, such as the implementation of local cultures and traditions into liturgies, in the form of musical instruments, songs, local language, and other forms of socialization to create a sense of familiarity and recognition of their cultures. Furthermore, there have been numerous instances of interfaith collaborations between religious groups in hope of addressing injustice and managing conflicts in Indonesia.⁸

These programs are never intended to respond to the violence Christians are being faced with, rather it is a pure form of Christianity in sharing and spreading the love to others as they have been mandated by God. Since the church has faced numerous contradictions with the general public for the fear of Christianization. The Book of John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."⁹ That being said, it does not mean that these programs do not portray any relevancy on the overall religious intolerance in Indonesia. As the Social Progress Index, an administration that deals with social progress of a country, determines that the progress of a country is based on three main factors, such as basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing, and opportunity. Religion

⁸ "Memperjuangkan Perdamaian Dan Persaudaraan Sejati." Adrilamadua. November 08, 2012. Accessed February 25, 2019. <https://adrilamadua.wordpress.com/kelas-xii/memerjuangkan-perdamaian-dan-persaudaraan-sejati/>.

⁹ "BibleGateway." John 15:13 NIV - - Bible Gateway. Accessed February 25, 2019. [https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John 15:13&version=NIV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2015:13&version=NIV).

and other social issues fall on the opportunity aspect; from 2014 - 2017, there has been a recumbent towards increasing trend of intolerance in Indonesia. Overall, DKI Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, has the least number of tolerances in religions with only 2.30 in Tolerance Index; in which, due to recent conflicts that took place in the capital city, such as the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, along with the political actions that are increasingly divisive.¹⁰

While many believe that it is not due to the ineffectiveness of these programs, rather it is due to more government restraints on the freedom of religion in Indonesia. In recollection, in the past 60 years, there have been several attempts by the Indonesian government to establish a common ground and platform to mitigate tensions between two parties, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the 1969 and 2006 House of Worship decree, and the joint regulations by the religious affairs and home affairs, titled “Guidelines for Regional Heads and Deputies in Maintaining Religious Harmony, Empowering the Religious Harmony Forum, and Constructing Houses of Worship.”¹¹ Despite the efforts, the decree was misused by them, instead, it was the tool to use unnecessary restraint against Christians and the construction of their holy sites.

In this manner, GKPB, as a religious group, promotes its programs to present a holistic and integrated faith-based commitment in achieving peace

¹⁰ Maulida Sri Handayani and Scholastica Gerintya. "Benarkah Intoleransi Antar-umat Beragama Meningkat?". *Tirto.id*. July 24, 2018. Accessed February 25, 2019. <https://tirto.id/benarkah-intoleransi-antar-umat-beragama-meningkat-cEPz>.

¹¹ "In Religion's Name | Abuses Against Religious Minorities in Indonesia." *Human Rights Watch*, May 18, 2017. Accessed February 22, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/02/28/religions-name/abuses-against-religious-minorities-indonesia#>.

through peace-building. It is indispensable to acknowledge the mutual importance of collaboration between state and non-state actors in direct conjunction. As peace-building captures an extensive understanding to which comprises of the different stages and approaches to address conflict towards peaceful means and outcomes. In this particular process, peace-building acknowledges the existence of structural violence, which involves discrimination and social inequality.¹²

In respect, as the statistics presented numerous attacks and the dilemma faced by the minorities, the unwillingness and biased government officials, including Indonesian authorities, have proliferated in the social and religious disparities.¹³ The Human Rights Watch has also stated in their reports that law enforcement and local governments have failed to protect the lives and rights of minorities in Indonesia. Unless there is a solid framework in Indonesian constitution against discrimination on minorities, as well as the willingness to tolerate and respect other religions in Indonesia, there will always be other cases of religious conflicts in Indonesia. Therefore, it is a topic that would always intrigue many scholars and readers, whom are interested in such topic, to study the behavior of the people in Indonesia's dense population; as well as to indulge further into examining the roots and outcomes of disparities in Indonesia's rich culture and how GKPB would be able to procreate other programs in mitigating religious conflicts in Indonesia.

¹² Ramsbotham, Oliver, Hugh Miall, and Tom Woodhouse. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management, and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011. 226-227.

¹³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 660 (Condemning the Invasion of Kuwait by Iraq). S.C. Res. 660, 45 U.N. SCOR at 19, U.N. Doc. S/RES/660 (1990). Accessed February 25, 2019. <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/gencomm/hrcom31.html>.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the conditions explained above, this research suggests the following research question:

How do GKPB (New Covenant Christian Church) programs reflect its role in advocating for peace-building?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of the research is to identify the role of GKPB in peace-building through its programs in addressing religious intolerance that has had forayed the Indonesian people for many years and providing alternate outcomes. The paper would examine the clarification and results of these programs within Indonesia's community in dealing with the ever-resolved issue of high level of intolerance amongst Indonesian. The outcome of the research would ensure whether programs promoted by GKPB are in fact addressing the social injustice and allowing the transformation toward positive results on the individuals within those communities.

1.4 Research Contribution

The findings from this research proposal will accommodate an understanding on how proficient the programs offered by GKPB in reflecting peace-building, in which will be depicted by the increasing level of religious tolerance within Indonesian communities through fewer religious conflicts in the future. The research topic chosen is the most consequential, due to the fact that not

only it covers many perspectives from both minority and majority religions on domestic level, but it also provides solutions to achieve greater good for the country, in regards to further enhancing Indonesia's effective democracy in the eyes of the international communities. By analyzing their challenges and strategies to overcome such issue, I believe this research would contribute as a reference for future non-state actors in seeing the effectiveness of values implemented by GKP. Not to mention, the topic is also available for the public knowledge to gentrify the minds of younger generations against religious intolerance in Indonesia.

