

The Spirituality of Prayer Fellowship: A Theological Study of the Life of the Early Church According to Acts 2:41-47

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ABSTRACT

The Prayer Fellowship developed in line with the influence of the charismatic movement in Indonesia. The Prayer Fellowship became an integral part of the church that is inseparable from the mainstream Protestant churches such as the Evangelical Christian Church Synod in Timor (GMIT). This study focuses on the Prayer Fellowship within the scope of the GMIT Synod viewed from a biblical perspective. This study is oriented towards the form of early church fellowship implemented by the Prayer Fellowship that the characteristics of the early church are still relevant today. The purpose of this study is to see the relevance of the life of the early church for the growth of the congregation's faith through the Prayer Fellowship. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with the method of biblical exegesis and through literature studies. The author explores the meaning of the text can help provide a good theological understanding of the early church fellowship. The author refers to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's understanding of sanctorum communio providing an understanding of the Prayer Fellowship that brings peace to the world. The result of this study is to provide a theological understanding of the early church fellowship in the text of Acts 2:41-47 which is still relevant to the life of the church today through the Prayer Fellowship within the scope of the GMIT Synod.

Keywords: *Spirituality, Prayer Fellowship, Acts 2:41-47, GMIT.*



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INTRODUCTION

The term “church” can simply be defined as a gathering of believers or a community of believers. The Indonesian word “gereja” derives from the Portuguese word “igreja.” “Igreja” comes from the Latin word “Ecclesia,” and “Ecclesia” comes from the Greek word “ekklesia,” which can be interpreted as “those called out” (from “ek,” meaning “out,” and “klesia,” derived from the root word “kaleo,” meaning “to call”). Thus, it can be understood that the church is a gathering of people called out from this world (Hutahaean, 2021). Simply put, the church is, of course, a community of believers distinct from other gatherings of people. In theology, according to Boland, the church can be understood through two terms: the “visible church” and the “invisible church” (Boland, 2015). The visible church focuses on the growth of the congregation’s faith through programs and routine activities such as singing, praying, preaching the Word, and offering tithes and offerings. Meanwhile, the invisible church is associated with all the routines within the church, carried out merely as a duty.

Amid the dynamics of global development that influence various aspects of human life, the Church strives to maintain its existence through the fulfillment of its mission as an extension of God’s hand. This mission is implemented in three primary forms: fellowship (koinonia), witness (marturia), and service (diakonia), which are broadly extended into various spheres of life. These efforts aim to maintain the Church’s relevance and advance its presence in the daily lives of the faithful amidst the currents of changing times (Situmorang et al., 2025). The Church provides forums such as Prayer Fellowships as forms of faith communities that are collectively responsible for the spiritual growth of their members. However, there is an important aspect of the Church’s dynamics and sustainability that has received insufficient attention and has even tended to be implicit in both ministry practices and scholarly studies to date.

Within the scope of the Synod of the Evangelical Church of Timor (GMIT), the Prayer Fellowship is an integral part. This is because the fellowship is one of the church’s categories of ministry (koinonia), alongside other categorical fellowships such as children (Sunday school), youth, young adults, men (fathers), women (mothers), and the elderly. The existence of the Prayer Fellowship is currently supported by GMIT as an intra-church organization, so that the prayer fellowship cannot be separated from the church as a whole. This is demonstrated by the existence of the Prayer Fellowship, which typically involves congregation members in worship services, mutual prayer, sharing testimonies, and showing empathy in serving both members and non-members, as well as ministries that define the church’s mission. However, there are often misunderstandings that separate the Prayer Fellowship from the church, as it is perceived to differ in spiritual bonds; the Prayer Fellowship places greater emphasis on spiritual gifts.

Prayer Fellowship emerged as a form of church ministry that grew in the 1980s and 1990s when the charismatic movement emerged and developed in Indonesia (Dien, 2020) and it cannot be denied that Prayer Fellowship is often associated with the charismatic movement (Rano Baki, 2023). The influence of the charismatic movement caused it to be noticed by most churches from denominations outside the charismatic movement. This subsequently encouraged non-charismatic or non-Pentecostal churches to form a congregational fellowship

known as the “Oikumene Prayer Fellowship.” Over time, a shift occurred among non-charismatic believers because the Prayer Fellowship increasingly asserted its presence by evolving into a church. Criticism frequently arose during discussions regarding the Prayer Fellowship, which became a source of conflict among congregation members.

Although there are various issues regarding its existence, the Prayer Fellowship is actually a manifestation of one of the three tasks of the church, namely *koinonia*. The need for fellowship is fundamental and essential in the church, because the church is a community (Hosea, 2019). In the Prayer Fellowship, people from different backgrounds even from other churches gather to worship, just as the early church did. There is praise and worship of God, the preaching of God’s Word, sharing of experiences with the Lord or testifying, and praying for one another. The focus of the Prayer Fellowship community is not on church doctrines but on coming together to build faith through prayer. However, if we look back at the early church community, the task of teaching was an important and inseparable part of the Prayer Fellowship (Acts 2:42). In other words, the Prayer Fellowship can serve as a venue for learning about faith, just as the apostles did with the believers.

This article aims to provide a space for believers to learn about faith—not necessarily filled with discussions of church dogma or complex theological concepts—but to lay the foundation for a Christianity rooted in Christ. There are many learning environments, both in the church (the church setting) and in theological schools (the academic setting). Daniel Sutoyo states that such communities (small groups, cell groups, prayer fellowships) can serve as venues for teaching the Christian life (Sutoyo, 2012). Prayer fellowships can serve as venues for discipleship in accordance with each church’s theological orientation or denomination. Yohanes Susanta proposes utilizing these church communities as venues for both liturgy and fellowship, rather than merely as gatherings that do not mutually support and build one another up (Susanta, 2020). Indeed, Susanta defines the church as a community; however, fundamentally, the community to be built is not merely a venue for liturgy but also a “social” venue.

Prayer Fellowship generally consists of people who feel their faith is growing in Christ, but this does not preclude social interaction beyond mere worship gatherings. This paper aims to provide an understanding of the early church (Acts 2:41–47), which serves as a role model, implemented concretely through the presence of the Prayer Fellowship within the life of the church.

Previous research by Sony, which produced the Taizé prayer model adopted by GKI Soka Salatiga, successfully created a space for inclusive, simple, and repetitive contemplative practices, utilizing elements of music, silence, and visual symbols. This appeals to young people and those seeking spiritual depth amidst busy modern life (Kristiantoro, 2021). Andreas found that the principles of early church life in Acts 2:41–47 remain highly relevant as a paradigm for holistic church growth, not merely the quantity of members (Sunarko, 2020). Janter writes that spiritual plurality is an inevitability in a living church. The best response is not to suppress one over the other, but to foster constructive theological and pastoral dialogue, so that pietism can enrich the church, and the church can provide a balancing framework for

pietism (Rano Baki, 2023). Unlike previous studies that have primarily compared the historical plurality of prayer spiritualities (such as pietistic research) or adopted contemporary models from outside (such as Taizé), this study specifically seeks to explore and contextualize the biblical model of the early church (Acts 2:41–47) as a theological foundation for investigating and reflecting on the spirituality of prayer communities within the GMIT context. This study also seeks to bridge normative theological study with practical reality by considering the potential gap between ideal and practice, so that it is hoped to provide a contextual and applicable contribution to the renewal of the GMIT congregation's prayer life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach through literature review and theological-exegetical analysis to examine the spirituality of prayer fellowship in the life of the Early Church as depicted in Acts 2:41–47, as well as its relevance to the practice of prayer fellowship in the Evangelical Church of Timor (GMIT) (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth interpretation of biblical texts and ecclesiastical realities as theological phenomena that encompass dimensions of value, meaning, and the experience of faith. To arrive at the research findings regarding Acts 2:41–47, the following steps of historical-critical and canonical exegesis will be employed: First, tracing the historical, social, and religious background of the Early Church in Jerusalem following Pentecost. Second, analyzing the narrative structure of the text to understand Luke's flow and emphasis. Third, conducting a linguistic analysis of key Greek terms such as *koinonia* (fellowship), *proseuchē* (prayer), and descriptions of shared ownership. Fourth, integrating the findings into the canonical context to examine the continuity of the theme with the overall narrative of Acts.

The data sources for this study include primary sources in the form of biblical texts and secondary sources in the form of biblical theology, church theology, Christian spirituality, and scientific journal articles relevant to the themes of prayer fellowship and congregational life. Data collection was conducted through systematic and selective literature review, taking into account the academic credibility and theological relevance of the sources (Basrowi & Suwandi, 2008). Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and theological synthesis, namely integrating exegetical findings with contemporary theological reflections, thereby producing a theological understanding that is not only normative but also contextual and applicable to contemporary church life (M. Afdhal Chatra, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Life of the Early Church in Acts 2:41-47: A Theological Understanding of Communion

The Book of Acts begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had promised in the Gospels. It began in Jerusalem and spread to Rome, encompassing several Roman provinces (Udu, 2024). At first, the Gospel was preached to some Jews and was well received. However, the fact that most Jews rejected the Gospel led to its wider spread among the Gentiles (non-Jews). The Acts of the Apostles chronicles how the church was born, organized, and faced

various challenges. Communities of believers began to emerge through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This indicates that the Book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. Some key figures featured in this book include: Jesus, who is the Spirit; the disciples; Paul; Peter; James; and Stephen (Marxen, 2020).

The church, in its early days, displayed a simple way of life, much like that of the early church. The fellowship portrayed still emphasized the life of God's people who had just been formed. At the beginning of the early church's formation, early events such as Pentecost served as the initial steps in the church's establishment. The sermons delivered by the Apostles (2:14–40) drew significant attention. Both Greek-speaking Gentiles and Greek-speaking Jews were introduced to Christ (Drane, 2001). This demonstrates that God, through the Holy Spirit, continually renews the lives of believers.

The word “fellowship” itself comes from the Greek word κοινωvία (koinonia), meaning “to be in fellowship,” derived from the root word κοινωvός (koinos), meaning “fellow worker” or “ally,” and its adjective κοινωvίω (koinonio), meaning “to share,” “to take part,” “to experience presence,” and “to be involved and take responsibility” (Jr, 2023). Fellowship means taking part, sharing responsibility, being involved, sensing presence, and being of one mind and understanding. The early church demonstrated a very close fellowship where everyone felt the same way within that fellowship without discrimination (2:42). It is understandable that fellowship is different from worship. When it comes to worship, the early church could do it on a scheduled basis, unlike fellowship, because fellowship has no schedule.

If we look at the context of the early church's life at that time, the picture of the Roman government at that time was sporadic (Halawa, 2021). After Jesus' ascension to heaven, not long after that in the first centuries, the early church began to take shape through the efforts of the apostles. But for the Roman government, the early church was a new sect and posed a problem for the Roman government. In Roman understanding, the Emperor was worshiped as a “god”; thus, to the Romans, the early church or Christians were a sect that rejected the Emperor as a deity to be worshiped. The church insisted on acknowledging that there is only one “God” from the Roman government's perspective, which led the early church to face persecution everywhere, particularly in Jerusalem. The early church began seeking hiding places considered safe for shelter. One of the places the early church used for shelter was the Catacombs. The Catacombs are underground tunnels that were often used as cemeteries and were later utilized by the early church as hiding places, places of worship, and meeting spaces, which eventually became their living quarters (Yewaonge, 2018). According to the author, the catacombs are underground tunnels that originally served as burial sites. During the time of the early church, their function evolved into places of refuge, places of worship, and meeting spaces. Over time, the catacombs evolved into living quarters for the early believers to avoid persecution.

Furthermore, they had to be careful in their use of language, ensuring that the Roman authorities could not discern what they were discussing through symbols. One symbol used by the early church was the fish symbol. In Greek, the word for fish is ΙΧΘΥΣ (ICHTUS). This word was used by fellow believers to communicate. Ichtus is an acronym for Ιησούς Χριστός

Θεός Υιός Σωτήρ (Iesous Christos Uhiος Soter), meaning Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior, referring to the person of Jesus himself. As explained earlier, due to persecution under Roman rule, the early church could not openly reveal their identity as Christians (The, 2008). To recognize one another as Christians, they would draw a semicircle on the ground using their feet; if the other person responded by drawing a semicircle that joined with theirs to form the shape of a fish, Alternatively, each person would draw a fish on the ground with their foot, and upon seeing this, they would know that they were fellow followers of Christ and part of the early church

Text Analysis

Language Comparison

Acts 2:41

GNV: οἱ μὲν οὖν ἀποδεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθησαν, καὶ προσετέθησαν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ψυχαὶ ὡσεὶ τρισχίλιαι (*oi men oun apodexamenoι ton logon autou ebaptisthesan, kai prosetethesan en te hemera ekeine psukhai zodzei triskhiliai*)

KJV	Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
TB 2	Orang-orang yang menerima perkataannya itu dibaptis dan pada hari itu jumlah mereka bertambah kira-kira tiga ribu jiwa.
BIMK (BIS)	Banyak orang percaya akan yang dikatakan oleh Petrus, lalu mereka dibaptis. Maka jumlah orang percaya pada hari itu bertambah lagi dengan tiga ribu orang.
Terjemahan Penulis	Orang-orang yang memang setelah menerima perkataan darinya itu dibaptis, dan pada hari itu mereka ditambahkan kira-kira tiga ribu jiwa

The author's translation includes the word "indeed" (from the Greek μὲν, men), which clarifies that the early church truly received the apostles' message.

The KJV also adds the word "gladly," which means that the early church gladly received the apostle's message.

The word αὐτοῦ is translated by the author, the KJV, and TB 2 as "his/from him," while in the BIMK translation it is rendered as "Peter"; of course, this translation is inseparable from the pronoun referring to the one who preached the Gospel, namely Peter. However, the author agrees more with the phrase "his/from him" because the word αὐτοῦ is the third-person masculine singular genitive pronoun derived from the root word αὐτός, meaning "his/from him" (Schafer, 2018) Although this word refers to Peter, the author believes that the phrase "his" already refers to Peter.

Acts 2:42

GNV: ἦσαν δὲ προσκατεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς (*esan de proskarterountes te didakhe apostolon kai te koinonia, te klasei tou artou kai tais proseukhais*)

KJV	And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
TB 2	Mereka bertekun dalam pengajaran rasul-rasul, dalam persekutuan, dalam memecahkan roti dan berdoa.
BIMK (BIS)	Dengan tekun mereka belajar terus dari rasul-rasul dan selalu berkumpul bersama-sama. Mereka makan bersama-sama dan berdoa bersama-sama.
Terjemahan Penulis	Sekarang mereka terus berlanjut dalam pengajaran dari rasul-rasul dan dalam persekutuan. Dalam pemecahan dari roti dan dalam doa-doa

The Greek word προσκατεροῦντες is translated as “they persevered” in the TB 2 and BIMK translations, while the author’s translation and the KJV render it as “continued.” The TB 2 and BIMK translations use “they persevered” to emphasize the perseverance of the early church in faithfully receiving instruction. The word “persevered” itself in Greek is ἐκτενῶς (Siebenthal & B.F. Drewes, 2013) which is an adverb. The author’s translation and the KJV choose to translate it as “continued,” reflecting the early church’s consistent practice of listening to the apostles’ teaching. Upon closer examination, these three terms appear quite similar in meaning, but the author prefers the phrase “continued to” derived from the root verb προσκατερέω, which describes the early church’s activity of listening to the apostles’ teaching as a continuous and unceasing practice.

The BIMK (BIS) translates the phrase κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου as “they ate together,” but the word ἄρτου is the genitive singular masculine form of the root word ἄρτος, meaning “bread.”

Acts 2:43

GNV: Ἐγένετο δὲ πάση ψυχῇ φόβος, πολλά τε τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα διὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἐγένετο (*Egineto de pase psukhe phobos, polla te terata kai semeia dia ton apostolon egineto*)

KJV	<i>And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles</i>
TB 2	Ketakjuban melanda semua orang, sebab rasul-rasul itu mengadakan banyak mengadakan mujizat dan tanda
BIMK (BIS)	Banyak sekali keajaiban yang dilakukan oleh rasul-rasul itu sehingga semua orang kagum dan takut
Terjemahan Penulis	Maka terjadi pada setiap jiwa ketakutan, banyak keajaiban dan tanda-tanda terjadi melalui rasul-rasul itu.

The Greek word ψυχῆ is translated as “people” in the TB 2 and BIMK. Meanwhile, the Personal Translation and the KJV translate it as “soul.” As seen, the word ψυχῆ is a masculine singular dative noun, which, when translated into English, corresponds to the word “soul” and in Indonesian to “jiwa” (Siebenthal & B.F. Drewes, 2013). TB 2 and BIMK translate it as “person” perhaps to further emphasize who is experiencing that fear. The author prefers to translate it as “soul” because the author wishes to explain the psychological situation experienced by the “soul” or, in other words, that the fear is experienced as a “psychological” issue. The words “people” and “soul” do not actually need to be debated since they share the same substance.

BIMK (BIS) reverses the sentence order found in the KJV, TB 2, and the author’s translation, where the people only became afraid after the apostles performed miracles and signs. This contrasts with the sentence structure in the KJV, TB 2, and the author’s translation, which place the people’s fear first, followed by the apostles performing miracles and signs.

Acts 2:44

GNV: πάντες δὲ οἱ πιστεύοντες ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινά, (*pantes de oi pisteuontes esan epi to auto eikhon apanta koina*)

KJV	<i>And all that believed were together, and had all things common;</i>
TB 2	semua orang yang percaya tetap bersatu, dan segala milik mereka adalah milik bersama,
BIMK (BIS)	Orang-orang percaya itu semuanya terus bersatu dan apa yang mereka punyai, mereka pakai bersama-sama.
Terjemahan Penulis	Sekarang semua orang-orang itu memiliki percaya hidup bersama-sama, dan segala hal dimiliki bersama.

The KJV, TB 2, and BIMK (BIS) translations add the words “were together,” “remained united,” “stayed united,” and “lived in unity” to describe believers whose lives remained united after believing in Christ. The author’s translation uses the phrase “living together”

The Greek word ἅπαντα is translated by TB 2 and BIMK (BIS) as “all their possessions, what they owned,” while the KJV and the author’s translation use the meaning “everything, anything.” These two interpretations have essentially the same connotation but differ because the TB and BIMK (BIS) interpret it as only what they possess, while other translations interpret it as everything.

Acts 2:45

GNV: καὶ τὰ κτήματα καὶ τὰς ὑπάρξεις ἐπίπρασκον καὶ διεμέριζον αὐτὰ πᾶσιν καθότι ἂν τις χρεῖαν εἶχεν (*kai ta ktemata kai tas uparseis epipraskon kai diemerison auta pasin kathoti an tis kreinan eikhen*)

KJV	<i>And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.</i>
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TB 2	Dan selalu ada dari mereka yang menjual harta miliknya, lalu membagi-bagikannya kepada semua orang sesuai dengan keperluan masing-masing
BIMK (BIS)	Mereka menjual barang-barang dan harta milik mereka, lalu membagi-bagikan uangnya di antara mereka antara mereka semuanya menurut keperluan masing-masing.
Terjemahan Penulis	Mereka telah menjual harta benda dan barang-barang itu untuk membagi-bagikannya untuk siapapun yang membutuhkannya.

The BIMK translation adds the word “money,” clarifying that what the early church distributed to those in need was the money from the sale of their property and possessions. Although in Koine Greek there is no explicit mention of “money”—only the word διεμέριζον, meaning “to divide” (Siebenthal & B.F. Drewes, 2013). the author did not add the word “money” because the term “to divide” already implies that the person was distributing what they had from the proceeds of the sale to those in need.

The word χρεία is translated by the author as “needs,” while other translations render it as “necessity.” In reality, the meanings are the same because both words derive from the root “need.”

Acts 2:46

GNV: καθ' ἡμέραν τε προσκατεροῦντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, κλωντές τε κατ' οἶκον ἄρτον, μετελάμβανον τροφῆς ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει καὶ ἀφελότητι καρδίας, (*kath hemeran te proskarterountes omothumadon en to hiero klontes te kat oikon arton metelambanon trophes en agliasei kai apheloteti kardias*)

KJV	<i>And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,</i>
TB 2	Dengan bertekun dan sehati mereka berkumpul tiap-tiap hari dalam Bait Allah. Mereka memecahkan roti di rumah masing-masing secara bergiliran dan makan bersama-sama dengan gembira dan dengan tulus hati,
BIMK (BIS)	Setiap hari mereka terus berkumpul di Rumah Tuhan; serta makan bersama-sama, dengan gembira dan rendah hati di rumah-rumah mereka.
Terjemahan Penulis	Setiap hari dan terus berlanjut dengan satu persetujuan dalam kuil itu. Kemudian mereka mengambil bagian memecahkan roti di setiap rumah dengan sukacita dan kejujuran hati.

The Greek word *ἱερόν* is translated as “house of the Lord” or “House of God” in the TB 2 and BIMK translations. However, in the author’s translation and the KJV, it is rendered as “temple,” meaning “shrine.” The reason the author chose the word “temple” is that at that time the early church was under persecution from both the Romans and the Jews, so the term used for the early church was adapted to the Roman context of the time, namely “temple” (Tubagus, 2022). The author prefers the word “kuil” because it captures the context experienced by the early church at that time.

Other translations render it as “sincere,” “humble,” while the author’s translation uses “honesty.” If we examine the word *ἀφελότητι* the feminine singular dative noun form of the root *ἀφελότης* it means “honest,” yet all translations convey the same meaning.

Acts 2:47

GNV: *αἰνοῦντες τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἔχοντες χάριν πρὸς ὅλον τὸν λαόν. ὁ δὲ κύριος προσετίθει τοὺς σφζομένους καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό.* (ainountes ton Theon kai ekhontes kharin pros olon ton laon ho de kurios prosetithe touz sodzomenous kath semeran to auto)

KJV	<i>Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.</i>
TB 2	sambil memuji Allah dan mereka disukai semua orang. Tiap-tiap hari Tuhan menambah jumlah mereka dengan orang yang diselamatkan.
BIMK (BIS)	Mereka terus memuji-muji Allah dan disenangi oleh semua orang. Setiap hari jumlah mereka terus bertambah karena Tuhan memberikan kepada mereka orang-orang yang sedang diselamatkan.
Terjemahan Penulis	Memuji Tuhan, dan memiliki kebaikan dengan orang-orang itu. dan setiap hari Allah menambah jumlah mereka dengan orang-orang yang diselamatkan

The translations of this verse whether the author’s translation, TB 2, or BIMK share the same meaning. Although TB 2 and BIMK add some words, the meaning of the sentence in all translations explains that the church was well-liked by many people, so God continued to add to their number as those who were saved day by day.

After comparing the author’s translation with several other Bible translations, such as the King James Version (KJV), Terjemahan Baru 2 (TB2), and Bahasa Indonesia Masa Kini-Bahasa Indonesia Sehari-hari (BIMK/BIS), I found that the author’s translation is closer to the KJV than to the others. There are several words that are translated the same way in the author’s translation and the KJV when compared to the other translations.

Critical Apparatus

Verse 41. In the GNV text, there is the phrase *δια τῶν Ἀποστόλων ἐγίνετο* (*dia ton apostolon egineto*), which refers to the miraculous deeds of the apostles. The critical apparatus likely aims to emphasize that the apostles truly succeeded in leading many people to believe. Just imagine people who had never met Jesus simply believing in him so easily. Verses 46–47.

The GNV text also contains the phrase ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ (*hesan epi to auto*), which describes the place where the early church gathered. The emphasis is on the same location or place and with the same purpose.

Theologians' Views on the Theology of the Community

Verses 44–47: Drewes describes how “everything was held in common” shares similarities with the Hellenistic Philosophical Community. What is meant by the Hellenistic Philosophical Community is people or groups of people living within the same social strata. This Hellenistic ideal encompasses both the rich and the poor, realized in practice based on faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Such a way of life among the congregation was very important and became an inspiration to others, so much so that Luke recounts this passage in chapter 4:32–35 (Drewes, 2014). Bergants and Karris further explain how this sense of community and the belief that everything belongs to all revealed an ideal form of friendship at that time. What is important is that they cared for one another; no one was considered superior to anyone else. As Jews who had come to faith, they also maintained their connection to Jewish traditions, so it is noteworthy that they continued to grow with the (Schumann, 2018). Luke emphasizes that everyone is saved both individually and as part of the church.

Bonhoeffer, a German theologian from the early 20th century, viewed the church as a living, worshiping universal community. In his work **Sanctorum Communio**, Bonhoeffer noted that we can observe the individual (in this case, the sinner) within the community, but that such a person can only be understood and addressed by the community itself. Although this may seem liberal, Bonhoeffer was able to demonstrate that he was a “modern theologian.” Behind his focus on fellowship within the church, Bonhoeffer began to situate theology within the context of social and ethical relationships. For Bonhoeffer, the existence of the church enables fellowship to be formed in the light of faith in Christ (Newbigin, 1993). Fellowship is important because within it there is not only a bond between fellow human beings, but also fellowship with God.

Sin destroys human fellowship because fellowship requires people who care for one another rather than merely looking out for themselves. All previous human fellowship was a *peccatorum communio* (fellowship of sinners), the old humanity in its connection to “Adam.” But because of Jesus Christ, who is the living sacrifice, humanity has been restored and has become a “collective person.” The sin that originated with Adam has been overcome and transformed into a collective Adam. This certainly affirms that Jesus lives as the church within the community (Newbigin, 1993). According to the author, sin destroys human community because it fosters a self-centered attitude. The old community was a “community of sinners” (*peccatorum communio*). However, through Jesus Christ as the living sacrifice, humanity is restored to a “collective entity.” Adam’s sin has been overcome, and Jesus now lives as the church within the new communion.

The second theologian is Yves Congar. Congar was an influential theologian in the period leading up to the Second Vatican Council. His views subsequently inspired much of the understanding of the church and communion at the Second Vatican Council. He observed that from the very beginning, Christians were a communion. In his view of authority within the

church, Congar noted that the early church (the ancient church existing between 100–451 CE) saw itself as the *ekklesia*. As mentioned in the introduction, *ekklesia* can be understood as a gathering or community of Christians. Within this community, authority is defined as acts of service toward one another (Congar, 1973). The author views the early church as a fellowship (*ekklesia*) where power is defined as service, which inspired the understanding of the church at the Second Vatican Council.

The customary use of the term *ekklesia*, defined as a fellowship of believers, is believed to stem from God's will, and God is present within that fellowship. Congar observes that while a leader in the church possesses charisma and authority of great importance, the church (congregation) retains the freedom to choose its own community, one that it believes addresses its spiritual needs. The church itself determines the customs and community that govern its faith (Congar, 1973). In this regard, Congar emphasized that prior to the Second Vatican Council, a bishop's position was often misused through the improper exercise of his charisma.

The Prayer Fellowship in GMIT as an Implementation of the Theology of the Early Church's Fellowship

The existence of the Prayer Fellowship within the Evangelical Church of Timor is inseparable from the desire to fellowship with one another. Through the Prayer Fellowship, everyone experiences support, encouragement, and a sense of connection with one another and even with God. Almost all churches in the GMIT have a Prayer Fellowship operating within the congregation, organized under the Prayer Fellowship Service Support Unit (UPP PD). In fact, at the synod, classis, and congregation levels, each already has a leadership structure for the Prayer Fellowship ministry within the GMIT.

Certainly, the Prayer Fellowship also addresses the needs of the church, particularly the GMIT as a missionary church. One of the core principles of GMIT's ecclesiology in its mission is *koinonia* or fellowship (*koinonia* is one of the five pillars of GMIT's ministry: *Koinonia* (fellowship), *Marturia* (witness), *Diakonia* (service of love), *Liturgia* (worship/praise), and *Oikonomia* (stewardship)). In the context of GMIT itself, given its diverse membership (ethnic groups, languages, political affiliations, etc.), the church must serve as a model in fostering an open fellowship that upholds equality (Timor, 2010). This is certainly fulfilled through the Prayer Fellowship.

As in the views of Bonhoeffer and Congar regarding the theology of communion, the church is a living communion. The presence of the Prayer Fellowship further strengthens the church, as within it a cycle of faith is built through prayers that are, of course, also offered to God for the church, society, and the world. There are no masters or servants in the Prayer Fellowship. Everyone is equal, as seen in the distinctive feature of the Prayer Fellowship: sitting together on the floor or carpet, which demonstrates an attitude of equality. There are no barriers separating people from one another, let alone from God. Everyone has the opportunity to experience fellowship with others and with God through praise to God, prayers, the preaching of the Word, testimonies, and, of course, a personal relationship with God.

People from many different backgrounds join the Prayer Fellowship. They seek to grow closer to God, learn more about God's love, be renewed through the preaching of the Word,

praise God even in the midst of suffering, find motivation to deepen their relationship with God, and, of course, experience a sense of fellowship within the group. Given the reality that there are already many Prayer Fellowships, they are inevitably communities of people who long to experience a deeper bond and connection with God and with one another.

By referring to the life of the early church, its characteristics can be observed in the practice of Prayer Fellowship, despite contextual differences. Both the early church and today's Prayer Fellowship share a common purpose, where Prayer Fellowship is not merely understood as a formal form of worship. If worship is understood narrowly as a weekly ritual gathering, then the deeper communal dynamics will not be encompassed. Conversely, within the fellowship, social solidarity becomes tangible; for example, when a member faces difficulties or illness, the entire community shares in that experience and offers support, just as was practiced by the early church. The life of the early church demonstrated significant growth both qualitatively and quantitatively. In this regard, the Evangelical Church of Timor (GMIT) has focused its attention on efforts to improve the quality and quantity of its congregation through the medium of Prayer Fellowship.

CONCLUSION

GMIT's understanding of itself and its mission in this context enables it to serve as an instrument for proclaiming the Word and simultaneously as God's agent in conveying the message of salvation through the Prayer Fellowship. The hope is that church fellowship remains not merely confined to the church building or the Prayer Fellowship, but is also lived out in daily life. The Prayer Fellowship has made significant strides in reaching out to congregational life, encompassing aspects of fellowship as well as the church's witness and ministry. GMIT has given full attention to the existence of the Prayer Fellowship in the world. With the understanding that the Prayer Fellowship is an inseparable part of the church itself and serves as a distinct strength for the church.

Through an understanding of the early church in Acts 2:41-47, the church is called to be a community of fellowship that encompasses all aspects of human life. Just as the early church did, the Prayer Fellowship must remain in the light of the Holy Spirit who sustains the church. The Prayer Fellowship, as a vessel of *koinonia*, is presented in the same way as the life of the early church. Understanding the context of the Christian faith is not limited to the church; rather, within the church community, it can have an impact on others. This task concludes with a proposal to the church specifically the GMIT to further maximize platforms such as the Prayer Fellowship as a space for mutual support among one another (*koinonia*, *marturia*, and *diakonia*).

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