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## Understanding the Inter-Ethnic Solidarity Formation in A Plural Charismatic Community

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### Abstract

This study describes the inter-ethnic solidarity in the charismatic Mawar Sharon church in Medan City, Indonesia, also known as the Connect Group Church. The qualitative and ethnographic approaches were used to determine the solidarity in Charismatic Churches where people are separated by ethnicity. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with respondents actively involved in the activities of the religious connect groups, such as sponsors, coaches, and team leaders. The results showed that the activities in the community include fellowship, ice breakers, praise and worship, and material sharing as a form of learning about inter-ethnic solidarity among members. Furthermore, active members such as team leaders, sponsors, and coaches play significant roles in these activities. Meanwhile, music and church songs are used to strengthen the relationship between members.

**Keywords:** cell community; charismatic church; ethnic assimilation; solidarity formation; inter-ethnic

## INTRODUCTION

According to Rahner, Albineno, Wuthnow, Anderson, and Beckford, many spiritual-based cell communities were formed by Charismatic Churches as part of a faith or religious community during the millennium era.<sup>1</sup> This movement continued Pentecost, which had many similarities and has become global. Their fiery preaching style determined the power of the Holy Spirit and Divine Healing. Several aspects distinguish the Charismatic and Pentecostal sects. Furthermore, most Charismatics reject the primacy of glossolalia/tongues imposed by the Pentecost and often remain in their denomination without establishing a new church, such as Charismatics in the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to conventional Christian Churches, all religious activities in the cell are carried out in a small group called a cell community. This cell community is a spiritual movement with an impact on church growth as found in South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Mainland China, Macau, Hong Kong, Africa, England, Australia, South Africa, and the United States.<sup>3</sup> This group has become a worldwide spiritual movement. Local churches in Indonesia, especially Pentecostal/Charismatic sects, tend to build services using cell community as the most important part of their growth strategy.<sup>4</sup> The cell community is taught to respect people's opinions, be humble, understand, listen, think, speak, and act maturely.<sup>5</sup> The cell community is like the roots of a growing tree, where assuming the branch is

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<sup>1</sup>K. Rahner, *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (USA: Continuum International Publishing Inc., n.d.), 184-85.; C. J. Albineno, *Gerakan Pentakosta Dan Gerakan Pentakosta Baru (Gerakan Kharismatik)* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1976).; R. Wuthnow, *I Come Away Stronger (How Small Groups Are Shaping American Religion)* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994).; A. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity Introduction to Religion*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).; James A. Beckford, "'Community' in the Sociology of Religion: The Case of Britain," *Social Compass* 62, no. 2 (June 3, 2015): 225-37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768615571692>.

<sup>2</sup>J. F. Stitzinger, "Spiritual Gift: Definitions and Kinds," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 14, no. 2 (2003): 143-76.; M. J. McClymond, "Charismatic Gifts: Healing, Tongue-Speaking, Prophecy, and Exorcism," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*, ed. M. J. McClymond (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., n.d.), 399-418.; M Hari

Sasongko, "Gereja Karismatik Dan Inkulturasi Musik Di Dalam Sistem Ibadahnya," *SELONDING* 13, no. 13 (July 28, 2018): 1913-27, <https://doi.org/10.24821/SELONDING.V13I13.2916>.

<sup>3</sup>Imron Widjaja, "Perkembangan Komsel Pelajar dalam Pertumbuhan Rohani Jemaat GBI Graha Pena Jakarta," *The Way Jurnal Teologi Dan Kependidikan* 5, no. 2 (October 30, 2019): 88-100, <https://doi.org/10.54793/TEOLOGI-DAN-KEPENDIDIKAN.V5I2.6>.; Amos Hosea, "Fenomena Kelompok Sel (Cell Group) dalam Gereja Lokal," *Diegesis : Jurnal Teologi* 4, no. 1 (September 5, 2019): 1-11, <https://doi.org/10.46933/DGS.VOL3I21-11>.

<sup>4</sup>Maringan Pahala Siregar, "Pengaruh Kelompok Sel Terhadap Pertumbuhan Jemaat Gereja Bethel Indonesia Simalingkar B Medan," *HAGGADAH: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 1 (2021): 42-51, <https://stmwc.ac.id/e-journal/index.php/haggadah/article/view/21>.

<sup>5</sup>P. C. Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1984).; J. Comiskey, *Ledakan Kelompok Sel* (Jakarta: Metanonia, 1998).

cut, it still grows. This statement means that the Charismatic Church continues to grow rapidly even though it is hampered due to the development of the cell community movement.<sup>6</sup>

The association of communities is the headquarter to forming the cell church, which is more exclusive and separates itself from community life, emphasizing religious experiences and emotions while prioritizing member loyalty and commitment. According to Baskoro, developments in the cell church include intensive indoctrination with various effective methods to change a person's mindset to become sectarian.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the cell community's activities are effective for indoctrination, socialization, and enculturation of ideas on the sectarian spirit, promotional religious experiences, and the problems of one's life. These factors encourage a person with life problems to experience religious emotions and think and behave like a sectarian. The cell church, originally a sect, formed an exclusive non-church community. A high sense of emotional togetherness, loyalty, and com-

mitment from members become the main basis for recruiting new people.

In Indonesia, cell communities, such as Connect Group, are a contemporary church trend.<sup>8</sup> At the HCC Palu Church, this cell community (*konsel*) aims to strengthen the faith of young people. The existence of this community has an impact on increasing the number of congregations and on the evangelistic mission in the church.<sup>9</sup> The Bethel Church in Simalingkar, Medan shows that the number of cell group members is increasing every year. In 2019 there are 5 cell groups in this church with 100 members.<sup>10</sup> The GBI Family of God Church in Jawa Tengah uses this cell group to grow its congregation and by 2010 the church already has more than 1000 cell groups.<sup>11</sup>

Medan is one of the heterogeneous cities in Indonesia due to its significant number of vernacular languages and ethnicities, such as Melayunese, Batak Mandailingnese, Batak Tobanese, Batak Simalungunese, Batak Karonese, and Batak Pakpaknese, Niasnese, Acehnese, Minangkabunese, Javanese, Chinese, etc. According

<sup>6</sup>L. Stockstill, *Gereja Sel* (Jakarta: Yayasan Media Buana, 2000).

<sup>7</sup>H. Baskoro, *Gereja Sel: Gereja Atau Sekte. Faktor-Faktor Pendorong Semangat Sektarian Gereja Sel* (Yogyakarta: Universitas Gajah Mada, 2003).

<sup>8</sup>D. Y. Cho, *Kelompok Sel Yang Berhasil* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 1994).; Daniel Sutoyo, "Komunitas Kecil Sebagai Tempat Pembelajaran Gaya Hidup Kristen," *Jurnal Antusias* 2, no. 2 (September 1,

2012): 1–22, <https://www.sttintheos.ac.id/e-journal/index.php/antusias/article/view/31>.

<sup>9</sup>Nustince Maki et al., "Peranan Kelompok Sel Terhadap Pertumbuhan Gereja Home Community Church (HCC) di Jemaat Palu," *BONAFIDE: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 2 (December 23, 2021): 266–81, <https://doi.org/10.46558/BONAFIDE.V2I2.82>.

<sup>10</sup>Maki et al.

<sup>11</sup>Maki et al.

to a 2019 census, the population of Medan is 2,279,894 people comprising 64.35% Moslems, 20.99% Christians, 5.11% Catholics, 0.06% Buddhists, and 1.04 % Hindus. Meanwhile, from the population data of Medan city in 2010, the number of ethnic Chinese population is 202,839 people, about 25% of the total population of Medan city.<sup>12</sup> Medan also differs in culture, political orientation, and economic background. In culture, the Chinese community consists of sub ethnics such as Hokkian, Hakka, Konghu, Tiociu, Khek, Hai Lo Hong, Hokciu, etc. They generally use the Hokkien language to communicate with other Chinese ethnicities. Furthermore, the segregation of worship places is also seen in this city's churches with ethnic characteristics. The worshippers use their respective regional languages in the liturgy, singing, and sermons. According to Sitinjak and Brahmana, Batak Tobanese, Karonese, and Simalungunese communities have churches called HKBP (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*), GBKP (*Gereja Batak Karo Protestan*), and GKPS (*Gereja Kristen Protestan Simalungun*) that showed the cultural diver-

sity.<sup>13</sup> Every church uses its respective ethnic languages.

The name Connect Group was initially used by the Mawar Sharon Church in Medan, North Sumatra Province. However, in subsequent developments, several Charismatic Churches in this city have used it as a religious community. Some of the daily activities carried out by members of this community are singing praises and worship, praying for each other, sharing God's Word, and fellowships that benefit their followers, such as health, economy and investment, politics, and social relations, etc. However, on the negative side, followers of this religious community become sectarian. Cell community growth does not always run smoothly and depends on the ability of its members and leaders. The focus of discussion in this study reveals the overview of Connect Group as a cell community consisting of inter-ethnic solidarity in a pluralistic society united by ecclesiastical music and worship activities.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This paper is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach. Primary data

<sup>12</sup> Lusiana Andriani Lubis, "Komunikasi Antarbudaya Etnis Tionghoa Dan Pribumi Di Kota Medan," *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 10, no. 1 (February 7, 2014): 13–27, <https://doi.org/10.31315/JIK.V10I1.83>.

<sup>13</sup> Della Yosephine Sitinjak, "Bentuk Penyajian Lagu Arab Karya Bonar Gultom Oleh Paduan Suara

NHKBP Sidorame Medan," *Repertoar Journal* 2, no. 1 (July 26, 2021): 102–16, <https://doi.org/10.26740/RJ.V2N1.P102-116>.; Karina Meriem Beru Brahmana, "Gambaran Penyesuaian Perkawinan Pada Suami Pendeta," *Jurnal Sains Psikologi* 10, no. 1 (March 31, 2021): 21–30, <https://doi.org/10.17977/UM023V10I12021P21-30>.

sources were collected from interviews with respondents actively involved in religious activities in the Connect Group and acting as sponsors, coaches, and team leaders. Meanwhile, direct observations obtained secondary data, such as the relationship between congregation members, activities in groups, and other activities carried out in the Connect Group. Respondents in this study are aged 22-39 years and work as teachers, insurance agents, bank employees, and entrepreneurs. Based on the results of data collection through in-depth interviews, it is known that the informant has been with this church for 4-14 years and served in various divisions, such as usher, singer, and praise and worship leader.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Connect Group

The cell community at Mawar Sharon Church started as a religious community in the form of a prayer gathering. This association is grouped based on age, such as KEMAS (Families Serving God and Others), PEMASA (Youth Serving God and Others), REMASA (Teenagers Serving God and Others), and AMASA (Children Serving God and Others).<sup>14</sup> At the end of February 2010, the Mawar Sharon Church fi-

nally changed and updated the term cell community to Connect Group, using a new system and concept. Connect Group has a more structured system with a cell community consisting of approximately 5-15 people with their respective parts. New members are often referred to as sympathizers. After exceeding the maximum number, the community is then divided to form new cells, with each assigned a Connect Group Leader to ensure their individual spiritual growth. Based from the depth interview found that the structure in the connect group as a cell community is as follows:

- a. Sympathizers are new members of the connect group or those that have not decided to join. Therefore, they are free members, not bound in the service of any activities.
- b. Members are active sympathizers in the weekly activities of the Connect Group.
- c. Sponsors are members that have decided to join the Connect Group. The leader assigned them to care for investigators spiritually and physically. They are also involved in every CG activity, such as leading praise and worship, sharing materials, and ice breakers.
- d. Connect Group Leader (CGL) is the primary leader of a cell community

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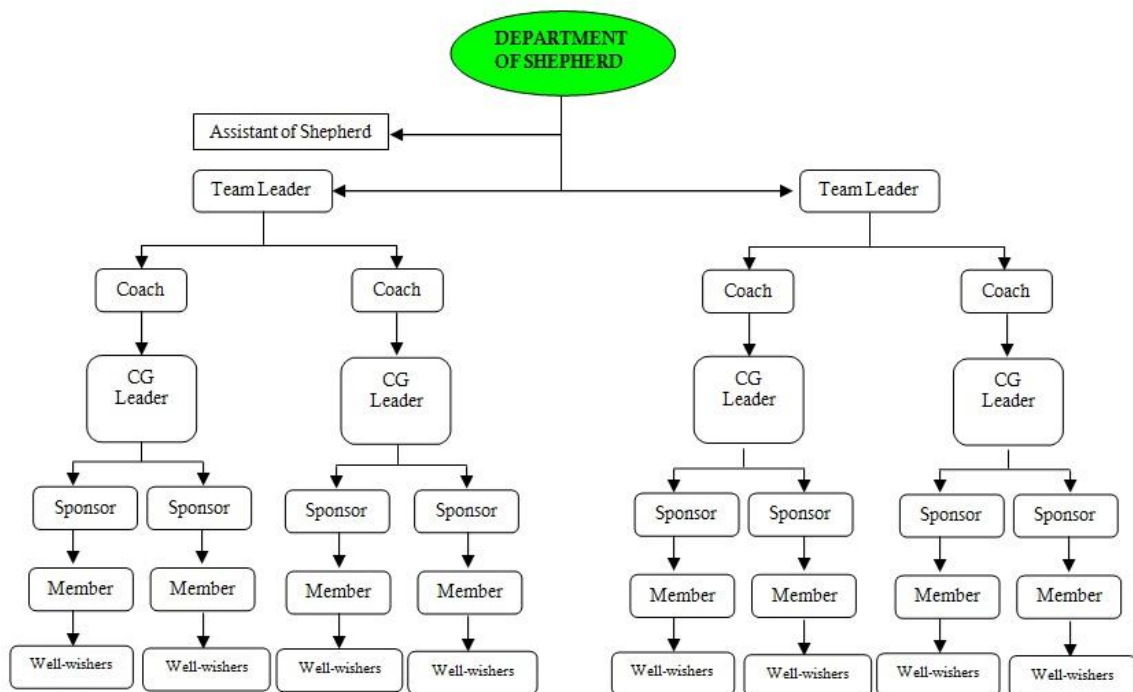
<sup>14</sup> This data was obtained from field results conducted by researchers through secondary data and interviews with church administrators.

- consisting of 6-15 people. CGL is selected from sponsors considered to have grown spiritually and can convince people to join the group.
- e. The coach is the leader of 4 to 5 Connect Groups and monitors and pays attention to the activities carried out weekly.
  - f. The Team Leader is conciseness of several coaches, pays attention to the development of the Connect Group in a structured manner, and arranges the themes for weekly activities.
  - g. Departmentalshepherds are specified by age group, which consists of Family

shepherding, Young Professionals shepherding (Pro-M Revolution), Army Of God shepherding (Youth/Teenagers), and Children's shepherding (Voltage/Eagle Kids). They have a partner called an assistant shepherd that helps them to monitor dream activity.

The structure in the Connect group is continuous and cannot be broken. However, its inability to function properly certainly impacts the inhibited growth of a cell community. Therefore, it is necessary to communicate and build good relations between the structures involved in the connect group.

Figure 1: Chart of Connect Group Management



Activities carried out in the Connect Group are not only limited to singing and listening to sermons rather to the spiritual and physical needs of each member. Furthermore, they help members who migrated from rural areas to Medan. Furthermore, the Connect Group is also fun and helps members overcome fatigue. Based on the data processed from the interviews, the four agendas of activities that need to be carried out in each meeting include:

- a. Fellowship is defined as an action or activity that builds friendship. This activity can be eating or relaxing together with friends in the Connect Group for 20-30 minutes. Fellowship is classified as a complementary program and is carried out before the Ice Breaker or after the Closing Prayer.
- b. Ice Breaker etymologically means “break the ice” to make the atmosphere cheerful, happy, and not sleepy or boring. Ice Breaker is a complementary plan carried out for approximately 15 minutes to melt the atmosphere and build cohesiveness among members. The games played are very simple and without tools, such as guessing the name of Bible characters, quizzes, yells, moving body parts together, and other short games.
- c. Praise and worship are the core agenda of Connect Group. It is an activity of

singing songs as a mandatory ritual for all members of the Christian congregation in the world. It is considered important and needs to be carried out in CG before entering the material sharing session.

- d. Material sharing, also known as God’s Word, is the most important agenda in CG. After Praise and Worship, someone is assigned to deliver the material and share short testimony about God based on Bible verses and the discussed topic. Furthermore, each member is given time to share and self-reflect on God’s goodness for the past week.
- e. Closing Prayer is the last activity of the Connect Group plan where every member prays for each other and supports those experiencing difficulties or seeking a breakthrough in their lives. The Connect Group Leader is usually the one that leads the closing prayer.

Apart from these activities, there are also agendas outside of the regular meetings set in the Connect Group. Once a month, CG Leaders from each community schedule regular Connect Group Outings meetings. This activity is carried out outside their usual gathering places, such as a Café, Restaurant, Bowling, and other entertainment locations, to ensure the members are not bored with the routine weekly activities. Apart from outings, another activity outside

the Connect Group is Worship Night. This activity is associated with singing praise and worship songs from the beginning to the end of the meeting. During worship night, the members are led by a leader. The worship leader prepare's a list of songs to be sung based on a jointly determined theme.

**Multiethnic Relationships Formed in Communities**

Ethnic diversity promoted the Mawar Sharon Church to introduce its vision and mission movement to adapt the message of peace and diversity throughout Indonesia. Therefore, Philip Mantofa, a pastor and leader of Mawar Sharon Church, stated the following excerpt:

...the church needs to perceive its vision and mission as a divine burden. However, we are grateful our church has spread from Sabang to Merauke. The various ethnic groups – Manado-nese, Ambonese, Chinese, and even Indians – have all become one. We love Indonesia and are grateful that our churches carry out their respective roles along with spiritual movements in this country.

This vision and mission are also implemented in the connect group at Mawar Sharon Church throughout Indonesia, including Medan, which adapts the message. Therefore, the congregation generally consists of various ethnicities, mostly Chinese, follow-

ed by Batak Tobanese, Karonese, Simalungunese, Niasnese, Pakpaknese, Manado-nese, Javanese, and Indian in each Connect Group.

Table 1: The Diversity of Ethnicity in the Connect Group at Mawar Sharon Church<sup>15</sup>

Connect Group	Diversity of Ethnicity	Description
A	X	Chinese Batak Karonese, Tobanese,
B	√	Indian, Chinese, Manadonese, and Javanese
C	√	Bataknese and Chinese
D	√	Chinese, Niasnese, Batak Karonese, and Tobanese
E	√	Batak Tobanese, Karonese, Manadonese, Indian, and Chinese
F	X	The majority are Chinese
G	√	Chinese and Bataknese
H	√	Niasnese, Batak Tobanese, Karonese, and Chinese
I	√	Chinese, Batak Karonese, and Niasnese
J	X	Chinese

It is undeniable that the ethnic diversity in each connected group affects their re-

<sup>15</sup> Processed from interviews with informants in August-November 2020.



relationship. According to the study respondents, the relationship between fellow members was initially awkward, and only a few dealt with it normally. Data from the Mawar Sharon Church in Medan showed that most congregations are Chinese. This phenomenon is interesting because members easily adapt and carry out their respective roles regardless of ethnic background. Furthermore, this process is inversely proportional to the context of the Medan people, that often have a prejudice against the Chinese and vice versa. Chinese often use the word “*huana*” or “*sek lang*”, meaning lower-class group, to describe the position of Indonesians. This data is also reinforced by findings carried out by experts regarding social relations between the Chinese and Indonesians. According to studies, the Chinese community in Indonesia is traumatized by past experiences. Therefore, they believe that Indonesians like to take advantage, insult, and despise people.<sup>16</sup>

However, this ideology was not found in the Connect Group congregation at Mawar Sharon Church, Medan. The reason is that the Chinese community’s presence is a means to embrace people from different classes and ethnicities. All respondents

agreed that the connection of mutual help and assistance was built in their religious community. This situation is inseparable from the role of Leaders and Sponsors that listen to each member’s complaints and become prayer partners. For example, when one community member is sick and needs help with hospital expenses, others do not hesitate to offer help by buying vitamins, medicine, food, and fruit. Furthermore, every Chinese New Year, Connect Group members from different ethnicities also celebrate by sending cakes and flowers or visiting the house for “*pai cia*”. The connections in this community are similar to a family bond, which makes them keep growing in faith and spirit of togetherness, irrespective of their varying ethnic differences.

This group of worshippers also experiences minor conflicts related to ethnic issues. According to the respondent, every conflict was a misunderstanding and stigma built by both parties before joining the community. They felt awkward or rather afraid to say the wrong thing because the Chinese people in the Connect Group were generally still powerful in using the Hokkien language. Therefore, it wasn’t easy to understand the circumstances and character of other

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<sup>16</sup>Omar Khalifa Burhan and Jefri Sani, “Prasangka Terhadap Etnis Tionghoa di Kota Medan: Peran Identitas Nasional dan Persepsi Ancaman,” *Psikologia: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Psikologi* 8, no. 1 (March 31, 2013): 25–33,

<https://doi.org/10.32734/PSIKOLOGI.V8I1.2562>. ; Z. Alkiatri, A. L. Waworuntu, and F Gani, “Medan Chinese and Their Stigma: Grabbing Power in Multicultural Society,” *International Review of Humanities Studies* 4, no. 1 (2019): 149–63.

members. Another respondent also stated the initial decision to leave because the community members failed to support their needs. However, the respondent decided to stay in the Connect Group and get closer.

Respondents from the Batak and Nias ethnic groups provided varying responses. They stated that they initially had difficulties after joining the Connect Group because the majorities were of Chinese descent. Furthermore, they also had trouble understanding Hokkien, leading to misunderstandings. Another respondent stated that the issue of Chinese domination also made them a little awkward, but in the end, they were able to blend in and get along. They started learning Hokkien through conversations in the association within the community. The informants enjoyed the learning process because it facilitated interacting with the Chinese community in their work and daily lives.

### **Ecclesiastical Music that Builds Solidarity and Social Bonding among Community Members**

Music plays an essential role in every aspect of human life. According to Nora,

humans build identities and document important aspects of their lives using music.<sup>17</sup> Ecclesiastical music as a religious force evokes a Bible response through verse, rhythm and melody, organ, drums, and bass accompanied by a chorus.<sup>18</sup> Music also has a unique phenomenon in the rituals of the Charismatic Christian Church, which are denominations historically established through the Charismatic Movement. It has the characteristics of Pentecostalism, especially in terms of the gifts as recorded in the Bible, such as tongues/glossolalia, prophecy, etc. The main characteristic that stands out from the rituals of the charismatic church is the expressive, dynamic and progressive nature of congregational worship. This is because the surrounding atmosphere is inseparable from the role of various elements during service. The presence of music during church hours is important because all worship activities are carried out by singing hymns accompanied by instrumental equipment. The activity of prayer and preaching God's word is also always accompanied by music or singing.<sup>19</sup>

The Mawar Sharon Church in Medan also carries out musical styles and

<sup>17</sup>D. Nora, *Music in Everyday Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>18</sup>Allison Schnable, "Singing the Gospel: Using Musical Practices to Build Religious and Racial Communities," *Poetics* 40, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 278–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.POETIC.2012.04.001>.

<sup>19</sup>Bayu Wijayanto, "Strategi Musikal Dalam Ritual Pujian Dan Penyembahan Gereja Kristen Kharismatik," *Resital: Jurnal Seni Pertunjukan* 16, no. 3 (December 28, 2015): 125–40, <https://doi.org/10.24821/RESITAL.V16I3.1678>.

arrangements associated with worship. According to Manurung, music is referred to as contemporary worship because it is dynamic, full of enthusiasm, flexible, and not arranged in a liturgically structured routine.<sup>20</sup> The applicable rituals are not necessarily the same in the order of worship and the selection of songs. The songs offered in worship activities in this community are divided into 2 types, namely slow and upbeat. Slow beat songs usually have a gradual tempo and are used for worship. Meanwhile, upbeat songs have a faster tempo and are traditionally used for praise.

Praise and Worship is a mandatory activity that needs to be carried out weekly in the Connect Group's routine agenda. Praise is an attitude that shows exaltation and happens when singing a song with a fast tempo and full of cheers (upbeat). Meanwhile, worship is an attitude that shows prostration or more respect using soft and intimate music (slow beat).<sup>21</sup> Praise and worship are not only associated with music but also the style of presentation and performance. Both are also associated with the expressions of the congregation manifested in various styles such as raising hands, dancing,

clapping, cheering, standing applause, kneeling, crying, and falling during worship.<sup>22</sup>

Music in the Connect group is essential because apart from being used for worship activities, it also contains various attributes, such as: (1) only acoustic guitar and cajon are used to fill the song tempo during praise and worship. The members of this community infrequently clapped as a tempo when singing a song; (2) While singing praises and hymns, the respondents admitted that they jumped, danced, clapped, and cheered. They feel the joy of God's goodness and express it by jumping, dancing, clapping, crying, and cheering as a form of gratitude.

In an observation conducted using a fast-paced, upbeat song, one of the respondents assigned to lead the praise and worship session started by stating the following as informants said:

*... Good night, all. Those that are happy today say: Amen!! Yes, Amen!! Exclaimed every participant. Today is a new day for all of us. Let's nudge and embrace our friends' shoulders. Say: You're great. Yes, you are great!!" exclaimed each participant. Alright, let's sing the song Today I Think Happy ....*

<sup>20</sup>R. Manurung, R. Ismail, and H. Daulay, "Namalo-Traditional Healer in Batak Toba Society, Indonesia: Knowledge of Drug and Traditional Treatment Process," *Man in India* 97, no. 24 (2017): 369-84.

<sup>21</sup>J. Cornwall, *Let Us Worship* (Florida: Bridge Logos, 2006).

<sup>22</sup>B. S. Ndoen, *Kingdom Worship Revolution: Sebuah Terobosan Menuju Paradigma Baru Penyembahan Kerajaan* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2011).

This session is accompanied by the strumming of guitar played by one community member while others form a circle. When the guitar is strummed, all the members applaud, with smiles and laughter. They also sang one of the famous songs with the following lyrics:

Today I feel happy  
Gather with brothers and sisters  
Lord Jesus unites us  
Regardless of between us  
Hand in hand in love  
In one heart  
Walk in the light of God's love  
You are my friend,  
you are my brother  
Nothing can separate us<sup>23</sup>

The atmosphere was usually filled with joy and warmth during the praise and worship session. Everyone was seen laughing while clapping and carrying out some simple moves. For example, when singing the song in the lyrics “hand in hand in love,” the worship leader instructed everyone present to hold hands with their neighbor. The song’s lyrics read, “you are my friend, you are my brother,” the leader instructed the worshippers to put up their best smiles. Furthermore, the leader also instructed them to form the love symbol by clasping the fingers of both hands while singing the lyrics “nothing can separate us” as a form of unity. The song ends with applause in unison. Sometimes, members shout, “we want mo-

re,” which means they enjoy singing together. This atmosphere, unconsciously strengthens solidarity among the congregation considering that they are fellow human beings who are God’s creations.

This activity is different when slow beat music is performed because it accompanies the implementation of praise and worship after singing 1-2 songs. The participants were seated while singing each song with the lyrics written on the paper. Furthermore, the worship leader asked all participants to bow their heads and speak in tongues.

... let's be quiet before God by bowing our heads in fellowship to show gratitude. Speak in tongues *shalalala...*

Connect Group’s atmosphere, which was initially cheerful and full of joy, turned solemn. The atmosphere was even more solemn when a guitar strum with a calm strain sounded like a song’s intro. Some participants were on their knees with heads bowed while raising their hands, while others cried. Then the worship leader prayed for a while before singing a song, which all participants joined. The lyrics are as follows:

We humble ourselves before You.  
Our hearts are full of gratitude  
We cannot complete each other's  
body  
Therefore, make us one  
Like you and Jesus

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<sup>23</sup> Depth interview, 2021.

Hence, the world knows the real earth from Your love  
Before we go declare Your love  
Start with us first  
Make us one.

The song is sung twice, followed by instructions from the worship leader to sing psalms and speak in tongues. During this period, the music played by the guitarist is only a soothing classical chorus. Therefore, other worshippers are not allowed to sing the lyrics anymore, while the worship leader says the following:

...let's see within ourselves how good God is to us. We are born with many differences, but in God's eyes, we are the same. God is good, therefore, let us unite our hearts to share with each other. Let us profess our faith, that we are one in the body of Christ...

The atmosphere of this quiet time with the worship leader can be analyzed further through his words suggesting the congregation to be able to love each other among human beings with the aim of strengthening solidarity and tolerance among congregations of different ethnic backgrounds. After saying this, the worship leader then asked the Connect Group participants to sing a song in a low tone. The lyrics are as follows: "...Make us of one heart, and let Your will be done. To express Your mercy, make us one..."

Furthermore, the leader invites the participants to repeat the song's lyrics in a

loud and confident voice, and they comply with their hands raised. After the song is sung, the person in charge of prayers takes over, which ends with hugs and sharing their feelings. This praise and worship activity is considered a simple activity and part of worship that must be carried out, but if further analyzed the purpose of this activity is to unite the congregation as Christians in strengthening solidarity and tolerance among them.

Praise and worship are classified as a habitus born and developed in the Connect Group community and important in building an atmosphere that bridges the presence of God. Therefore, members are allowed to feel it in routine activities every week. It is seen from the practices carried out during worship and the implementation of life outside the Connect Group. Each member is connected as family and friends without discrimination while sending messages, asking for information, and carrying out personal outings for fun. Praise and worship is a tool that unwittingly instills awareness in every Connect Group member, building solidarity within the realm of spiritual community. Therefore, without realizing it, members with various cultural and ethnic backgrounds can ultimately adapt to their fellow community members.

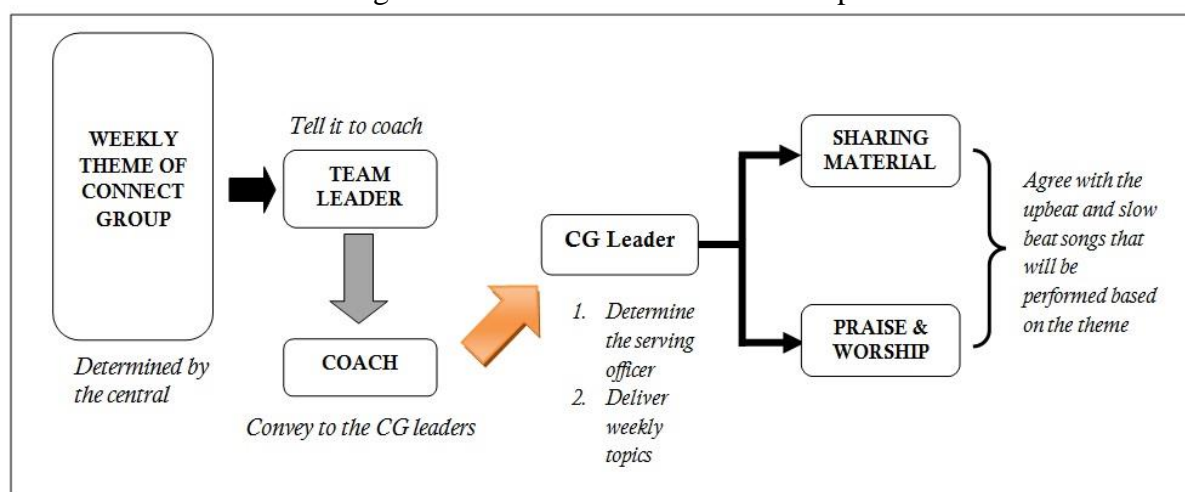
Interestingly, the practice of this relationship is not only in daily life; rather, it

becomes a symbiotic mutualism that is mutually beneficial between different ethnicities. For example, the Chinese community, whose majority is trading or opening a restaurant, is supported by other members to order food and promote it to other families. Non-Chinese communities such as Batakese, Manadonese, and Niasnese learn Hokkien, making it easier to get jobs and build business relationships with the Chinese communities outside the Connect Group community. Therefore, in reality, Praise and Worship also influence the formation of socio-economic networks in society. This practice does not happen immediately because time is needed to adapt and build this solidarity.

Music and songs, such as praise and worship, positively impact community growth. An important point in building this

community is solidarity and bonding between members of different ethnicities, which is inseparable from the pedagogical process carried out by Sponsors, CG Leaders, Coaches, and Team Leaders. Furthermore, the strategies used by the sponsor and Coach to connect with the CG and Team Leaders they supervise are determined. In preparing the song to be sung, the same effort was made with the theme of intimacy and unity determined in the meeting. Its lyrics need to be adapted to the theme of the message conveyed in Connect Group activities. The worship leader in charge of praise and worship needs to be technically and spiritually prepared. The goal is to be able to build a community and not just enjoy the songs. The following figure 2 is the flow of praise and worship carried out within the Connect Group.

Figure 2: The Flow of Praise and Worship



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Praise and Worship within the Connect Group are used to establish good relations between fellow members, thereby producing strong unity and solidarity within the group. This Praise and Worship also create a new culture in the religious community with a different pattern from other denominational church communities. Furthermore, strong inter-ethnic assimilation is formed within the group through music and songs. Worship activities, music, and songs are a place of assimilation in a multicultural society. However, this situation needs further enhanced to build relationships with other groups connected within the same Charismatic Church.

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