



## Building Religious Harmony: A Theological Study on Interreligious Communication

Delima Anria Maena Banjarnahor<sup>1\*</sup>, Melina Agustina Sipahutar<sup>2</sup>, Rogate Artaida Tiarasi Gultom<sup>3</sup>, Dapot Damanik<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kantor Kementerian Agama Kabupaten Dairi

<sup>2,3,4</sup>Institut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN) Tarutung

**Corresponding Author:** Delima Anria Maena Banjarnahor [delima.troy@gmail.com](mailto:delima.troy@gmail.com)

### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Religious Harmony, Inter-Religious Communication, Christian Theology, Interreligious Dialogue, Reconciliation

*Received* : 21, September

*Revised* : 23, October

*Accepted* : 25, November

©2025 Banjarnahor, Sipahutar, Gultom, Damanik: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the

[Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



### ABSTRACT

Indonesia as a religiously pluralistic country needs a deep theological approach and an effective inter-religious communication strategy to realize harmony. This paper examines how Christian theology provides a normative basis for interfaith relationships through the values of love (agape), reconciliation, and the recognition of plurality, as well as how interfaith communication is a means of building social harmony. With a literature study method, this study combines the literature of Christian theology and cutting-edge interfaith communication (2020–2025). The results of the study show that harmony is not just passive tolerance, but the active involvement of religious people in life dialogues, theological dialogues, and institutional dialogues. The Church is called not only to preach peace, but to present it through open communication, mutual respect, and interfaith social collaboration.

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a plural and multireligious country, with six official religions and hundreds of local faiths. However, the social reality of the last five years shows that relations between religious communities have not been completely stable. Some cases show the vulnerability of interfaith communication. For example, in 2020–2023, several regions experienced social friction related to the construction of houses of worship and religious-based hate speech on social media. The case of the rejection of the establishment of the Protestant Christian Church in Cilegon (2022) is a clear example of how communication between religious communities that is not open can cause local social and political tensions.

In addition, research by Astuti et al. (2024) on interfaith communication in Manado shows that "although Manado is known as the city of a thousand churches and a symbol of tolerance, the potential for social segregation still arises if dialogue is not maintained sustainably." This shows that harmony requires continuous, not situational, communication.

In the context of Christian theology, the church's call to be the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16) means to be a peacemaker in a plural society. Arifianto and Stevanus (2020) affirm that "Christians are called to be light and salt in the midst of a society of different faiths, so that harmonization can be realized."

However, efforts to build harmony cannot now be separated from the **issue of religious moderation**, which has been one of the national focuses of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia since 2019. The program emphasizes four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of local traditions. For the church, this means living the faith in an inclusive and relational manner without losing theological integrity. As emphasized by Fitriani et al. (2024), "the implementation of religious moderation requires synergy between inclusive theology and interfaith dialogue so that it does not stop at rhetoric, but becomes a social proxy."

From the perspective of harmony theology, Bawa (2023) writes that "grounding harmony theology means presenting the values of love and peace in social practice, not just doctrinal discourse."

\* Thus, the church does not only theorize about love, but it needs to show that love in communication, service, and interfaith social solidarity.

## METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach of library research with a theological-contextual paradigm and interfaith communication. This approach was chosen because the purpose of the research is to understand the meaning of harmony from the perspective of Christian theology and the model of interfaith communication in the context of religious moderation, not just to measure social phenomena quantitatively.

According to Moleong (2022), the qualitative approach of library research focuses on:

1. Collection of primary and secondary written sources;
2. Analysis of texts to interpret meaning;
3. Synthesis of theories to build a model or conceptual framework.

In this context, the main written sources come from:

1. Contemporary Christian theology books and articles (BPK Gunung Mulia, Momentum, Gandum Mas, and theological university publications).
2. Academic article on inter-religious communication, religious moderation, and a case study of Indonesian pluralism 2020–2025.
3. Religious moderation policy document from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

### ***Data Sources***

Research data sources are divided into two categories:

1. Primary source
  - a. The Holy Scriptures of the Bible (the context of theology of harmony and reconciliation).
  - b. Christian theology books and articles on harmony, interreligious dialogue, and religious moderation (e.g., BPK Gunung Mulia 2020; Arfianto 2022; Mawikere & Juda 2023).
2. Secondary sources
  - a. Artikel jurnal internasional dan nasional tentang komunikasi antarumat beragama (Astuti et al., 2024; Fitriani et al., 2024).
  - b. Laporan kasus pluralisme dan moderasi beragama di Indonesia 2020–2025, termasuk konflik rumah ibadah dan inisiatif perdamaian komunitas.
  - c. Analisis media online terkait isu keberagaman dan dialog lintas iman.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

Data were collected through documentation studies and literature analysis:

1. Documentation study: collecting books, journals, articles, and official reports from Christian theology publishers (BPK, Momentum, Gandum Mas) as well as government agencies related to religious moderation.
2. Literature analysis: reading and taking notes of direct quotations or important ideas, then grouping them according to themes: (a) the theological basis of harmony, (b) the model of interfaith communication, and (c) religious moderation.

### ***Data Analysis Techniques***

Data analysis was carried out by content analysis and thematic analysis:

1. Content Analysis: examining each theological text and interfaith communication to find values, concepts, and practices of harmony.
2. Thematic Analysis: grouping data into large themes, for example:
  - a. Theology of harmony and reconciliation;
  - b. Interfaith communication strategies;
  - c. The application of religious moderation in the social context;
  - d. Concrete cases (2020–2025) as an illustration of the practice of harmony.

The results of this analysis will be used to formulate a model of interfaith communication based on Christian theology, as well as highlight the challenges and opportunities of religious moderation.

### ***Data Validity and Reliability***

To ensure validity and reliability, the study applied:

1. Triangulation of sources: combining books, journals, and policy documents.
2. Theoretical triangulation: comparing the perspective of Christian theology with the theory of communication and religious moderation.
3. Trail audit: records the entire data collection and analysis process in detail so that it can be tracked back.

With this approach, the research is expected to produce a strong conceptual understanding, interfaith communication model, and practical recommendations for churches and pluralistic societies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Recent Case Analysis (2020–2025)*

In the last five years, several cases of pluralism and religious harmony in Indonesia have stood out:

1. Cases of houses of worship conflicts in Malang Regency (2021)

The conflict arose due to the rejection of some citizens against the establishment of the Christian Church. The study of Fitriani et al. (2024) shows that open communication with local religious leaders and a religious moderation approach help resolve conflicts peacefully.

2. Peace Maker Solo Initiative (2022–2023)

The program has succeeded in building a space for interfaith dialogue for the younger generation of Christians and Muslims, increasing social tolerance, and strengthening interfaith communication skills.

3. Kota Manado – Interfaith Youth Dialogue (2024)

The study of Astuti et al. (2024) found that the active involvement of interfaith adolescents in social activities reduced the level of prejudice between communities and increased awareness of religious moderation.

From these cases, it can be seen that inclusive, symmetrical, and communication based on the principles of religious moderation is effective in building harmony and reducing conflicts

### *A Model of Interreligious Communication Based on Christian Theology*

Based on the analysis of the literature and cases, the author formulates a model of interreligious communication based on Christian theology with three main pillars:

**Table.1 A model of Interreligious Communication Based on Christian Theology**

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Example Practice</b>
<b>Theology of Harmony</b>	Foundations of the Christian faith: love, reconciliation, recognition of human dignity	Faith education in the church about plurality and love without discrimination
<b>Dialogue Inclusion</b>	Exchange of information and experiences between religious communities with the principles of symmetry and empathy	Interfaith forums, joint social activities, interfaith online discussions
<b>Religious Moderation</b>	A balance between the truth of faith and respect for differences	Peace campaign, house of worship conflict resolution, tolerance training for youth

This model is dynamic, emphasizing a repetitive communication process, not just a one-way program. Arifianto (2022) emphasized that religious moderation in church practice is "living the truth of faith in an inclusive, respectful, and fair attitude."

### *Implementation of Religious Moderation*

The results of recent literature and case studies show that religious moderation can be implemented through:

1. Education and formation of the people: teaching love, tolerance, and empathy as part of the Sunday school curriculum and theology classes.
2. Interfaith dialogue: building regular forums involving youth, religious leaders, and civil society.

3. Shared social practices: social action, community service, and humanitarian activities involving various religious communities.
4. Use of digital media: educating the people about pluralism, moderation, and theological values through online media.

Weinata Sairin (2020) calls the practice of religious moderation a "holy path (via sacra) to present God in human diversity." This approach combines theology, communication, and social practice, so that religious moderation is not only theoretical, but real in everyday life.

### ***Synergy of Theology and Communication in Harmony***

The discussion shows the synergy between Christian theological values and communication strategies between religious communities:

1. Theology provides value, purpose, and moral legitimacy.
2. Communication provides methods, media, and spaces for interaction.

These two aspects must go hand in hand so that harmony is not only a discourse, but an effective practice. The proposed communication model can be used as a strategic guideline for churches and interfaith communities.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of theology, communication, and the case of the past five years, it can be concluded:

1. Christian theology as the basis of harmony  
The values of love, reconciliation, and respect for human dignity are the moral foundations for building harmony between religious communities. This theology encourages Christians to live the faith in an inclusive and fair manner, according to the principle of religious moderation.

2. Interfaith communication as a real practice  
Inclusive, symmetrical, and empathetic communication strategies are effective in reducing conflicts, building solidarity, and strengthening interfaith networks. A theologically-based communication model combines the value of faith with the practice of dialogue and social collaboration.
3. Religious moderation as a practical and theological bridge  
Religious moderation integrates the truth of faith with respect for differences, thus creating sustainable harmony. The implementation of moderation requires education, dialogue, social practices, and digital media as educational means.
4. Synergy of theology and communication  
Religious harmony is effective when theology provides moral legitimacy and communication provides a method of interaction. The two aspects complement each other and produce a model that can be applied by churches and interfaith communities in Indonesia.

### **REFERENCES**

- Arifianto, Yonatan Alex. *Moderasi Beragama dalam Perspektif Iman Kristen*. Jakarta: Momentum Press, 2022.
- Astuti, L., Nugroho, R., & Santoso, H. "Revealing Intercultural and Interfaith Communication in Manado Which Has a Thousand Churches as a City of Tolerance." *Informasi: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Media* 54, no. 2 (2024): 45–60.
- Badan Penerbit Kristen (BPK) Gunung Mulia. *Teologi Kerukunan dan Rekonsiliasi: Kajian Praktis Gereja Kristen*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2020.

- Fitriani, R., Handayani, S., & Prasetyo, T. "Implementation of Religious Moderation Based on Inclusive Theology and Dialogue in Indonesia." *IJMuRhica* 4, no. 1 (2024): 12–28.
- Gandum Mas, S. *Dialog Antarumat Beragama dan Implementasi Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Gandum Mas Press, 2021.
- Kholis Firmansyah & Aly Mashar. "Buku Lintas Iman Sebagai Upaya Penguatan Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama: Studi Kasus Peace Maker Solo." *Indonesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2023): 101–117.
- Moleong, Lexy J. *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2022.
- Momentum Press. *Praktik Moderasi Beragama: Perspektif Kristen dan Lintas Agama*. Jakarta: Momentum Press, 2022.
- Sairin, Weinata, ed. *Kerukunan Umat Beragama Pilar Utama Kerukunan Berbangsa*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2020.