

DONUTS AND THE GOSPEL: HOSPITALITY EVANGELISM IN AN INDONESIAN PIONEERING CHURCH

Sari Saptorini¹, Sukma Hendra Wahyudi Surahman²

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis, Semarang

Email: sarisaptorini@stbi.ac.id¹, surahman@gmail.com²

Abstrak

Misi yang berfokus pada gereja perintisan seringkali menghadapi berbagai tantangan, termasuk keterbatasan sumber daya manusia, kendala finansial, dan jaringan sosial yang belum berkembang, yang semuanya menghambat pelaksanaan strategi penginjilan secara optimal. Penelitian sebelumnya menunjukkan bahwa praktik hospitalitas memiliki peran penting dalam memperkuat moderasi beragama, membentuk paradigma teologis yang inklusif, serta menegaskan relevansi kontekstual dari praktik makan bersama. Namun, studi-studi yang ada umumnya menekankan konsep-konsep luas mengenai hospitalitas dan jarang meneliti strategi sederhana seperti berbagi makanan populer sehari-hari dalam konteks jemaat perintisan. Penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan donat sebagai media “hospitality evangelism” dalam pelayanan gereja perintisan serta meneliti relevansinya bagi penginjilan, pertumbuhan iman, dan kesaksian jemaat. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dan desain studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembagian donat bukan sekadar tindakan sosial, tetapi berfungsi sebagai praktik hospitalitas yang menciptakan keterbukaan relasional melalui interaksi sederhana, seperti respons positif, percakapan singkat, dan kehadiran yang diterima secara natural di tengah masyarakat. Praktik ini membuka ruang bagi percakapan iman secara non-intrusif serta meneguhkan kesaksian jemaat perintisan dalam konteks masyarakat yang majemuk. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi misi tidak harus berskala besar atau kompleks, melainkan dapat diwujudkan melalui tindakan-tindakan sederhana, membumi, dan kontekstual yang mendukung pelayanan gereja masa kini secara bermakna.

Kata Kunci: Gereja perintisan, hospitality evangelism, donat, pertumbuhan iman, kesaksian gereja.

Abstract

Missions focused on church planting often encounter significant challenges, including limited human resources, financial constraints, and underdeveloped social networks, all of which hinder the optimal implementation of evangelistic strategies. Previous research demonstrates that hospitality practices play an important role in strengthening religious moderation,

shaping inclusive theological paradigms, and highlighting the contextual relevance of communal meals. However, existing studies generally emphasize broad concepts of hospitality and rarely examine simple strategies such as sharing popular everyday foods within the context of pioneering congregations. This study analyzes the use of donuts as a medium of hospitality evangelism in church-planting ministries and explores its relevance for evangelism, faith formation, and congregational witness. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through interviews, observations, and literature analysis. The findings reveal that the distribution of donuts is not merely a social activity, but functions as a form of hospitality that fosters relational openness through simple interactions, such as positive responses, brief conversations, and a presence that is naturally received within the community. This practice creates space for non-intrusive conversations about faith and strengthens the witness of pioneering congregations within pluralistic social contexts. The study concludes that missional strategies do not need to be large-scale or complex; rather, they can be embodied through simple, grounded, and contextually relevant actions that meaningfully support contemporary church ministry.

Keywords: *pioneering church, hospitality evangelism, donuts, faith formation, church witness*

INTRODUCTION

Churches that are beginning to grow often face unstable and limited conditions. A closer examination reveals deficiencies in various areas, ranging from a lack of direct ministry personnel and financial constraints to the limited social networks within the congregation. These challenges hinder the effective implementation of evangelistic mission strategies. Such insights highlight the importance of hospitality as part of a mission strategy, offering an alternative pathway for evangelistic practice within pioneering churches. As Rante Salu et al. point out, the practice of hospitality in church ministry can strengthen religious moderation within Indonesia's diverse and pluralistic society.¹ This idea resonates with Shirley et al., who view hospitality as a theological paradigm that shapes congregations to become more inclusive.²

This perspective is further reinforced by Panuntun and Susanta, who explain that the Javanese tradition of "bancaan" (communal gathering) embodies the values of Christian hospitality and demonstrates the relational power of shared meals within a local cultural

¹ Syani B. Rante Salu et al., "Early Church Hospitality-Based Pentecostal Mission in the Religious Moderation Frame of Indonesia," *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1-6.

² Timothy W. Shirley, Malan Nel, and Esias E. Meyer, "Building Welcoming and Inclusive Congregations: Biblical Hospitality as a Theological Paradigm," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 45, no. 1 (2024): 1-8.

setting.³ These findings collectively affirm the significance of hospitality in mission contexts. However, most existing studies remain focused on broad conceptual discussions or culturally specific practices and have not sufficiently explored simple, everyday strategies, such as the use of popular foods that are widely accepted across communities, as practical expressions of hospitality within the ministry of pioneering congregations.

The practice of hospitality in missionary ministry is not simply understood as a friendly attitude or social action; it goes beyond that, functioning as a theological perspective that guides the direction of the church's witness. In his research, Longkumer explains that hospitality can serve as a framework for a mission that is ecumenical in nature yet firmly rooted in local values.⁴ This perspective is enriched by Matheos, who interprets the Pentecost event as a call for the church to live with openness and to welcome all people.⁵ Hale similarly argues that everyday practices of eating together (commensality) can serve as natural spaces that nurture fellowship and foster the congregation's spiritual growth.⁶ Siahaan and Kause further remind us that the example of the early church in practicing hospitality can inspire Indonesian churches to build religious moderation within society.⁷ From these insights, it is evident that hospitality is considered essential to mission. However, existing discussions continue to emphasize broad concepts or formal meal gatherings and have not highlighted simple, practical strategies such as incorporating popular foods into the ministry of pioneering congregations.

Several studies have begun shifting from purely conceptual discussions toward exploring the practical application of hospitality within congregational life. Haag, for example, in his study of the dinner church movement in Seattle, found that shared meals can function as highly effective gathering spaces not only for long-standing members but also for individuals attending church for the first time.⁸ Meanwhile in Indonesia, Butarbutar and Milala explain that hospitality must be reinterpreted as a concept broader than

³ Daniel F. Panuntun and Yohanes K. Susanta, "Christian Hospitality in Javanese Bancaan Tradition," *HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): 1–7.

⁴ Bendanglemla Longkumer, "HOSPITALITY AS A PARADIGM IN MISSION: AN ECUMENICAL AND INDIGENOUS EXPLORATION," *QUEST: Studies on Religion & Culture in Asia* 4 (2020): 1–12.

⁵ Rommi Matheos, "Tuan Rumah Yang Ramah, Tamu Yang Rapuh, Dan Kaum Peziarah: Misi Gereja Yang Hospitable Bertitik Tolak Dari Peristiwa Pentakosta (Kis. 2:1-13)," *GEMA TEOLOGIKA: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual dan Filsafat Keilahian* 8, no. 1 (2023): 15–30.

⁶ Lori K Hale, "COMMENSALITY AS A METHOD OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT Submitted to The King 's University In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of Doctor of Ministry Lori Hale," no. May (2023).

⁷ Harls Evan R. Siahaan and Munatar Kause, "Hospitalitas Sebagai Hidup Menggereja Dalam Bingkai Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia," *Danum Pabelum: Jurnal Teologi Dan Musik Gereja* 2, no. 2 (2022): 232–240.

⁸ Will F Haag, "Seattle Dinner Church Movement : Participatory Motives of Non Founding Members" (2023).

traditional church-planting models.⁹ Building on this perspective, Jepriadi, Sima, and Susanto focus on how local culture can serve as an entry point for mission and evangelism, especially when the values of hospitality are elevated and more deeply understood within a missional framework.¹⁰ These studies collectively indicate that hospitality can indeed be expressed through communal meals and the integration of local cultural traditions. However, research that specifically explores simple, everyday strategies such as the use of popular foods in pioneering congregations remains scarce.

In reality, food is not only a means of satisfying physical needs; it also holds significant potential as a bridge for social relationships and as a space for shared spiritual growth. In theological studies, both the Gospels and the Book of Acts clearly demonstrate that eating together possesses deep liturgical and social meaning, making it a tangible expression of hospitality rooted in faith.¹¹ Haag's study on the dinner church movement likewise emphasizes that shared meals within the church can create profound spiritual experiences while opening opportunities for faith formation.¹² Other analyses highlight hospitality as an integral missional paradigm essential for evangelism and for shaping a unified and resilient faith community.¹³ In the context of Indonesian culture, scholars note that the Javanese "bancaan" tradition is infused with hospitality values that can be creatively utilized in missionary practice.¹⁴ Despite this abundance of literature on food's role in cultivating a vibrant faith community, research focusing specifically on the use of popular, everyday foods, such as donuts, as a form of hospitality evangelism within pioneering congregations remains limited.

Recognizing this gap in existing studies, the present research seeks to offer a new perspective by examining the use of a simple and popular food, donuts as a medium of hospitality evangelism within a pioneering congregation. This strategy emerges from the conviction that small acts, such as sharing food, can provide meaningful pathways for contextual evangelism.¹⁵ Furthermore, recent studies on evangelism in multicultural contexts emphasize that churches must develop simple, relational, and readily accepted

⁹ Rut Debora Butarbutar and Raharja Sembiring Milala, "Dari Church Planting ke Hospitalitas: Rekonstruksi Misi Gereja Dalam Konteks Keberagaman," *Epigraphe: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kristiani* 4, no. 2 (2020): 170–182.

¹⁰ Jepriadi, Sicilia Sima, and Sulianus Susanto, "Tantangan Dan Peluang Budaya Lokal Dalam Misi Pemberitaan Injil," *Makarios: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual* 1, no. 1 (2022): 132–140.

¹¹ Alison While, "Eat, Drink and Be Merry..." *British Journal of Community Nursing* 28, no. 12 (2023): 580–581.

¹² Haag, "Seattle Dinner Church Movement : Participatory Motives of Nonfounding Members."

¹³ Longkumer, "HOSPITALITY AS A PARADIGM IN MISSION: AN ECUMENICAL AND INDIGENOUS EXPLORATION."

¹⁴ Panuntun and Susanta, "Christian Hospitality in Javanese Bancaan Tradition."

¹⁵ Otniel Aurelius Nole, "Menjadi Kristen Evangelis Tanpa Isolasi Sosial: Konstruksi Penginjilan Karitatif Di Lingkungan Heterogen," *Jurnal Teologi Injili* 5, no. 1 (2025): 19–37.

approaches within diverse communities.¹⁶ This is supported by Sumarauw et al., who argue that church growth is not determined solely by large-scale strategies but can also be fostered through creative forms of evangelism expressed in the everyday lives of believers.¹⁷ Building on this foundation, the present study seeks to understand how sharing donuts can function as a contextual, relevant, and effective mission method supporting evangelism, nurturing faith, and strengthening the witness of pioneering congregations.

This research is expected to offer tangible contributions both theologically and practically. From a theological standpoint, the study expands the discourse on hospitality by demonstrating that sharing simple meals can serve as a genuine expression of faith one that need not rely on elaborate or complex programs but can emerge through grounded, everyday practices that resonate with the lived experiences of pioneering congregations.¹⁸ Within Indonesia's pluralistic society, such an approach can also facilitate the development of healthy social relationships, strengthen religious moderation, and present a more inclusive image of the church.¹⁹ Therefore, this research not only provides new insights into mission theology but also proposes a contextual ministry model that can be practically implemented by pioneering congregations today.

This study contributes a novel perspective to missiological and theological discussions on hospitality by articulating a micro-scale hospitality strategy rooted in the use of popular, non-traditional food within the context of pioneering churches in Indonesia. While many previous studies have largely emphasized formal communal meals, traditional rituals, or large-scale hospitality programs (Haag 2023; Panuntun & Susanta 2021; Shirley et al. 2024), this research highlights how simple, everyday practices such as sharing donuts can function as an incarnational and relational form of mission. Theologically, this study reframes hospitality not merely as a moral virtue or social practice, but as a micro-incarnational expression of the Gospel, through which presence, care, and relational openness become tangible witnesses of faith. Strategically, the findings suggest that such low-threshold hospitality practices are particularly effective for pioneering congregations with limited resources, offering a contextual, accessible, and replicable model of mission within Indonesia's pluralistic society.

¹⁶ Soegianto Soegianto and Prinsipessia Putri Abigail Lolong, "The Dynamics of Evangelism in a Multicultural Context: Challenges and Opportunities for Contextualization," *Journal Didaskalia* 6, no. 2 (2023): 48-55.

¹⁷ David Neyland Sumarauw et al., "A Theological Review Of Evangelism And Its Influence On Church Growth," *Jurnal Impresi Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (2025): 1097-1110.

¹⁸ Shirley, Nel, and Meyer, "Building Welcoming and Inclusive Congregations: Biblical Hospitality as a Theological Paradigm." Sumarauw et al., "A Theological Review Of Evangelism And Its Influence On Church Growth."

¹⁹ Siahaan and Kause, "Hospitalitas Sebagai Hidup Menggereja Dalam Bingkai Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia."

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study method, as its primary objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of the practice of hospitality evangelism expressed through the distribution of donuts within a pioneering congregation. Data collection was carried out through field observations conducted during the activity, as well as brief conversational interviews with several recipients to capture their genuine experiences and responses. The observations focused on participants' immediate reactions, patterns of interaction, and the emergence of brief relational exchanges during the distribution process. Field notes were recorded to document recurring responses such as expressions of appreciation, short conversations, and non-verbal signs of openness, which later informed the analytical process. The data analysis followed a thematic approach, which involved repeatedly reading the collected data to identify patterns of meaning such as feelings of being cared for, the development of social relationships, and the awareness of faith testimony arising from simple acts.²⁰ Through this process, the research not only generates factual descriptions but also uncovers the deeper significance behind the participants' experiences. This methodological approach aligns with contemporary research in religious studies, which demands both academic rigor and sensitivity to congregational context and practical ministry realities, as emphasized in modern theological methodology.

DISCUSSION**The Concept of Hospitality Evangelism in Mission Theology**

Hospitality evangelism essentially emphasizes that the proclamation of the Gospel is not only carried out through sermons from the pulpit or formal activities according to the church schedule, but also through concrete actions that demonstrate the practice of welcoming and accepting others sincerely. In his research, Longkumer states that hospitality serves as a framework for a mission that is ecumenical in nature but still grounded in local values.²¹ This means that hospitality is not merely a manifestation of social hospitality, but also an expression of faith that demonstrates God's love in everyday life. Thus, the Gospel can and is present not only through words but also in warm and open relationships within the community. The biblical basis indicates that the practice of hospitality has been an important part of the life of God's people since the founding of the early church. Acts 2:46-47 depicts a community of believers gathering daily to break bread and eat together with joyful hearts.

²⁰ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology; In Qualitative Research in Psychology," University of the West of England Bristol 3, no. 2 (2006): 77-101, <https://psychology.ukzn.ac.za/?mdocs-file=1176>.

²¹ Longkumer, "HOSPITALITY AS A PARADIGM IN MISSION: AN ECUMENICAL AND INDIGENOUS EXPLORATION."

This meal was not merely to fulfill physical needs, but rather a means of gathering and fellowship that strengthened their faith and demonstrated their witness before a large audience. Hebrews 13:2, a similar message emphasizes the importance of providing hospitality, as this simple act has profound spiritual meaning and value. Paul also reminds us in Romans 12:13 that every member of the congregation should always share and be ready to help others, even in the midst of limitations. Overall, this text emphasizes that hospitality is not merely a supplementary form but also a core part of the Christian calling.

These biblical thoughts and ideas align with contemporary studies of mission theology. As Silalahi et al. point out, they interpret the Pentecost event as the foundation and starting point for the emergence of a spirit of hospitality that builds and forms Christian fellowship and is highly relevant for fostering harmony within and between religions in Indonesia.²² Similarly, Shirley, Nel, and Meyer also view hospitality as a paradigm that helps the church build an open, friendly, and welcoming congregation.²³ Therefore, hospitality evangelism can be understood as a practice deeply rooted in Scripture and recognized for its theological legitimacy in modern missiology. This makes it a highly relevant approach to presenting the Gospel through simple acts that emphasize acceptance, togetherness, and genuine love.

In addition to its strong biblical foundation, the concept of hospitality has been further reinforced through mission theology, which views it as a vital means of cultivating meaningful relationships within a community of faith. Haag's research on the dinner church movement in Seattle, for example, demonstrates that shared meals—though simple—can serve as powerful avenues for building spiritual togetherness. Through this practice, both long-standing members and newcomers experience warm fellowship and find an open space where the Gospel can be proclaimed.²⁴ These findings show that shared meals are not mere social rituals; they function as mission strategies that address fundamental human needs for connection and recognition. Chandler further supports this view by highlighting how Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman exemplifies Gospel-centered leadership that embraces those perceived as outsiders as an expression of transformative hospitality.²⁵ Therefore, within a missionary framework, hospitality should not be understood merely as interpersonal kindness but as an expression of faith that creates pathways for the Gospel to work through welcoming, warm, and contextual relationships.

²² Frans H. M. Silalahi et al., "THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY FOR INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS HARMONY: AN INDONESIAN PERSPECTIVE," *Manna Rafflesia, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Arastamar Bengkulu* Vol. 11, N, no. Oktober (2024): 67–78.

²³ Shirley, Nel, and Meyer, "Building Welcoming and Inclusive Congregations: Biblical Hospitality as a Theological Paradigm."

²⁴ Haag, "Seattle Dinner Church Movement : Participatory Motives of Nonfounding Members."

²⁵ Diane J Chandler, "Hospitality in Gospel Leadership: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 12, no. 1 (2022): 3–18, <https://sojo.net/articles/true-biblical->.

In the Indonesian context, the practice of hospitality is not confined to church life but is also deeply intertwined with local cultural traditions. One such tradition is the Javanese “bancaan”, which, according to Panuntun and Susanta (2021), is not merely a simple children’s meal or a commemorative practice. Rather, “bancaan” is rich with values of gratitude, togetherness, and relational harmony, all of which strengthen social bonds within the community and carry spiritual significance.²⁶ These values demonstrate that Christian hospitality does not always need to be expressed through grand or formal gestures; it can be authentically lived out through simple, grounded acts of friendliness and care that resonate with ongoing local cultural practices. Other local studies also affirm that approaches incorporating such practices are highly relevant for promoting religious moderation within pluralistic societies.²⁷ Nevertheless, most existing studies still frame hospitality within broad or formal contexts such as large meals or mission paradigm reconstruction leaving limited attention to simple strategies that can be applied in pioneering congregations. It is from this gap that the present research emerges, seeking to explore how popular, everyday foods such as donuts can serve as simple yet effective means of hospitality, strengthening social relationships and presenting the Gospel contextually.

Donuts as a Medium of Hospitality for Pioneering Churches

Many contemporary studies on hospitality emphasize large gatherings or broader church discourse. This study, however, focuses on a different dimension by highlighting the power of simple yet meaningful practices. Donuts popular, familiar, and widely enjoyed—can serve as a medium of hospitality that is easily accepted within the community, particularly in the context of church planting. Silalahi et al. (2024) emphasize that hospitality should not be reduced to an abstract theological concept; its truest expression is found in simple acts of openness and service that foster harmony in diverse communities.²⁸ Kurniawan (2025) similarly argues that hospitality theology can support church planting in pluralistic societies through practical, uncomplicated steps that do not require substantial resources.²⁹ Additionally, Winarjo (2023) notes that local traditions of eating together hold significant relational power, functioning as spaces that nurture fellowship and strengthen communal bonds.³⁰ Building on these insights, this study examines how donuts, affordable,

²⁶ Panuntun and Susanta, “Christian Hospitality in Javanese Bancaan Tradition.”

²⁷ Soegianto and Abigail Lolong, “The Dynamics of Evangelism in a Multicultural Context: Challenges and Opportunities for Contextualization.”

²⁸ Silalahi et al., “THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY FOR INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS HARMONY: AN INDONESIAN PERSPECTIVE.”

²⁹ Roni Kurniawan, “Peran Hospitality Theology Dalam Mendukung Church Planting Menghadapi Tantangan Pluralisme,” *Jurnal Teologi Praktika* 1, no. Vol.6 No.1 (December 2020) (2025): 78–93, <https://ejournal.sttkadesiyogyakarta.ac.id/index.php/juteolog>.

³⁰ Hendra Winarjo, “Makan Sebagai Sarana Pengasuhan, Persekutuan, Dan Hospitalitas: Sebuah Konstruksi Teologi Makan Dengan Lensa Trinitarian,” *Kurios* 9, no. 1 (2023): 81.

accessible, and familiar in everyday life can become entry points for building relationships, proclaiming the Gospel, and offering tangible ministry within pioneering congregations.

Beyond its practical function, the use of donuts in this study carries theological significance that deepens the meaning of Donuts and the Gospel. Donuts, as an ordinary and widely familiar food, symbolize the incarnational movement of the Gospel that enters everyday human contexts without imposing formality or distance. This practice reflects an understanding of mission in which the Gospel is communicated not primarily through doctrinal proclamation, but through embodied presence, relational openness, and simple acts of care. In this sense, hospitality expressed through sharing donuts becomes a form of lived theology, where the message of Christ is encountered through concrete experiences of welcome and generosity rather than abstract theological discourse.

Field observations indicate that the distribution of donuts generated predominantly positive responses from community members. Most recipients responded with smiles, verbal expressions of gratitude, or brief expressions of appreciation upon receiving the donuts. In several instances, short conversations emerged naturally, allowing volunteers to introduce the presence of the pioneering congregation in a non-intrusive and relational manner. Although some individuals accepted the donuts and departed without further interaction, repeated observations revealed a consistent pattern in which the act of sharing food created moments of relational openness. These brief interactions functioned as meaningful points of contact that affirmed the congregation's presence within the community and opened space for ongoing relational engagement.

The idea of using simple foods as tools for mission aligns with practices already evident in the life of the early church. Acts 2:46–47 records believers gathering daily to break bread and share meals with joy and sincerity. For the early church, this bread was not a luxury item but an ordinary part of daily life that God used to strengthen their faith and expand their witness. Likewise, Romans 12:13 emphasizes the importance of sharing and hospitality as integral aspects of congregational life, while Hebrews 13:2 reminds believers that simple acts of welcoming others can open the door to profound spiritual encounters—often beyond what is immediately visible. These passages collectively show that hospitality does not need to be expressed through grand or complex means; it can be embodied in simple, everyday actions. In this study, donuts serve not only as a popular food but also as symbols of openness, togetherness, and love in the context of a pioneering congregation. Field observations revealed that donut distribution created a warm and friendly atmosphere in which most recipients responded positively. Although some individuals left quickly, many engaged in brief conversations that fostered connection. Several recipients expressed feelings of being cared for even through a small gesture like receiving a donut while others appreciated the interaction despite their busy schedules.

These responses show that donuts function not merely as food to be shared but as catalysts for forming new relationships. The brief conversations that emerged demonstrate that the community recognized the presence of the pioneering church not only through

worship gatherings but also through concrete acts of social engagement. The fact that most recipients understood that the activity was initiated by the pioneering congregation further strengthened the intended message of Christian witness. Thus, it becomes clear that even a simple act of sharing donuts can bridge social connections and create opportunities for meaningful expressions of faith within the community.

Field observations and experiences indicate that the practice of sharing donuts as a simple meal can create opportunities for brief conversations, cultivate genuine interest, and affirm the presence of the pioneering congregation within the community. This finding aligns with practical studies on the dinner church movement, which show that shared meals even in their simplest forms can naturally foster engagement and meaningful dialogue about faith.³¹ Research in the Indonesian context also supports this conclusion, emphasizing that the values of hospitality rooted in local cultural traditions can empower churches to carry out peaceful and inclusive ministries. Studies on the early church, framed within the context of religious moderation, and reflections on hospitality theology in local culture both highlight that small, simple acts are often more readily accepted and more effective in building cross-community relationships than large formal gatherings.³² The Javanese “bancaan” tradition stands as a clear example, demonstrating that even simple communal meals can strengthen social bonds and carry deep spiritual meaning.³³ Therefore, the practice of distributing donuts should not be viewed merely as a social gesture but as part of a broader missional understanding in which everyday foods can function as contextual, inclusive tools for a mission that resonate with the real lives of the surrounding community.

While the Javanese “bancaan” tradition is referenced in this discussion as an illustrative cultural example, the hospitality strategy explored in this study is not intended to be limited to a single cultural framework. The use of donuts highlights a form of everyday hospitality that is culturally flexible and widely recognizable, allowing it to be adapted across diverse social and cultural settings. Rather than functioning as a culturally bound ritual, this approach emphasizes transferable missional principles rooted in relational presence, openness, and simplicity. In this way, Donuts and the Gospel contributes to a broader repertoire of hospitality strategies that can be contextualized in various communities beyond specific local traditions.

The Relevance of the Donut Strategy for Evangelism and Church Witness

The simple experience of distributing donuts demonstrates an act that touches not only the social dimension but also carries spiritual significance for both the congregation

³¹ Haag, “Seattle Dinner Church Movement : Participatory Motives of Nonfounding Members.”

³² Rante Salu et al., “Early Church Hospitality-Based Pentecostal Mission in the Religious Moderation Frame of Indonesia.”

³³ Panuntun and Susanta, “Christian Hospitality in Javanese Bancaan Tradition.”

and the surrounding community. What initially appears to be a small gesture of sharing food in fact opens pathways to new relationships, short conversations, and a growing awareness of the church's presence among the wider public. For the pioneering congregation, this experience becomes a means of learning to witness and serve with sincerity. For the recipients, a donut—though simple—can communicate care, attention, and compassion that holds deeper meaning. Therefore, this small-scale strategy illustrates that the mission of the church does not always need to be expressed through large programs; it can be embodied through simple, concrete actions that resonate closely with the daily lives of the community.

The biblical foundation also clearly shows that growth in faith often occurs through simple acts. In 1 Corinthians 3:6, Paul emphasizes that some plant and others water, but God alone brings the growth. This passage reminds believers that God can use faithfulness in small actions to bear significant spiritual fruit. Likewise, Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40 affirm that even the smallest acts of kindness done for others are considered acts done for Him. This perspective underscores the idea that simple acts of service even sharing food carry profound spiritual significance. In harmony with this, contemporary missiological studies emphasize the necessity of relational and contextual approaches to evangelism. Sumarauw et al. (2025) argue that church growth is shaped not only by large strategies but also by creative acts of everyday evangelism that are relevant to people's lived experiences.³⁴ Likewise, Soegianto and Lolong (2023) maintain that in pluralistic and multicultural societies, evangelism methods that are inclusive, welcoming, and simple are more effective in bridging social and cultural differences.³⁵ Therefore, the strategy of distributing donuts stands on solid biblical and theological foundations as a meaningful expression of Christian witness.

Practically, the practice of distributing donuts benefits not only the recipients but also contributes to the spiritual growth of the congregation. Through this simple activity, members learn to serve humbly, cultivate social sensitivity, and experience the joy of expressing faith through tangible actions. For the surrounding community, the donuts act as a bridge that allows them to view the pioneering church not merely as a place of worship but as a caring and compassionate fellowship. From a missiological perspective, this approach aligns with reflections that emphasize relational evangelism. Bosch (2011) asserts that authentic mission is always contextual and emerges from concrete interactions with others rather than large-scale programs.³⁶ Similarly, Green (2004) explains that the early church grew not through grand strategies but through genuine witness embodied in

³⁴ Sumarauw et al., "A Theological Review Of Evangelism And Its Influence On Church Growth."

³⁵ Soegianto and Abigail Lolong, "The Dynamics of Evangelism in a Multicultural Context: Challenges and Opportunities for Contextualization."

³⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2011).

daily life and personal relationships.³⁷ Thus, the simple act of sharing donuts can be understood as a form of relational evangelism, where faith is communicated through closeness, attentiveness, and concrete expressions of care.

From the various discussions above, it is evident that the practice of distributing donuts is not merely a trivial social gesture but a mission activity that touches the dimensions of faith, relationship-building, and Christian witness within a pioneering congregation. Although simple, this practice demonstrates that a pioneering church can remain present and relevant in the community without relying on large resources. This aligns with biblical teaching that God can use small seeds to produce significant growth. It also reflects missiological insights that stress the effectiveness of relational approaches in reaching hearts and fostering genuine connection. Therefore, the strength of a hospitality strategy utilizing popular foods lies in its ability to nurture faith, open doors for Gospel conversations, and form an inclusive, open church community within a diverse society. These findings highlight that mission does not always depend on large-scale programs; it can also emerge through small, tangible, and meaningful acts.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that hospitality evangelism has a strong biblical and theological foundation, further reinforced by local cultural practices. Scripture consistently highlights the importance of welcome, sharing, and relationship-building through communal meals. The practices of the early church, as well as cultural traditions such as the Javanese “*bancaan*”, show that hospitality is not merely a social custom but a tangible expression of faith that remains deeply relevant in a pluralistic society.

The findings of this field research indicate that, within the context of a pioneering church, simple actions such as donut distribution can open spaces for meaningful relationships. Observations, interviews, and brief conversations reveal that the surrounding community sensed the care and presence of the pioneering church through something as simple as receiving a donut. These interactions illustrate that the Gospel does not always need to be expressed in grand or elaborate ways; it can also be made visible through small, sincere acts. In this context, the donut serves as a simple yet meaningful symbol of hospitality, effectively connecting the church plant with its wider community.

Furthermore, the discussion shows that a hospitality-based strategy utilizing donuts is relevant for strengthening evangelism, nurturing faith, and affirming the church’s witness in a diverse society. This simple act not only reinforces social relationships but also creates opportunities for dialogue and acceptance across communities. Consequently, this strategy suggests that mission within a church-planting context does not necessarily need to rely on large or complex programs; rather, it can develop through small, concrete initiatives that are closely connected to the everyday experiences of the surrounding community. In this

³⁷ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004).

case study, “Donuts and the Gospel” functions not merely as a metaphor but as a practical illustration of how simple acts of hospitality can support relational engagement and witness. Within the context of a pioneering congregation, the distribution of donuts emerges as a contextual, relevant, and meaningful expression of hospitality evangelism, through which the Gospel becomes tangible in everyday life.

REFERENCES

- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology; In Qualitative Research in Psychology.” *University of the West of England Bristol* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101. <https://psychology.ukzn.ac.za/?mdocs-file=1176>.
- Butarbutar, Rut Debora, and Raharja Sembiring Milala. “Dari Church Planting ke Hospitalitas: Rekonstruksi Misi Gereja Dalam Konteks Keberagaman.” *Epigraphe: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kristiani* 4, no. 2 (2020): 170–182.
- Chandler, Diane J. “Hospitality in Gospel Leadership: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman.” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 12, no. 1 (2022): 3–18. <https://sojo.net/articles/true-biblical->.
- Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.
- Haag, Will F. “Seattle Dinner Church Movement: Participatory Motives of Nonfounding Members” (2023).
- Hale, Lori K. “COMMENSALITY AS A METHOD OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT Submitted to The King ’ s University In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of Doctor of Ministry Lori Hale,” no. May (2023).
- J. Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York: Orbis Books, 2011.
- Jepriadi, Sicilia Sima, and Sulianus Susanto. “Tantangan Dan Peluang Budaya Lokal Dalam Misi Pemberitaan Injil.” *Makarios: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual* 1, no. 1 (2022): 132–140.
- Kurniawan, Roni. “Peran Hospitality Theology Dalam Mendukung Church Planting Menghadapi Tantangan Pluralisme.” *Jurnal Teologi Praktika* 1, no. Vol.6 No.1 (December 2020) (2025): 78–93. <https://ejournal.sttkadesiyogyakarta.ac.id/index.php/juteolog>.
- Longkumer, Bendanglemla. “HOSPITALITY AS A PARADIGM IN MISSION: AN ECUMENICAL AND INDIGENOUS EXPLORATION.” *QUEST: Studies on Religion & Culture in Asia* 4 (2020): 1–12.
- Matheos, Rommi. “Tuan Rumah Yang Ramah, Tamu Yang Rapuh, Dan Kaum Peziarah: Misi Gereja Yang Hospitabel Bertitik Tolak Dari Peristiwa Pentakosta (Kis. 2:1-13).” *GEMA TEOLOGIKA: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual dan Filsafat Keilahian* 8, no. 1 (2023): 15–30.
- Nole, Otniel Aurelius. “Menjadi Kristen Evangelis Tanpa Isolasi Sosial: Konstruksi Penginjilan Karitatif Di Lingkungan Heterogen.” *Jurnal Teologi Injili* 5, no. 1 (2025): 19–37.
- Panuntun, Daniel F., and Yohanes K. Susanta. “Christian Hospitality in Javanese Bancaan Tradition.” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): 1–7.
- Rante Salu, Syani B., Harls E.R. Siahaan, Nunuk Rinukti, and Agustin Soewitomo Putri.

- “Early Church Hospitality-Based Pentecostal Mission in the Religious Moderation Frame of Indonesia.” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1–6.
- Shirley, Timothy W., Malan Nel, and Esias E. Meyer. “Building Welcoming and Inclusive Congregations: Biblical Hospitality as a Theological Paradigm.” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 45, no. 1 (2024): 1–8.
- Siahaan, Harls Evan R., and Munatar Kause. “Hospitalitas Sebagai Hidup Menggereja Dalam Bingkai Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia.” *Danum Pabelum: Jurnal Teologi Dan Musik Gereja* 2, no. 2 (2022): 232–240.
- Silalahi, Frans H. M., Linda A. Ersada, Hengki B. Tompo, and David Kristanto. “THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY FOR INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS HARMONY: AN INDONESIAN PERSPECTIVE.” *Manna Rafflesia, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Arastamar Bengkulu* Vol. 11, N, no. Oktober (2024): 67–78.
- Soegianto, Soegianto, and Prinsipessia Putri Abigail Lolong. “The Dynamics of Evangelism in a Multicultural Context: Challenges and Opportunities for Contextualization.” *Journal Didaskalia* 6, no. 2 (2023): 48–55.
- Sumarauw, David Neyland, Hery Budi Yosef, Endang Pasaribu, and Guntur Hamonangan Sahat Silaban. “A Theological Review Of Evangelism And Its Influence On Church Growth.” *Jurnal Impresi Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (2025): 1097–1110.
- While, Alison. “Eat, Drink and Be Merry...” *British Journal of Community Nursing* 28, no. 12 (2023): 580–581.
- Winarjo, Hendra. “Makan Sebagai Sarana Pengasuhan, Persekutuan, Dan Hospitalitas: Sebuah Konstruksi Teologi Makan Dengan Lensa Trinitarian.” *Kurios* 9, no. 1 (2023): 81