

Implementation of the Role of Peacemakers in Bridging Differences in Beliefs: A Christian Educator's Perspective

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Abstract

Indonesia is a nation significantly rich in cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. While this diversity is a source of strength, it also presents challenges in fostering social harmony. This study examines the implementation of the peacemaker concept in bridging differences in beliefs, based on Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:9. Using a qualitative method with a literature review approach (library research), the research explores relevant websites, journals, and books to analyze the biblical meaning of "peacemakers" and how Christian educators can apply this principle in Indonesia's religiously plural society. Findings indicate that being a peacemaker requires active engagement in fostering peace rather than merely living in passive harmony. Key implementation strategies include developing interfaith empathy, applying conflict mediation techniques rooted in Christian values, and adopting a collaborative approach to community service. This study concludes that Christian educators play a vital role as peacemakers, with a responsibility to bridge differences, facilitate interfaith dialogue, and promote tolerance and inclusivity within Indonesia's diverse society.

Keywords: Peacemaker, Christian educators, religious plurality, interfaith dialogue, tolerance

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Introduction

Indonesia is a nation rich in cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity (Syarnubi et al., 2023). According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, Indonesia's population in mid-2024 reached 281.6 million people (*Jumlah Penduduk Pertengahan Tahun (Ribu Jiwa), 2022-2024*, n.d.). Formally, the country recognizes six official religions: Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism (Labobar, 2024; Mubarrak & Kumala, 2020; Suardana et al., 2023). Beyond these six major religions, Indonesia is also home to numerous indigenous ethnic groups, many of which have preserved ancestral belief systems which have been passed down from generation to generation since the ancestors of each ethnic group, and to this day, indigenous religions can still be found in Indonesia. This vast diversity presents both a strength and a challenge in fostering social harmony. Achieving peace in a pluralistic society is no simple task; in fact, differences can sometimes lead to conflicts and divisions. Building harmony amid diversity requires a continuous process – one that demands effort, sacrifice, and strong collaboration. Ideally, this diversity should serve as a foundation for Christian educators to cultivate an understanding of tolerance, embracing differences as an opportunity for mutual growth rather than division.

Religious diversity often creates opportunities for conflict, sometimes leading to the marginalization of minority groups. Over time, this can foster an unconscious ideology of fascism in how religious plurality is perceived. While diversity has the potential to be a source of strength and greatness, it can also become a catalyst for division, weakening and even destroying societal harmony. The term "conflict," derived from *configere* (meaning "to strike each other"), reflects the tensions and division that arise within religious diversity, often due to differing perspectives and the use of religion as a competitive tool, both on an individual and communal level (Suratman & Sugiono, 2023). On a broader scale, intolerance within a pluralistic society is frequently rooted in rigid and static interpretations of religious beliefs. This often leads to the misconception that numerical superiority equates to truth and quality, with the majority wielding power to suppress the minority beyond mere numbers to minimal quality, affecting their fundamental rights. A stark example of such discrimination is the forced dissolution of a church service in Lampung by a village government official (BBC, 2023). This incident caused unrest among congregants who wished to practice their faith freely, despite constitutional guarantees of religious

freedom. The 1945 Constitution, Article 29, Paragraphs 1 and 2, explicitly upholds the right to worship according to one's religion (*Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia 1945*, n.d.). However, cases of religious discrimination persist, leading to intimidation and fear among minority groups as they carry out their religious rituals, underscoring the urgent need for stronger interfaith harmony and peace.

In Christianity, the church serves as the bearer of a peace mission known as the Gospel—the good news for the world. The church is not merely an organization; rather, it is a living organism that drives a movement, within which there are leaders entrusted by God to guide His people. These church leaders do not bring the good news only to those who have already received it, but also to those who have yet to hear and accept it. As a message of good news, the Gospel must not be conveyed with rigidity or in a static manner. Often, peace is easily maintained within communities that share the same beliefs. However, peace remains an ambiguous concept if it is only applied among those who think alike. The role of a peacemaker exists precisely because of diversity—because of differences, opposing perspectives in believing in one God with another from which all of that true peace is created without demanding uniformity in belief but by embracing coexistence despite those differences. The church was established to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, which is to make disciples of all nations for the Kingdom of God, as written in Matthew 28:19-20 (New Translation Bible, 2019, Matthew 28:19-20).

Jesus Christ set an example as a leader who brings peace. A peacemaking leader is someone who possesses a heart filled with peace, a noble character, and the ability to actively pursue harmony (Lukmono & Sudarmanto, 2020). As widely understood, religious moderation is a principle that emphasizes an approach based on essential values, enabling individuals to understand and practice their faith while respecting and accepting differences in religious beliefs (Ardilla et al., 2023). As the world continues to evolve, religious moderation becomes increasingly important and relevant in fostering peace.

Previous research on peacemakers has been conducted in a study titled "*Generation Z as Peacemakers: A Biblical Review of Matthew 5:9.*" This study focuses on discussing Generation Z as peacemakers in relation to Matthew 5:9 (Panggabean & Santo, 2023). Another study that also explores the church's mission as a peacemaker is titled "*The Church's Mission as a Peacemaker in the Indonesian*

Context: A Review of Luke 12:51" (Susanto & Miraji, 2022). Building upon these previous studies, this research seeks to complement and expand on certain aspects. While Panggabean and Santo's (2023) study centers on Generation Z as the primary focus of peacemakers, this research focuses on church leaders as peacemakers, regardless of age. On the other hand, Susanto and Miraji's (2022) study examines the role of the church as a whole – referring to all Christians within the church community – and is based on Luke 12:51. In contrast, this research emphasizes the role of church leaders in making an impact and positioning themselves as the primary subjects of peacemaker. Naturally, leadership is closely connected to those being led, as leaders shape the direction of their followers, including in matters of fostering peace. Therefore, this study uses Matthew 5:9 as its foundational scripture.

Building upon the two studies mentioned above, this research focuses on the implementation of peacemakers in bridging differences as a form of religious moderation within the educational sphere. With the emergence of various perspectives on addressing differences in belief, an in-depth study is required on how to apply the concept of peacemaker found in Matthew 5:9 to bridge these differences. Amid the various challenges identified, this study emphasizes that peace should begin with Christian educators. A responsible and successful Christian educator is one who can guide their students according to the truth of God's Word. One key aspect of this is leading a movement that demonstrates to the world – especially in the midst of religious diversity – that faith differences exist, yet educators are called to foster peace. This peace does not originate from the world but comes from God Himself.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a library research approach to analyze and understand the implementation of peacemaker in the context of religious differences based on Matthew 5:9. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen as it provides a deep and comprehensive depiction of the phenomenon under study (Gilbert et al., 2018), particularly in exploring the meaning and interpretation of biblical texts and their application in a pluralistic religious context.

In this library research, the primary data sources used are biblical texts, specifically Matthew 5:9, in various translations and interpretations. Secondary

data sources include theological literature, biblical commentary books, theological academic journals, scholarly articles, and other relevant literature related to the research topic. Data collection is carried out through systematic exploration and documentation of these sources, focusing on aspects related to the role of peacemakers and interfaith dialogue.

The applied data analysis technique uses a hermeneutic approach to interpret the biblical text, specifically Matthew 5:9, by considering its historical, linguistic, and theological contexts. The analysis is conducted in several stages: first, examining the literal and theological meaning of Matthew 5:9; second, identifying the principles of peacemaker contained within the text; and third, analyzing the relevance and application of these principles in the context of religious differences. The data analysis is carried out through various methods, including a biblical analysis of Matthew 5:9, a grammatical analysis of key Greek terms, an interpretation of the meaning of "peacemakers" and "children of God" in the context of church leadership, and an analysis of the role of Christian educators as peacemakers based on the reviewed literature.

To ensure the validity of the data and research findings, source triangulation was conducted by comparing various theological perspectives and interpretations from credible sources. This study also applies the principle of objectivity in data analysis while still considering the Christian faith perspective as a theological foundation. The results of the analysis are then presented in a descriptive-analytical manner to provide a deep understanding of the implementation of peacemakers in the context of religious differences.

Findings and Discussion

Biblical Analysis of Matthew 5:9 on Peacemakers

Matius 5:9 Berbahagialah orang yang membawa damai, karena mereka akan disebut anak-anak Allah. (TB)

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemaker: for they shall be called the children of God (UKJV)

Matthew 5:9 μακαριοι οι ειρηνοποιοι οτι αυτοι υιοι θεου κληθησονται (BYZ)

Matthew 5:9 is one of the Beatitudes delivered by Jesus on the mount as the introduction to His sermon. The Sermon on the Mount was originally addressed to Christians, but it is meant to be shared with all people on earth. This

sermon contains ethical teachings to help people understand God's truth and recognize their own sinful nature. Through the sermon, Jesus objectively declared the Kingdom of God (Purba, 2022). Jesus consistently renewed the Law of Moses – not merely correcting or refining it, but restoring the social order that had been broken by humanity living in sin.

Two key words will be the focal point of analysis in this text: peacemakers and children of God. The word people in Greek is *οἱ* (*hoi*), derived from the root word *ο* (*ho*). This word has a grammatical structure as article, nominative, masculine, plural form. In English, it can be translated as the, that, this, one, he, she, it, etc. Therefore, this term can be interpreted as those people. The word peacemakers in Greek is *εἰρηνοποιοὶ* (*eirenopoioi*), derived from the root word *εἰρηνοποιος* (*eirenopoios*). This word has a grammatical structure as adjective, nominative, masculine, plural form. In English, it is translated as pacific, loving peace, a peacemaker. Thus, this term refers to people who possess a calm nature, those who actively pursue and love peace (Patandean, 2018). The word children in Greek is *υἱοὶ* (*huiioi*) from the root word *υἱός* (*huios*). This word has a grammatical structure as Noun, Nominative, Masculine, Plural. In English, this word is translated as child, foal, son. Thus, this word can be interpreted as children. The word God in Greek is *Θεοῦ* (*Theou*) from the root word *Θεός* (*Theos*). This word has a grammatical structure as Noun, Genitive, Masculine, Singular. In English, this word is translated as God. Thus, this word is interpreted as the Lord.

Based on the analysis that has been conducted above, the researcher provides three meanings of the word “peacemaker”. First, a peacemaker is able to resolve conflicts; Second, a peacemaker is able to create an environment that fosters spiritual growth; and third, a peacemaker is able to facilitate reconciliation in the midst of society.

Interpretation of Matthew 5:9 in the Context of Christian Educators

Based on the grammatical analysis above, it can be explained as follows:

The Meaning of "Peacemaker" for Christian Educators

As a peacemaker, a Christian educator is not merely someone who lives peacefully and serenely with a focus on themselves, but rather someone who actively plays a role in creating peace. An educator as a peacemaker has the privilege, responsibility, and power to establish peace (Lukmono, 2021). The term

eirene (peace) is also parallel to the word *Shalom* in the Old Testament, which means overall well-being, justice, and harmonious unity. The word *shalom* in the Old Testament is closely related to spiritual or religious life. It is always associated with something good or tranquil. It is something pure from *Yahweh*. It is an external manifestation beyond human self and is always connected to social aspects beyond individual concerns. Since it originates from God, it must be responded to by humans in the form of values and responsibilities based on divine morals, which are embodied in the social domain (Purba, 2022). From the term peacemaker, the researcher seeks to provide three meanings of a peacemaker for church leaders. First, a peacemaker is able to resolve conflicts. This is an action of peacemaking. Various conflicts and disputes have occurred in the name of religion (Lukmono & Sudarmanto, 2020). True peace will never be fully materialized if harmony does not exist among adherents of different religions. Second, a peacemaker is able to create an environment that foster spiritual growth. A peacemaker fosters cooperation within a diverse society, establishing interfaith collaboration programs to strengthen unity and solidarity. Third, a peacemaker is able to facilitate reconciliation in the midst of society. In a large community, conflicts are inevitable, and this is where the role of a peacemaker becomes crucial in reconciling broken relationships caused by conflict.

"Children of God" as the Identity of Christian Educators

Based on grammatical analysis, children of God refer to individuals who possess the nature and character of God. As a peacemaker, a church leader embodies divine characteristics. These divine characteristics form the identity of a Christian educator. Identity is the distinctive trait of a person, often referred to as one's self-identity (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, n.d.). Erikson, a renowned psychologist and psychoanalyst, developed a theory on the stages of personality development. According to Erikson, self-identity is an individual's comprehensive understanding and perception of themselves (Prima, 2024). As a peacemaker who will be called children of God, one must reflect divine characteristics in all their actions. The characteristics of a peacemaker include love, forgiveness, a peaceful nature, and a willingness to help others. Additionally, a peacemaker is someone who bears the responsibility of ensuring that God's will is fulfilled within the community they are building. As stated in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20), which calls for making disciples

of all nations (Darmawan et al., 2024), Christian educators have a responsibility to fulfill this mission in their role as peacemakers.

When an educator actively engages or initiates movement in challenging situations to bring forth the Kingdom of God, they will be called children of God. A peacemaker serves as a third party who mediates between two opposing sides, bringing about tangible peace through their presence. Any action taken to achieve peace amidst the conflicts or difficulties affirms their identity as a child of God. Oneway Christian educators foster this understanding within church education is by organizing Sunday school services, where children are taught about being *children of God* who bring peace wherever they go.

Strategy for Implementing Peacemaker in Bridging Differences in Beliefs

In today's era of religious pluralism, differences in beliefs can become a trigger for conflict, both between individuals and among groups. Within this pluralistic context, the role of Christian educators becomes highly essential and crucial. Based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God," church leaders are called to actively bridge differences in beliefs. The following are some key strategies that can be implemented:

Christian Educators as Peacemakers Capable of Resolving Conflicts with Christian Values

In the context of conflict mediation, Christian values can serve as a solid foundation for creating peaceful and fair resolutions. Christian values such as love, forgiveness, and reconciliation are highly relevant to the mediation process (Sumiwi et al., 2021). Christian educators as peacemakers who apply these values will help conflicting parties view the causes of disputes from a broader and more spiritual perspective, encouraging them to find mutually beneficial solutions. As peacemakers, Christian educators must be able to act as a mediator in conflicts within religious communities.

Forgiveness is a crucial aspect of conflict mediation based on Christian values (Katryn et al., 2021). A mediator helps conflicting parties understand the power of forgiveness in healing wounds and restoring bonds that have been strained or even broken (Sumiwi et al., 2022). The Christian mediation approach also emphasizes the pursuit of restorative justice, focusing on relationship

restoration and repairing harm rather than punishment or revenge. Thus, conflict mediation grounded in Christian values can serve as an effective tool for fostering lasting peace and strengthening communities.

Christian Educators as Peacemakers in Nurturing Children Who Foster Spiritual Growth

Developing a sense of empathy and cross-cultural understanding is one of the key aspects of fostering harmony and tolerance in this pluralistic era. This begins with an awareness of the diversity of beliefs and differences within that diversity. It involves avoiding fanaticism, being open to differences, understanding others' perspectives, and respecting the values of different beliefs (Madiyono & Haq, 2023). One effective technique is initiating dialogue and direct interaction with individuals of different faiths. Engaging in open discussions and sharing religious insights can help build mutual understanding. Educators must also support every Sunday school child in learning to appreciate and respect religious differences ensuring that the environment remains harmonious and conducive to spiritual growth (Santo, 2023).

Christian Educators as Peacemakers in Facilitating Reconciliation Within Society

As peacemakers, Christian educators should possess the ability to bridge differences and resolve conflicts through education. Leaders must understand the complexities of social dynamics and carefully identify the root causes of conflicts. With strong communication skills, Christian educators can facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties, creating a space for mutual listening and understanding. They remain impartial, acting as fair and objective mediators (Dompas et al., 2023). In the reconciliation process, Christian educators as peacemakers encourage the development of mutually beneficial and sustainable solutions. They also help restore trust and relationships that have been damaged by conflict. Through a wise and empathetic approach, leaders contribute to the realization of a more harmonious and tolerant society, where differences can be managed constructively.

The Role of Christian Educators as Peacemakers in Bridging Differences in Beliefs

Religious diversity is a crucial reason for Christian educators to take an active role within the community, especially in the school context. Neglecting

this responsibility can lead to increasingly complex issues regarding religious differences and diversity. As a pluralistic nation, Indonesia requires church leaders, as part of this diversity, to wisely embrace their role. One major concern is that some church leaders do not act as mediators in conflicts but instead contribute to making Christianity an exclusive religion. Harmful leadership traits such as fundamentalism, narrow-mindedness, deceitfulness, and excessive fanaticism are sometimes tolerated by their followers, leading to a culture of personality worship. This occurs when leaders claim to defend their faith while demeaning other religions through sarcasm and disrespect (Intarti, 2018). Therefore, church leaders hold a highly significant role. If they fail to guide their communities toward truth and reconciliation, they do not bridge religious diversity but rather widen the existing divide.

Policy undoubtedly plays a crucial role and is an important step to take. In this regard, the Bilangan Research Center provides an analogy regarding leadership, emphasizing that a leader must have multiple perspectives in leading: see above (viewing from above – big picture), see below (looking downward – detailing), see behind (looking backward – reflection or evaluation), see ahead (looking forward – projection), see beside (observing surroundings – creativity), see beyond (looking beyond what is visible – vision), and see through (leading to the end – planning, implementation, commitment) Taking on a leadership role, particularly in bridging different perspectives, is undoubtedly essential. Based on these perspectives, the roles that can be adopted are as follows:

Being a Pillar of Prayer for Peace in the World of Education

The church is not merely an organization – a rigid and passive assembly – but rather a living organism with a dynamic and interconnected system. In this context, its movement must be driven by leaders who embody the identity of God’s children. True peace can only thrive when prayer remains at the heart of a guided community. When educators commit to consistent prayer, they not only nurture peace within their own circles but also influence those they lead beyond the community.

The church has taken on a vital role as a spiritual institution that consistently serves as a pillar of peace through both prayer and concrete actions. In fulfilling its mission as a peacemaker, the church not only holds regular prayer gatherings for global peace but also actively encourages children to become

agents of peace in their daily lives. Through sermons that emphasize love and forgiveness, the church continually reminds its congregation that true peace begins within the heart of each individual. Christian educators also play an active role in interfaith dialogue and conflict mediation at various levels of society, demonstrating the church's commitment to not only praying for peace but also bringing it to life through tangible efforts. By organizing social and humanitarian initiatives that engage diverse community groups, the church fosters understanding and breaks down prejudices that often fuel conflicts (Dompas et al., 2023). The offered prayers are not merely rituals but serve as a spiritual foundation that inspires every member of the congregation to actively promote peace within their own communities.

Collaborative Approach in Education

In this context, the values of equality play a crucial role, particularly in fostering kindness, social engagement, and community involvement. Christian educators are called to actively participate, serving as role models and a source of blessing by demonstrating the character of God's children without creating divisions. Collaboration is possible when equality is upheld amidst diversity. It is not about striving for dominance but rather about offering support and contributing meaningfully in any capacity. Educators can also take on the role of mediators, promoting messages of tolerance and inclusivity while fostering mutual respect and instilling humanitarian values (Santo, 2024) within individuals, organizations, and broader community groups.

The church has effectively developed a collaborative approach in children's ministry as a tangible expression of its role as a peacemaker (Buan & Elena, 2023). By fostering strong partnerships with various community elements, social institutions, and humanitarian organizations, the church has successfully created more comprehensive service programs that reach different educational levels. This collaborative approach goes beyond material assistance, encompassing community empowerment through skills training, spiritual guidance, and educational programs involving professionals from diverse fields.

Additionally, the church actively builds networks with interfaith communities to provide inclusive services that honor diversity. Through various social initiatives such as shelters, health clinics, and community education centers, the church demonstrates its commitment to making a lasting positive

impact. Church leaders and congregants work hand in hand with community figures and local governments to identify societal needs and develop appropriate solutions. This collaborative approach not only strengthens the church's role as an agent of social transformation but also lays a solid foundation for fostering a peaceful and thriving society.

Implication

Theoretically, the concept of a peacemaker, as derived from Matthew 5:9, provides a strong theological foundation for fostering interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution within the educational process in the school setting. This understanding enriches academic discourse on the role of religion in promoting social harmony, where Christian values of peace can be integrated with modern approaches to conflict management. Moreover, this concept broadens the theoretical perspective on how spiritual values can be translated into concrete actions within the context of religious pluralism.

Meanwhile, the practical implications of this study can be observed in several key aspects. First, it provides concrete guidance for young individuals and peace activists in fulfilling their roles as bridges between different faiths. Second, the findings can be applied to the development of more effective and sustainable interfaith dialogue programs. Third, the findings serve as a reference for designing a more inclusive, peace-oriented religious education curriculum. Fourth, this study offers a practical framework for religious institutions to develop conflict resolution strategies based on spiritual values.

Furthermore, these practical implications extend to the development of concrete methods for fostering interfaith communication, such as cultural exchange programs, regular dialogue forums, and collaborative social initiatives involving diverse religious communities. This underscores that the role of a peacemaker is not merely a theoretical concept but can be transformed into tangible actions that contribute to fostering harmony and coexistence in a pluralistic society.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies are recommended to focus on evaluating the impact of Christian educators' role as peacemakers on students, the school environment, and the surrounding community. This evaluation can assess changes in attitudes,

behavior, and social interactions following the implementation of Matthew 5:9 principles by educators. Various research methods can be employed, including surveys to measure shifts in students' attitudes and behavior, observations to analyze social interactions within the school, and interviews with students, teachers, and parents to gain deeper insights. Additionally, document analysis, such as school records or incident reports, can be utilized to track behavioral changes over time.

The findings of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of Christian educators as peacemakers, the positive impact of applying Matthew 5:9 principles in an educational setting, and practical approaches to fostering peace within schools and the wider community. Therefore, this research holds the potential to make a significant contribution to the development of peace education.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the biblical analysis of Matthew 5:9 reveals that peacemakers are those who actively create peace rather than merely living in passive harmony. Peacemakers embody divine characteristics as "children of God." The role of Christian educators as peacemakers is crucial in Indonesia's religiously diverse society. Several key strategies for Christian educators in bridging differences in belief include fostering empathy and interfaith understanding through dialogue and direct interaction, utilizing conflict mediation techniques based on Christian values such as love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Christian educators must take an active role in bridging differences by being steadfast in prayer for peace, adopting a collaborative approach in community service, and serving as mediators of messages of tolerance and inclusivity. Wisdom and a broad perspective are essential for church leaders in fulfilling their role as peacemakers in a pluralistic society. The implementation of this role by Christian educators is expected to foster harmony and religious tolerance while setting an example for sustainable peace.

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