

Liturgical Training and Youth Fellowship Development in Realising Meaningful Worship

Berthin S. Banga, Yane R. Maahury, Yeni I. Roragabar, Yofsan Tolanda, Godfried San Ferre, Yohanes Bandong, Okrisye Lantaka, Resmi Hutasoit, Mika Gobai, Melina Hutapea, Irianto, Tresia F. Lesirolo, Ayulita Limbong

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Protestan Negeri Sentani

berthinbanga3@gmail.com

Article Info

Article history:

Accepted: 04 November 2025

Publish: 01 December 2025

Keywords:

Liturgical Training, Youth Ministry, Meaningful Worship, Liturgical Formation, Community Engagement, GKI Hermon Hollo Him

Abstract

This community engagement program responds to the declining participation of young congregants in meaningful worship at GKI Hermon Hollo Him. The activity aimed to strengthen the role of young liturgists and nurture the spiritual formation of the youth fellowship. Using a structured approach, including needs assessment, contextual material design, lectures, demonstrations, guided practice, and reflective discussions, the program equipped participants with theological insight and practical liturgical skills. Evaluation was conducted through questionnaires to measure comprehension and responses toward the training. The results show a marked improvement: most participants gained a deeper understanding of liturgy as a transformative encounter with God and demonstrated increased confidence in leading worship. The program successfully integrated theological learning and liturgical practice, enabling young members to serve with greater awareness, competence, and spiritual maturity. In conclusion, the activity effectively empowered youth as active agents in realizing meaningful and life-giving worship within the congregation.

This is an open access article under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)



Corresponding Author:

Berthin S. Banga

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Protestan Negeri Sentani

berthinbanga3@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The church in the contemporary era is at a challenging crossroads. The rapid pace of digitalisation and shifting spiritual values, especially among the younger generation, require the church to adapt without losing its essence. The phenomenon of declining youth participation in church life, including weekly worship, is a global concern that is also felt in many local congregations.

Young people who are accustomed to fast-paced and personal digital interactions often find conventional worship less relevant and appealing. As a result, worship, which should be the pinnacle of a transformative encounter between believers and God, risks being degraded to a mere formal routine devoid of spiritual depth (Gloria et al., 2024; Labberton, 2009; Von Allmen, 2023). Younger generations prefer worship experiences that are interactive, innovative, and relevant to everyday life. Conventional worship that is rigid and monotonous is often considered merely a formal routine (Bingaman, 2023). In this context, revitalising the role of liturgists and strengthening

the fellowship of young members are strategic keys to reviving an authentic and meaningful spirit of worship.

Leitourgia was initially used in ancient Greek society to describe public service or duties performed for the benefit of the wider community, such as paying taxes or defending the country (Garnett, 2012; Grace, 2003). In later developments, this term was adopted in a religious context, particularly in Jewish and Christian traditions, to refer to worship services performed by communities or individuals to God (Belcher et al., 2021; Turner, 2013). In the Christian church, a “liturgos” refers to an individual who carries out this ministry, either as a worship leader or as part of the congregation who is actively involved (Grace, 2003; Rusmanto et al., 2024).

This meaning emphasises that worship is not a one-way performance from the pulpit, but rather a collective work involving dialogue between God and His people. The involvement of the liturgist and the congregation in the liturgy emphasises the collective, rather than the individual, dimension, so that worship becomes a shared celebration that strengthens the unity and mission of the church in the world (Belcher et al., 2021; Cones, 2021; Rusmanto et al., 2024). A competent liturgist acts as a facilitator of this sacred dialogue, guiding the congregation to enter into God's presence in an orderly, solemn, and contemplative manner.

However, the reality on the ground often shows a gap between theological idealism and pastoral practice. Many young ministers entrusted with liturgical duties usually lack a deep theological understanding of liturgy, adequate technical skills, and the spiritual sensitivity necessary to lead worship. The worship services they lead often feel mechanical and rigid, failing to touch the hearts of the congregation. Liturgists are expected to have spiritual depth, to be able to live out and convey their faith experience in every liturgical action, and to foster the spiritual participation of the congregation (Winter & Kühn, 2024; You & Ji, 2023).

Therefore, comprehensive liturgical training is no longer just an option, but an urgent necessity for developing ministers who can build bridges between God's holiness and the reality of congregational life. In line with the importance of the role of liturgists, the existence of a community of young members is a key pillar for the sustainability and vitality of the church. They are the backbone of the church today and will remain so in the future. However, the enthusiasm and energy of young people can easily fade if it is not accompanied by focused and continuous guidance. Effective youth development must go beyond mere recreational or social activities; it must focus on strengthening spiritual identity, deepening understanding of faith, and actively involving them in church ministry (Napitupulu & Tafonao, 2024). Without this foundation, the younger generation will easily become alienated from church life and seek other communities that they consider more relevant.

The active involvement of young members, especially in the context of worship services, has a significant double impact. First, it strengthens the participation of the congregation as a whole, because the energy and creativity of young people can bring a refreshing new atmosphere to worship. Second, this involvement fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility for the congregation's life. When young members are not only the objects of service but also the subjects who serve, they will appreciate and find meaning in every moment of worship. The integrated development of young members with liturgical service is a long-term investment for the growth of a healthy and dynamic church.

In the specific context of the GKI Hermon Hollo Him, the potential for youth ministry is enormous. This congregation has enthusiastic young members who are ready to be involved. However, initial observations indicate challenges in terms of systematic training and ongoing spiritual guidance. There is a clear need to train young ministers to have a solid understanding of worship, liturgical theology, and the ethics of ministry as liturgists. Without adequate preparation, their role in worship risks becoming merely a fulfilment of a schedule without deep understanding.

The primary issue underlying this research is the gap between the great potential of young members at GKI Hermon Hollo Him and the reality of youth worship services, which are perceived as not yet fully achieving the depth of meaning they could offer. Existing worship activities often still require improvement in terms of structure, contextual worship arrangements, and increasing the capacity of the liturgists who lead them. This gap is evident in worship services that sometimes lack solemnity and are not yet fully capable of becoming a transformative space for young congregations. As a result, worship has not become the main attraction that can strengthen their spiritual bond with God and His church.

In response to these issues, the community service activities carried out by the team of lecturers and educational staff at STAKPN Sentani have become a matter of urgency. These activities are designed to make a concrete academic and spiritual contribution, bridging the existing gaps. The main objective is to empower young members through structured liturgical training and comprehensive fellowship development.

Through training and mentoring, it is hoped that young liturgists will emerge who are not only technically skilled but also theologically and spiritually mature. This programme aims to create synergy between theological understanding, liturgical skills, and active congregational participation, so that worship services are not only orderly but also truly meaningful, touching the heart, and deepening the congregation's relationship with God.

2. METHOD

The implementation of Community Service activities at GKI Hermon Hollo Him was carried out through several stages of methods that were systematically designed to achieve the goal of quality liturgical guidance. The first stage began with preparatory activities, namely identifying needs and problems in the implementation of Sunday school liturgy, compiling contextual training materials, and assigning roles and setting activity schedules.

The next stage involved implementing activities through lectures and demonstrations. Through lectures, the PkM team conveyed the basic concepts of liturgy, the structure and meaning of liturgical elements, and the principles of meaningful worship, utilizing visual media for aid. Next, through the demonstration method, the team directly demonstrated examples of the correct and relevant implementation of liturgy in the context of the congregation. Then, the participants were invited to practice and interact in the process. Following this, there was a stage of material deepening, where the team further discussed and explained the theological meaning of the presented material, accompanied by reflective discussions to help participants understand the connection between liturgy and their spiritual lives.

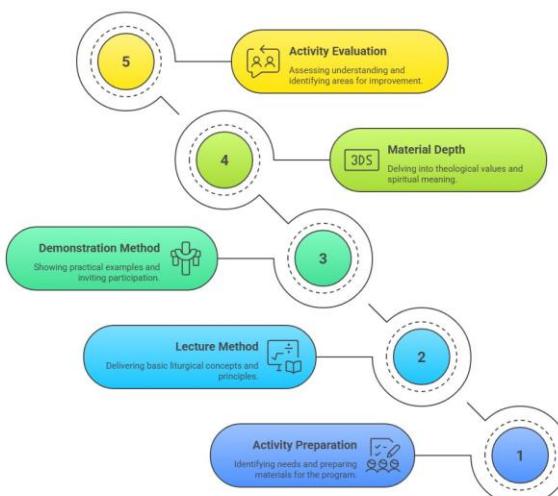


Figure 1. Implementing PkM Activities

In the final stage, an evaluation of the activity was conducted by distributing questionnaires to assess the participants' level of understanding and response to the material provided. The results of this evaluation became the basis for joint reflection by the team and congregation to improve the quality of similar activities in the future. The PkM activity took place on 2 November 2025 from 11:00 to 13:00 WIT. The participants consisted of 35 members of the Young Members Association. The PkM activity was based on a programme directed by the STAKPN Sentani institution.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Enhancing Theological Understanding and the Role of Liturgists in Meaningful Worship

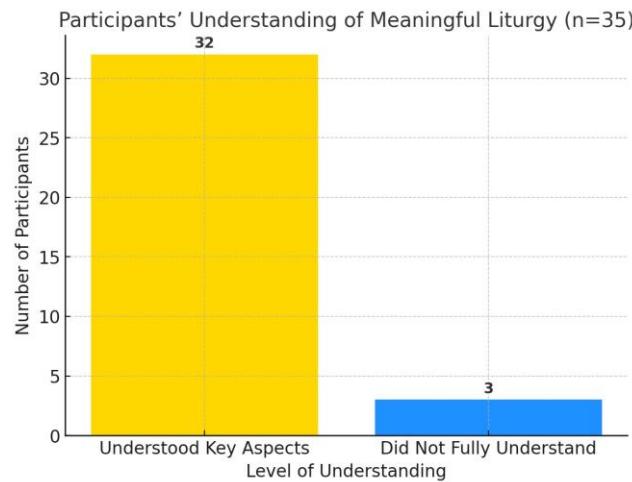
The Community Service activities carried out at the Hermon Hollo Him GKI Church have yielded significant results in broadening the theological understanding of young members regarding the role of a liturgist. Through lectures and in-depth study of the material, participants were guided to understand the basic meaning of leitourgos as a calling to serve that originates from God's love and is intended for the spiritual welfare of the congregation. They realised that a liturgist is not merely a technical leader of worship, but a spiritual servant who brings God into the fellowship of the congregation.



Figure 2. The presenter explains the role of the liturgist in meaningful worship.

This new understanding changed the participants' perspective on worship. They saw worship not merely as a church routine, but as a living encounter between God and the congregation, where a dialogue that builds faith takes place. Worship as an encounter with God in every element of the liturgy reveals spiritual dynamics: God speaks and the congregation listens, God gives and the congregation responds with gratitude. This theological awareness is a crucial foundation for young members to serve with greater appreciation and responsibility.

This change in perspective has also fostered a new spirit among young members to participate in every service. They have come to understand that being a liturgist is not merely a technical task, but a spiritual calling to create a meaningful and heartfelt worship atmosphere. Every prayer, song, and Bible reading is no longer performed mechanically, but with the awareness that through these simple actions God is speaking and working among His people. Liturgical ministry becomes a space for spiritual character formation, where faith and responsibility come together in harmony to glorify God.



Here's the bar chart showing the distinction between the two participant categories:

- Yellow represents those who understood the key aspects of meaningful liturgy (32 participants).
- Blue represents those who did not fully understand (3 participants).
-

The 35 participants understood that meaningful liturgy must pay attention to several key aspects: theological, practical, participatory, and musical. Through this explanation, participants learned that every detail of worship, from prayers and songs to readings of the Word and blessings, has interconnected spiritual messages. This activity not only increased liturgical knowledge but also shaped a reflective spirituality of service that is sensitive to God's presence in the congregation.

Strengthening Practical Capacity and Participatory Reflection in Worship Services

In addition to theological aspects, this PkM activity also focuses on improving practical skills through demonstration and evaluation methods. In the demonstration session, participants are directly involved in simulating the Worship Service for Young Members, from the call to worship through the opening, psalm singing, preaching, offering, intercessory prayer, and closing blessing. Through this practice, participants learn to understand the liturgical flow as a whole, manage transitions between sections, and use appropriate language and body language in leading worship. Active interaction in this simulation fosters confidence and awareness that every liturgical action has deep spiritual meaning.

The reflection and deepening of the material stage became a critical moment to discuss the experience. Discussions facilitated by the PkM team helped participants identify theological values in liturgical actions and how worship can be a means of lively spiritual communication. Young members realise that the quality of worship is not only measured by how orderly it is, but also by how deeply it touches and moves the hearts of the congregation.



Distribution of Responses on Liturgist Role Improvement (participants)

The results of the evaluation questionnaire reinforced these findings. Most of the 31 participants responded positively and showed a marked improvement in their understanding of the role of liturgists. They expressed a desire to be more actively involved in worship services and to develop worship services that are more contextualised to the lives of young people. This activity also strengthened solidarity and a spirit of shared ministry among the participants, affirming that liturgy is a collective work of God's people.



Figure 3. The presenter explains the topic, strengthening practical capacity and participatory reflection in worship services

This PkM activity successfully integrated theological learning and liturgical practice into a unified whole. Through a process of learning, practice, reflection, and evaluation, young members of the congregation were trained to become worship leaders who are not only technically competent but also spiritually and theologically mature. Thus, this activity became an effective means of preparing a generation of church leaders who can lead meaningful and vibrant worship services in their congregations.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service activity carried out at the GKI Hermon Hollo Him Congregation successfully achieved its goal as a means of guiding and empowering young members of the congregation to understand and fully appreciate the role of liturgists. Through a series of lectures, demonstrations, in-depth study of the material, and evaluation, this activity not only broadened the theological knowledge of the participants but also strengthened their practical skills in leading orderly, lively, and meaningful worship services.

Young members can understand the leitourgos not merely as a technical executor of worship, but as a spiritual servant who brings about an encounter between God and His people through every element of the liturgy. They learn that meaningful worship must touch the heart, move faith, and foster the active participation of the entire congregation. This awareness is an essential foundation for the younger generation to become more deeply involved in reflective and responsible church ministry.

5. REFERENCES

- Belcher, K. H., Grove, K. G., & Pilz, S. K. (2021). Recording as the Re-Membering Work of the People: A Catholic-Jewish Dialogue on the Body and Liturgical Memory. *Studia Liturgica*, 51(2), 122–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00393207211033997>
- Bingaman, K. A. (2023). Religion in the Digital Age: An Irreversible Process. *Religions*, 14(1), 108. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010108>
- Cones, B. (2021). Essential Workers, Essential Services? Leitourgia in Light of Lockdown. *Religions*, 12(2), 101. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020101>
- Garnett, S. (2012). Liturgy, Greece and Rome. In *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Wiley.

- <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah06202>
- Gloria, H., Rajagukguk, R. Y., & Tasae, P. (2024). Innovation in Providing Christian Religious Education in Youth Worship as a Learning Community. *Formosa Journal of Applied Sciences*, 3(7), 3127–3142. <https://doi.org/10.55927/fjas.v3i7.10349>
- Grace, S. (2003). The Catholic Encyclopedia. *Choice Reviews Online*, 40(12), 40Sup-0202-40Sup – 0202. <https://doi.org/10.5860/CHOICE.40Sup-0202>
- Labberton, M. (2009). *The dangerous act of worship: Living God's call to justice*. InterVarsity Press.
- Napitupulu, F., & Tafonao, T. (2024). Membangun karakter iman pemuda: Peran strategis gereja dalam mengembangkan karakter pemuda. *Jurnal Sarita Bahalap*, 2(2).
- Rusmanto, A., Gozaly, R., & Naftali, J. (2024). Signifikansi Tata Liturgi terhadap Keterlibatan Umat Menghadirkan Pembaharuan Hidup di Generasi Masa Kini. *ELEOS: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, 3(2), 154–165. <https://doi.org/10.53814/eleos.v3i2.80>
- Turner, B. S. (2013). *The religious and the political: A comparative sociology of religion*. Cambridge University Press.
- Von Allmen, J.-J. (2023). *Worship, its theology and practice*.
- Winter, S., & Kühn, L. (2024). Biographically Anchored Liturgies as a Starting Point for Liturgical Formation. *Religions*, 15(4), 423. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040423>
- You, B., & Ji, Q. (2023). “In Communion with God”: The Inculturation of the Christian Liturgical Theology of Giulio Aleni in His Explication of the Mass (Misa Jiyi). *Religions*, 14(10), 1255. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101255>