

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Christian Hospitality in the Piring Kasih Programme and the Promotion of Interfaith Harmony in Semarang

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse Christian hospitality in the “Piring Kasih” service as a socio-religious practice that strengthens interreligious harmony at Santa Theresia Bongsari Church, Semarang City. This study is important because faith-based social service does not only function as humanitarian assistance, but can also become a space for interfaith encounter within a plural urban society. This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach and a sociological perspective. Data were obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, and were then analysed through data reduction, data display, and inductive conclusion drawing. The findings show that “Piring Kasih” is not merely a free lunch service, but a practice of hospitality manifested through openness, non-discriminatory acceptance, empathy, a spirit of sharing, and a commitment to service. This practice strengthens harmony through internal church relations, interreligious interaction, and social service that respects human dignity. The implication of this study indicates that faith-based food service can serve as a practical model for building interfaith solidarity. The originality of this study lies in its explanation of Christian hospitality as a concrete social practice operating through food service and everyday human relations.

Keywords: Christian hospitality; Piring Kasih; food service; interreligious harmony; Santa Theresia Bongsari Church.

Introduction

The economic vulnerability of urban communities remains an important issue because it is directly related to people’s ability to meet their basic needs, particularly food. Lower-middle-income groups, informal workers, older people, children, and other vulnerable groups often face pressure due to income uncertainty, limited access to social resources, and the rising cost of living (Lamak & X, 2024). In this context, food insecurity cannot be understood merely as a household economic problem, but also as a humanitarian issue that requires social, moral, and religious responses (Arifianto, 2020).

This condition is reflected in data from Statistics Indonesia of Semarang City, which recorded that the number of people living in poverty in Semarang City in 2023 reached approximately 80.53 thousand. Although the poverty rate decreased by 0.02 percentage points compared with 2022, the number of poor residents actually increased by 0.66 thousand people. This data indicates that there are still groups of people living in economically vulnerable conditions who require social support, particularly in fulfilling basic needs such as food (BPS, 2023).

In such a situation, community-based and faith-based social services are important to examine. The Church, as a religious institution, does not only perform ritual functions, but also has a social function in presenting care, solidarity, and service to the wider community (Atasoge, 2020; Lazauardi, 2021). In the Christian tradition, social service is rooted in the teachings of love and concern for those who are poor, weak, and in need of assistance (Mawardi, 2019). In an urban society that is religiously diverse, church-based social service can also become a social practice that builds interreligious relations when carried out openly, without discrimination, and with respect for human dignity (Garcia-Yeste et al., 2021; Sugiyanana & Setiyaningtiyas, 2022).

One form of church-based social service that is interesting to examine is the “Piring Kasih” service at Santa Theresia Bongsari Church, Semarang City. This service has been running since

2019 in the form of free lunch distribution every Thursday within the church environment. The programme is open to the general public without distinction of religion, social status, age, occupation, or identity background (Dodit, 2023; Keuskupan Agung Semarang, 2023). In the context of a plural urban society, “Piring Kasih” cannot only be understood as a charitable activity, but also as a space for social encounter between the church, parishioners, volunteers, donors, and people of different religious backgrounds. Food in this service becomes a social medium that brings the church and the surrounding community together in a more open and equal human relationship (Gamasta, 2023; Pradanimas & Kamayanti, 2023).

Research on this theme has developed into three main tendencies. First, studies on economic vulnerability, social inequality, and the fulfilment of basic needs. Makmur et al. (2024) show that social inequality is related to the distribution of resources and social justice. Rakasiwi and Kautsar (2021) explain that socio-economic conditions affect individuals’ quality of life and health status. Siringo-ringo et al. (2023) examine the consumption behaviour of lower-middle-income communities, while Manorek et al. (2021) analyse the relationship between community income and household consumption patterns. These studies show that economic vulnerability affects the fulfilment of basic needs, but they have not sufficiently explained how such vulnerability is responded to by religious institutions through social service practices that have theological foundations and local social functions.

Second, studies on social service as support for vulnerable groups. Febriyanti (2014) examines social welfare services for neglected children in social care institutions, Syafni and Mujahiddin (2021) discuss social services in youth social care institutions, while Purnowo (2008) analyses the social service of the Salvation Army Church in the management of orphanages. These studies emphasise the importance of social service in assisting vulnerable groups. However, most of them still focus on formal institutions such as social care homes and orphanages. Church-based social service in the form of free lunch distribution, which is regular, open to the general public, and takes place within an interreligious space, has not been widely analysed as a socio-religious practice that creates spaces of encounter, acceptance, and solidarity across identities.

Third, studies on Christian hospitality and interreligious harmony. Maria (2021) discusses Christian hospitality in the relationship between church ministers and congregations, Suprabowo (2020) interprets hospitality through Luke 10:25–37, while Simanjuntak (2023) highlights hospitality towards people with disabilities. Meanwhile, studies on interreligious harmony more often emphasise dialogue, tolerance, state regulation, and the role of religious leaders in maintaining social harmony (Arifinsyah, 2018; Riyanto, 2022). These studies are important, but hospitality is still largely understood as an internal theological value of the Church, while harmony is more frequently discussed through formal spaces. There remains a lack of research explaining how Christian hospitality operates as an interreligious social practice through food service, shared meals, the involvement of interfaith volunteers, and non-discriminatory service in everyday life.

This study is necessary to examine the “Piring Kasih” service as a practice of Christian hospitality that operates through food service. This study does not only view “Piring Kasih” as an activity of sharing food, but also as a social space in which the values of love, acceptance, openness, and respect for human dignity are realised in interreligious relations. This study aims to analyse the “Piring Kasih” service at Santa Theresia Bongsari Church as a practice of Christian hospitality formed within the socio-religious context of the Bojongsalaman community, realised through free lunch service, and contributing to the strengthening of interreligious harmony. Specifically, this study explains the socio-religious context that enabled the emergence of “Piring Kasih”, the concept of “Piring Kasih” as a social movement of the Church, and the forms of Christian hospitality that build acceptance, openness, and interreligious relations.

The main argument of this study is that “Piring Kasih” expands the understanding of Christian hospitality from an internal theological value of the Church into an interreligious social practice. Using Hershberger’s theory of Christian hospitality, this study views hospitality as the act of receiving others, including those who are different or strangers, not as threats, but as fellow human beings who need to be welcomed and served. In the context of “Piring Kasih”, hospitality is realised through the provision of free lunches, acceptance of anyone who comes, non-discriminatory service, attention to the religious needs of recipients, and the formation of a space for encounter between the church, volunteers, and people of different religious backgrounds. Thus, this study adds a socio-practical dimension to Hershberger’s theory of hospitality by showing that acceptance of “the other” does not only take place as a personal attitude, but also through organised, inclusive, and interreligious social action (Hershberger, 2009).

Methods

This study employed a qualitative method using a case study approach and a sociological perspective. The qualitative method was used because this study sought to understand the meanings, experiences, actions, and social relations formed within the “Piring Kasih” service (Bogdan & J, 1992; Hadi et al., 2021). The case study approach was chosen because the research focused on one specific socio-religious practice examined in depth within its real-life context (Wahyuningsih, 2013). The unit of analysis in this study was the social service practice of “Piring Kasih” at Santa Theresia Bongsari Church, Semarang, understood as a socio-religious event. The study focused on the socio-religious context underlying the service, the concept of “Piring Kasih” as a social movement of the Church, and the forms of Christian hospitality that contribute to strengthening interreligious harmony. A sociological perspective was used to examine social interaction, solidarity, interreligious relations, and the mechanisms of harmony that emerge through this service (Soekanto, 1986).

The research data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with 16 informants selected purposively based on their direct involvement and knowledge of the “Piring Kasih” service. The informants consisted of two priests/church leaders, two sisters/church ministers, three programme managers or service staff, four volunteers, one donor/collaborator, one interfaith religious figure, and three beneficiaries. Purposive selection was used to ensure that the data were obtained from individuals who had a strong understanding of the phenomenon under study (Rahmadi, 2011). Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from church documents, activity archives, photographic documentation, regional social data, books, journal articles, and other relevant written sources. The use of primary and secondary data was intended to enrich the understanding of the research object and strengthen the depth of analysis (Bungin, 2009).

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted within the Santa Theresia Bongsari Church environment from 5 September 2024 to 23 December 2024. It covered volunteer briefings, food preparation, coupon distribution, queues of beneficiaries, the distribution of free lunches, communal prayers, interactions between volunteers and beneficiaries, and documentation of the service for workers at the Jatibarang landfill. In-depth interviews were conducted from 5 September 2024 to 27 March 2025 with church managers, volunteers, donors, religious figures, and beneficiaries. Interviews were used to explore the experiences, meanings, and perspectives of the informants in greater depth (Sulistyarini & Novianti, 2012). Documentation was used to complement observational and interview data through archives, activity photographs, and other relevant supporting records (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). During observation, the researcher positioned herself as an observer-participant, being present to observe the service process, record field

dynamics, and engage in a limited manner without taking a primary role in programme management.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative thematic analysis through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and inductive conclusion-drawing. These stages were used to sort, organise, and interpret the data in order to produce meaningful findings (Sugiyono, 2012). The collected data was grouped into main themes, namely the socio-religious context of Bojongsalaman, the concept of the “Piring Kasih” service, forms of Christian hospitality, and the strengthening of interfaith harmony. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing accounts from the priest, nuns, managers, volunteers, donors, religious leaders, and beneficiaries, whilst methodological triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. In this way, the research findings were compiled based on field data that mutually reinforced one another and were verifiable.

Results

1. The Socio-Religious Context of Bojongsalaman as a Space for Church Service

The research data show that Santa Theresia Bongsari Church does not merely function as a place of worship, but also as a space for social service connected to the surrounding community. The church is situated within the socio-religious context of Bojongsalaman, West Semarang, which is plural and shaped by the dynamics of urban life. The existence of pastoral structures, regional administrators, neighbourhood administrators, volunteers, and interfaith networks indicates that the church possesses strong institutional capital to carry out social service in an organised manner. The church’s involvement in social and ecological activities, as well as interfaith networks such as Persaudaraan Lintas Agama and Gusdurian, also demonstrates that Santa Theresia Bongsari Church exists as a faith community that is open to people from diverse backgrounds.

This openness is concretely reflected in the “Piring Kasih” service, a free lunch programme held every Thursday for the community around the church. Based on field data, this service began in September 2019 with the discovery of Rp15,000,000 among piles of used clothing. The money was then used to provide around 50 portions of food packed in boxes and distributed to the surrounding community. Over time, this service developed into a regular programme supported by donors, parishioners, and volunteers. Ibu Linda, as the service coordinator, explained:

“Initially, this service was simple, but because the community responded positively and the need was real, it continued to be carried out every Thursday” (Linda, personal communication, 12 September 2024).

The development of this service can also be seen in the increasing number of meals provided. Initially, “Piring Kasih” only provided around 50 portions, but this later increased to approximately 260 to 300 portions. The change in presentation from food boxes to plates also reflects an improvement in service quality and greater attention to a more humane way of serving. Ibu Veronika, as a volunteer, emphasised:

“We want the people who come to feel properly welcomed. So they are not only given food, but are served in a decent and loving manner” (Veronika, personal communication, 19 September 2024).

The implementation of “Piring Kasih” has also transformed the function of the church space into a space for social encounter. The activity begins at around 09.00 WIB with food preparation, the arrangement of eating utensils, the division of volunteer duties, and a shared prayer. The lunch service opens at around 11.00 WIB. Each recipient receives a “Peduli Piring Kasih” coupon, takes a tray, queues, receives food, and then eats together within the church complex. This experience is illustrated in the statement of Afrian, one of the child recipients of the service:

"I am happy to come to the church on Thursdays because I can eat together and the food is delicious" (Afrian, personal communication, 19 September 2024).

The "Piring Kasih" initiative has the meanings shown in the following table:

Tabel 1. Social Meaning of the "Piring Kasih" Service

Data Aspect	Field Findings	Social Meaning
Beginning of the service	Began in September 2019 with funds of Rp15,000,000	The service emerged from the church's social sensitivity
Initial portions	Around 50 portions of boxed meals	The service began on a simple scale
Development of the service	Increased to around 260–300 portions	Indicates increasing need and service capacity
Service time	Every Thursday; preparation at 09.00 WIB and lunch at 11.00 WIB	The service adapts to the practical needs of the community
Service flow	Coupons, queuing, receiving food, and eating together	The church becomes a space for social encounter
Meaning of the service	Recipients are expected to feel welcomed and served properly	The service builds relationships that respect human dignity

The data above show that "Piring Kasih" emerged from Santa Theresia Bongsari Church's social concern for the surrounding community. The church does not only function as a place of worship for Catholics, but also as a social space open to the general public. The free lunch service, which initially began simply with around 50 portions, has developed into a service providing 260–300 portions. This development indicates that "Piring Kasih" has received a positive response from the community and addresses a real need, particularly the need for food. Furthermore, the service flow, which involves preparation, coupon distribution, queuing, receiving food, and eating together, shows that the church has become a space of encounter between volunteers, parishioners, and the surrounding community.

Based on the data, there are four main patterns that explain how the socio-religious context of Bojongsalaman has become a space in which the "Piring Kasih" service emerged and developed. First, there is the institutional capital of the church that supports social service. Santa Theresia Bongsari Church has pastoral structures, regional administrators, neighbourhood administrators, volunteers, and a community of parishioners that enable the service to run in an organised manner. This structure means that "Piring Kasih" does not depend on spontaneous action alone, but can be carried out regularly every Thursday.

Second, there is an orientation of openness towards people from diverse backgrounds. The church's involvement in social and ecological activities, as well as interfaith networks, shows that the church does not stand as a closed community. This orientation becomes an important basis for the community's acceptance of "Piring Kasih", because the service is not only intended for parishioners, but also for the wider public.

Third, there is the church's sensitivity to the community's food needs. Data concerning the beginning of the service from Rp15,000,000, the provision of around 50 food portions, and its development into 260–300 portions show that this programme emerged from the real needs of the community. Ibu Linda's quotation reinforces the point that the service continued because the community responded well and because the need genuinely existed.

Fourth, there is a transformation of the church space into a space for social encounter. Through the service flow involving coupons, queues, food distribution, and eating together, the church becomes a meeting place for volunteers, parishioners, and the surrounding community. Afrian's quotation shows that beneficiaries experience the church as a pleasant place to eat together.

Meanwhile, Ibu Veronika's quotation shows that volunteers do not merely wish to provide food, but also want recipients to feel properly welcomed.

Thus, the socio-religious context of Bojongsalaman enables "Piring Kasih" to develop as a form of social service that carries the meaning of hospitality. This service emerges from a combination of an organised church structure, openness towards people from diverse backgrounds, sensitivity to food needs, and the formation of a shared dining space as a space for social encounter. Therefore, "Piring Kasih" cannot only be understood as a charitable activity, but also as an initial form of Christian hospitality realised through food service that is open, regular, and respectful of human dignity.

2. The Concept of "Piring Kasih" Service as a Church Social Movement

The research data show that the "Piring Kasih" service represents a Church social movement in responding to the food needs of the surrounding community. This service emerged within the context of Semarang City, which continues to face economic vulnerability. The Statistics Indonesia Office of Semarang City recorded that, in 2023, the number of people living in poverty in Semarang reached approximately 80.53 thousand, an increase of 0.66 thousand compared with 2022. This condition indicates that there are still groups in society who require social support, particularly in meeting basic needs such as food (BPS, 2023).

In the context of Bojongsalaman, "Piring Kasih" serves as a form of social support provided by the Church for people in need, including informal workers, housewives, online motorcycle taxi drivers, construction labourers, students, children, older people, pedicab drivers, homeless people, and the wider community (Wicaksono & Irawaty, 2023). This service does not position recipients as objects of pity, but as fellow human beings with dignity. Father Clement Budiarta, S.J. explained:

"The service is more about humanity, meaning that we are fellow creations, and there are other creations who need attention. Fundamentally, relationships among human beings are subject-to-subject relationships. In Catholic teaching, compassion does not objectify the individual who receives help; rather, they are human subjects equal to other human beings." (C. Budiarta, personal communication, 28 November 2024).

This service also follows a non-missionary principle. The Church does not direct social service as a means of imposing faith, but as a humanitarian act open to anyone. Sister Virgo explained:

"If they are interested, for example, we do not ask them, but usually they are the ones who start asking questions, and then there is preparation. They are then asked whether this is truly their own decision or not. So, there must not be any coercion." (S. Virgo, personal communication, 07 Oktober 2024).

The sustainability of "Piring Kasih" is supported by volunteers and donors from the congregation, the wider community, other cities, and even overseas. Mrs Harni, as the financial administrator, stated:

"The donors can be anyone; sometimes from America, sometimes from Jakarta, Surabaya, and sometimes also from Bali." (H. Harni, personal communication, 05 September 2024).

The management of the service also takes into account the surrounding socio-religious context. The service is held every Thursday because this day is considered neutral and does not clash with the tradition of giving on Fridays. Mr Yohanes Suwanto explained:

"The most available or neutral time chosen was Thursday because of constraints on other days. Meanwhile, Friday would feel inappropriate because of the Friday Blessing programme, which is generally carried out in mosques." (Y. Suwanto, personal communication, 12 September 2024).

Interfaith sensitivity is also reflected in attention to the halal status of the food. Mrs Minarni Handayani, a Muslim volunteer, stated:

"The food is halal, meaning that it does not use pork, the oil or anything else does not contain it. Perhaps Father has already directed that the food must be halal because those who eat it are not only Catholics or Christians, but also many Muslims." (M. Handayani, personal communication, 19 Desember 2024).

Therefore, the concept of the “Piring Kasih” service as a Church social movement is reflected in Table 2.

Tabel 2. The Concept of “Piring Kasih” Service as a Church Social Movement

Data Aspect	Meaning of the Findings
Economic vulnerability	“Piring Kasih” emerged within the context of the community’s social needs
Humanitarian orientation	Recipients are not positioned as objects of pity
Spirit of love and solidarity	The service becomes an actualisation of faith through social action
Non-missionary principle	The service safeguards religious freedom
Donor support	The sustainability of the service is supported by a broad solidarity network
Sensitivity in service timing	The Church considers the surrounding socio-religious context
Halal food	Inclusivity is realised through the technical aspect of food provision

The data above show that “Piring Kasih” is not merely an activity of distributing free lunches, but a Church social movement that connects faith, humanity, and concern for the surrounding community. This service responds to the food needs of people from diverse backgrounds, particularly vulnerable groups, while continuing to recognise beneficiaries as fellow human beings with dignity. In addition, “Piring Kasih” is carried out openly, non-missionarily, and with sensitivity to religious diversity. This is evident in the protection of religious freedom, the broad support of volunteers and donors, the choice of Thursday in consideration of the Friday Blessing tradition, and attention to halal food for Muslim recipients.

Based on the data, four main patterns explain the concept of “Piring Kasih” as a Church social movement. First, “Piring Kasih” is a response to the food needs of the community. Its target recipients, including informal workers, housewives, online motorcycle taxi drivers, construction labourers, students, children, older people, pedicab drivers, homeless people, and the wider public, show that this service is directed towards anyone in need.

Second, this service represents the actualisation of Christian love and respect for human dignity. The service relationship is understood as a “subject-to-subject” relationship, so recipients are not treated as objects of pity, but as equal human beings who deserve respect.

Third, this service is inclusive and non-missionary. The Church does not force aid recipients to follow Catholicism. This principle is important because it enables the Church’s social service to be more easily accepted as a humanitarian act open to all people.

Fourth, the management of the service is sensitive to the interfaith context. This can be seen in the choice of Thursday so as not to clash with the Friday Blessing tradition, the broad support of donors, and attention to halal food for Muslim recipients.

Thus, the concept of “Piring Kasih” service is built upon four main elements: response to food needs, Christian love that respects human dignity, inclusive and non-missionary service principles, and management that is sensitive to religious diversity. Therefore, “Piring Kasih” can be understood as a Church social movement that not only provides food assistance, but also creates a humane, open, and respectful space of service for interfaith communities.

3. The Hospitality of “Piring Kasih” and the Strengthening of Interreligious Harmony

The research data show that hospitality in the “Piring Kasih” service is manifested through the church’s openness in welcoming anyone who comes, without distinguishing between religion, social status, age, occupation, or identity background. This service is not merely an activity of providing free lunches, but also a practice of accepting fellow human beings. Dwi, one of the volunteers, explained:

"From the beginning, this service was indeed for the public. Anyone who wants a free lunch is welcome. We do not look at whether they are Muslim or anything else." (Dwi, personal communication, 10 October 2024).

Hospitality is also reflected in empathy towards people in need. Misrifah, one of the service recipients, stated:

"This programme helps, Miss, it helps people who do not have anything for lunch. Usually, it is people on the streets who come here." (Misrifah, personal communication, 12 September 2024).

Another form of hospitality can be seen in the act of sharing that goes beyond religious boundaries. Anne Avantie, as a donor and collaborator, stated:

"Fellow human beings are not those who were created to embrace the same religion, but how we view others as human beings loved equally by God." (Anne Avantie, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

Hospitality is also practised through a sustained commitment to service. Nuri, one of the volunteers, stated:

"Serving is not only about this; there are also tasks such as washing dishes. Whatever I am asked to do here, I am willing." (Ibu Nuri, personal communication, 17 October 2024).

Furthermore, "Piring Kasih" strengthens interreligious harmony because it involves volunteers and beneficiaries from different backgrounds. Minarni Handayani, a Muslim volunteer, stated:

"The tolerance is very good. They do not differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims. I feel comfortable and accepted by them." (Minarni Handayani, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

This interreligious acceptance has also received a positive response from religious figures of other faiths. Reverend Samuel Prasetyo stated:

"As long as it helps others, there is no issue, no problem. We are grateful because we can all help one another." (S. Prasetyo, personal communication, 27 March 2025).

Harmony in "Piring Kasih" is also built through the acceptance of human beings as human beings, rather than on the basis of their religious identity. Sister Silvia explained:

"The coupons only have numbers; we do not ask for names or religions. We only see the human being." (Sister Silvia, personal communication, 13 February 2025).

This meaning of harmony is further emphasised by Father Eduardus Didik C. Widyatama, S.J., who views "Piring Kasih" as part of an effort to build a peaceful common home:

"We are seeking ways for harmony, peace, and welfare to be experienced by all of us." (E. D. C. Widyatama, personal communication, 19 December 2024).

Based on the discussion above, hospitality in the "Piring Kasih" service appears in various forms of social practice that contribute to the strengthening of interreligious harmony, as presented in Table 3 below.

Tabel 3. The Hospitality of "Piring Kasih" and the Strengthening of Interreligious Harmony

Data Aspect	Field Evidence	Meaning of the Findings
Openness of service	The service is open to the public without distinguishing between religions	Hospitality is manifested through non-discriminatory acceptance
Social empathy	Food helps people who do not have lunch	The service responds to the food needs of vulnerable groups
Act of sharing	Love is understood as something that unites human beings	Sharing becomes a practice of universal love
Commitment to service	Volunteers are willing to serve in various tasks	Hospitality becomes a sustained commitment to service
Interreligious relations	Muslim volunteers feel comfortable and accepted	"Piring Kasih" creates a safe space for interreligious cooperation

Data Aspect	Field Evidence	Meaning of the Findings
Support from interreligious figures	A pastor views this service positively because it helps others	The service is accepted as a form of humanitarian solidarity
Acceptance without religious identity	Coupons only use numbers, without asking about religion	Harmony is built through the acceptance of human beings as human beings
Common home	The church provides free lunches as a way to build peace	“Piring Kasih” becomes a social practice for shared harmony

The data above show that hospitality in “Piring Kasih” does not merely mean friendliness, but is realised through concrete actions of accepting, serving, and respecting whoever comes. This service is open to the general public, helps meet the food needs of vulnerable groups, involves volunteers from different religious backgrounds, and provides an experience of being accepted without regard to religious identity. Thus, “Piring Kasih” is not only an activity of sharing food, but also a space of social encounter that builds togetherness, solidarity, and interreligious harmony.

Based on the data, there are four main patterns in the hospitality of “Piring Kasih”. First, hospitality is realised through acceptance without discrimination. The church opens its service to anyone who needs lunch, without distinguishing between religion, social status, age, occupation, or other identities. Second, hospitality is reflected in empathy and the act of sharing. This service helps vulnerable communities meet their food needs while presenting love that goes beyond religious and social identity boundaries. Third, hospitality is practised through the commitment of volunteers. The volunteers do not merely carry out technical tasks, but are also socially and spiritually involved in sustaining the service. Fourth, hospitality strengthens interreligious harmony. The involvement of Muslim volunteers, acceptance from religious figures of other faiths, and a service system that does not ask about religious identity show that “Piring Kasih” becomes a safe space for interfaith encounter. Thus, “Piring Kasih” can be understood as a practice of Christian hospitality that strengthens interreligious harmony through acceptance, empathy, sharing, commitment to service, and respect for human dignity.

Discussion

The findings show that the “Piring Kasih” service at Santa Theresia Bongsari Church is a practice of Christian hospitality that has grown out of the socio-religious context of Bojongsalaman. This programme does not stand merely as a charitable activity, but emerges from the church’s pastoral tradition, sensitivity to the community’s food needs, and openness towards people of different religious backgrounds. In this context, the church functions not only as a place of worship, but also as a space for social service that brings together parishioners, volunteers, donors, and the surrounding community in a shared practice of care.

The research findings reveal three main points. First, “Piring Kasih” emerged from a church context that possesses institutional capital, pastoral structures, volunteers, donors, and social networks that support the sustainability of the service. Second, the concept of this service is rooted in the values of love, solidarity, and respect for human dignity, so that beneficiaries are not positioned as objects of pity, but as fellow human beings who deserve to be served properly. Third, hospitality in “Piring Kasih” is reflected through openness, empathy, the act of sharing, commitment to service, non-discriminatory acceptance, and the involvement of people from different religious backgrounds.

These findings occur because of the relationship between church structure, theological awareness, and the social needs of the community. The pastoral structure enables the service to run in an organised manner through the division of roles among priests, sisters, administrators, volunteers, and donors. Theological awareness provides the foundation that faith should not stop

at liturgy, but must be realised in social action. Meanwhile, the community's food needs provide the concrete context that makes this service relevant. Thus, "Piring Kasih" can endure because it is supported by institutional capacity, spirituality of service, and real social needs.

This study is in line with research on the role of the church in responding to poverty. Latumahina (2021) and Kwirinus and Peri (2023) emphasise that the church has a moral responsibility to be present with poor and vulnerable groups. However, this study offers a new emphasis: church-based social service does not only function as assistance for poor communities, but also as a space for interreligious hospitality. "Piring Kasih" is not merely a practice of diakonia, but also a social mechanism that brings the church and people of different faiths into more open relationships.

These findings also broaden studies on Christian hospitality. While Suprabowo (2020), Subelki (2022), and Kurniawan (2024) emphasise hospitality as an attitude of welcoming others, this study shows that hospitality can operate through simple and repeated social practices, such as distributing food, welcoming recipients warmly, providing halal food, not asking about religious identity, and involving interfaith volunteers. The novelty of this study lies in its assertion that Christian hospitality can become an organised social practice that strengthens interreligious harmony.

Compared with studies on interreligious harmony that often emphasise formal dialogue, interfaith forums, state regulations, or the role of religious elites, this study shows that harmony can also be built through everyday social practices. "Piring Kasih" demonstrates that eating together, accepting others without discrimination, and serving basic human needs can become a form of practical dialogue that is closer to people's daily lives. Thus, this study expands the understanding of harmony from formal spaces to concrete humanitarian practices.

Historically, "Piring Kasih" can be understood as a continuation of the pastoral tradition of Santa Theresia Bongsari Church. The history of the church, the parish structure, and its involvement in social activities show that this service did not emerge suddenly, but developed from the church's orientation towards balancing spiritual and social service (Kennedy, 2024). Therefore, the institutional history of the church becomes an important form of capital for the emergence of social service that is open to the wider community (Susanta & Panuntun, 2021).

Socially, "Piring Kasih" shows that food can become a medium of encounter and social cohesion. Food does not only fulfil biological needs, but also creates a space for communication, acceptance, and recognition of others (Buan & Elena, 2023). When people from various backgrounds come to the church, take coupons, queue, receive food, and eat together, an encounter takes place that reduces the distance between the church and the surrounding community. In this context, "Piring Kasih" becomes a social bridge that brings together religion, social class, age, and different identities in a more humane atmosphere (Lestari, 2020).

Ideologically, this service represents a humanist and inclusive face of religion. The church does not limit its service only to its internal members, but views all human beings as subjects with dignity (Andrian, 2022). Catholic identity in this service does not become a social boundary, but an ethical foundation for serving anyone without discrimination (Eleven, 2021). Thus, "Piring Kasih" shows that religion can become a source of solidarity, humanity, and social harmony.

Reflection on these findings shows that "Piring Kasih" has several important functions. First, the programme strengthens social solidarity by helping to meet the food needs of the community. Second, it strengthens interreligious harmony because it creates a space of encounter that is not burdened by doctrinal debate, but is built through humanitarian cooperation. Third, it strengthens the internal spirituality of the church because volunteers learn to serve, work together, and live out the value of love through concrete action.

However, this service also has potential dysfunctions. First, if it is not developed further, “Piring Kasih” may remain within a charitable pattern that only addresses immediate needs without touching the roots of economic vulnerability. Second, church-based social service still risks being misunderstood as a missionary agenda if interreligious communication is not maintained openly. Third, the sustainability of the programme may be disrupted if it depends too heavily on donors and volunteers. Fourth, the increasing number of recipients may create management issues, such as long queues, imbalance in the number of portions, hygiene standards, and the workload of volunteers.

Based on these potential dysfunctions, several action plans need to be implemented. To prevent the service from remaining merely charitable, the church can add simple empowerment elements, such as recording recipients’ needs, providing nutrition education, holding periodic health checks, or linking recipients with government social assistance programmes. To prevent missionary misunderstandings, the church needs to strengthen interreligious communication by involving religious leaders, neighbourhood leaders, local government officials, and social communities in informal coordination. To maintain sustainability, the church can develop a volunteer and donation management system through rotational schedules, simple donation reports, food hygiene standards, and regular evaluation.

Conclusion

This study finds that the “Piring Kasih” service at Santa Theresia Bongsari Church, Semarang City, is a practice of Christian hospitality that transforms a free lunch service into an open, equal, and humane interreligious social space. This service does not only function as food assistance for people in need, but also represents the church’s social responsibility towards humanitarian issues in its surrounding community. Hospitality in “Piring Kasih” is manifested through openness, non-discriminatory acceptance, empathy, the act of sharing, and a sustained commitment to service. Thus, “Piring Kasih” shows that interreligious harmony is not only built through formal dialogue, but also through simple actions such as providing food, serving with kindness, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in the development of Christian hospitality studies within the context of interreligious social service. This study offers an understanding of socio-theological hospitality, namely Christian hospitality that operates through food service, interreligious openness, and everyday human relations. By taking “Piring Kasih” as a case study, this research shows that the practice of sharing food can become a theological, social, and ethical medium for building solidarity, strengthening social trust, and reducing distance between religious communities in urban society. These findings broaden the understanding that the church is present not only as a ritual institution, but also as a social actor that plays a role in building a harmonious and inclusive shared life.

This study has limitations because it focuses only on one church community, namely Santa Theresia Bongsari Church, so its findings cannot yet be generalised to all forms of church-based social service in Indonesia. In addition, this study places greater emphasis on hospitality, harmony, and the social experiences of actors and service recipients, and therefore has not quantitatively measured the impact of the service on the economic welfare of beneficiaries. Future research may therefore broaden the object of study to include several churches or other interreligious communities, and use a comparative or mixed-methods approach to examine the social, economic, and sustainability impacts of such services in greater depth.

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