

From the *Chairman's Heart*

Shift of Emphasis in the Ministry



Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Since the second Sunday of February, one of our church members stopped attending church services because of fear of Coronavirus. She paid tithes, but she was not in Sunday services. She has been a very faithful member who attends all the services. As a pastor I felt that she had guilty feelings in her. Since she became a Christian, she enjoyed every church service and fellowship with other members. I encouraged her and told her not to feel guilty. I know she has been instructed to love the Lord and attend church services faithfully. I felt that our members need some instructions on Christian ethics so that they may decide their behavior by themselves. Our members had conflicts between church attendance

and protecting themselves and others from Coronavirus by being away from church services.

I have recently recognized that there is a shift of emphasis in my ministry. I used to emphasize the attendance of church services as the expression of our love toward the Lord. Now I honor our members' decision of being absent from the services so as to protect themselves, their family, and other church members.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus recently said, "Don't expect someone else to keep you safe. We all have a part to play in protecting ourselves and one another." I think our Lord guides us to learn the second

**COVID-19
SPECIAL EDITION**

IN THIS ISSUE

**From the
Chairman's Heart** 1

**Beyond Relief:
The Church Outside the
Wall** 2

**Report and Updates
from each country** 12

part of commandments in our practice: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' We have a part to play in protecting ourselves and one another. Our love of God can be practised in protecting one another. Due to the widespread of Coronavirus, all our services are now suspended. However, I believe that our members as well as pastors are learning important lessons of loving our neighbors in this time of Covid-19 pandemic.

Rev. Paul H. Ueki
Chairman

BEYOND RELIEF: THE CHURCH OUTSIDE THE WALL

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In the last few months, all sectors of society have experienced significant disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The church has been of no exception. Since March 22, most churches in Indonesia have been on a new phase of their journey. They have been required to conduct their Sunday services virtually—by online streaming, on video, on YouTube, or in some other ways that avoided the physical gathering of people at the church or any other indoor location.

Five common major concerns expressed by church leaders in April 2020 were:

1. Lack of capacity and readiness to engage their congregations through digital and technology-based means
2. Decline in church revenue (due to lost offerings)
3. Spiritual needs, nourishment, and other pastoral care
4. Financial needs (loss of livelihood due to unemployment) and physical needs (health) of the congregation
5. Church members switching to another congregation with a better online service

Many churches quickly realized that they were not ready for this challenge. Most families have not been prepared to conduct worship at home, and congregations have not been trained to give their tithes and offerings online. Most churches have not established a system or account for online giving. Only about 40% of churches in the cities have some staff capacity or team for creating or delivering digital contents; in rural areas, the percentage is much lower.

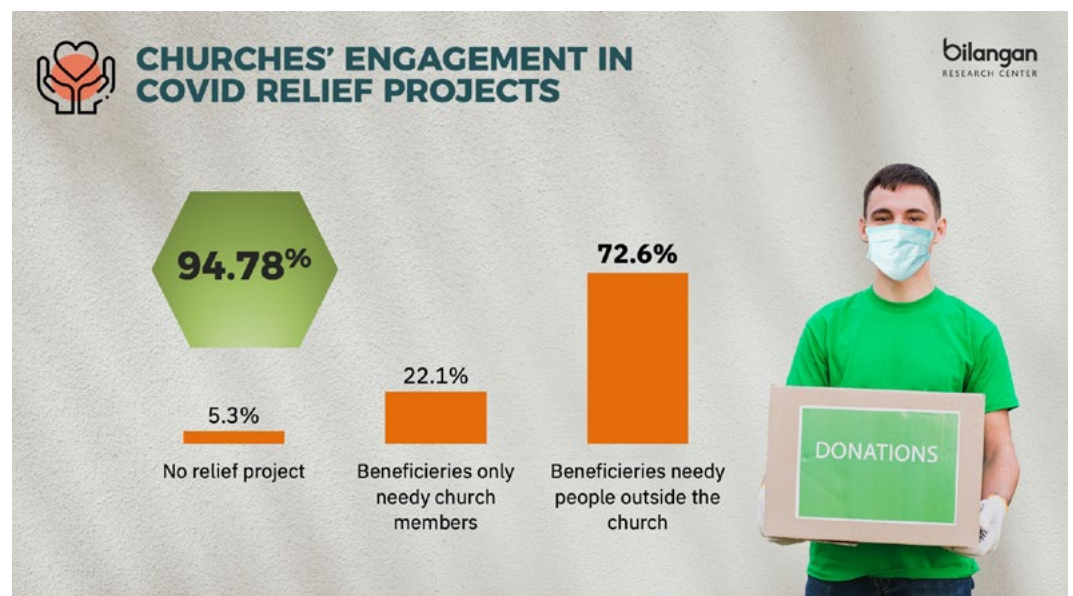
But the church in Indonesia has learned, adapted, and adjusted very fast. In a mere six weeks, the percentage of churches with the capacity to manage digital and media production increased to more than 64%.

In mid-June 2020, the Bilangan Research Center (BRC) conducted a national survey on the church's response to COVID-19. Almost all of the 600 respondents were pastors, leading congregations in small and large cities in Indonesia (due to time and technology constraints, rural churches were not included in this survey). The respondents represented 87 church denominations from across 28 (out of 34) provinces in Indonesia.

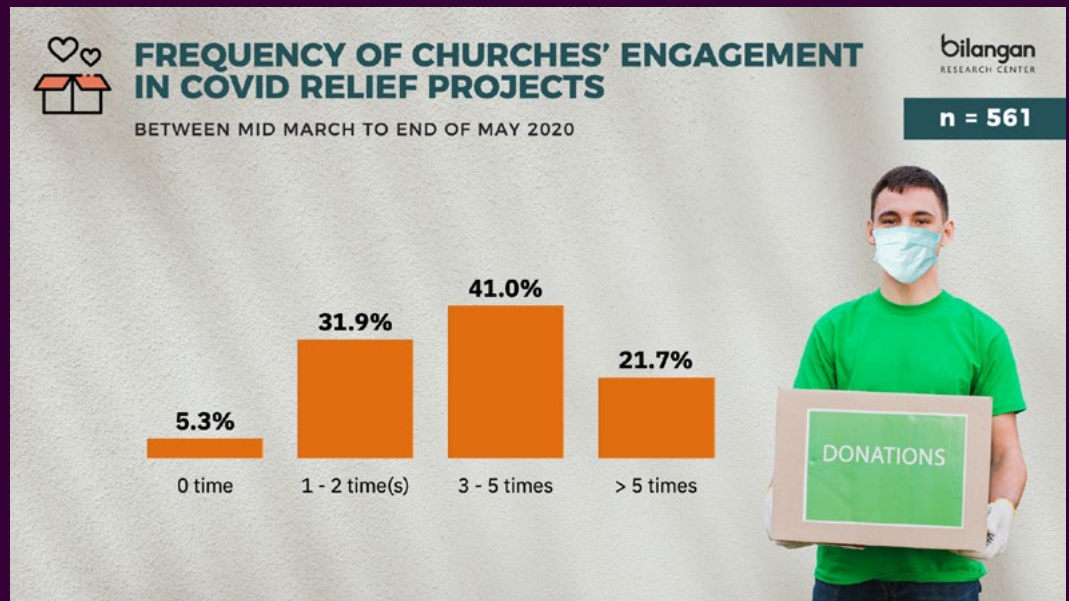
Although the pandemic has killed thousands of Indonesians, caused millions to lose their jobs, and significantly reduced church revenues, the findings from the BRC's survey shed light on what the church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be.

In these challenging times, the church in Indonesia has answered the call to be the salt and light of the world. It has been the church that cares for the needy beyond its four walls; the church that strengthens other social institutions to help the community; the church that financially and technologically assists other congregations in need (regardless of their denomination or theological streams); the church that is present in the community—in short, the church outside the wall. The church has been a holistic disciple-making community.

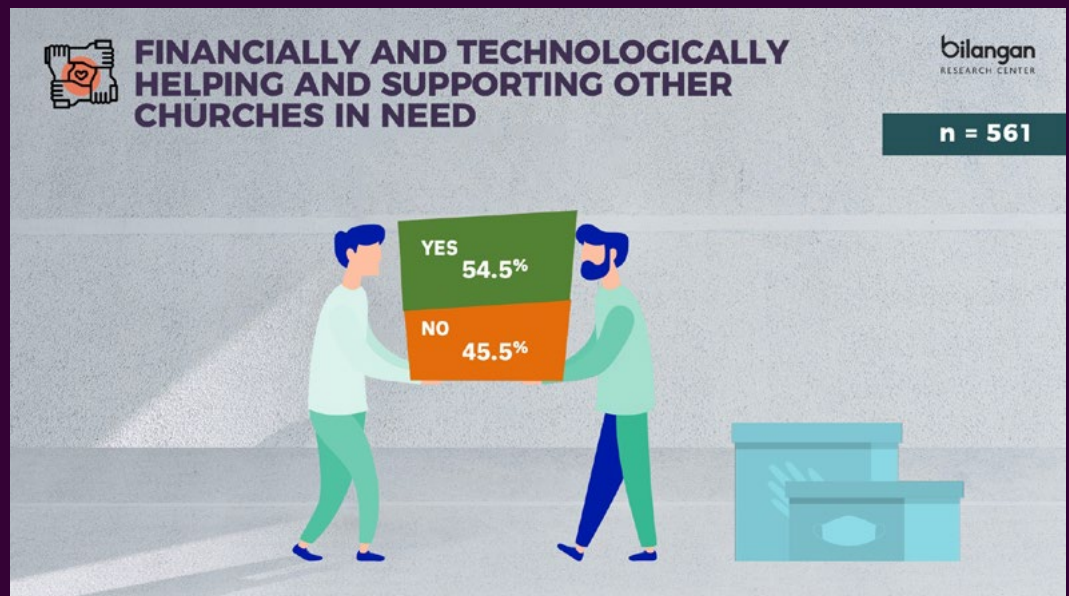
From mid-March to the end of May 2020, 94.78% of churches organized relief projects for the needy. Of these, 22.1% targeted their own members, but the rest demonstrated care for the needy outside the church walls.

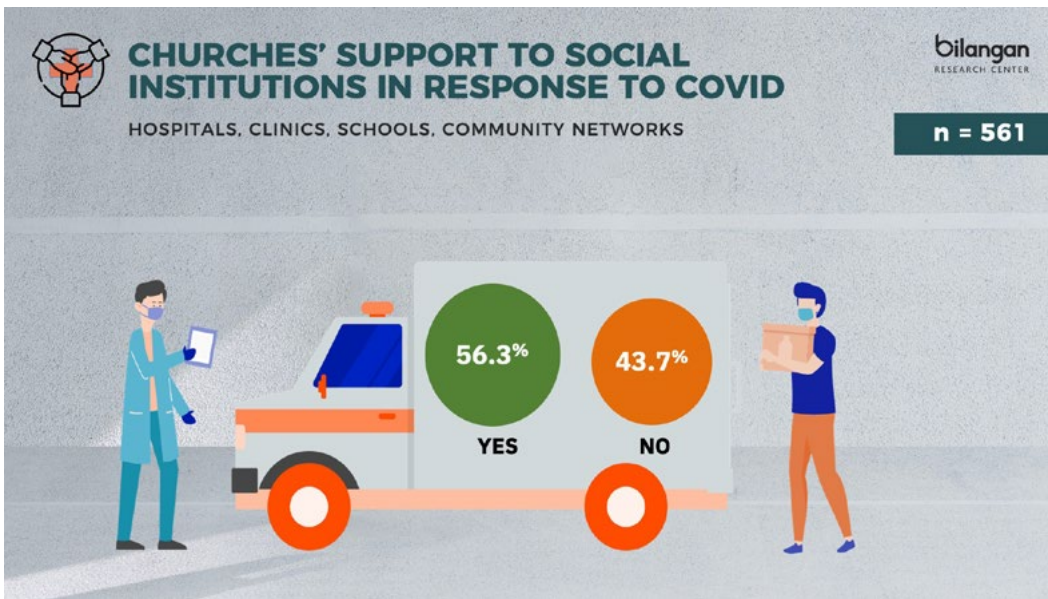


Most of these churches organized relief projects more than once. Three of every five churches conducted three or more relief projects, and one of every five churches carried out at least five projects during the 10-week period.



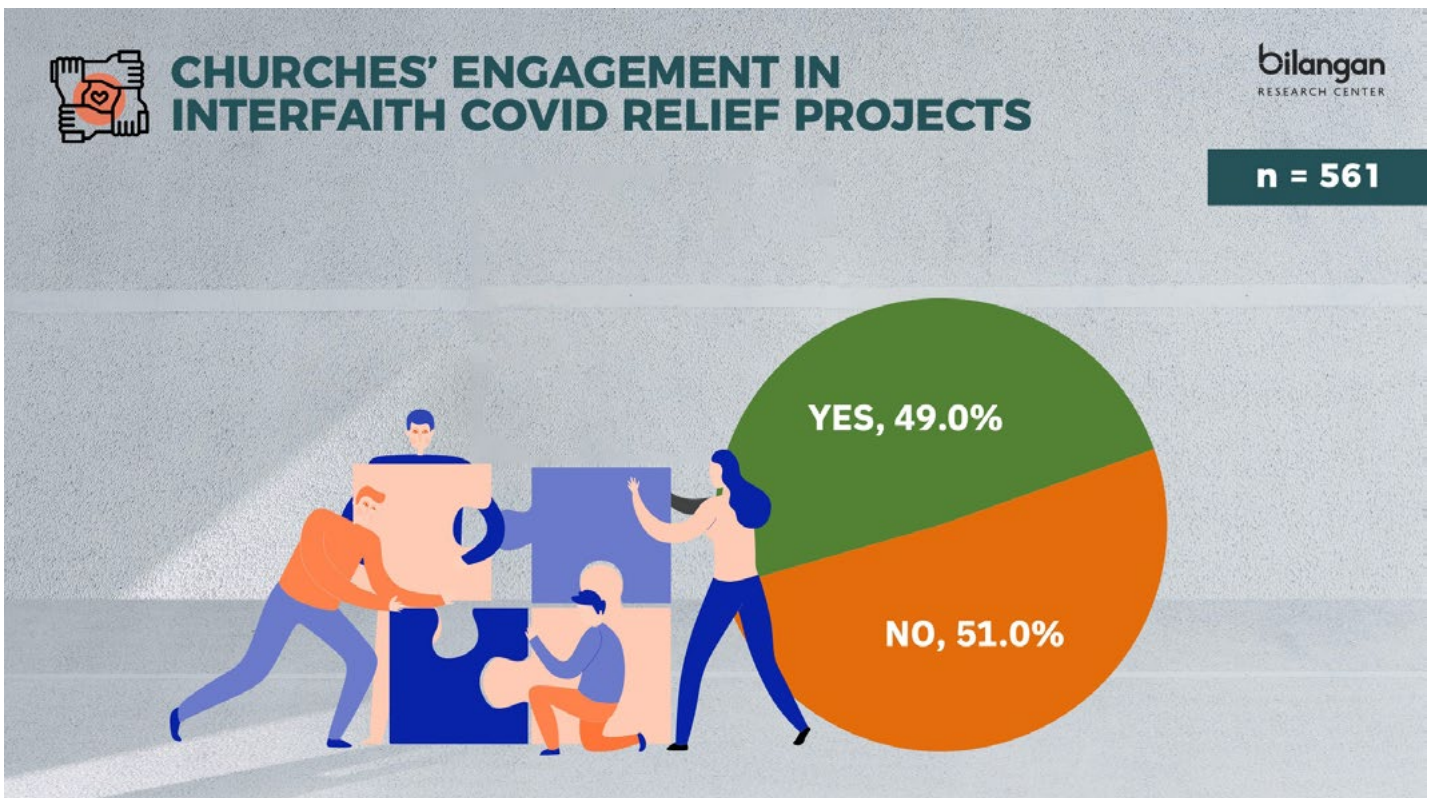
Although they have experienced a sharp decline in their offerings due to holding no physical Sunday services since March 22, 2020, 54.5% of churches have reached out to help other churches in need, both financially and technologically. These acts of love and unity, fulfilling Jesus' prayer in John 17, took place across different denominations, theological affiliations or streams, and geographical locations. What a powerful witness!



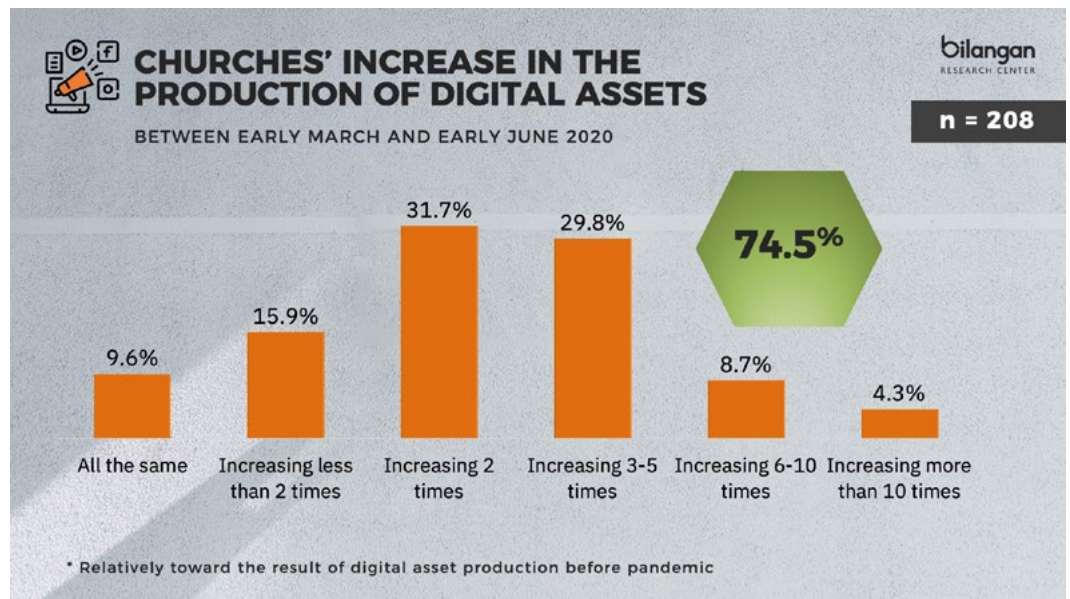


56.3% of churches acknowledged the importance of other social institutions in helping the community during the pandemic by financially supporting institutions such as hospitals, clinics, schools, and other community networks.

Almost half of the churches surveyed extended their hands to build bridges of collaboration with non-Christian religious entities in organizing interfaith relief projects.

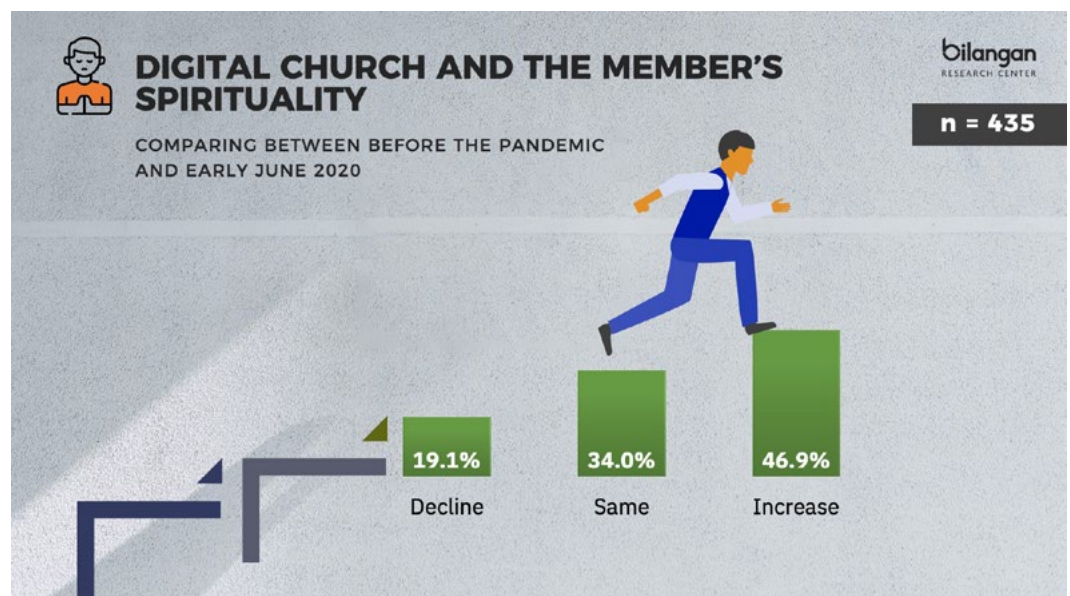


Within 2.5 months, the production of digital assets grew significantly. Three of every four churches (74.5%) increased their digital production (YouTube or video recording of sermons, teachings, worship, etc.) by 100% (i.e., double) or more.

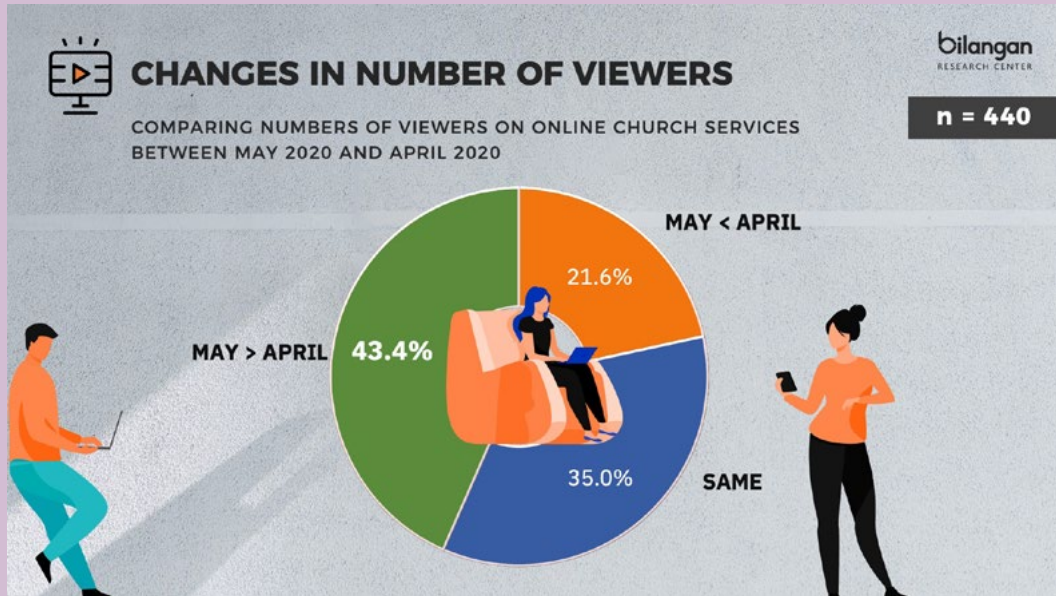


When pastors were asked whether they thought their church members had grown spiritually during the pandemic, almost half said “yes.” Fewer than 20% said the spirituality of their church members was declining; the remainder indicated neither growth nor decline.

When COVID-19 first hit Indonesia in mid-March 2020, most pastors worried that the lack of physical Sunday services would cause a decline in the spirituality of their church members. Two and a half months later, in early June, their fears generally had not materialized, as more than 80% of the pastors said that they had not observed any decline in spirituality.



To understand the trend in church members' engagement with digital or online services, we asked the pastors to compare their total number of viewers between April and May 2020. We were encouraged to find that almost half of the churches experienced an increase in viewers in May, relative to April. Slightly over 20% reported a decline in viewers; the rest indicated no change from April to May.



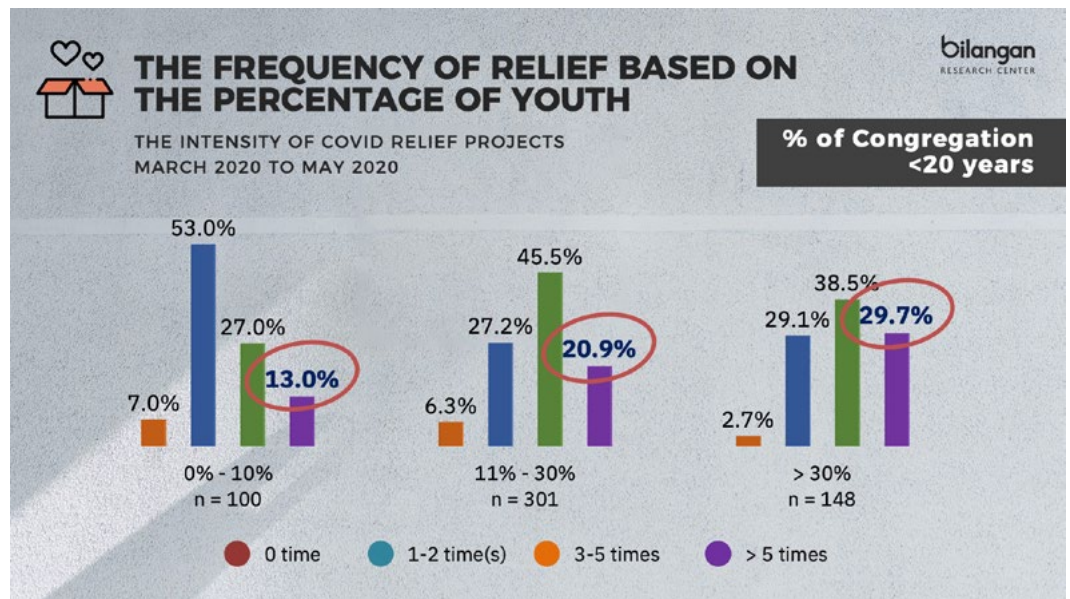
The church has witnessed a significant movement of prayer in response to COVID-19, as 83.8% of congregations reported engaging in cross-denominational, citywide, nationwide and even international prayer events online. Numerous church networks, national Evangelical Alliances, and individual mission organizations organized 40-day prayer and fasting events.

With such a substantial prayer movement, could we expect spiritual revival, church renewal, and national transformation?

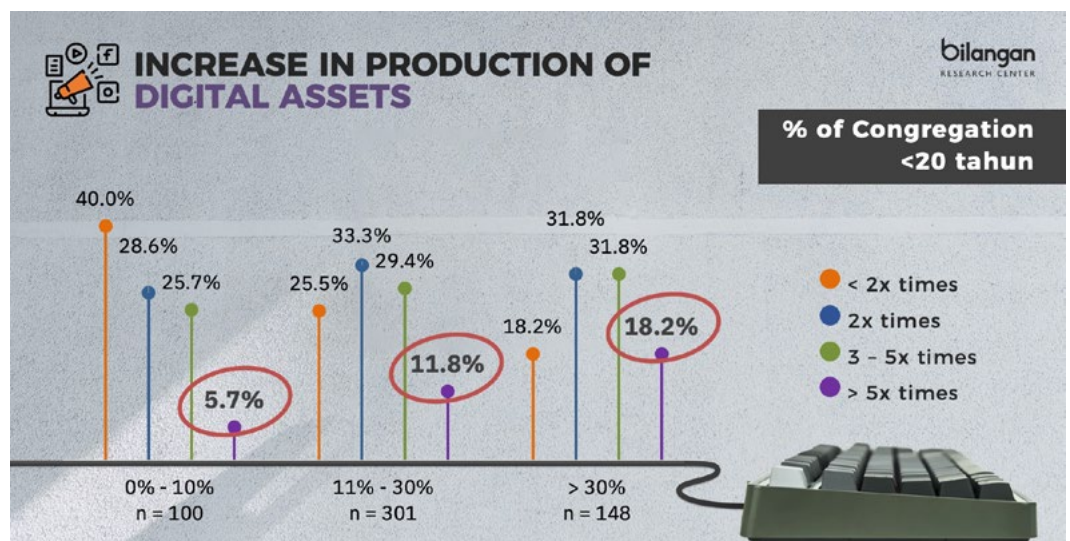


In this survey, the BRC was also eager to understand the role and impact of the younger generation (under 20 years old) in the church's response to COVID-19. The graphic below shows that churches in which youth represent more than 30% of the total congregation are more active and more generous in conducting relief

for the needy. Among churches with more than 30% of their congregation below 20 years old, some 29.7% of them have organized more than five relief projects for the poor. On the other hand, among churches with fewer than 10% youth members, only 13% organized more than five relief projects.

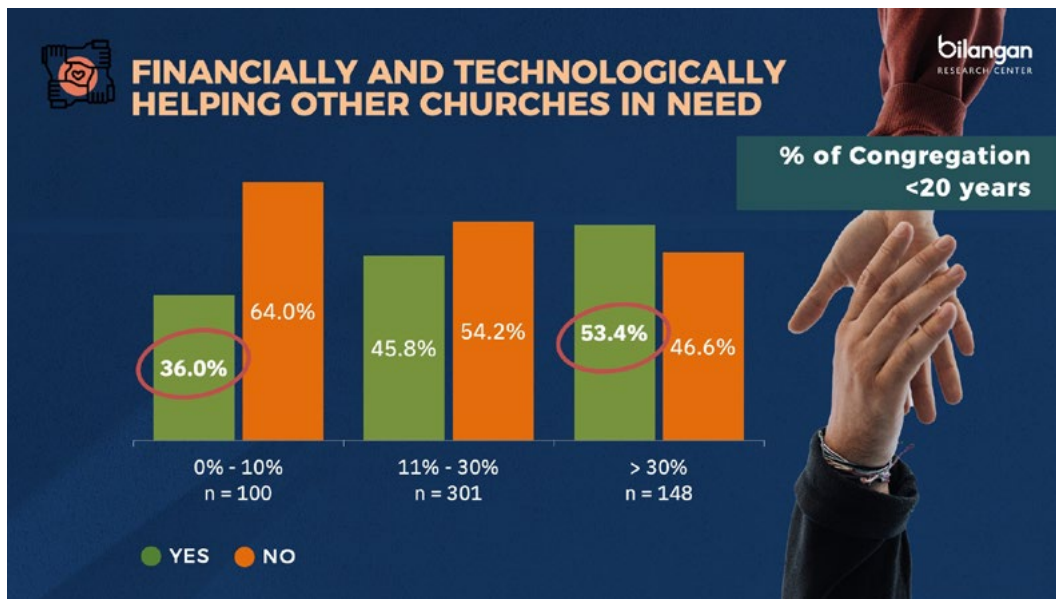


In terms of the increased production of digital assets during the first 10 weeks of the pandemic (March-May 2020), churches with a large percentage of youth (more than 30%) greatly outperformed churches with fewer than 10% youth; 18.2% of the younger congregations but only 5.7% of those with relatively few youth reported five times as much digital production as prior to the pandemic.

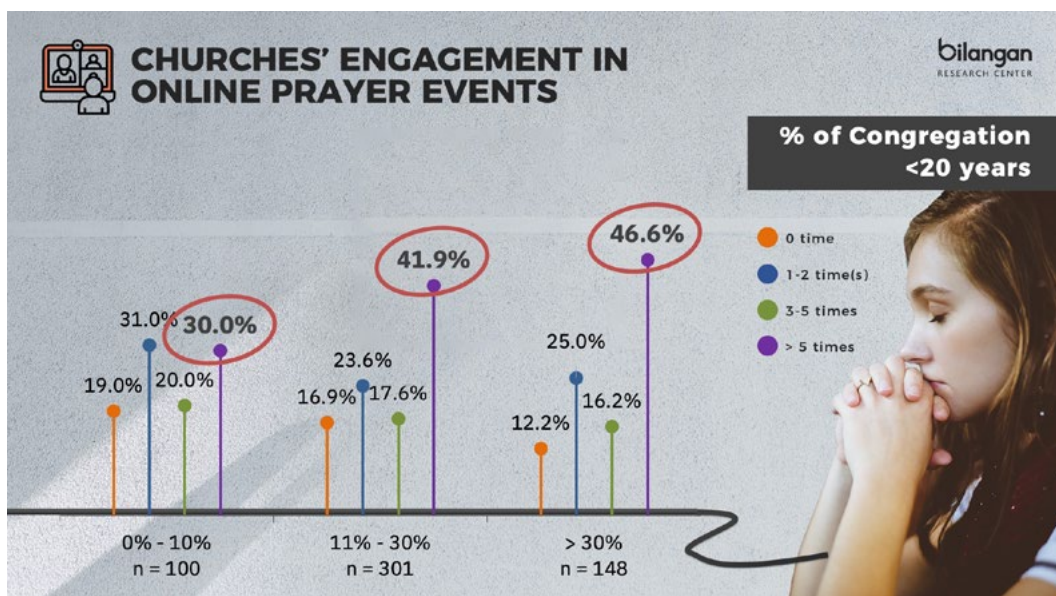


* Relatively toward the result of digital asset production before pandemic

Churches that attract more young people not only exhibited greater digital production and care and generosity to the needy; they also made a difference in caring for other churches, beyond their own denomination or geographic area. Churches with more young people proved to be more caring and helpful toward other churches, thus strengthening the spirit of unity across denominations and theological streams.



Our youth also made a significant contribution toward the deepening commitment to unified prayer across denominations and geographical locations. Churches with more young people (below age 20) by far engaged more in online prayer events than those churches with a lower percentage of young people.



The BRC cross-tabulated all churches' activities in response to COVID-19 against the percentage of youth in each congregation. The findings were consistent with regard to every single category of activity. The greater the percentage of young people in a church, the more likely that church was to care actively for the poor, to be compassionate and generous, to be engaged in prayer, to make efforts to promote the unity of the body of Christ, to be holistic in their theology, and to engage with their surrounding community to promote societal transformation.

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NEXT GEN <20 years old

Higher percentage of youth (below 20 years old) Consistently exhibit increase in the engagement and outcomes:

- Digital adoption**
- Care for the needy**
- Spirit of unity among churches**
- Collaboration spirit with government and other institutions**
- Interfaith and collaboration**

Before the pandemic, most churches carried out more than 85% of their church activities inside the church walls. During the pandemic, when no gathering is allowed at the church building, the church has been “doing church” outside the wall—in homes, in the midst of the community, among the needy.

COVID-19 has released the church from its four-wall “prison,” which has prevented the church from being the sign of the Kingdom in the midst of the community. In just a few months, the

church has journeyed back several thousand years to recalibrate to the model of the early church, which met in homes and made disciples holistically on streets, at business centers, and in market places.

The “new normal” church is not simply a Sunday service with only 30% of capacity permitted to attend, strict social distancing rules, masks, hand sanitation, and temperature checks at the church door.

In large part, the Indonesian church has functioned as a “new normal” church by operating outside the church walls—caring for the needy, helping each other, and being a generous, prayerful, and loving community. We are seeing a movement of holistic disciple making, with young people contributing significantly toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

I pray that even after the pandemic has gone, the church will not return to her state before the pandemic, but will move forward in this “new normal” time. In summary, the graphic below shows the six assets God has entrusted to the church in Indonesia during the pandemic, as the foundation on which the church can move forward in advancing and strengthening the Kingdom of God on earth.

ASSETS & FOUNDATION FOR NEW NORMAL CHURCH IN INDONESIA

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COME, LORD JESUS!

REPORT AND UPDATES FROM EACH COUNTRY

(COVID-19 Figures taken from Worldometers as of Aug 2nd, 2020)

BANGLADESH

TOTAL CASES
240,746

ACTIVE CASES
100,753

RECOVERED
136,839

DEATHS
3,154

- Helped 411 poor pastor/evangelist families with cash in June
- Individual Churches extended help to the vulnerable in their own community with relief package, cooked food, and sanitation materials.
- The religious gatherings (Church, Mosque, Temple) are permitted with proper health guidelines. In the cities, a small number of people attending physically, mostly participate online.

Pray for:

- Intense flooding in Bangladesh where 1/3 of the country is being flooded with at least 110 deaths and 2.4 million people impacted, more than half a million (around 550,000) families displaced from their homes.

INDIA

TOTAL CASES
1,757,393

ACTIVE CASES
570,481

RECOVERED
1,149,460

DEATHS
37,452

- With the support from partners and members, provided support to around 21,000 people in 16 states as of July 15, 2020. Families have been supplied with dry ration kits for 15-20 days.
- Distributed hundreds of hygiene kits that also included masks and sanitisers, mostly to traffic marshals and frontline workers.

Pray for:

- The frontline warriors (both health-workers and police personnel) who are relentlessly and selflessly working for the safety of the citizens.
- The young and vulnerable continue to have good mental health in this tough situation.

MALAYSIA

TOTAL CASES
8,999

RECOVERED
8,664

ACTIVE CASES
210

DEATHS
125

The National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) of Malaysia will be launching the 40-day Fast and Prayer on August 6th with the theme **“Hearing The Holy Spirit for The Times We Live In”**. This year’s is significant as it is our 20th year and NECF is hosting it online and in four different languages (English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil) to have a wider participation standing in the gap for both the church and the nation.

NEPAL

TOTAL CASES
20,332

RECOVERED
14,603

ACTIVE CASES
5,672

DEATHS
57

- Amidst COVID 19 challenge, Nepal was hit by mudslides in the hilly regions and flooding in the southern parts which caused deaths, great loss of personal and public properties. Major highways and bridges have been swept away that the capital city is disconnected from other districts.

Pray for:

- Grieving family members, Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Volunteers and Social Workers who are working very hard in different parts of the country.
- Unity in providing help to people in need at this difficult time.

PAKISTAN

TOTAL CASES
279,698

RECOVERED
248,577

ACTIVE CASES
25,145

DEATHS
5,976

- Raised awareness of local churches, pastors and leaders to lead congregation with the correct understanding of corona virus and taking safety precautions.
- Raised funds locally and internationally to help vulnerable families in need, including Muslim families.
- Provided food and toys to children in slum area.
- Conducted a few online bible classes at college level to strengthen the faith and knowledge of bible college students, pastors, and leaders.
- Shared written and video messages to encourage the community.



PHILIPPINES

TOTAL CASES
103,185

ACTIVE CASES
35,569

RECOVERED
65,557

DEATHS
2,059

- PHILRADS, relief and development arm of PECE provided personal protective equipment to 61 hospitals, 8 government-affiliated agencies, and numerous private healthcare institutions. The total amount of equipment provided:
 - 148,300 face masks
 - 13,870 protective coats
 - 3,000 pairs of shoe covers
 - 500 face shields with foam
 - 500 boxes of surgical gloves
 - 3 anesthesia machines, which were also used as ventilators.
- Provided food packs to more than 13,000 people in vulnerable families affected by the quarantine in and around Manila.
- Cared for church leaders by providing cash assistance to 2,000 pastors affected by service suspension.
- Evangelicals joined hands with other Protestants and Catholics to raise 30 million US dollars for collective response.
- As some believers may view cessation of church services as a limitation of religious freedom, PECE composed a detailed theological statement that contains a series of biblical arguments why Christians should not oppose the temporary restriction on worship services.

Pray for:

- People who are in fear as the congress passed the new Anti-Terrorism Bill that includes warrantless arrests that can last to 24 days.
- People (11,000) who lost their jobs with the shutdown of the biggest TV network ABS CNN.

SRI LANKA

TOTAL CASES
2,815

ACTIVE CASES
290

RECOVERED
2,514

DEATHS
11

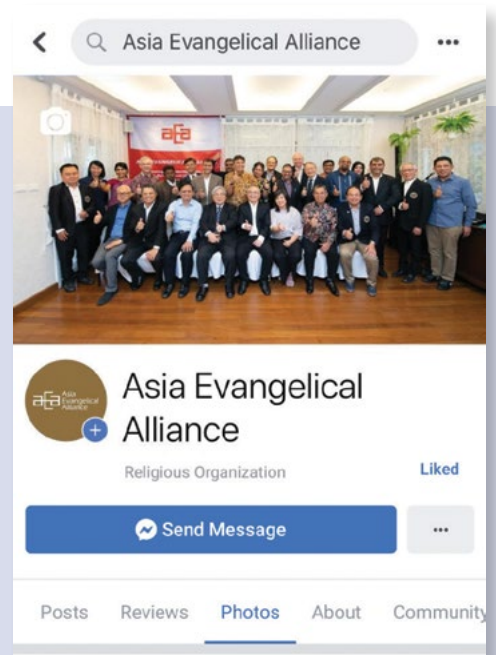
- Distributed provision packs to support the survival of 1,071 families.
- Published and circulated to the churches a trilingual toolkit titled “Laws governing the COVID-19 situation in Sri Lanka”.
- **Prayer mobilization**
 - Initiated online prayer meetings with the National Prayer Team and circulated prayer points among pastors’ network.
 - Raise prayer through social media platforms.
 - Youth Evangelical Alliance (youth arm of the NCEASL) hosted several audio and video podcasts and live worship & prayer sessions in collaboration with youth leaders from different churches.



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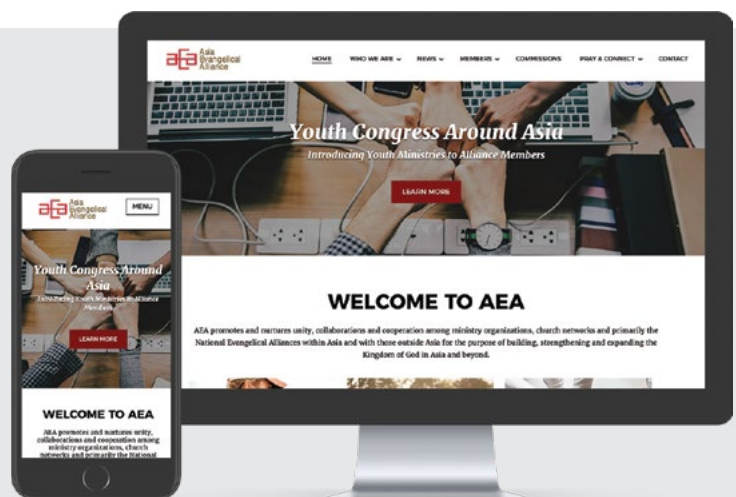
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“We do hope that this website and other AEA media help AEA community grow much stronger and be more effective in fulfilling our call in Asia and beyond.”

Dr. Bambang Budijanto - AEA, General Secretary



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