

Congregational Perceptions of the Importance of Personal Testimony in GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky

Persepsi tentang Pentingnya Kesaksian Pribadi di Jemaat GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions and practices of personal testimony among adolescents and young adults in GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky with regard to their congregational life practices. Using a qualitative participatory ethnographic design, data were gathered from 20 members through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and analysis of congregational documents. The evidence indicates that personal testimony is an essential, not marginal, practice since whoever is to express, interpret, and communicate faith. Testimonies come mostly from a feeling of gratitude at how God has helped them and an inner sense of calling and encouragement from leaders and peers, but they are also accompanied by anxiety, feelings of unworthiness, and fear of being judged. As a matter of fact, empirically, testimony is a kind of lived narrative theology: through telling detailed accounts of the struggle, divine assistance and change, participants re-read their histories of life through the lens of the gospel and combine the teaching of theology with the experience. The act of testifying brings about emotional and spiritual change, while listening to the testimonies of others brings about mutual edification, consolation, and hope. The study further shows that the practice of testifying in this congregation is influenced by the dialogue between GMIM's Reformed heritage and Minahasan cultural values such as mapalus, honesty, and solidarity, which together foster authenticity, openness, and communal responsibility.

BACKGROUND

Personal testimony plays a leading role in the life of the congregation of Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM) Getsemani Perum Risky as a source of faith expression (Yohanes et al., 2025), spiritual transformation, and communal fortification (Gideon and Julianes, 2025). Personal testimony, which is taken as the personal account of experience with the grace of God (Natanael, 2025; Rangka, 2024), serves not only to confess faith (Novita et al., 2024) but also to spread theological and ethical values in the life of the congregation (Suseno et al., 2025). Amid constantly changing social, cultural, and spiritual dynamics, personal testimony appears as a contextual response to everyday life problems (Sukadana, 2022), while simultaneously being an effective tool for faith education (Donni, 2023) in a relationally based church setting (Anggara, 2025).

The value of witnessing in the Christian tradition has long been recognized in biblical literature and in the customs of the church throughout the ages. Testimony does not simply repeat

universal stories in local contexts like GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky, but it is also well set in Minahasan cultural realities of togetherness, honesty, and respect for lived experience (Mawekere & Tewu, 2024). Thus, personal testimony is not simply a ritual of liturgy (Karurung, 2024) but a living and dynamic theological practice (Pranoto et al., 2023) that makes personal faith relevant to the life of the congregation as a whole (Palopak et al., 2024).

Recent research in practical theology and the anthropology of religion (Ismail & Pro, 2020) demonstrates that the practice of personal testimony is a kind of narrative theology (Tobing, 2021) – a particular approach to theology that constructs faith based on contextual and relational life stories (Giri, 2025). In the context of Protestant churches in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, the research by Sihombing (2021), Tambunan (2022), and Lumentut (2023) affirms the importance of testimony in the development of congregational faith identity (Pote et al., 2024), especially against the background of religious pluralism, value migration in society, and the pressure of modernity (Fikriyah, 2024). These results suggest that testimony is not just an individual (Jura, 2024) but also has a communal aspect that enhances spiritual strength and community building (Sumakul et al., 2025).

In modern sociology of religion, testimony has been understood as a kind of religious capital that helps people achieve social status, moral authority, and figurative position in their social networks (Akilah et al., 2025). In different Christian churches in Indonesia, a study by Adiputra (2024) indicates that testimonies, particularly of overcoming crises (Harianto, 2024), are a mechanism of affirmation of the divine presence and strengthening of the socio-spiritual support networks. A similar trend is evident in comparative research in Southeast Asia by van der Veer and Koesoema (2022), who emphasize that the form and meaning of testimony are strongly contextualized by local situations, including church authority structures and cultural values (Maramis & Andrew, 2025).

However, most studies published between 2020 and 2025 remain in urban settings or focus on Charismatic and Pentecostal denominations (Sariyanto et al., 2025). In contrast, the practices of testimony in ethnically based mainline churches (Manukrante et al., 2025) – such as Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM) – still need to be explored. GMIM, the heir of the Reformed theological tradition with its emphasis on doctrine, structured liturgy, and communal ethics, has a distinctive approach to testimony (Jonathan & Harsawibawa, 2022): it is not emotionally spontaneous but is carefully incorporated into congregational life and catechesis. The recent literature by Pangemanan (2024) already borders on this dynamic; however, it does not provide a detailed discussion of how testimony functions as a theological practice between Calvinist heritage (Mawikere & Hura, 2023) and Minahasan cultural values. As a result, this research gap will be open until 2025.

Although there is an increasing body of work on religious narratives and practices of testimony in global Christian contexts, there is still a significant empirical and theoretical gap regarding how practices of personal testimony function in ethnically and traditionally based congregations like GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky. In particular, no study has systematically explored the theological, social, and pastoral functions of testimony in the local Minahasan setting, in which Reformed theological heritage is entangled with local cultural values. This gap makes it difficult to create models of pastoral ministry that are contextually sensitive and responsive to congregational spiritual needs.

This study aims to analyze the role and meaning of personal testimony in the life of the congregation of GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky in the theological, social, and transformational dimensions. Using a qualitative approach based on participatory ethnography and in-depth interviews, this study aims to understand how congregants understand, experience, and practice testimony as an integral part of their faith life and how this practice contributes to building a spiritually resilient and empowered community.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the theory of lived theology and contextual ecclesiology, especially in the mainline churches of Southeast Asia. Practically, this means that the results can be used as a foundation for creating pastoral guidelines that are more inclusive and culturally appropriate and for strengthening discipleship strategies that build on the

lived narratives of congregants. For GMIM as an institution, such research may offer a reference for designing programs for faith formation that are closely linked to the socio-cultural realities of its congregations.

The novelty of this research lies in the combination of Reformed theological perspectives with a cultural-anthropological approach to analyzing the practices of testimony in the community of GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky—a setting that is not often discussed in reliable international literature. Unlike previous studies that seem to approach testimony from Charismatic or individualistic perspectives, this study provides a holistic understanding of testimony as a communal practice rooted in Minahasan values and Calvinist theological tradition. This approach allows for the development of a contextual narrative theological model that can be replicated in similar congregational settings in the Indonesian archipelago.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a participatory ethnographic design (Adji, 2024) to gain more in-depth knowledge of the role and meaning of personal testimony in the life of the GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky congregation. This approach was adopted to reflect the complexity of experiencing faith, which is contextual, relational, and cultural in nature (Sinaga, 2025) and cannot be adequately measured using quantitative methods. Participatory ethnography (Arianto & Handayani, 2023) enables the researcher to not only observe, but to be actively a part of the life of the community over the period of study (Ondeng & Mustami, 2024), that is, to get an emic (insider) understanding of testimony practices as perceived and lived by congregants (Juita et al., 2025). The study focused on the congregation of GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky, North Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi. This location was chosen because its exemplary GMIM Reformed tradition and high Minahasan culture (Kaunang, 2024) provide a perfect social laboratory to investigate the role of personal testimony in a particular local area.

Data Collection

There are three primary methods of data collection, in-depth interviews, (2) participatory observation, and (3) documentation of church archives. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15-20 key informants, who were purposely chosen based on the frequency of giving testimony, active participation in church ministries, age, educational background, and various life experiences, including those who have experienced crises of faith, recovery, or great spiritual transformation (Irmesyanti, 2024). The interviews will be semi-structured and based on key themes such as personal experiences with God (Ayu Nugrahaningrum & Nisa Rachmah, 2023), the reasons behind giving testimony, how the testimony affected their self and community, and the connection between testimony and their identity as Minahasan.

Participatory observation was conducted for at least one week and involved participation in various church activities, including Sunday services, prayer meetings, catechetical classes, and ministry committee meetings. In the process of all these observations, the researcher notes the contexts, forms, and congregational reactions to testimony practices within liturgical and non-liturgical settings. Oral narratives and the detection of commonalities in theological and cultural trends are also supported by the analysis of archival materials, including worship logs, congregational bulletins, and audio/video records of testimonies (where available).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using the principles of grounded theory, in which the open, axial, and selective coding processes were performed to identify the core themes that arose from the field data (Sumilah et al., 2025). The validity of the data is guaranteed by the use of source triangulation (interviews, observations, documents), member checking (checking interpretations with informants), and researcher reflexivity to reduce bias. This approach allows for the construction of a holistic understanding of personal testimony as a living theological practice that is rooted in the Reformed tradition but shaped and given meaning by the Minahasan cultural context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The study involved 20 members of GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky, all of whom were adolescents and young adults aged 14 to 24 years ($M = 17.75$). The majority were categorized as youth (15 participants; 75%), and the remaining were adolescents (5 participants; 25%). Most participants said they had previous experience in sharing personal testimony: 18 out of the 20 respondents (90%) had shared a testimony in some way, either in formal worship services or on a smaller fellowship level. Only two respondents said that they had never given a testimony. Therefore, these numbers suggest that personal testimony is a relatively common and familiar practice among the younger generation in this congregation.

Table 1. Profile of Participants

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Role in congregation	Youth	15	75
	Adolescents	5	25
Age range (years)	14–16	6	30
	17–18	10	50
	19–24	4	20
Testimony experience	Ever testified	18	90
	Never testified	2	10

The participants' stories reveal that their initial experiences of giving testimony were generally in youth or adolescent services or small group fellowships. When reporting their reasons for deciding to testify, the respondents repeatedly identified three related reasons. First, many stressed their appreciation of God's assistance in specific circumstances, including the cure of a disease, family issues, money problems, and school challenges. Testimony was experienced as an appropriate means of expressing gratitude for divine help in these areas. Second, a number of participants spoke about an inner spiritual prompting or sense of calling that resulted, for instance, after listening to a sermon or reflecting on a recent event in their lives. They used the words "moved" or "urged" to speak in response to the grace of God. Third, respondents often mentioned encouragement from youth leaders, church workers, or spiritually mature peers who urged them to share their stories and promised them support.

In contrast, the two respondents who did give a testimony explained their hesitation in terms of feeling unprepared, not feeling that they had a big enough or dramatic enough experience to share, or fearing that they might speak incorrectly or not be able to express themselves well in front of others. These accounts emphasize that although testimony is everywhere, it is also marked by a certain level of anxiety and thresholds that must be crossed.

Participants descriptions of their emotional experiences before, during, and after giving testimony indicate a dynamic process. Prior to speaking, almost all respondents expressed high levels of emotional tension, such as nervousness, fear of making mistakes, fear of being judged, and fear that the congregation would not listen well. However, many have recalled that once they began to speak, their feelings changed: they felt more composed and focused, and in a number of cases, they experienced a sense of having been guided or strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

After giving their testimony, respondents often felt a sense of relief and release, as if a burden had been lifted. They also shared their gratitude and a renewed sense of closeness with God, having revisited and verbalized God's work in their lives. Some reported a strengthened sense of self-worth and identity; they felt more courageous and confident and more aware that their life story could become a blessing to others. These tendencies indicate that the activity of testimony is not merely verbal but also an emotionally and spiritually shaping process.

When asked what constitutes personal testimony, the respondents developed a rich theological understanding. They always spoke of testimony as telling real and concrete experiences with God in daily life instead of abstract doctrinal knowledge. Testimony was understood as an act of public confession of the goodness and power of God; an act of acknowledgment that "God has really worked" in their individual history. At the same time, participants emphasized that testimony is being addressed not only to God but also to the congregation; it is meant to strengthen, encourage, and give hope to those who are listening. In this way, personal testimony is viewed as a confession of faith and pastoral ministry in the community.

The respondents' reports indicate a well-perceived transformative effect of the testimony. Many participants said that the process of giving testimony transformed their views of God and themselves. They grew more conscious of God's faithfulness in the little details of their lives, and they began to understand their faith as their own and not just something they inherited from their family or tradition. Several respondents commented that remembering and telling their stories in the past helped them to become more humble, as they recognized their own weaknesses and sinfulness, and ascribed all positive change to divine grace. Others emphasized that testimony stimulated self-reflection and helped them to recognize patterns in their behavior that recurred, including those where they had destructive habits or areas where their character still needed to be changed.

Listening to the testimonies of others was also found to be impactful. Respondents remembered times when someone else's testimony was a turning point in their life: a catalyst for repentance, a source of comfort in a crisis situation, or an incentive for becoming more seriously involved in the ministry. The practice of testimony thus works in two directions and shapes both speakers and hearers.

Despite these positive impacts, respondents faced several challenges. A significant number of them confessed to feeling insecure about being judged or misconstrued by the congregation, particularly when revealing painful or controversial details of their past. Others felt unworthy to testify because they believed their lives were still touched by sin or spiritual immaturity. Several participants mentioned challenges in organizing their narratives: they did not know which parts of their story to include, what level of detail would be suitable, and how to ensure that they focused on God rather than themselves. Some respondents also shared experiences of hearing testimonies that sounded too dramatic, untrue, or detached from the actual situation of the congregation to be credible. This form of impression raises concerns regarding authenticity as well as the ethical limits of testimony. These stories reflect that although the value of testimony is extremely high, the community has realized that it is susceptible to abuse or misinterpretation.

Participants connected their practice of testimony to two major sources of influence: the theological tradition of GMIM and Minahasan cultural values. They knew that GMIM, being a Reformed church, emphasizes the Word, structured liturgy, and communal ethics. Within this framework, testimony tends not to be overly spontaneous or emotionally expressive, as tends to be the case in charismatic contexts. Instead, testimonies are meant to be orderly, reflective, and in harmony with the larger theological and liturgical life of the church, and they are meant to build up the fellowship rather than merely to show off individual emotion.

Simultaneously, respondents emphasized the importance of Minahasan values such as *mapalus* (mutual cooperation), honesty, and togetherness. These values form the ethos of testimony in several ways. The principle of *mapalus* urges members to help each other, so that testimony is conceived as a way of helping each other in times of struggle. Honesty is regarded as a moral principle that cannot be compromised: a lie or exaggeration in the witness is deemed worthless and possibly harmful to the faith of the congregation. Minahasan's openness and shared sense of communal belonging further encourage young people to open up about even vulnerable sides of their life, knowing that they are a part of a supportive community.

Respondents always referred to testimonies as important communal resources. They saw it as a way to deepen faith, provide hope for people facing difficulties, and foster solidarity and empathy. Upon hearing a testimony, people felt much closer to other congregants; they could better

empathize with their problems, and they prayed more for one another. Some explicitly articulated how a specific testimony had played a significant role in their own lives in terms of reconciliation with family members, abandonment of harmful behaviors, or greater dedication to church ministry. In terms of congregational life, participants identified a number of settings within which testimonies are commonly given: Sunday services, youth and adolescent worship, catechetical classes, prayer meetings, and small group gatherings. In some cases, testimonies also take place in casual talk in friendship circles or families. Most respondents felt that the church already offers sufficiently adequate space for testimony, although some said that opportunities could be more structured and consistent, particularly in programs aimed at young people.

When invited to vent their hopes and suggestions for the future, respondents suggested several directions for developing the practice of testimony: They emphasized the need for mentoring and training so that young people might learn how to prepare testimonies and deliver them in ways that were honest, concise, and centered on God's work. Many recommended making more use of digital media - including video recordings and social media platforms - to share testimonies in ways that are meaningful for the digital culture of the younger generation.

Respondents also emphasized the need to create safe spaces where openness is encouraged and where judgment is minimized so that those who testify feel accepted even if they are sharing painful or fragile aspects of their lives. Lastly, they told us that they hoped that testimony would be more directly linked to their practical life changes and service, and that the stories they heard in church would be followed by practical change in real life in their daily behavior and communal interactions. Taken together, these findings indicate that in GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky, the understanding of personal testimony and its experience is understood and lived out in a theological, relational, and cultural practice that is deeply embedded in the life of the congregation, particularly among the younger members of the congregation.

Discussion

The results of this study prove that personal testimony among the youth of GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky is beyond a marginal element in congregational worship. It serves as a fundamental activity through which faith is expressed, identities are constructed, and unity is enhanced. In this section, the empirical findings are explained in relation to the theoretical perspectives described in the introduction, especially narrative theology, religious capital, the Reformed heritage of GMIM, and the impact of Minahasan culture.

First, the way in which the participants spoke of and practiced the testimony resonated well with the idea of narrative theology. Rather than simply repeating doctrinal statements, the young people of this congregation do theology by telling stories of their concrete experiences of God's action in their lives. Their stories usually follow a recognizable storyline: an initial situation of difficulty or crisis, a period of struggle, an encounter with divine help or guidance, and a new situation interpreted in terms of a gift of grace. This pattern reflects, on the one hand, the classic structures of Christian testimonies and, on the other, the particular realities of their everyday lives, such as academic pressure, family conflict, health problems, and identity search.

In telling such stories, respondents effectively interpret their own biographies in terms of theology. Therefore, testimony is a place where doctrinal teaching, which has been handed down by sermons and catechesis, is reclaimed in the terminology of individual experience. Religion is not an object of belief regarding God but is perceived in the experienced sense of touch. This confirms the argument that testifying can be a privileged position of lived theology, where the gap between abstract theology and everyday life is closed by the telling of stories.

Second, the data make it clear that the function of testimony is transformative for those who give testimony. The emotional arc of participants from a state of anxiety and fear to a state of relief, gratitude, and new confidence points to the fact that testimonies are a formative spiritual discipline. As they retell and express their stories, respondents redefine their memories in terms of God's faithfulness to them. They are starting to view their past not as a sequence of random actions or

individual accomplishments but as a story in which grace and providence may be identified. This reframing plays a part in the construction of a special Christian identity in which vulnerability, reliance on God, and gratitude occupy center stage.

Simultaneously, listening to the testimonies of others is experienced as spiritually important. Several participants often reported that the story of someone else had inspired them to repent, to continue through trials, or to become more involved in ministry. Thus, testimony is not merely a private practice but also a public one, through which faith is handed down, reinforced, and made fresh. Theologically, it is the belief that the Holy Spirit operates not only through Scripture and preaching but also through the shared tales of believers.

Third, this study confirms that testimony can be explained in terms of religious capital. Those who are willing and able to testify - especially in a manner that is taken to be sincere, coherent, and God-centered—gain a certain moral and spiritual credibility in the congregation. Their narratives may influence preconceptions, standards, and hopes among colleagues. However, unlike forms of capital that tend to create rigid hierarchies, the religious capital associated with testimony in this context seems more participatory. Respondents emphasized that anyone, regardless of their background or status, can experience God's work and share it for the good of others. A key reason why testimony is prized is not that it sets spiritual elites off against ordinary believers but that it testifies that God is at work in the daily lives of all members.

However, religious capital ambivalence is also manifested in the anxieties and indecision of the participants. Because testimony is so visible and personally exposed, it may become a cause for anxiety: those who testify may worry about being judged or misunderstood. References to testimonies that appeared to be exaggerated or inauthentic by the respondents emphasize the importance of a cautious ethic of testimony. Devoid of pastoral work, the practice may easily slide to self-promotion, emotional manipulation, or the broadcast of intimate information, which should not be discussed in a social gathering. Thus, the congregation's sensitivity to the dangers of testifying is as significant as its sensitivity to its benefits. The data suggest that it is the youth themselves who see the need for authenticity, humility, and discretion. They want their testimonies to be truthful, edifying, based on God's work, and not on personal glory. This has some similarities to the Reformed emphasis on God's sovereignty and grace, which resists any attempt to convert spiritual experience into a tool for self-exaltation.

Fourth, the contribution of the Reformed heritage and Minahasan cultural values of GMIM to the form of testimonial practice is emphasized. As a Reformed church, GMIM places great emphasis on the centrality of Scripture, doctrinal soundness, and orderly worship. In this context, testimony is not an unbridled emotional outpouring; it is part of a liturgy and catechetical system that requires consistency with the announced Word. This has no implication of a lack of emotion, but of an emotional expression in the service of more Catholic ends, of edification, of teaching, of community discernment. The stories told by the respondents demonstrate that they are aware of this framework and that their testimonies spontaneously conform to it. Many call on sermons, passages from the Bible, or themes from worship services of recent memory when describing their stories. Therefore, they are not free-floating narratives and are bound to the theological grammar of the church. In this respect, the congregation is a hermeneutical community in which personal experiences are interpreted and evaluated.

The Minahasan culture is another important aspect of the culture. Values such as *mapalus*, honesty, and solidarity form the ethos according to which testimony is provided and accepted. Since *mapalus* values mutual support and shared responsibility, it promotes the members to view testimony as a form of spiritual and moral support: through telling their story, an individual helps strengthen the other person in their spiritual and moral life. The cultural assumption of honesty and straightforwardness also provides further support for the demand for authenticity in testimony. Participants were emphatic in expressing that fabricated or embellished stories would not be acceptable, not only on religious but also on cultural grounds, because they would go against the integrity expected in Minahasan social relationships.

The interplay between Reformed theology and Minahasan culture supports the claim that the practice of testimony in GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky is a truly contextual practice. It cannot be reduced to a generic Protestant model or to purely local customs. Rather, it is the product of a continuing dialogue between world theology and a specific cultural context. This observation is part of a larger debate within contextual ecclesiology, as it demonstrates how a traditional Protestant tradition, such as a personal testimony, may be restructured in a local mainline church based in Southeast Asia, which has strong ethnic roots.

Fifth, the results have significant implications for pastoral practice. Testimonies are a powerful resource for developing faith among young people. Its trends and effects warrant strategic investments in mentoring and training. Simple workshops on how to prepare and deliver a testimony (including theological content, storytelling structures, and ethics) could help address some of the anxieties and difficulties expressed by respondents. Such initiatives would not only ensure the quality of the testimonies but also send the message that the church is serious about the voices and experiences of younger members. The results also suggest that churches might fruitfully expand spaces in which testimonies are encouraged. While worship on Sundays and youth services already offer opportunities, small groups, catechetical classes, and family gatherings are potentially safer and more intimate settings where young people can begin to tell their stories. These settings may help foster habits of openness and support for one another, which in turn enhances the larger congregational life.

In addition, the suggestions by respondents regarding digital media indicate a timely direction for the future ministry. The younger generation is increasingly living in digital spaces where stories, images, and short videos are circulated at great speed. Provided that the testimonies are properly edited and that proper ethical protection is utilized, digital platforms can make these stories go beyond the church building and into the context of people, schools, workplaces, and social networks. This would require clear guidelines with respect to issues of privacy, consent, and theological content, but could go a long way toward strengthening the church's witness among youth. Finally, the desire to connect testimony more closely with concrete action highlights the possibilities of bringing the practice of testimony and diaconal and missional initiatives closer together. Testimony is embodied discipleship when it brings about visible modification of behavior, renewed dedication to service, or enrolment in social concern programmes. The congregation may deliberately create opportunities for people who have testified to being involved in ministries that resonate with their stories. For example, people who have experienced healing in their family relationships could work in counselling or family ministry, and people who have overcome addictions could work in support groups.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enhances the knowledge of personal testimony in ethnically based mainline churches, which is comparatively understudied in recent scholarship. This demonstrates that testimony may simultaneously serve as a place of narrative theology, religious capital, and a negotiated cultural place. At the same time, the limitations of the study need to be recognized: the sample consists of adolescents and youth in one congregation, and the qualitative design seeks depth rather than breadth. Future research could expand the age range of the participants, examine several GMIM congregations in varying settings, and investigate quantitative correlations between testimony practices, spiritual maturity, and congregational participation.

Based on empirical evidence from GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky, personal testimony is an important and multifaceted practice in the life of the church. It helps to interpret their experiences in the light of the gospel, develop courage and humility, and contribute to the spiritual strength of their community. Influenced by both Reformed theology and Minahasan culture, testimony here is a way of seeing how a traditional Christian practice might take new local shapes that are both traditionally faithful and attentive to new realities.

CONCLUSION

This study intended to investigate how adolescents and young adults in GMIM Getsemani Perum Risky comprehend and experience personal testimony in the life of the congregation. The results indicate that testimony is not a marginal or optional part of worship but one of the key practices in which faith is expressed, explained, and communicated. For the majority of people who participate, giving testimony is a familiar experience that has arisen out of a sense of gratitude for God's help, an inner sense of calling, and encouragement from leaders and peers, although it is often accompanied by anxiety, feelings of unworthiness, and fear of being judged by others.

Empirically, personal testimony manifests as a lived narrative theology. Telling real-life stories of hardship, supernatural assistance, and change, young members re-read their life histories through the prism of the gospel and combine the teachings of the doctrines with their experience. This emotional and spiritual transformation that is created through the act of testifying is recounted by the respondents: they talk about feeling the tension decrease and being replaced by relief, feeling doubtful and getting renewed confidence, and feeling a more active voice of calling. Listening to the testimonies of others also serves as a way of mutual edification, consolation, and hope, and confirms the communal aspect of testimony.

The research also shows that the practice of testimony in this congregation is influenced by the interplay between the Reformed heritage of GMIM and Minahasan cultural values. The Reformed focus on Scripture, soundness of doctrine, and more structured services offers a theological and liturgical structure according to which testimonies are supposed to be reflective, coherent, and God-centered. Simultaneously, cultural values such as *mapalus*, honesty, and solidarity encourage authenticity, openness, and a strong sense of shared responsibility for one another's spiritual journeys.

These lessons have significant pastoral implications. They cite the necessity of deliberate mentoring in the testimony, providing safe spaces for witnessing, and the considerate incorporation of testimonies into both liturgical and digital spaces. Future studies in a variety of congregations and age groups could extend these results to better understand the role of personal testimony in the formation of faith, communal strength, and contextual ecclesiology in mainline churches in Indonesia and elsewhere. These studies would also shed light on the dangers, chances, and constraints of using AI in various environments.

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