

HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF BATAK-LANGUAGE GMIM IN MANADO FROM 1970-2024

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 22-08-2025

Revised : 23-09-2025

Accepted : 21-10-2025

KEYWORDS

*Batak ;
GMIM ; History ;
Church ; Tontemboan
Development*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the historical development of the GMIM Batak Language Congregation in Manado from 1970 to 2024. This phenomenon is unique because GMIM, founded in the Minahasa region, has opened itself to diverse ethnic groups, including the Batak community. Using a qualitative historical approach, the study reveals that Batak migrants who settled in Manado have made a significant contribution to the life of GMIM by preserving their language and culture in worship. The results show that the establishment and growth of GMIM Batak Language Congregation reflects cultural adaptation, unity in diversity, and the ecumenical spirit of GMIM. The study concludes that this congregation has not only enriched GMIM's mission but also serves as a model of intercultural Christian fellowship in North Sulawesi.

INTRODUCTION

Manado, the capital of North Sulawesi Province, is a multicultural city inhabited by diverse ethnicities and religions. Manado is one of the largest cities in North Sulawesi and a center of social, cultural, and religious interaction. The diversity of its society is reinforced by the presence of various ethnicities, including the Batak community, which has played a significant role in religious life in this region. One form of the Batak community's contribution is the establishment of the Batak-Speaking Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM), which serves as a forum for Batak congregations to worship in their own language and culture. The presence of GMIM Batak demonstrates GMIM's openness as a major church institution in North Sulawesi in accommodating the linguistic and cultural diversity of its congregation. This church is a symbol of social and religious adaptation between the Batak and Minahasa communities. The Batak people in Manado are inseparable from the history of the development of a kinship system that is firmly held, reflected in hereditary clan names. Genealogy or tarombo is very important to the Batak people. Batak people who do not know their genealogy are considered lost (nalilu). Batak people are required to know their genealogy, at least their ancestors who inherited their clan and their clanmates (dongan tubu). This is necessary to determine their kinship within a clan (Kristian, 2022). Amidst this diversity, religious life thrives, including the Batak community, which arrived as migrants in the 1970s. They bring with them a strong cultural identity, language,

and Christian faith. In this context, the presence of the Batak-speaking Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM) is a fascinating phenomenon, demonstrating how a local church can adapt to cultural diversity without losing its identity.

Sociologically, this research confirms that the existence of the Batak community in Manado is the result of migration that created patterns of cultural and faith encounters. In the process, the Batak congregation not only strives to maintain its identity but also adapts to the GMIM church culture. This aligns with Kuntowijoyo's view that history is "a reconstruction of the past contextualized within the present and future." (CNN, 2023) Therefore, the Batak-Language GMIM serves as a concrete example of how a local church transforms without losing the essence of its faith.

Historically, GMIM is known as a church born and rooted in Minahasa, with its distinctive language and liturgical traditions. However, the growing number of Batak congregations in Manado has given rise to a new form of ministry: GMIM services in the Batak language. This church serves as a forum for the expression of faith for the Batak community, who wish to preserve their language and traditions while simultaneously integrating within GMIM. This phenomenon demonstrates the socio-religious dynamics that enrich church life in Manado.

The scientific value of this research lies in its contribution to the study of Local Church History and Christian Inculturation in Eastern Indonesia. To date, the history of the development of the Batak-language GMIM has never been systematically documented in a scholarly work. Therefore, this research provides a novel contribution in the form of a historical investigation into the formation of the Batak-language GMIM congregation in Manado from 1970 to 2024, covering the factors influencing its growth, the forms of cultural adaptation that occurred, and the congregation's role in Manadonese social life.

The main problems raised in this study are: "How has the Batak-language GMIM developed in Manado from 1970 to 2024?" and "what socio-cultural factors influence its existence?" Through these questions, the study seeks to uncover the process of its founding, the development of the congregation, and the church's contribution to the life of the multicultural community in North Sulawesi.

The purpose of this study is to describe the historical process of the formation of the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation, explain the factors that support and hinder its development, and analyze the impact of this church's presence on the preservation of Batak cultural identity in the diaspora. Thus, this study not only provides theological-historical understanding but also serves as a source of documentation for the study of church and culture in Indonesia.

A historical study of the Batak-language GMIM is important because, to date, no previous research has specifically explored the development of this church. Most literature only discusses the general history of GMIM in Minahasa without addressing the contributions of non-Minahasan ethnic groups. Therefore, this research offers state-of-the-art value in enriching the study of local church history and the dynamics of multiculturalism in Eastern Indonesian Christianity.

Scientifically, this research is expected to be important documentation for the development of contextual and ecumenical multicultural church services in Indonesia .

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative method with a historical approach. Data were obtained through literature review, field observations, and interviews with congregation members and church leaders. As defined, qualitative methods are research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behaviour (Moleong, 1997). A historical approach is used to reconstruct the chronological and contextual

history of the founding of the Batak-language GMIM in Manado. The analysis is conducted by interpreting historical events and data related to the congregation's development.

According to Kuntowijoyo's explanation, the historical method consists of five important stages, namely: topic selection, source collection (heuristics), verification (source criticism), interpretation (analysis and synthesis), and historiography (writing history) (agus, 2024).

The process and meaning in this research are based on a theoretical basis, which serves as a guide for the research, focusing on the facts on the ground (Febriani, 2022). Data were collected through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with church leaders, traditional figures, and congregation members directly involved in the tradition. In addition, direct observations were conducted during the tradition to record emerging cultural and religious elements. Secondary data were obtained from church documents, local archives, and scholarly literature related to Minahasan culture and contextual theology. Documentation was used to obtain additional relevant data, such as records of past events, which can be in the form of writings, drawings, or monumental works of art (nisma, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Understanding Church History

Church history is a story about the development and changes experienced by the church. According to Jonge, there are two categories of church history. Church history is seen from an empirical perspective: Christianity, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, and biblical interpretation. Second, the theological perspective: the history of Jesus Christ, the body of Christ on earth, human sin, and theology (de Jonge, 1989). The science of history also seeks to interpret past events and determine their meaning. The goal of any effort to decipher and interpret the past is to gain a clear and comprehensive understanding of the past (C. de Jonge, 2004). The day of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost marked the birth of the Church. The disciples were filled with the Spirit of Christ, so they boldly testified to the deliverance God had given to the world. Where people responded to the Gospel by believing in Jesus Christ, small congregations were formed (H. Berkhof, 1990).

Batak tribe

The Batak people originate from the province of North Sumatra. Around 2,000 BC, the North Sumatra region was inhabited by people who migrated from southern China or Proto-Malay and Deutro-Malay people. They settled in the highlands around Lake Toba. The group began to build settlements in Sianjur which then developed and spread to the surrounding areas. After living in one settlement and forming a community group, small kingdoms were formed. Each has its own system of government and customary law. The existence of Siraja Batak in Tapanuli became the starting point of the Batak Tribe civilization. He is also considered the ancestor of all people who come from the Batak Tribe. The origins of the Batak Tribe are generally known from ancestors from South Asia who settled on the island of Sumatra. The Batak Tribe is also known to be Austronesian speakers. Quoting from the book *Tribes in Sumatra* by Giyanto, the ancestors of the Batak Tribe are the Proto-Malay group or what is commonly called Old Malay. Initially, the Proto-Malay group came from South Asia. They then migrated to Indonesia via the island of Sumatra via the

Malay Peninsula. Upon arriving in Sumatra, the group settled around Lake Toba (Goodnews, 2024). They initially chose Sianjur for its abundant water sources and flat terrain, ideal for farming (K. Wiradnyana, 2018).

DALIHAN NA TOLU is something unique in the world, born alone in the Batak Land since ancient times and still lived and practiced by the ethnic group. Let us follow a little history of the Batak Land, where DALIHAN NA TOLU grew. The Batak Land is an inland area in North Sumatra with Lake Toba as its center. This inland area is a plateau flanked by mountains. According to the myth that still lives today, the first ancestor of all Batak people was named Si Raja Batak, who lived at the foot of Mount Pusuk Buhit, this mountain is located to the west of Lake Toba. The descendants of this ancestor inhabited the entire island of Samosir. Later, some of them crossed Lake Toba, then spread to all corners to inhabit certain areas in North Sumatra.

The Batak ethnic group can be divided into two branches, namely the Toba branch and the Pak-pak Daiiri branch. The Toba branch is divided again into the Toba, Angkola, Mandailing and Simalungun branches. The Daiiri branch (Pak-pak Daiiri) is divided into Daiiri, Karo, Alas and Gayo. The main difference between the two branches in the field of language is that the Batak language of the Daiiri branch recognizes the pepet sound. This is due to the difficult natural conditions of ancient times in terms of traffic, so that for a long time there was a break in communication between the areas inhabited by the Toba branch and those inhabited by the Daiiri branch. The Simalungun Batak language, which is closer to the Toba Batak language than to the Daiiri Batak language, is a bridge between the Toba and Daiiri branches (Siahaan, 1982).

Dalihan Na Tolu itself can be interpreted as a three-legged stove. A three-legged stove requires absolute balance. Functional status as a social construct consists of three fundamental elements. These three elements are:

1) Somba Marhulahula

Somba Marhulahula which means respect for the hula-hula. Hula-hula is a group of wives' clans, starting from the wife, the mother's clan group (father's wife), the grandfather's wife's clan group, and several generations; the child's wife's clan group, the grandson's wife's clan group, the sibling's wife's clan group and so on from the dongan tubu group. Hula-hula is considered a source of blessings and also a source of offspring. Offspring are obtained from a wife who comes from the hula-hula. Without the hula-hula there is no wife, without the wife there is no offspring. The hula-hula occupies an honorable position in Batak society. This respect must always be shown in attitudes, words and actions. Batak people must somba mar hula-hula, which means they must be respectful, submissive and obedient to the hula-hula.

2) Elek Marboru Elek Marboru or the weak attitude of the boru/woman. It can be interpreted as a feeling of affection that is not accompanied by hidden intentions and ulterior motives. Boru is gentle towards our women or the clan group who takes wives from our children (our daughters). A gentle attitude towards the boru is necessary, because in the past it was the boru who could help work the rice fields in the fields. Without the role of the boru, holding a party would be impossible. Batak advice goes like this: Molo naeng ho ma ho marboru, meaning: "If you want to gain wealth, be gentle to the boru".

3). Manat mardongan tubu/sabutuha

Manat mardongan tubu/ sabutuha, namely the attitude of being careful towards fellow clans to prevent misunderstandings in the implementation of traditional events. According to the saying of the elders "hau na jonok ok do na boi marsiogoson" which means that the wood that is close is the one that can rub against each other. This illustrates that such close and frequent relationships allow for conflicts, conflicts of interest, position and others. The image of dongan tubu is the figure of an older brother and younger sibling. Psychologically in everyday life the relationship between an older brother and younger sibling is very close. However, sometimes there are certain reasons

that can cause the relationship to become strained, even leading to bloodshed. That is why the Batak people are ordered to *manat mardongan tubu*, which means: to respect and be careful towards relatives of the same clan so as not to hurt their feelings (Harvina, 2017).

The Beginning of the Historical Journey of GMIM Batak Language in Manado in 1969-1970

The Batak people are one of Indonesia's major ethnic groups, possessing distinct social and cultural characteristics. Batak people are generally known for their assertiveness, stubbornness, courage, self-confidence, and strong fighting spirit. They are also known for their tenacity, courage in facing challenges, and strong sense of independence. Furthermore, the Batak people are renowned for their high regard for education. This is what drives many Batak people to migrate to major cities throughout Indonesia, including Manado, in order to obtain a better education, secure decent employment, and improve their standard of living.

The Batak ethnic group itself consists of various sub-tribes, such as the Toba, Karo, Simalungun, Pakpak, Angkola, and Mandailing. Despite their diverse sub-tribes, the Batak people uphold the values of kinship (daliha na tolu for the Toba Batak, for example) and social solidarity. These values are embodied in the practice of mutual cooperation, mutual assistance, and maintaining family ties even when they are away from home. Therefore, when Batak people migrate, they usually seek out fellow Bataks to form community groups. This is done to maintain identity, strengthen emotional bonds, and provide mutual support in their new homeland.

The origins of the Batak-Language GMIM Congregation in Manado are inextricably linked to the story of a Batak migrant named Mr. J. Hutagalung. In 1969, he moved from his hometown to Manado City after being assigned to lead Bank Dagang Negara (BDN). As a Christian, he sought a place of worship to further his spiritual life. Initially, he worshipped at GMIM Sentrum Manado. However, after attending several services there, he discovered that no other Batak people were there. This situation sparked a longing in him to fellowship with fellow Batak migrants, as for the Batak people, togetherness with fellow ethnic groups holds profound meaning, especially in the context of spiritual life (Interview with, 2025).

With this longing, Mr. J. Hutagalung began searching for and contacting fellow Batak people in Manado. He explored various government agencies and other institutions in the city. His efforts ultimately paid off, as he managed to find several other Batak people. After getting to know them, he invited them to gather and hold a meeting at his official residence in the Tikala area. This initial gathering was more of a familial affair, serving as a means of fostering friendship among fellow Batak migrants.

However, over time, the gatherings evolved into a form of communal worship. This culminated in the first service held at J. Hutagalung's home on October 19, 1969. These services then continued regularly, once a month. Although the congregation remained limited, the close-knit family atmosphere kept these services going (Interview with, 2025).

Interestingly, some of the congregation members who attended the service came from areas quite far from Manado, such as Tondano, Tomohon, and the surrounding areas. At that time, transportation was not as advanced as it is today. Traveling to the place of worship certainly required considerable effort, expense, and time. However, this did not dampen the congregation's enthusiasm for attending. This fact demonstrates that the longing for fellowship in ethnic and faith unity far outweighed the obstacles they faced.

Over time, the number of Batak people living and working in Manado has increased. Many of them work as civil servants, members of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and Indonesian National Police (Polri), and

private sector employees. Their presence has also led to a steady increase in the number of congregants attending services. To maintain the continuity of regular worship services, the congregation has taken the initiative to invite pastors to lead their services. The pastors at GMIM have volunteered to serve the congregation on a rotating basis, resulting in a more orderly atmosphere.

On December 6, 1970, the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation began its first service at the GMIM Sentrum Manado Church Building at 11:00-13:00 WITA. With the approval of the Chairman of the BPMJ GMIM Sentrum Manado Rev. JJ Rotty, the Regional Chairman of GMIM Sentrum Rev. Rondo, and Rev. JJ Wala as the pastor serving at GMIM Sentrum Manado. And has received approval from the BPMJ GMIM Synod in Tomohon by the Chairman of BPS-GMIM Rev. Rein Markus Luntungan, and the General Secretary Rev. WA Roeroe. The Khadim of the pastor from GMIM was Rev. JJ Wala, and the New Year's service was led by the General Secretary of BPS-GMIM Rev. WA Roeroe. The Chairman of the Batak-speaking GMIM in Manado at that time was St. Jansen Hutagalung, Secretary St. J. Sihombing, and treasurer Drs. Marining Hutagalung (Interview with, 2025).

The establishment of the Batak-language GMIM in Manado was based on an agreement from the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), which emphasized that churches based on ethnicity should not be established in Eastern Indonesia. Congregations are expected to join existing church organizations in their respective areas. This principle is implemented by the Batak-language GMIM, which integrates ethnic identity into the church's organizational structure without forming a new denomination. However, functional congregations are still given the authority to independently organize their worship and fellowship life, as long as they do not conflict with GMIM regulations and provisions.

Over time, BPS-GMIM has periodically held Service Meetings for Functional Congregations as a means of coordinating and fostering service. Several functional congregations have participated in these meetings, including:

1. GMIM Christ Congregation in Manado
2. GMIM Christ Congregation in Bitung
3. GMIM Anugerah congregation in Langowan
4. Batak-Speaking GMIM Congregation in Manado Center
5. GMIM Sion congregation on Inspiration Hill, Tomohon
6. Dutch-Speaking GMIM Congregation in Manado (currently inactive)
7. GMIM Congregation Speaking Toraja in Sario Manado

Through the BPS-GMIM decision, all functional congregations have the right and authority to manage the congregation's household autonomously, as long as it is in line with GMIM regulations.

Thus, the period 1969–1970 marked the beginning of the birth of the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation in Manado. The formation of this congregation clearly demonstrates a strong spiritual longing and the need to preserve Batak cultural identity in a foreign land. From a simple meeting in the home of a migrant, a congregation community developed that would later become a vital part of GMIM's history in North Sulawesi.

Congregation Growth 1970–1980

After the first service held at J. Hutagalung's official residence on October 19, 1969, the Batak congregation in Manado grew steadily. What initially consisted of only monthly family services began to manifest itself as the embryo of an independent congregation.

In the late 1970s, the Batak congregation's worship at Hutagalung's house began to attract the attention of GMIM pastors. One of the pastors noted for serving was Rev. J. Wala. His presence provided spiritual strengthening

and recognition that this fellowship was not merely an informal gathering but had the potential to develop into a formal congregation.

As the congregation continued to grow, the congregation's management approached the GMIM Sentrum Manado Congregation Council (BPMJ) and the GMIM Synod in Tomohon . They requested permission for the Batak congregation to use the GMIM church facilities for regular worship services. This request was granted, and on December 6, 1970 , the Batak-Speaking GMIM Congregation was officially established and granted the opportunity to regularly worship at GMIM Sentrum Manado (SM, Interview, 2025).

The agreement made together with BPMJ GMIM Sentrum is as follows:

1. Batak congregation services will be served by GMIM pastors.
2. Catechism services will be provided by the assigned vicar.
3. Every sermon to be delivered must first be consulted with the BPMJ GMIM Sentrum.
4. The sacramental services (Holy Communion and Holy Baptism) will be served by the pastor of the GMIM Sentrum congregation.
5. The Batak congregation's worship time is set every Sunday at 11.00–13.00 WITA.

With this agreement, the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation had a clear position within the GMIM community. In 1971, the congregation was officially registered with the GMIM Synod, with the first board consisting of J. Hutagalung as Chairman, J. Sihombing as Secretary, and Drs. M. Hutagalung as Treasurer . This simple organizational structure became the initial foundation for the ministry (Interview with ES, 2025).

Regarding language, the congregation also established a unique rule. The first Sunday service is held in Indonesian, while the second through fourth Sundays are held in Batak. This decision stemmed from the congregation's desire to preserve their native language in worship while simultaneously ensuring the younger generation's familiarity with Batak language and culture. Thus, language has been an integral part of the congregation's identity since its inception.

The 1970s–1980s could be described as a period of initial growth, during which the congregation began to organize its worship, organization, and service patterns. Although its numbers were not yet significant, the spirit of keeping the faith and culture alive was a key driving force in its growth.

The Period of Conflict and Division 1982–1987

Entering the 1980s, the GMIM Batak-Speaking Congregation sought to further strengthen its presence. One important step was taken in 1982 , when the congregation successfully purchased a 1,750 m² plot of land in the Teling Atas area . The land was planned to be used to build a multi-purpose building or Sopo Godang , which could function as a center for congregation activities as well as a place for Batak cultural fellowship. The construction of the GMIM Batak-Speaking Congregation Multi-Purpose Building. This step was part of an effort to improve congregational services.

In order to support the ministry, Rev. M. Pardede S.Th., from HKBP, was placed by BPS-GMIM in the GMIM Yarden Dendengan Dalam Congregation. His presence also helped the ministry of the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation which at that time was still using the GMIM Sentrum Building on Jalan Sarapung, Manado, for weekly services every Sunday at 11:00 and 13:00 WITA. Therefore, on August 19, 1982, a meeting of the Congregation Working Body was held together with the Congregation Council and the elders of the Batak-speaking GMIM Congregation at the home of the T. Sitorus family. In the meeting, it was agreed to form a Multipurpose Building Construction Committee as well as the establishment of a foundation to support the construction process.

The Committee for the Construction of the Multipurpose Building (Sopo Godang) for the GMIM Batak Language Congregation in Manado consists of:

1. ISO Nainggolan, SH
2. H. Siregar
3. WD Hutabarat
4. AP Hutagalung
5. Drs. AB Sidabutar
6. E. Silalahi

The building committee was formed on August 19, 1982, and a building permit was submitted to the city government. The cornerstone was laid on January 27, 1985. However, during this process, differences of opinion emerged within the congregation. Although the Building Committee had been formed, the initial plan for the Multipurpose Building was never realized. This was due to various factors, some members of the congregation believed that the land and the building plan should be directed towards establishing the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP), rather than developing the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation. This conflict culminated in 1987, when the congregation that chose the HKBP path finally established the HKBP church in Teling Atas (ES, Interview, 2025). This difference created tensions that became increasingly difficult to bridge, and finally, some members of the congregation, led by Rev. M. Pardede, S.Th., along with Drs. Gurning as Deputy Chief of Police, decided to build the HKBP church on the land. This incident was a heavy blow to the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation, as most of the congregation members moved to the HKBP. The remaining congregation must struggle to survive with smaller numbers.

Over time, various aspirations emerged from congregation members and the congregation council. These differing views can be summarized as follows:

1. Aspiration to build the HKBP Church Building on land belonging to the Batak-speaking GMIM Congregation in Manado.
2. The establishment of the HKBP Manado Church led by Rev. M. Pardede, S.Th., Drs. R. Gurning, and parties who support the plan.
3. The desire of some parties to maintain the integrity of the Batak-speaking GMIM Congregation in Manado.
4. Agreement to continue worshipping as a Batak-speaking GMIM congregation, by forming a congregational management led by:
 - Chairman of the Daily Workers' Board: St. AP Hutagalung
 - Secretary: St. JL Situmeang
 - Treasurer: St. DN Simorangkir

Finally, in May 1987, the HKBP Manado Church was officially opened. However, the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation in Manado decided to continue worshipping at the GMIM Sentrum building on Jalan Sarapung, Manado.

This period of conflict and division left deep historical scars. However, it also demonstrated the strong identity dynamics within the Batak diaspora. For some, Batak identity is seen as better represented within the HKBP, while for others, it can be maintained within the GMIM.

Post-Conflict Developments 1988–2003

After the major split in 1987, the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation entered a difficult period. Congregation numbers dwindled drastically, and most Batak migrants in Manado preferred to worship at the HKBP. As a result, for nearly a decade and a half, the number of Batak-speaking GMIM congregations remained stagnant (DE, Interview, 2025).

Despite this, services continue to be held regularly. The remaining congregation, though small, demonstrates their commitment to maintaining the existence of GMIM Berbahasa Batak. Their close-knit togetherness enables the congregation to persevere despite limitations.

This period could be described as a period of stagnation. No major development was undertaken, and ministries were carried out at a snail's pace. However, this difficult period proved the congregation's resilience and strong faith. This foundation then enabled the congregation's revival in the following years.

The Revival and Building of New Churches 2004–2016

Entering the 2000s, after a long period of stagnation following the split, the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation began to revive. Although its size was less than before, their commitment to faith and spirit of togetherness remained strong. One tangible manifestation of this revival was the congregation's involvement in various GMIM Synod service programs and community outreach programs.

In 2004, the congregation participated in a scholarship program initiated by the GMIM Synod for students from Nias who were affected by natural disasters. Despite the congregation's relatively limited financial resources, their concern for those in need demonstrates that the congregation is not solely focused on itself but also plays an active role in supporting humanitarian services. This is one sign that the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation remains alive and functioning despite experiencing setbacks.

In 2009, the congregation adjusted its contribution system, or financial obligations, to GMIM Sentrum. This adjustment was made to balance the congregation's own financial capabilities, given that the majority of its members are migrants with limited financial means. This decision also demonstrated the congregation's independence in managing its finances and organization.

A significant event in the congregation's history occurred in 2010, when the congregation received a pastor specifically assigned to serve them, Rev. NK Londong. This pastor's presence brought a breath of fresh air to the congregation. Previously, worship services often required assistance from other GMIM pastors on a rotating basis. With the addition of a dedicated pastor, the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation began to organize their services more regularly, intensively, and consistently. The presence of this pastor also strengthened the bonds among the congregation, as they felt they had a spiritual leader truly present in the congregation's life.

The congregation's revival peaked in 2012, when they successfully purchased a plot of land in Tingkulu, measuring approximately 1,500 m². This land purchase was the result of hard work, sacrifice, and the togetherness of the entire congregation. Great hope arose that the Batak-Speaking GMIM congregation would finally have its own church building, a dream that had been only a dream since its inception.

The church's construction and groundbreaking ceremony, led by Rev. N. Longdong in Tingkulu, began on April 20, 2014. The entire congregation contributed in various ways, including labor, thought, prayer, and funds. The congregation worked together, reflecting the strong values of solidarity inherent in Batak culture. Every family in the congregation contributed, ensuring the building process was carried out in a spirit of togetherness (ES, Interview, 2025).

Finally, on August 2, 2015, the first service in the new church building was held. This service coincided with the congregation's anniversary, thus adding a very deep meaning for the entire congregation. The official inauguration was then carried out on June 19, 2016 by the Chairman of the GMIM Synod at that time, Rev. Dr. HWB Sumakul. This inauguration event was real proof that the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation was able to rise from adversity, rebuild itself, and even realize a big dream that had been longed for.

The period from 2004 to 2016 can be described as a time of revival and renewal. From a once-divided congregation, they have emerged strong and independent, having their own church building. This success serves as a symbol of identity, pride, and recognition of the existence of the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation in Manado.

Congregational Ministry in the Modern Era 2016-2024

Following the inauguration of the new church building in Tingkulu in 2016, the ministry of the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation has grown and become more focused. Congregational life no longer focuses solely on Sunday worship, but also encompasses comprehensive ministry to all age groups, from children and teenagers to young adults, mothers and fathers, to the elderly. Each group has its own ministry committee that actively develops programs and activities to foster the congregation's faith.

Furthermore, the church has also begun to open itself to technological developments. This proved invaluable during the 2020–2021 Covid-19 pandemic, with the pastor assisting in the ministry at that time being Rev. Melani Pua., S.Th., M.Psi. During the pandemic, in-person worship services were suspended in accordance with government policy. However, the Batak-Speaking GMIM congregation did not stop worshipping. Worship services were shifted online, utilizing social media platforms such as YouTube and the congregation's Facebook page. Although the congregation could not physically gather, technology enabled them to continue fellowshiping in prayer and God's Word.

The pandemic has indeed brought significant challenges, particularly in terms of pastoral care and congregational participation. However, it has also proven that the Batak-speaking GMIM congregation is capable of adapting to the situation. In mid-2021, when the government began to relax restrictions, in-person services resumed with strict health protocols in place.

Another significant development occurred in 2021, when the congregation was served by a new pastor, Rev. Rocky Marojahan Purba. His presence brought a new dynamic to the congregation's ministry. He not only continued spiritual ministry but also encouraged the congregation to become more active in various areas, including social service, developing commissions, and preserving Batak culture in worship.

Entering 2024, the Batak-Speaking GMIM Congregation has reached the age of 54 years. For more than half a century, this congregation has gone through various dynamics: its initial formation with longing, growth and official recognition, conflict and division, long stagnation, until its revival with the establishment of its own church building. Now, the congregation not only exists, but is also increasingly established as an integral part of GMIM, while still maintaining the Batak cultural identity through language, traditions, and distinctive church life. With the management as Chairman of the Congregation St. Desmon Eduard Siahaan, Vice Chairman St. SB Manulang, Secretary of the Congregation St. Lerry Hutasuht, Treasurer of the Congregation St. RF br Situmeang (LH, Interview, 2025).

Thus, the period 2016–2024 can be called a period of modern ministry, where congregations are increasingly open to technology, adaptive to the challenges of the times, and consistent in maintaining their cultural identity as well as their Christian faith.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Batak-language GMIM in Manado is a product of the Batak community's need to maintain their cultural and linguistic identity within an open, local church setting. Since its inception in 1970, This congregation is a clear example of successful cultural adaptation in the context of multi-ethnic church ministry in North Sulawesi. The existence of GMIM Berbahasa Batak not only enriches the life of faith and culture within GMIM, but also demonstrates a high ecumenical spirit through active involvement in cross-cultural ministry. The history of the development of GMIM Berbahasa Batak in Manado from 1970 to 2024 shows a dynamic growth process, starting from the formation of a worship fellowship of the Batak diaspora community, experiencing periods of division and restoration, until becoming an established congregation and officially recognized within the GMIM structure. This development reflects the ability of the Batak congregation to adapt to the social and cultural context of the Minahasa community without losing its linguistic identity and spiritual traditions. This church is not only a place of worship, but also a space for cultural preservation, faith education, and social integration between cultures in North Sulawesi. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that GMIM Berbahasa Batak continue to develop culturally relevant services for the younger generation, strengthen faith education and preserve the Batak language, and utilize digital technology to expand the church's mission. Going forward, this church has the potential to become a model for developing contextual and multicultural services within GMIM and other churches in Indonesia.

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