THEOLOGY ADVOCACY

A Theological Framework for Churches

A Collaborative Resource of:

IPTL

GKI Tana Papua

GMIT

GKS

GPM

GKPB

UnitingWorld



THEOLOGY OF ADVOCACY

A Theological Framework for Church-Based Advocacy

Indonesia and Timor Leste

***A collaborative resource of**:*

IPTL, GKI Tana Papua, GKPB, GPM, GMIT, GKS

Supported by UnitingWorld

Editorial Team:

Rev. Domingos Alves, S.Si.Teol,
Rev. Joice Adelce da Costa, S.Th,
Rev. Dr Mery Kolimon,
Rev. Marlin Lomi, S.Th,
Rev. Dr Ni Luh Suartini,
Rev. Elifas Tomix Maspaitella, M.Si,
Rev. Dr Apwee Ting

CHAPTER 1

A Wounded World and the Calling of the Church

Our world is marked by deep wounds: social inequality, poverty, violence, environmental destruction, and the growing impacts of climate change. Across Easter Indonesia and Timor Leste, these crises do not affect everyone equally. Those who suffer the most are the poor, Indigenous communities, women, children, people with disabilities, and those living on the margins of society. Climate change in particular intensifies existing injustices: rising sea levels, droughts, storms, and food insecurity disproportionately affect communities with the least resources to adapt. Ecological crises become moral and spiritual crises.

In the midst of this wounded world, the church is called to embody and proclaim God's love through concrete acts of justice, compassion, and solidarity. To be the church is to listen to the cries of the world and to take part in God's mission to defend life and restore creation. Silence before suffering is not neutrality; it is complicity. The church that does not speak is a church that has not yet heard.

1.1 Advocacy as a Calling of Faith

Advocacy is an expression of Christian faith rooted in the love of God for the world and in the ministry of Jesus Christ, who came "to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed" (Luke 4:18–19). Advocacy, therefore, is not an optional activity or an external addition to the life of the church. It is an essential dimension of "missio Dei", the mission of God which sends the church to be a sign of justice, compassion, and peace in the world.

1.2 Theological Foundations of Advocacy

God Who Is Just and Compassionate

God hears the cries of the oppressed (Exodus 3:7–10) and commands justice for the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers (Psalm 82:3). God's justice is restorative, not merely punitive: it restores dignity and life to those who suffer. The God of Scripture is not neutral in the face of injustice.

Jesus Christ as Defender of Life

Jesus consistently aligned himself with the poor and marginalized, challenged unjust systems, and embodied God's compassion through healing, inclusion, and liberation. His ministry reveals that advocacy is not a peripheral concern but lies at the very heart of the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit as Empower and Guide

The Spirit gives the church courage, wisdom, and perseverance to speak truth, accompany the suffering, and act for justice. The Spirit also shapes the character of advocates, nurturing love, patience, humility, and hope. Without the Spirit, advocacy becomes empty activism; with the Spirit, advocacy becomes testimony.

The Kingdom of God as Vision of Justice and Shalom

God's Reign is the vision of a new order where love, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation flourish. Advocacy is a foretaste of this Kingdom, a sign pointing toward the world as God intends it to be.

1.3 The Church's Identity as an Advocate Community

A Prophetic Community

The church is called to speak truth in the midst of injustice, discern the signs of the times, and bear witness to God's will for justice. Prophecy is not primarily prediction; it is the courageous naming of what God sees.

A Pastoral Community

The church accompanies and strengthens those who suffer, offering care, healing, and solidarity. Advocacy is pastoral when it seeks to restore broken lives and wounded communities. The wounds of the world are the wounds of Christ's body.

A Transformative Community

The church works with society to bring about social, political, economic, and cultural transformation. This transformation includes both personal conversion and structural change, so that life in abundance becomes possible for all. Worship that does not produce justice is incomplete worship (Isaiah 58:6–7).

Reflective Questions

1. Where, and in what forms, is injustice most visible in my community today?
2. How does my church respond to suffering through charity alone, or also by pursuing structural change?
3. What does "loving our neighbour" mean when we face oppressive structures or harmful public policies?
4. How can the prayer "Your Kingdom come" become visible in the social engagement of my church?
5. What cries of the world do we hear today, and how is the church called to respond as an act of faith?

CHAPTER 2

The Church's Journey: Historical Witness Across Indonesia and Timor Leste

The historical dimension reveals how each church's ministry of advocacy grows out of real struggles, contextual challenges, and deep theological convictions. These diverse stories demonstrate that while the contexts differ, the calling to seek justice and uphold dignity is shared by all. Together, the six partner churches offer a rich framework of contextual theologies, each contributing something irreplaceable to the shared ecumenical framework.

2.1 Timor Leste (IPTL): Faith Shaped by Suffering and Hope

The Protestant Church of Timor Leste (IPTL) was born amid collective trauma: centuries of Portuguese colonial rule, followed by forced integration with Indonesia from 1975–2000, marked by war, displacement, and systematic human rights violations. Out of these wounds emerged a theological conviction that the church must be an agent of healing, reconciliation, education, and ecological stewardship. Faith forged in suffering does not become passive; it becomes prophetic.

IPTL's advocacy focuses on: restoring dignity and agency to communities recovering from trauma; education and empowerment to help people claim their rights; and ecological justice that honours land as a spiritual and life-giving gift of God. The core spiritual commitment that animates IPTL's ministry is captured in two words:

"Never again."

This is a theological commitment to memory, healing, and the prevention of future violence. Remembering rightly is itself an act of advocacy.

2.2 Papua (GKI Tana Papua): Advocacy for Land, Life, and Indigenous Rights

Papua faces an acute tension between large-scale economic development and the protection of Indigenous lands, cultures, and ecosystems. For GKI Tana Papua, land, forest, and sea are sacred gifts of God, the ground of identity, spirituality, and survival for Indigenous communities. Dispossession of land is therefore not only an economic injustice; it is a spiritual wound.

GKI-TP's advocacy includes: accompanying communities in dialogue and negotiation regarding customary land rights (hak ulayat); strengthening theological awareness that caring for land is an expression of faithfulness to God the Creator; and developing local theology that affirms God's presence in the struggles of Indigenous peoples. Advocacy in Papua is a ministry of listening, presence, and the restoration of dignity.

2.3 Bali (GKPB): Advocacy Amid Tourism and Economic Pressures

Bali's economy is profoundly shaped by tourism, creating tension between economic growth and the ecological, cultural, and community wellbeing of Balinese society. GKPB frames advocacy as the effort to uphold human dignity and ecological sustainability in the midst of intense economic pressure that often treats land and people as commodities.

GKPB's approach includes community-based advocacy for marginalized groups: tourism workers, local vendors, communities losing land; socio-ecological education integrating environmental and social justice into church programmes and schools; and household economic empowerment to strengthen families against economic vulnerability. Advocacy in Bali seeks a balance where economic development serves people and creation, not the reverse.

2.4 Maluku (GPM): Ecological Advocacy and the Theology of the Earth's Depths

The Protestant Church of Maluku (GPM) is known for its long-standing commitment to ecological justice, expressed through the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) movement. A defining theological contribution of GPM is the "Theology of the Earth's Depths" (Teologi Perut Bumi), which understands the earth not as an object of exploitation but as the living body of God, entrusted to humanity as stewards, not owners.

GPM's advocacy integrates evidence-based and legal work (partnering with experts and civil society to challenge destructive mining), ecological Christian education in worship and congregational life, and interfaith collaboration with Muslim communities and multi-sector institutions. GPM demonstrates that prophetic advocacy must weave together spirituality, science, ethics, and collective action into a single seamless witness.

2.5 East Nusa Tenggara (GMIT): Transformative Diakonia and Prophetic Witness

GMIT has developed one of the most comprehensive theological frameworks for advocacy among Indonesian churches, shaped by the realities of poverty, human trafficking, gender-based violence, and ecological vulnerability. At its heart is a three-level understanding of diakonia:

1. Charity Diakonia: immediate assistance ("giving fish").
2. Reformative Diakonia: building skills and capacities ("giving a fishing rod").
3. Transformative Diakonia: addressing systemic injustice: asking who controls the coast, who owns the land, and whether the poor still have access to the sea.

This framework drives GMIT's advocacy on human trafficking (driven by chronic poverty, migration pressure, and structural neglect of Eastern Indonesia), gender-based violence, and ecological degradation. GMIT has established "Rumah Harapan", a safe house for survivors of gender-based violence, offering medical, legal, psychological, and spiritual care. Liturgy, sermons, contextual Bible studies, youth movements, and data-driven faith reflection are all woven into GMIT's advocacy ecology.

2.6 Sumba (GKS): Ecology, Human–Nature Relationship, and Sustainability

Gereja Kristen Sumba (GKS) operates in a unique ecological and cultural context on Sumba island, where indigenous spirituality, land, water, and forest are inseparably woven into community life. GKS brings to the ecumenical partnership a distinctly ecological and culturally rooted perspective: one that understands relational ecology, recognizes the sacredness of water, land, and forest, and reads environmental degradation as a spiritual violation, not merely a material problem.

Sumba faces chronic water scarcity, land degradation, food vulnerability, migration and human trafficking, and patriarchal constraints that limit women's participation. GKS responds by protecting water sources and customary (adat) forests, promoting community-based food security, strengthening women's economic roles, and developing culturally rooted environmental education. A defining conviction underlies all of this:

> *"Advocacy must be rooted in local culture. Local spirituality is a theological source for justice."*

In asserting this, GKS does not merely adapt Christian theology to local culture; it insists that God is already at work in Sumbanese wisdom, waiting to be named. Local culture is not background to the Gospel; it is a site of revelation.

Reflective Questions

1. Timor Leste: How can trauma and collective memory become sources of hope, healing, and advocacy?
2. Papua: Why is land a matter of spiritual identity for Indigenous Papuans, and what does that mean for the church's response?
3. Bali: How can the church respond when economic development threatens ecological and community wellbeing?
4. Maluku: What does the "Theology of the Earth's Depths" teach us about caring for creation, and what is our church's ecological theology?
5. NTT: How can communities move from charity to transformative justice? What keeps churches at the level of charity?
6. Sumba: In what ways does local culture or indigenous wisdom in my context serve as a theological resource for justice?

CHAPTER 3

Dimensions of a Theology of Advocacy

The theology of advocacy is a faith reflection born from the experience of human suffering and the longing to manifest God's justice in the world. It is not merely an emotional response to social problems; it is action rooted in spirituality, ethics, social awareness, and deep theological understanding. These four dimensions are interconnected and must be embraced holistically. Together they form the framework of advocacy.

3.1 The Spiritual Dimension: The Root of All Advocacy

The spiritual dimension is the foundation from which all advocacy work must grow. Without it, church advocacy easily becomes activism, prone to anger, burnout, and the slow loss of hope.

Advocacy emerges from prayer, compassion, sensitivity to God's presence, and the desire to participate in the healing of the world. Jesus initiated his liberating actions after praying and communing with God. The church is called to do likewise: to listen before speaking, to weep before acting, to be renewed before renewing.

Prayer is not a preparation for advocacy but an inseparable dimension of it. Prayer enables the church to see the suffering of the world through God's eyes, remain faithful through difficulty, find wisdom amid complexity, and guard the heart from hatred and despair. In prayer, the church is reminded that advocacy is not merely a human project but participation in the work of the Holy Spirit.

Compassion is the spirituality that moves the church to be present, to listen, and to walk alongside the wounded. It is not sympathy from a distance but solidarity in proximity, the willingness to be changed by another's suffering. This is where advocacy draws its deepest strength.

3.2 The Ethical Dimension: Integrity and Truth

The ethical dimension ensures that the church's advocacy is carried out with integrity and in alignment with Gospel values. The church must demonstrate that its methods are consistent with the goals it pursues. The credibility of the church's witness depends on the coherence between what it proclaims and how it acts.

Advocacy requires honesty, transparency, accountability, and faithfulness to truth. These values apply not only to the church's public speech but to its internal culture: how it treats survivors, how it handles power, how it accounts for resources, and how it builds relationships with the communities it accompanies.

Ethical advocacy honours the dignity of every relationship: between church and society, between advocates and victims, between the church and government, between the church and Indigenous communities. The ethics of care affirms that advocacy must be oriented toward restoration, dignity, and long-term justice, not merely toward winning arguments or shaping public opinion. A church that does advocacy without integrity does more harm than silence.

3.3 The Social Dimension: Grounded in Real Conditions

The social dimension places church advocacy in the midst of concrete reality, where injustice, poverty, inequality, violence, and environmental destruction take place every day. The church does not live apart from society; it is embedded in it, called to read its signs and respond to its wounds.

Social advocacy invites the church to study the context, read data and research, listen carefully to community voices, and create spaces for honest dialogue. The issues that demand advocacy have real faces and names: poverty and structural inequality; human trafficking and forced migration; gender-based violence; environmental degradation; agrarian conflicts and the erosion of Indigenous land rights; the marginalization of coastal communities; and weak governance that further silences the poor.

Because social problems are complex and interlocking, the church must build collaborative relationships: with government institutions, civil society organizations, customary institutions, academic communities, ecumenical and interfaith movements, and the media. Advocacy becomes stronger when it is embedded in broad networks of shared concern.

3.4 The Theological Dimension: Revealing Who God Is

The theological dimension is what makes church advocacy distinctively Christian: it is not merely social work, but a theological act that reveals who God is and how God works in the world. When the church defends life, it proclaims that God is love, that God is the defender of the weak, that God opposes injustice, and that God is restoring a broken world.

This theology is rooted in the long biblical narrative: the liberation of Israel from Egypt; the prophets' strong denunciation of injustice; Jesus' ministry of inclusion, healing, and challenge to power; the early church's radical life of sharing and mutual care; and the vision of God's Kingdom filled with shalom. Advocacy is not a new idea imported into the church from outside; it belongs to the oldest and deepest streams of the faith tradition.

The God we worship is not neutral. God's preferential love for the poor, the marginalized, the suffering, and the oppressed is not favouritism; it is the justice that restores life. To stand with the poor is not a political choice; it

is a theological one. And every act of advocacy, however small, becomes a sign that the Kingdom of God is breaking into the world.

Together, these four dimensions form a living whole. The spiritual dimension gives strength; the ethical dimension safeguards integrity; the social dimension grounds the church in real-world conditions; and the theological dimension provides the foundation of faith. When all four are embraced together, the church can engage in advocacy that touches hearts, transforms structures, and brings forth new life.

Reflective Questions

1. How does the spirituality of my church sustain its advocacy ministry? What spiritual practices enable long-term engagement?
2. What ethical values must be upheld when the church speaks truth to power? Where does our church's integrity face the greatest test?
3. What social issues are most urgent in my local context? Are we listening to the voices of those most affected?
4. How does the theological understanding of God's preferential love shape the church's concrete actions?
5. How do I understand the relationship between prayer, justice, and liberation? Can prayer that does not lead to action be called a prayer?

CHAPTER 4

Advocacy in Practice: Prophetic Action, Solidarity, and Public Witness

Theology that does not become practice is incomplete. The church's calling is not only to understand injustice but to respond to it through ministries that heal, empower, transform, and restore. This chapter shows how the theology of advocacy takes concrete form, enabling the church to bear witness to Christ in the world across three overlapping fields: environmental advocacy, human rights and social justice, and advocacy for vulnerable and marginalized communities.

4.1 Environmental Advocacy: Caring for God's Creation

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). Humanity is called to steward the earth (Genesis 2:15), not exploit it. Caring for creation is therefore an act of worship and obedience, not merely an environmental preference. Ecological destruction is a theological problem: it is the desecration of God's gift and the gravest harm to the poorest communities, who depend most directly on a functioning creation.

Environmental advocacy seeks to protect the earth as our shared home, reduce the impacts of climate change, and work toward ecological justice especially for communities most affected by environmental degradation. Concrete forms include:

- Eco-theology education: teaching congregations the biblical and theological basis for creation care, and connecting ecological concerns to worship, preaching, and Christian formation.
- Green Church initiatives: energy-saving practices, waste reduction, tree-planting, water conservation, and climate-friendly congregational lifestyles.
- Policy advocacy: speaking out against destructive extractive projects, promoting sustainable land use, and supporting community-led environmental management.
- Collaboration with Indigenous and local communities: supporting traditional ecological knowledge and advocating for fair access to natural resources.

Environmental advocacy teaches the church not only to protect creation but to stand with communities whose lives, identities, and livelihoods are inseparably tied to land, forest, and sea.

4.2 Advocacy for Human Rights and Social Justice

All people are created in the image of God (imago Dei), possessing dignity that cannot be taken away. God calls the church to defend the oppressed, speak for the voiceless, and pursue justice and peace in society. Human rights advocacy is therefore an expression of discipleship.

The church's advocacy for human rights and social justice seeks to build a society that values justice, equality, and peace for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, social class, or religion. This advocacy takes several forms:

- Accompaniment of victims: pastoral care, legal assistance, protection, and psychological support for those experiencing violence and discrimination.
- Interfaith dialogue and reconciliation: collaborating with religious communities to promote harmony, prevent conflict, and build peaceful societies.
- Public policy advocacy: engaging government and civic institutions to promote laws that uphold justice, gender equality, human rights, and freedom of belief.
- Human rights education: integrating human rights values into church schools, sermons, youth programs, and community workshops.

The church cannot claim to love God while remaining indifferent to the violation of God's image in any human being.

4.3 Advocacy for Vulnerable Groups, Indigenous Peoples, and Coastal Communities

God's heart is with the vulnerable. Jesus consistently restored dignity to those pushed to the margins: women, children, people with disabilities, the poor, and the outcasts of his society. The church is called to do likewise: not from a position of charity that keeps people dependent, but from a posture of solidarity that restores agency, voice, and full participation in community life.

Advocacy for vulnerable communities seeks to protect their rights, wellbeing, and participation in systems that often exclude or harm them. Concrete forms include:

- Strengthening Indigenous rights: supporting communities in defending land rights, cultural identity, and traditional wisdom against dispossession.
- Economic empowerment: developing livelihood programmes, savings groups, vocational training, and household economic resilience.
- Protection of women and children: fighting gender-based violence, promoting gender equality, and providing safe spaces and legal support.
- Accompaniment of coastal and fishing communities: supporting those affected by climate change, ocean exploitation, declining fish resources, and land reclamation.

This form of advocacy aligns the church with those whose voices are most often ignored or silenced. To stand with them is not a social programme; it is the Gospel made visible.

4.4 The Church as a Prophetic Community in the Public Sphere

When the church engages in advocacy, it testifies that God cares about this world. Church advocacy does not seek political power; it seeks to defend human dignity, pursue truth, and promote the common good. The church must not fear speaking out against unjust policies or harmful systems.

Prophetic witness in the public sphere is expressed not only through preaching but through research and critical analysis, pastoral accompaniment, congregational education, cross-sector collaboration, and community action. Advocacy cannot be done alone. The church must build networks with ecumenical bodies, interfaith communities, local governments, civil society organizations, and Indigenous communities. Collaboration strengthens and expands the impact of prophetic witness.

Reflective Questions

1. Is my church actively contributing to solutions for ecological crises? What simple actions can we take to protect creation?
2. Do we understand human rights as part of Christian faith and discipleship? How can we speak courageously in situations of injustice?
3. Who are the vulnerable groups near our congregation that we seldom hear from? Do we give them space to tell their stories?
4. What does “standing with the marginalized” mean beyond providing charity? What would genuine solidarity look like?
5. How can pastoral care become a liberating form of advocacy? What changes in our ministry would make this possible?

CHAPTER 5

Integration, Challenges, and Hope

Theology and advocacy are two inseparable dimensions of the church's life. Theology without advocacy risks becoming abstract reflection disconnected from the reality of suffering. Advocacy without theology becomes reactive action without spiritual direction, vulnerable to ideology, burnout, and the distortion of good intentions. This chapter explores how theology and advocacy form a living circle of reflection and action, examines the challenges that threaten this integration, and holds open the signs of hope that sustain the church's commitment.

5.1 The Circle of Reflection and Action

The integration of theology and advocacy is not merely a concept but a movement of faith. It begins with the awareness that God is at work in the world, especially among those who are wounded. The church is called to understand the will of God through theology, and to carry out the will of God through advocacy. These two movements cannot be separated; together they form a holistic vocation.

From Reflection to Action

True theological reflection will always give birth to action. Christian faith rejects passivity in the face of injustice. Theology must interpret Scripture contextually, see the world through God's eyes, and listen to the cries of the people. From such reflection arise solidarity, moral courage, and a vision for transformation. As James affirms, faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

From Action to Reflection

The advocacy actions of the church must be continually examined, corrected, and deepened through theological reflection. Advocacy that is not rooted in theology can become a mere emotional reaction, lacking long-term direction, or entangled in particular interests. Crucially, the experiences of the people, especially those who suffer become a source of theology: the stories of survivors, the struggles of Indigenous communities, the daily efforts of poor families, the experiences of coastal communities facing climate crisis. These help the church understand how God is at work in the realities of life.

The Cycle of Spiritual Learning

As the church acts, the church learns. What is learned becomes material for new theological reflection that improves future action. This healthy and necessary cycle: reflection, action, new reflection, transformation is what keeps advocacy alive, honest, and Spirit-led.

5.2 Advocacy as Transformation

The integration of theology and advocacy leads the church into a transformational movement: transforming the self, the community, and social structures.

- Spiritual transformation: advocacy shapes sensitivity of heart, moral courage, deep compassion, and hope amid difficulty. The church becomes more Christ-like when it defends the oppressed.
- Communal transformation: more relevant liturgy, more critical education, more empathetic pastoral care, deeper solidarity within the congregation, and more visionary leadership.
- Social transformation: protection for survivors of violence, fairer regulations, restoration of Indigenous land, increased ecological awareness, strengthened voices for women and young people, and improved wellbeing for vulnerable families.

Social transformation is not only structural change but also cultural and mental transformation within society.

5.3 Challenges in the Theology of Advocacy

The theology of advocacy is not an easy path. When the church chooses to stand with the vulnerable, speak the truth, and challenge unjust structures, it will face resistance and difficulty. These challenges must be named honestly, because they cannot be overcome if they remain unacknowledged.

Internal Challenges

- Many members view advocacy as political activism or NGO work, separating faith from social justice and therefore resisting church engagement with structural injustice.
- Fear of risk: leaders and congregants worry that advocacy may create conflict with government, customary institutions, or powerful groups, leading the church to choose silence.
- Limited capacity: technical expertise, legal knowledge, research capacity, and trained advocacy leaders are often lacking.
- Church structures that do not support advocacy: lacking dedicated commissions, funding, or training for justice ministry.
- Hierarchical church culture that does not give room to grassroots initiatives, particularly from women, youth, and small congregations.

External Challenges

- Resistance from government or powerful groups that perceive the church's prophetic voice as a political threat.

- Complexity of social issues: trafficking, land conflicts, migration, and ecological destruction require multisectoral collaboration and long-term strategies that are difficult to sustain.
- Patriarchal culture and structural violence that makes gender justice advocacy controversial or actively resisted.
- National economic inequality: the development gap between western and eastern Indonesia creates entrenched poverty that cannot be addressed without state-level policy reform.
- The global ecological crisis: climate change creates widespread impacts that require churches to grow in environmental literacy and the capacity for ecological advocacy.

5.4 The Church's Response: Pathways Forward

Despite these challenges, the church does not walk alone. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to speak, stand with the vulnerable, and develop creative and contextual strategies.

- Strengthening theological education on advocacy: through catechism, leadership training, thematic sermons, and contextual liturgical materials that demonstrate advocacy's theological foundations.
- Developing structures and systems for advocacy: establishing commissions, allocating budgets, building partnerships, and developing clear processes for accompanying survivors.
- Ecumenical and interfaith collaboration: building networks with other churches, civil society, customary institutions, academic communities, and leaders of other faiths.
- Developing courageous and wise leadership: church leaders equipped with moral courage, social analysis, negotiation skills, and resilient spirituality.
- Increasing the participation of youth and women: whose energy, creativity, empathetic perspectives, and lived experience of injustice strengthen advocacy in irreplaceable ways.

5.5 Signs of Hope

Behind every challenge lie signs of hope. Hope in the theology of advocacy is not passive optimism but the active belief that God's Spirit is at work, renewing the world from within.

- A new awareness in the churches: growing attention to social justice, ecological responsibility, and the urgency of supporting survivors including around gender equality, human rights, and Indigenous rights.
- The rise of transformative contextual theologies: land theology, maritime theology, ecological theology, trauma and healing theology, and Indigenous theology, all enriching the church's understanding of God's work.
- A strengthening ecumenical movement: churches in Indonesia and Timor Leste growing more connected through theological collaboration, accompaniment programmes, capacity exchanges, and shared advocacy networks.

- Increasing youth involvement: young people who speak boldly, are sensitive to justice, are skilled in digital communication, and carry the future of church advocacy.
- A spirituality of hope: the deep theological conviction that darkness will not have the final word, that injustice will not prevail forever, and that God's Spirit continues restoring the world.

Reflective Questions

1. Has the advocacy carried out by my church been accompanied by theological reflection, or have these two been separated?
2. Whose experiences need to be heard so that the church's theology becomes more contextual and grounded?
3. What internal challenges are most strongly felt in my church? What would it take to overcome them?
4. Where do I see signs of hope in the church and in my local community?
5. What kind of transformation is most needed in my congregation: spiritual, communal, or structural?

CHAPTER 6

A Shared Commitment: The Church's Call Today and Tomorrow

The theology of advocacy affirms that Christian faith cannot be separated from the struggle to bring justice, peace, and restoration to the world. Amid social wounds, ecological crisis, structural violence, and the suffering of many communities, the church is called to be a living witness of God's liberating love. Advocacy is not an optional addition to the church's mission; it is at the heart of the Gospel's calling. This concluding chapter ties together the preceding reflections and points forward toward the shared vocation of the churches of Indonesia and Timor Leste.

6.1 The Church Called to Embody Just Love

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for the world for the poor, the oppressed, and the hopeless. The theology of advocacy reminds us that God's love is not neutral, that justice is an expression of love, and that defending the oppressed is a concrete act of faith. The church is called not only to comfort the wounded but to challenge the structures and systems that produce wounding. This is not a political agenda; it is faithfulness to the God who sides with life.

Love that does not defend the weak is an unfulfilled love. Worship that does not produce justice is incomplete worship. A church that proclaims God's love but remains silent has not yet understood what it proclaims.

6.2 The Church Renewed Through Advocacy

Advocacy does not only change the world; it transforms the church. A church that lives out advocacy will experience renewal in its spirituality (emphaty, prayerful in action, rooted in compassion and moral courage), its liturgy (bringing the world's cries into prayer, preaching, and song), its education (faith formation that is critical and transformative), its pastoral care (present amid social wounds, accompanying survivors), and its leadership (humble yet courageous, guided by the vision of God's justice).

The church that advocates becoming the church it was always called to be. Advocacy is not a burden added to the church's life; it is the expression of its deepest identity as the body of Christ in a wounded world.

6.3 The Church in the World: Persistent Public Witness

The theology of advocacy returns the church to its rightful place: in the midst of the world, not apart from it. The church must be a voice for the voiceless, a protector of the vulnerable, a partner to Indigenous communities and coastal peoples, a healer for the wounded, and a steward of creation. The church's public witness is not about

practical politics but about faithfulness to the Gospel and the dignity of every human being made in God's image.

In the midst of social despair, church advocacy brings hope to victims, justice to those deprived of their rights, and signs of God's Kingdom. The church is called to be salt that prevents decay, light that dispels darkness, and leaven that transforms social structures from within.

6.4 A Shared Commitment of the Churches

This theological framework is a shared work of the churches in Indonesia and Timor Leste, a first step toward deeper collaboration. It affirms that God's justice is the foundation of ministry, that the suffering of the people is the church's calling, and that ecumenical collaboration across churches and nations is a strength that must be continually nurtured.

The six partner churches: IPTL, GKI Tana Papua, GKPB, GPM, GMIT, and GKS, supported by UnitingWorld have brought to this framework six distinct contexts, six theological voices, and one shared conviction: that advocacy is not the work of one church alone but the shared calling of the whole people of God. Together, they offer a framework that is richer, more contextual, and more resilient than any single church could produce alone.

The future of church advocacy is a future of hope because God's Spirit works through God's people, and because the cries of the suffering do not go unheard.

6.5 An Invitation to the Journey

This resource is not a final word. It is an invitation to a journey, a journey of listening, reflection, action, and transformation that must be taken again and again, in each context, by each community, in each generation. The theology of advocacy is a living theology, not a fixed system. It grows as the church grows, deepens as the church suffers, and renews itself as the church encounters the living God at work in the world.

To advocate is to love:

to love the God who liberates,

to love the wounded neighbour,

to love the groaning earth.

Advocacy is an act of faith that refuses to remain silent before suffering. It is an act of hope that believes the world can be changed. It is an act of love that lives God's promise of a new heaven and a new earth.

May the churches of Indonesia and Timor Leste be strengthened to become instruments of God's love and justice, living witnesses of Christ in a wounded yet Spirit-renewed world.

Reflective Questions

1. What does it mean for my church to embody just love: love that does not remain silent before suffering?
2. In what ways has advocacy already begun to renew the life of my church? In what ways has it been resisted?
3. What is the most important next step my church can take toward a more faithful advocacy ministry?
4. How can we strengthen our relationships with the other partner churches in this shared ecumenical framework?
5. What is your prayer for the church's advocacy: for your community, for Indonesia, for Timor Leste, for creation?

Resources:

1. Lomi, Marlin “GKS dan Keadilan Ekologi”, 2026
2. Maspaitella, Elifas “Gereja dan Tanggung Jawab Ekologi”
3. Maspaitella, Elifas “Teologi Perut Bumi”
4. Majelis Sinode GMIT “Naskah Teologi Paska Pelayanan GMIT Tahun 2023”
5. GPM, Departemen Pengembangan Oikumene Semesta, Biro Lingkungan Hidup dan Kebencanaan, “Desein Advokasi Lingkungan Gereja Protestan Maluku”, 2025
6. GPM, “Hasil Sidang Komisi Khusus Lingkungan”, 2023
7. GPM, “Pedoman Advokasi Gereja”, 2016
8. Suartini, Ni Luh, “Membangun Eko-Teologi Kontektual GKPB Dalam Menghadapi Krisis Ekologi di Bali”, 2019