



Magenagenangan: The Philosophy of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa as a Manifestation of Love

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ABSTRACT

This paper explains the Minahasan concept of *Magenagenangan*, one of the manifestations of love within the church context of the Evangelical Church of Minahasa, as a church that was born as a result of the preaching of the gospel. *Magenagenangan* means *baku-baku inga* or remembering each other. The concept of remembering each other creates a space for reflection from which the Evangelical Church in Minahasa was born, rooted in God's love for the people of Minahasa, North Sulawesi. This study employed a literature-based research approach to examine the history of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa by analyzing books, journal articles, historical manuscripts, and academic publications. The findings indicate that the rituals and rites practised by the members of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa reflect a pattern of love toward fellow human beings, understood as an expression of divine love. Consequently, the study concludes that the concept of *magenagenangan* serves as a life philosophy for the Minahasa Evangelical Church community, embodying God's love within the context of digital society. This research deepens the understanding of the doctrine of love in the local Church through a contextual approach rooted in the history, traditions, and culture of the Minahasa community. The *Magenagenangan* tradition is understood as a concrete form of love that is alive in everyday practice. This approach is expected to make a real contribution to teaching and education patterns, both in terms of knowledge and in shaping attitudes and behavior. The integration of theological and biblical studies with psychological and moral values allows love to be understood as a universal value that is relevant in a diverse society.

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INTRODUCTION

Magenagenangan is a tradition, custom, and cultural practice that has been passed down through generations by the ancestors of the Minahasa people. These cultural values continue to be preserved and embodied in the everyday behavior and social life of the Minahasan community. The term *magenagenangan* itself means *baku-baku inga*, which can be translated as "mutual remembrance" or "remembering one another." This concept of reciprocal remembrance reflects one of the fundamental callings of the church to serve others as an expression of love for God and fellow human beings. In this context, *magenagenangan* serves as a manifestation of love within the ecclesiastical life of the

Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa. Geographically, the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM)¹ is located in the Minahasa region and was initially established as a local church as a result of the missionary work and gospel proclamation in the area. Faithful to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, GMIM continues to carry out its missional mandate to preach the gospel. As such, the church is called to transcend its local origins and participate in God's mission globally. GMIM is a fellowship composed not only of the Minahasan people but also of individuals from various ethnic and racial backgrounds, both within and beyond the Minahasa region, who profess faith in Jesus Christ.

The presence of the church is not intended to eliminate or suppress the existing culture within the local community. Rather, it aligns with the wisdom expressed in the local proverb: "Where the earth is trodden, there the sky is upheld," emphasizing respect for indigenous identity and context. In this spirit, the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM) embraces the Minahasan philosophy of life as part of its ecclesial identity. One significant cultural symbol is the Manguni bird, which represents the concept of "the Church in the land of Minahasa." Its use within church life exemplifies the integration of Christian teachings with local cultural values, forming a contextual theological expression that resonates with the lived reality of the Minahasan people.

Magenagenangan (baku-baku inga) or "remembering each other" represents one among many life philosophies upheld by the Minahasan people. However, the author observes that existing literature generally focuses on another prominent Minahasan philosophy, *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou*, which is commonly translated as "a person lives to humanize others." Rivo, in his study, discusses the concept of cultural hospitality as a form of tolerance between Javanese Muslim and Minahasan Christian communities. His research highlights how such cultural values serve as a unifying force, fostering harmonious coexistence in the context of religious and ethnic diversity in Tondano.² In contrast, Realita, Tio, et al., examined the internalization of the Minahasan philosophy *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou* in the context of character education. Their study focuses on how this indigenous value system contributes to shaping the character of students in alignment with the noble values of Pancasila, Indonesia's foundational philosophical ideology.³

Previous studies have not addressed the concept of *Magenagenangan* a Minahasan philosophy of life, in the context of the church. The existing literature primarily discusses this cultural value within the frameworks of religious sociology or character education. However, these works have yet to explore *Magenagenangan* from the perspective of theological-practical science. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining *Magenagenangan* through a Christian cultural approach, positioning it as a philosophy of life embraced by the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM) and as a contextual manifestation of God's love within the dynamics of digital society.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that culture can serve as a means of teaching and education within church life. In the context of the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM), *Magenagenangan (baku-baku inga)*, as a way of life, functions as a continual reminder for church members to live in mutual care and remembrance. This includes helping one another, offering encouragement, and providing mutual support, thus fostering life and well-being among individuals both within and beyond the Minahasa region, wherever they may be in the world. The expression of GMIM's identity through love, embodied in *Magenagenangan*, is genuinely practiced by its members and rooted in the teachings of Jesus: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Therefore, love cannot be fully realized through words alone; it becomes transformative only when expressed through concrete

¹ GMIM is an acronym for the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa. The term Masehi is derived from Arabic, carrying the same meaning as the word Christian. Similarly, the term Injili corresponds to the Greek word Euangelion, which translates to "good news." The preposition di in the name "Evangelical Church in Minahasa" indicates the geographical context of Minahasa at the time of the church's establishment. It also reflects the church's identity as part of a broader ecclesiastical organization present globally.

² Rivo Wakulu, "Mutualitas Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou: Hospitalitas Kultural Toleransi Komunitas Jawa Muslim Dan Minahasa Kristen Di Tondano," *Journal of Education, Humaniora and Social Sciences (JEHSS)* 4, no. 2 (October 24, 2021): 1175–85, <https://doi.org/10.34007/jehss.v4i2.870>.

³ Realita Meydena Andhela Totoda et al., "Internalisasi Nilai Dari Slogan Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou Dan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Internalization of Values from the Slogan Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou and the Profile of Pancasila Students)," *EDUKATIF: JURNAL ILMU PENDIDIKAN* 5, no. 6 (December 31, 2023): 2689–95, <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v5i6.5845>.

actions, as exemplified by Christ. The church and local culture or tradition must coexist harmoniously, so that both the ecclesial community and broader society may live together and partake in the love of Christ.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing both literature review and interview methods. Through the literature study, the author explored the historical development of the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM), which emerged as a result of gospel proclamation and initially functioned as a local church deeply rooted in cultural values that helped shape the life patterns of the Minahasan community within the church. This paper specifically examined *magenagenangan* as a cultural construct of Minahasan tradition and as one of the manifestations of love in the context of GMIM. The study further provided a theoretical analysis of Christian teachings on the concept of love: *loving God and loving others*, and explores its implications for both church life and broader society. In addition, interviews were conducted as a means of collecting valid data regarding congregational understanding and lived expressions of love.

To obtain valid data, interviews were employed as the primary data collection technique. During the interview process, ethical considerations were observed, and purposive sampling was used to identify sources of information that aligned with the objectives of the study. The interview data were analyzed by categorizing the congregation's understanding of the concept of love and examining the implications of *magenagenangan*, the philosophy of the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa, as an expression of love within church life. These findings were reviewed and interpreted descriptively in the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

"Magenagenangan" as a Cultural Construction

In Minahasan culture, there remains a strong commitment to mutual assistance carried out selflessly, reflecting a deep sense of solidarity. This includes the preservation of mutual respect, honoring elders, and showing reverence for community leaders, traditional authorities, and religious figures. Love, within the Minahasan cultural context, is inherently connected to communal practices such as *"gotong royong"* and *"mapalus"*, cooperative efforts that manifest during both celebratory and sorrowful events, often involving collaboration across church denominations and religious communities. Everyday expressions such as *"baku sayang"* (loving one another), *"baku-baku bae"* (doing good to one another), *"baku topang"* (supporting one another), and *"baku beking pande"* (helping each other become wiser or more skilled) illustrate a way of life rooted in love and collective care within the Minahasan community. The Minahasan people consistently embody the philosophy of *"Tumou Tou"* to live in order to give life to others, especially in the context of religious and social diversity, as a means of fostering communal harmony and togetherness. This way of life is reflected in several cultural expressions that promote mutual care and unity, including:

Ma'upus-upusan	: loving one another
Ma'sigi-sigian	: greeting or honoring one another
Ma'tulung-tolongan	: helping one another
Ma'leos-leosan	: living peacefully with one another
Ma'tombol-tombolan	: supporting one another
Ma'esa-esaan	: being united in oneness ⁴

These expressions are more than linguistic traditions; they represent deeply rooted cultural values that align with and reinforce Christian principles of love, peace, and solidarity in daily life.

⁴ P. F. Rampengan, "Sitou Timou Tumou Tou as a Form of Church Mission," *Journal: Tumou Tou* 2, no. 2 (2015): 1–15.

Implementation of “Magena-genangan” as a Form of Church Love Among the Minahasan People in the Digital Era

In general, the behavioral patterns of the Minahasan people are instinctively shaped by various life philosophies that have been deeply embedded within the community, forming a distinct cultural identity not only in Minahasa but also throughout North Sulawesi. These values are reflected in the rites and rituals practiced by the Minahasan people, which are rich in meaning and promote principles of communal life. The Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM), as a church born from the proclamation of the gospel in Minahasan land, has embraced these cultural foundations, particularly the life philosophy of “*magena-genangan*” (*baku-baku inga*) or mutual remembrance as a contextual expression of Christian love. This philosophy fosters a spirit of mutual care, unity, and solidarity, encouraging church members both within Minahasa and beyond to live in peace, tolerance, cooperation, and love amid cultural and religious diversity. As such, *Magena-genangan* serves not only as a cultural legacy but also as a theological ethic for building inclusive and harmonious communities in an increasingly pluralistic world.

Based on the most recent available data from the 2021 Tolerant City Index (IKT) survey, North Sulawesi is represented by two cities in the top five rankings: Manado in second place and Tomohon in fifth. In addition, according to the 2021 Religious Harmony Index (KUB) published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, North Sulawesi ranked third nationally with a score of 76.35.⁵ The data above indicates that the people of North Sulawesi Province maintain a harmonious and peaceful coexistence among religious communities. Demographically, the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa (GMIM) is one of the most prominent religious organizations in the region, with a significant membership base that dominates seven districts and municipalities across North Sulawesi. The following presents statistical data regarding the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa:



Source: Dashboard GMIM <https://dashboard.gmim.info/page-dasbor>

The progression of time has led the Minahasa community, including the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa, to adapt to contemporary developments. As a result, the expression of love through *magena-genangan* (*baku-baku inga*), or remembering each other, is no longer confined to face-to-face interactions. Instead, it is now extended through the utilization of technological and informational advancements via digital or online media, enabling it to reach a broader audience. The GMIM Synod Office has an Information and Research & Development (R&D) division, which functions as a cross-disciplinary mediator and manager of digital and online media usage. This includes

⁵ Saiful Maarif, “Interview: ‘Religious Tolerance and Moderation as the Breath of the Nyiur Melambai Earth,’” 2022.<https://kemenag.go.id/wawancara/toleransi-dan-moderasi-beragama-sebagai-nafas-bumi-nyiu-melambai-fhh351>

the management of official GMIM multimedia accounts on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, as well as online news outlets such as Dodoku GMIM, which provides essential information, reminders, and educational content to promote healthy lifestyles, spiritual motivation, and acts of love. Additionally, these platforms offer teachings and education tailored to current issues relevant to the congregation. The official GMIM Synod website features statistical data dashboards, along with a concise profile of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa, and serves as a valuable resource for both the community and church leadership. Through these digital tools, GMIM aims to ensure that actions and initiatives are both effective and targeted, addressing the specific needs of its members.

When asked whether the culture of *Magenagenangan (baku-baku inga)*, as a form of love within the context of GMIM, is truly felt in church life, the answer is affirmative in terms of its values. GMIM continues to encourage its congregation to remind one another of love. However, in practice, this culture still needs to be actively nurtured and preserved. At times, “*baku-baku inga*” can be misused as a means of judgment rather than a tool for building one another up. The true purpose of *Magenagenangan* is to remind each other to continue living in the truth and love of Christ, not to undermine others. When practiced with sincerity and humility, it can become a powerful force for positive transformation in church life.⁶

Magenagenangan (baku-baku inga) is not merely a concept of customs and traditions inherent to the Minahasa region, but, from a theological perspective, it is seen as a manifestation of God's love for the Minahasan people of North Sulawesi. This cultural practice shapes a pattern of loving one's fellow human beings as an expression of love for God, particularly within the context of GMIM. GMIM, as an independent and mature church, has endured numerous challenges and trials, surviving the storms and waves of adversity. Its continued existence and growth are no easy feat. Such perseverance requires unity and togetherness among its members, who deeply love their church. Although the church is not perfect, as it is organized by finite human beings, a strong church will continue to develop and thrive as long as there are individuals who remember and reflect on its journey. This strength, rooted in mutual love and remembrance, enables GMIM to take root, grow, and bear fruit for Christ.⁷ This is because Christ is the Head of the Church.

The following section outlines the results of interviews concerning the congregation's understanding and the implications of Christian teachings on love within the context of church life in the Evangelical Christian Church of Minahasa. These findings are focused on and limited to several key points, namely:

- **“Love as the Divine Initiative”**

Love is initiated by God toward the people He loves. Divine love represents perfection during human imperfection. Despite humanity's flaws, God continues to love humankind by giving His only Son, Jesus Christ, so that all may receive the assurance of salvation and eternal life through Him, the Savior of the world (John 3:16). This form of love, often referred to as **agape** love, is characterized by sincerity and selflessness. It is the kind of love exemplified and taught by Jesus, one that seeks nothing in return, is willing to sacrifice, forgives without limit, and embraces humanity fully. His love is without end: it transcends time, circumstances, and conditions. For His love endures forever, extended to every human being without exception.⁸

- **“Love as the Faithful Calling of Believers”**

In practice, love must be demonstrated through concrete actions within communal life. As Jesus commanded to "love your neighbor," love is to be understood not merely as an abstract concept, but as a visible expression of affection, care, and sincerity. It involves attitudes marked by patience, forgiveness, and an inclusive spirit that does not discriminate or show favoritism. Genuine love treats all individuals equally, refusing to exploit others for personal gain or to

⁶ Aquina S, Private Interview Results by Linda on 26 Mei 2025

⁷ Grachella S Interview Results by Linda on 28 Mei 2025

⁸ Mariska K, Celine A, Aquina S, Victory P, Private Interview Results by Linda

pursue self-serving goals. In this way, love becomes both an ethical imperative and a reflection of Christ's own example.⁹

- **“The Importance of Love in the Church”**

The Church is a fellowship of believers who have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light, to proclaim His mighty works through the person of Jesus Christ. As such, Christ is the head of the Church, and the Church is His body.¹⁰ The Church, as the body of Christ, must make love the foundation of all its ministries. Without love, every act of service becomes merely a routine activity. Love enables the Church to embrace differences, work together, and become a blessing to others. Moreover, love prevents division within the Church and sustains its unity in God.¹¹ 1 Corinthians 12:12, 25-26 *"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members, though many, are one body, so also is Christ. Lest there be any division in the body, but that the different members take care of one another. Therefore if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."* So, love is important in church life, because, love is a reflection of the nature of Jesus.¹² This means that, believers are called to reflect Christ in their daily lives. Since members of the Church live in close fellowship with one another, love must be manifested through a lifestyle grounded in compassion and care. Acts of love within the community enable the congregation to build meaningful relationships and foster mutual understanding. Without love, however, the Church becomes vulnerable to conflict and division.¹³

Love as a Theological Reflection in GMIM: Its Role in Shaping Christian Religious Education

The Minahasa Evangelical Church (GMIM) is one of the churches established in the land of Minahasa as a result of evangelization. GMIM serves as a fellowship of the Minahasan people, as well as individuals from other tribes and ethnic groups, both within and outside Minahasa. United by their belief in Jesus Christ, the Church is committed to proclaiming the great deeds of the Lord and serving as a blessing to many, regardless of time or place.¹⁴

GMIM is called to fellowship, witness, and serve in the land of Minahasa, within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and even across the world, as an expression of faith, hope, and love for God, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. GMIM was established as an independent church, separate from the Indonesian Protestant Church (GPI), on September 30, 1934.¹⁵ GMIM's vocation is derived from the pattern of Christ's service and rule, which is characterized by servanthood based on love, sacrifice, humility, gentleness, patience, and self-control, seeking no personal gain (Phil.2; Gal. 5).

Love is the essence of Christian teaching. Without love, all other actions are meaningless and futile. As stated in 1 Corinthians 13:13, *"And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love"*. Love refers to the love of God, and thus, the foundation of all things is the love of God, for God is love itself.¹⁶ The manifestation of God's love has been revealed through Christ, who descended from heaven in His glory as the incarnate Son of God, embodied in the person of Jesus, to save humanity. As stated in John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"*. GMIM, a Calvinist church, adheres to the theological principles of John Calvin, one of the prominent Reformers who significantly influenced the Christian world. John Calvin emphasized that God's love is universal in nature, extending to all people, including sinners. This is because there are no sinless humans. He emphasized

⁹ Victory P, Aquina S, Mariska K, Private Interview Results by Linda

¹⁰ Celine A, Private interview results by Linda on 27 Mei 2025

¹¹ Aquina S, Private interview results by Linda

¹² Mariska K, Private interview result by Linda

¹³ Aquina S, Celine A, Mariska K, Victory P, Private interview result by Linda

¹⁴ Badan Pekerja Majelis Sinode GMIM, "Tata Gereja GMIM: Bab 1: Pasal 1, 'Nama Gereja'. Hal 4 (GMIM Synod Assembly Working Committee)," *GMIM Church Order: Chapter 1: Article 1, "Name of the Church"*, n.d.

¹⁵ GMIM Synod Assembly Working Committee, "GMIM Church Order: Basic Order 'Preamble,'" *Tomohon*, 2021.

¹⁶ Grace Putri Kenanga, et al. "Character-Based School of Love, an Ideal Form of Christian Education," *Didasko Journal of Theology and Christian Education* 3, no. 1 (2023): 49–56.

that God's love is God's initiative as a gift solely to man and does not depend on man's good deeds. Human beings are loved by God, not because they deserve to be loved, but actually only because God's love makes them worthy.¹⁷ This universal love of God reveals that even sinners, who have strayed or are lost, remain within the scope of God's love. God continues to care for humanity, bestowing blessings upon all, regardless of whether individuals are obedient or faithful, or even if they reject or ignore Him in their daily lives.¹⁸

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, outlines the nature and characteristics of love: "Love is patient; love is kind; it does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud. It does not dishonor others; it is not self-seeking; it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. "Love never fails". These qualities described above are embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught that the first and greatest commandment is love. In Matthew 22:37-40, he answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Therefore, the law of love does not abolish the law; rather, it fulfills the law.

- **Forms of Love Ministry in GMIM**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minahasa (GMIM) actively practices love in its church life. GMIM carries out its calling to fellowship, witness, and serve. According to Polii, the expression of love within GMIM is often reflected in the habits of the congregation, who continue to uphold the Minahasa philosophy of life, "Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou." This philosophy emphasizes the idea that human beings exist to humanize one another, promoting mutual care, respect, and love within the community.¹⁹ In contrast, Sulu offers a more specific explanation of the forms of love-based services practiced by the church. He identifies several key areas of service, including social services, diakonia, and support for children, the elderly, the sick, and grieving families. Additionally, Sulu highlights the church's commitment to education and healthcare, which are accessible not only to church members but also to the general public, without discrimination.²⁰ Forms of Love in Service in GMIM:

- **Diakonia:** Assistance provided to the sick, underprivileged, and those affected by natural disasters.
- **Cross-Age Ministry:** Services extended across generations, from Sunday school children to the elderly.
- **Cooperation Between Columns and Congregations:** Mutual support and solidarity (mapalus) in both joyful and sorrowful moments.
- **Education and Health:** GMIM's involvement in establishing schools, hospitals, and orphanages to serve both the church community and the general public.
- **Spiritual Assistance:** Support through home visits, counseling services, and collective prayer sessions.

CONCLUSION

The heritage of rites and rituals in Minahasan culture has shaped the members of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa, fostering a pattern of love toward fellow human beings as a manifestation of God's love. In this context, the concept of *magenagenangan (baku-baku inga)* serves as the philosophy of life for the members of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa. It represents God's love in a digital society, uniting and binding people together amidst societal plurality. This concept of love extends

¹⁷ Timothy, et al. "Theological Analysis of the Concept of God's Love and Mission in John Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination and Its Implications for Indonesian Reformed Churches," *Didache: Journal of Theology and Christian Education*, n.d.

¹⁸ Timothy, et al. "Theological Analysis of the Concept of God's Love and Mission in John Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination and Its Implications for Indonesian Reformed Churches,"

¹⁹ Vicotry P, Private interview result by Linda on 29 Mei 2025

²⁰ Aquina S, Private interview result by Linda

beyond the borders of Minahasa, embracing both the local community and members of the Evangelical Church in Minahasa worldwide.

The Evangelical Church in Minahasa emphasizes that love is universal, as it is a direct initiative of God. This is evident in John 3:16, which emphasizes that God's love for all people is so great that God the Father gave His only Son to atone for the sins of the whole world through Jesus Christ. Moreover, it is God's will for humans to live in love with one another. Therefore, love is not only a teaching within the church but must also be accompanied by real actions in daily life, both within the church and in society.

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