

I Am in Prison, Making Batik, and You Are Visiting Me

A Postcolonial Feminist Perspective in Interreligious Prison Educational and Missional Ministry for Female Inmates in Indonesia

Jeniffer F. P. Wowor and Merry K. Rungkat 

Jeniffer F. P. Wowor teaches Christian Religious Education at the Faculty of Theology, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Merry K. Rungkat teaches Old Testament Studies at the Faculty of Theology, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, Indonesia.

Abstract

This article contributes to the literature on interreligious engagement in prison from the perspective of Christian religious educational and missional ministry. It uses a case study conducted in the Class IIA Women's Correctional Institution in Semarang, Indonesia. In Indonesia, educational and missional ministry in prisons plays a vital role in supporting prison services. This ministry is understood as part of the Christian mandate to serve those in prison, regardless of their religion. Though spiritual development for Christian inmates is also essential, it is important to consider a comprehensive interreligious engagement programme that includes art, creativity, and imagination, including batik-making. Using a postcolonial feminist perspective, this article proposes practices relevant to prison ministry, especially for female inmates. The practices are both educational and missional. We call the interconnection between the educational and missional a liberating third space – a space of interreligious engagement that is relevant for female inmates in Indonesia.

Keywords

prison educational and missional ministry, female inmates, postcolonial feminist perspective, interreligious, batik

Overview of Educational and Missional Ministry in Prisons in Indonesia

I will never forget the first time I was given a sermon schedule for a Sunday service in the prison. It was very stressful because I had to prepare in a very short time. Actually, I was not originally scheduled to preach that morning, but suddenly, the scheduled preacher couldn't serve and asked to be replaced. At that time, I had not been ordained as a pastor and was still a vicar or prospective pastor. I later learned that prison service was not a "primary" ministry category in the church community, although the prison ministry makes an essential contribution to faith education and church mission. There is much uncertainty about the minister who will serve. Cancellations happen very often, and the Sunday service will be cancelled if there is no substitute. This happened 17 years ago.

Uniquely, after being moved to other congregations, ordained as a pastor, and having taught on campus, I was never again scheduled to serve in prison. Although I was regularly scheduled in the churches I served, I never had the opportunity to serve in prison again. This is because the space to serve in prison worship is limited. In my church ministry area, many churches take turns holding Sunday services in prison. Thus, the ministry of a church denomination in prisons can be very limited. The same thing also happens for services in prisons, which are internally regulated. Inmates complain that prison services and pastoral counselling carried out in prison often do not run optimally because they conflict with other activities.

The narrative above comes from the life experience of one female pastor and religious educator related to educational and missional ministry for incarcerated people in Indonesia. Her narrative also reveals challenges associated with the ministerial service for incarcerated people, especially female inmates. Prison ministries are often not considered part of the church's "main" programmes.¹ As a result, prison ministries conducted by individual churches are often just a formality following the given schedule. If this condition is combined with internal problems in the prison's ministerial services, a ministry for inmates is unlikely to be efficient or effective. In addition, churches often run ministries in prisons in isolation, not integrated with other churches, supporting communities, or people from other religions. In the context of a religiously pluralistic society such as Indonesia, this tends to fragment social services (based on religion). Therefore, it is imperative to consider the concept of ministry in prisons in a broader context.

This article will use postcolonial feminist perspectives in Christian religious educational and missional perspectives to analyze research results, focusing on the specific context

¹ Rencan Carisma Marbun, "Pelayanan kepada Lembaga Permasalahatan (LP) sebagai Upaya untuk Meminimalisasi Kejahatan," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 4:2 (2020), 11.

of the women's prison.² Women offenders have often faced discrimination and multiple losses; they tend to commit less serious crimes compared to men, and most are poverty-driven crimes, such as theft, fraud, and minor nonviolent narcotics crimes.³ Given these factors, the ministry can pay critical attention to intersectional aspects that place female inmates in multilayered oppression through discrimination and multiple losses as part of colonial oppression in a patriarchal society. Postcolonial feminist imagination refers to "a desire, a determination, and a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and guises."⁴ Prison ministry represents a call, following Christ's example, for ministry to marginalized groups (in this case, female inmates) and not exclusively for Christian inmates. Thus, it should give attention to interreligious engagement. In this exploration, the narratives and experiences of female inmates are recorded and analyzed in order to formulate prison service models tailored to their needs.

Research Method: Case Study of a Women's Correctional Institution in Indonesia

This study used qualitative descriptive research by reviewing the literature and collecting and analyzing narratives and interview results. We first reviewed the scholarly literature related to theological, educational, and missional perspectives on prison ministry, especially for female inmates. We also explored additional supporting literature to complement the data on the background of the problem and analysis. The literature emphasized the importance of feminist postcolonial interpretation of the biblical text, feminist missiology, and its correlation to three crucial areas to which religious educators must attend as the theoretical basis of prison educational ministry for female inmates: multireligious co-living and communal flourishing, trauma and addiction, and politics and religious language.⁵

² Based on recent data from the Institute of Criminal Justice Reform in Indonesia, the number of incarcerated women in Indonesia is increasing. However, the Indonesian criminal justice system was built primarily with male offenders in mind and is therefore not sensitive to women's needs. This shows the domination of a patriarchal society. This affects not only policy but also the process of incarceration. In Indonesia, as of March 2019, there were 10,547 women in prisons and 3,737 in detention centres. The number of female inmates at the national level has been increasing faster than that of their male counterparts. From 2011 to 2018, the number of incarcerated women increased by 144%, while the number of male inmates was estimated to have increased only by 108%. Institute for Criminal Justice, *Indonesia Criminal Law Update: Women Behind Bars in Indonesia* (Jakarta: ICJR, 2019), 4–8.

³ Institute for Criminal Justice, *Indonesia Criminal Law Update*, 7.

⁴ Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 2.

⁵ Rachele Renee Green, "Can Religious Education Change a Prison?" *Religious Education* 115:1 (2020), 89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2020.1708167>.

To explore the context in which female inmates are situated, this study used the case study method, focused on the Class IIA Women's Correctional Institution in Semarang in Central Java, Indonesia. The research was conducted by interviewing nine respondents, including female inmates (both Christians and those of other religions), prison employees, and prison pastoral ministers, in June 2023.⁶ The batik⁷ training and other creative programmes underway in this women's prison inspired us. In the analysis section, data from published information on female inmates and videos from this prison are explored. Through this research, the main research question of this study can be answered: What are the relevant practices of prison educational and missional ministry in the Indonesian context for female inmates? Prison educational and missional ministry is an essential part of faith education that welcomes, inspires, provokes, and challenges its learners to envision. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, this makes the prison become a third space that places female inmates not as objects of fostering independence and religion but as subjects of liberation who struggle together with the people around them and have hope for a better life.

Throughout this process, space was made for listening to women's voices and building solidarity toward social justice. As a result, this article will show that interreligious engagement through integration between religious formation and self-reliance developmental programmes provides new and relevant sources for prison missional and educational ministry as a liberating third space for female inmates. This process can be closely related to arts-based liberative pedagogy through decolonial imagination.⁸ The technique for making batik in a self-reliance developmental programme has been found to have a transformative impact on an inmate's resistance and resilience in prison.

Analysis: The Need for Integration of Religious Formation and Self-Reliance Programmes

Based on interviews conducted with five female inmates, two prison pastoral ministers, and two prison employees in the Class IIA Women's Correctional Institution in Semarang, we present two main findings.

First, batik training is one part of the self-reliance developmental programme offered in this correctional institution, alongside cooking and hairdressing training. This

⁶ Research permission letter from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia (letter number: W13.UM.01.01-639, date: 18 April 2023).

⁷ *Batik* is one of Indonesian cultural heritage textiles. It represents the identity of the nation in the world.

⁸ Jeniffer Fresy Porielly Wowor, "Weaving Ancestral Wisdom: Communicating the Power of Sumbanese Women's Resistance to the Next Generation through Arts-Based Liberative Pedagogy," *Religious Education Journal* 117:5 (2022), 396, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2022.2138032>.

programme is differentiated from religious formation. Female inmates take part in one, not all three, of these activities. Participation is determined based on an assessment conducted when a woman enters the correctional institution. An interview with a female inmate who took part in batik-making activities offered unique insight that shows the interconnectedness of spirituality, art, and the inmate's life stories. She engaged in spiritual reflection through the batik-making experience. According to her, God shaped her life in a fashion like the process of batik-making. It is like cloth being made into batik by a batik maker. Even though her life seemed "hot" or not good because she was in detention (batik is made using hot wax), she was sure that in the future she would experience the beneficial results of her time in prison, just like batik that has been processed. Another inmate said that she learned the value of patience and calm because if she was angry, the batik results would not be good. When the results were good, she rewarded herself and said she realized that she could be a good person even though she had a dark past. Inmates also reported that making batik helped them to calm themselves: for example, when a child was sick or when their family could not be contacted.

However, responding to these spiritual reflections, one of the pastoral ministers said there was no connection between the ministry carried out in the institution and the batik-making. It shows the disconnection between spirituality and creativity. In fact, the self-reliance developmental and religious formation programmes were often scheduled simultaneously, so inmates were required to choose one or the other. Religious formation benefits inmates spiritually, and self-reliance developmental programmes develop skills. Batik-making was not aimed at fostering the spiritual life of the inmates. There was no connection between the developmental and the religious formation programmes.

The second main finding was that religious formation should be provided according to the religion of each inmate. The inmates of the prison were Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist, but religious guidance was only provided for Christians and Muslims. It was not offered for Buddhists because of the limited number of qualified personnel in community institutions and nearby monasteries. Christian religious formation involves various activities, including group worship, counselling services, and social action. Worship was conducted in the ecumenical church building provided by the correctional institution. Worship services were conducted by outside church ministers and internal staff. In the interviews, the pastoral ministers reported that the services conducted in the prison were largely related to preaching the gospel and discipleship that is carried out until after they leave. Some were converted to Christianity, baptized, and attended Bible school after leaving prison. There was also reported incidental service support and assistance from churches around the prison, including social actions such as assisting with items needed by inmates and free medical treatment. Churches provided this assistance not only to Christian inmates but to all. They also distributed *takjil* (sweet drinks and

snacks to break the fast during the fasting month of Ramadan) for all inmates, not only for Muslims. Through this information, we can see that interreligious engagement is already carried out in this correctional institution, though it remains relatively rare.

Based on the research findings, we conclude that correctional institutions have received significant attention and support required to prepare facilities for self-reliance developmental programmes as well as religious formation initiatives. Though the implementation is related to data collected as part of an assessment, the self-reliance developmental programmes have had a positive impact on the spiritual lives of the inmates. According to female inmates' personal experiences recounted in the interviews, their faith experiences generally grew and became stronger since they entered the prison. Interreligious encounters already exist, although they are still not widely carried out. As mentioned above, one interview included a spiritual reflection on the integration of the two programmes, comparing the batik-making process to God's shaping of her life. Even though the pastoral ministers emphasized that the two programmes were not integrated, the inmate's experience of this integration is important to consider.

Spiritual reflection is an integral part of faith education. When we search and find God in life circumstances and reflect on our relationship with God, this is a religiously educative activity.⁹ The strong spiritual reflection from a female inmate about batik-making was primarily related to the presence of God, who is often considered absent in the lives of people serving a sentence because of their mistakes. This reflection of faith cannot be regarded as an ordinary reflection but as a meaningful faith reflection. The research shows that batik-making creates a liberating third space for women weavers. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, a third space provides a symbolic space for women to free themselves from the domination of colonial values and results in the formation of an identity that is born from a strategy of defending against the dominant culture. A third space is the interstices between colliding cultures that constitute the liminal space, a space in which meaning and representation are negotiated in a new manner.¹⁰ Thus, a female inmate reconstructs her spiritual identity, resistance, resilience, and relationship with God through batik-making. In that process, she reflects deeply to come to meaningful insight and becomes a reformer for her life in a strong reflection of God's presence. This is in line with the concept of the postcolonial feminist

⁹ Luz Marina Díaz, "Spiritual Conversation as Religiously Educative," *Religious Education* 112:5 (2017), 477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2015.1113039>.

¹⁰ Kwok Pui Lan, "Changing Identities and Narratives: Postcolonial Theologies," in *Complex Identities in a Shifting World: Practical Theological Perspectives*, ed. Pamela Couture, Robert Mager, Pamela McCarroll, and Natalie Wigg-Stevenson (Zurich: LIT, 2015), 117.

perspective in mission. According to Letty M. Russel, “Such structures of domination and subordination call for a new look at church missions and their traditional connection to colonialism and to structures of patriarchy.”¹¹

Moreover, the social action of Christian services aimed at all inmates in correctional institutions, regardless of their religion, should be appreciated. This can be seen as part of the gospel message. However, it is also important to remember that the communication of the gospel should not shade into Christianization, which is not necessary in the context of a religiously pluralistic Indonesia. Christianization is a colonial legacy that must be criticized in the development of Christianity in Indonesia.¹² In feminist missiology, our mission is life-giving for all.¹³ There is also a need for social action that impacts the lives of the surrounding community by respecting inmates as part of community life.

“I Was in Prison, and You Visited Me”: A Feminist Postcolonial Interpretation of Matthew 25:36

This verse occurs within the eschatological discussion of Matthew 24–25. Jesus says that there will be a final judgment for everyone, the basis for which is how people act during their lives: good or bad deeds toward others and God. However, what was “good” by societal standards at that time was turned upside down by Jesus. Throughout Jesus’ teachings, he emphasized love for everyone without exception. Jesus broke societal norms and engaged with people who were marginalized in society. This is a liberating message for the powerless, including female inmates. This message frees not only those who are marginalized but also people who are shackled by wrong assumptions that cause them to perpetuate domination.

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, two things are the root of suffering in society: colonialism and patriarchy. These are closely related to the power that silences the souls and bodies of the marginalized. Women are among the chief sufferers of colonialism and patriarchy and often experience injustice in society. For example, in a patriarchal society, women’s physical bodies, due to menstruation, were often viewed as “dirty.”¹⁴ Women are also affected psychologically, so they find it difficult to relate to other

¹¹ Letty M. Russell, “God, Gold, Glory, and Gender: A Postcolonial View of Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 93:356 (2004), 40.

¹² Russell, “God, Gold, Glory, and Gender,” 44.

¹³ Russell, “God, Gold, Glory, and Gender,” 44.

¹⁴ Merry Kristina Rungkat, “Darah Haid: Reinterpretasi Imamat 15:19-31 dalam Perspektif Penebusan Kristus,” *Waskita: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Masyarakat* 3:1 (2016), 63–80.

people. Also, women's intellectual abilities are considered lower in these societies.¹⁵ Yet, in this text from Matthew 25, Jesus criticized a society that was unfair to those who are marginalized, including those in multiple layers of marginalization, such as women, inmates, and oppressed people.

It must be acknowledged that the treatment of women, the poor, the weak, foreigners, and inmates is the fruit of a tradition deeply rooted in patriarchy. This tradition colonizes vulnerable groups, is one-sided, and must be abolished. Jesus' teachings in this text represent the desire of the oppressed to be free and experience life like humans. Jesus even identified himself with them, regardless of their backgrounds, beliefs, or gender. The postcolonial feminist approach to this text has a very strong mission aspect. A mission for Jesus' disciples and society at that time but also a mission for readers today. The intended mission is twofold: the first is mission to save the weak from the clutches of the rulers, and the second is mission to save the rulers from the pattern of thinking and actions that discriminate against others. Jesus' mission is about freedom that cares about justice for all people. This is in line with a postcolonial feminist perspective in mission through feminist missiology as "an expression of love and welcome for all people from every nation and religion, and of all creation. In this mission, God shows no partiality and rejects all attempts to use domination to rule over others in God's name."¹⁶

Further, this text invites us to interpret Jesus' presence in prison. Jesus emphasizes that our service to those in prison is the same as visiting Jesus himself. Loving humans who are visible in their pain and suffering is equivalent to loving the invisible God. Jesus is present for those who suffer, even in prison. In terms of this study, it can be said that Jesus was present and took part in self-reliance developmental programmes, including making batik. Jesus is present regardless of the gender and religion of the inmates. Using this lens, we can identify many opportunities for church mission and faith education, not only for the institutional apparatus in prisons but also for churches. No matter the reason people are imprisoned, they remain human beings who are transformed personally and communally by God's presence. There are spaces for them to build relationships with God and others to share their stories and to strengthen and humanize them. This is an invitation to a pedagogical process – listening to one's own voice of pain, struggle, and liberation – and a missiological process – listening to others' voices of pain, struggle, and liberation.

¹⁵ Ira D. Mangililo, "When Rahab and Indonesian Christian Women Meet in the Third Space," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 3.1 (2015), 45–64.

¹⁶ Russell, "God, Gold, Glory, and Gender," 45.

Interpreting this text with a postcolonial feminist lens brings us to a clearer understanding of the meaning of the text through creative hermeneutics that interrogate power dynamics in gender inequality through dialogical imagination.¹⁷ Female inmates are subject to multiple layers of marginalization amid the power relations of the patriarchal society of Indonesia. Women in prison live a much more miserable life than other women who have also suffered in colonialist and patriarchal societies. Jerda Djawa, an Indonesian female theologian who has been involved in services for female inmates in Ternate Prison and Tobelo Correctional Institution, states that the context of these multiple layers of marginalization is also related to the role of mothers who cannot be separated from their children. When children do not receive optimal care, the mother is blamed.¹⁸ Djawa emphasized that creative programmes can support inmate families including children because there is a profit from the product produced. Spiritual formation can also strengthen inmates. Thus, the correlation between spiritual formation and self-reliance developmental programmes is essential for female inmates.¹⁹

Dreaming Together: An Invitation for a Prison Educational and Missional Ministry

From a postcolonial feminist perspective in Christian religious education, the integration of self-reliance developmental programmes and religious formation in prison is essential to empower women to resist binary structures in the colonial legacy while carrying out religious life. HyeRan Kim-Cragg states that injustice is complex.²⁰ In the binary structures of the colonial context, hierarchical structures create dichotomous divisions.²¹ Attention to the integration of developmental programmes and religious formation is also essential so that services and faith education are not subsumed by the objective of proselytizing inmates. In her book *God and Captivity*, Tanya Erzen gives her central argument related to the role of religion, especially that of conservative Protestants, in the US prison system. She disapproved of the coercive use of power in evangelizing to prison populations, as it raises ethical and legal issues.²² The ministries provided are “conditional services” designed to proselytize inmates. In postcolonial feminist studies, which talk about efforts to perpetuate conquest and oppression, a Christian/religious tendency

¹⁷ Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 38.

¹⁸ Interview with Jerda Djawa on 16 November 2023.

¹⁹ Interview with Jerda Djawa on 16 November 2023.

²⁰ HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Interdependence: A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2018), 130, 132.

²¹ Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), 43, quoted by Kim-Cragg, *Interdependence*, 133.

²² Tanya Erzen, *God in Captivity: The Rise of Faith-Based Prison Ministries in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017), 95.

for proselytism is part of colonialism, which remains influential in the lives of religious communities. Proselytism also marginalizes followers of other religions. Erzen criticizes the ministries' singular focus on "changing hearts and saving souls." Due to the expansion and increasing punitiveness of mass incarceration (the incarceration rate in the United States is the highest in the world), the services provided should have a communal impact (social implications), including reform of the prison system.

Erzen also detailed alternative prison programmes, including restorative justice, contrasted with faith-based prison ministries. Erzen's book is helpful in the context of religious pluralism, which invites us to criticize the trend of Christianization. Erzen invites us to humanize inmates by accepting them as they are. Assistance to them is not a "top-down" approach by aid providers. Erzen suggests that readers need to consider the root causes of incarceration. Bigger problems in the state and social system must be considered, including racism and poverty. Is our goal to make prisons a better place? Or should we try to keep people from going to prison?

On the other hand, Erzen also admits the limitations of her perspective because each prison's context is different. Some complexities are not fully understood in the context of prisons. We cannot generalize opinions about faith-based programmes that maintain a prison system. Is it true that there are no prison faith-based programmes that make inmates' lives better? In Erzen's conversations with inmates, they often brought up the word "hope" with reference to the impact of faith-based ministries. This may seem simple, but the emergence of hope is significant because it represents the hope of "life" amid the reality of "death" in prison.

Despite the weaknesses of faith-based programmes, the fact remains that prison ministry often does improve the lives of inmates. From the perspective of religious education, we see that hope in the middle of punishment can still make an educative theological contribution to a person's development, including faith development.²³ The internal drive within inmates to respond to challenging times in life can propel them to continue developing a guiding sense of meaning, purpose, and faith. In an interview with a female inmate in Semarang, this happened in the integration of spiritual formation and self-reliance developmental programmes. In this process, the implementation of faith-based programmes can still be a catalyst for growth despite their limitations. Nevertheless, Erzen's critical notes must be considered.

Rachelle R. Green, a practical theologian and religious educator, expresses her response to Erzen's thoughts based on her research on a programme called "Theology" in a

²³ Nicola Slee, *Women's Faith Development: Patterns and Processes* (England: Ashgate, 2004), 78.

women's prison in Georgia. She argues that in a prison educational ministry, teaching *how* to think theologically is more essential than teaching *what* to think about religion. An approach that privileges how we think theologically contrasts with Erzen's concerns about proselytizing and coercion.²⁴ Green emphasizes that "the fundamental goal of religious education in prison must be the doing of justice defined as liberating people from and diminishing the power of structures of oppression."²⁵ This is in line with God's mission that all in each place are welcomed as a gift.²⁶

Prison educational and missional ministry is an essential part of church mission faith education that welcomes, inspires, provokes, and challenges its learners to envision. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, this makes the prison become a third space that places female inmates not as objects of fostering independence and religion but as subjects of liberation who struggle together with the people around them and have hope for a better life. They are not guided on *what* to think about religion exclusively, but they learn *how* to think theologically. If this process occurs in self-reliance developmental programmes like the one focused on batik-making, then integrating developmental programmes and religious formation in correctional institutions is crucial in supporting liberating faith education.

In this vein, Green invites faith education to provide space for inmates to dream of a better life. In this view, there is hope, creativity, art, imagination, and freedom.²⁷ Green's invitation aligns with the work of Mariska Lauterboom, a religious educator from Indonesia. Lauterboom argues that during the colonial period, during which Indonesia was controlled mainly by the Dutch, local culture was restricted and even banned because it was considered inferior to European culture and contradictory to the Christian faith and the Bible.²⁸ Given this reality, the decolonization of Christian religious education in the Indonesian context, including prison educational and missional ministry, is necessary. Faith education as part of church mission should instead be integrated with art and human creativity.

This process can be closely related to arts-based liberative pedagogy, including collaboration with *wastra* or traditional Indonesian heritage textiles, of which batik is one type, besides traditional textiles. The motifs and techniques for making Indonesian *wastra* have been found to have a transformative impact on women's resistance and resilience

²⁴ Green, "Can Religious Education," 87.

²⁵ Green, "Can Religious Education," 88.

²⁶ Russell, "God, Gold, Glory, and Gender," 45.

²⁷ Green, "Can Religious Education," 90.

²⁸ Mariska Lauterboom, "Dekolonialisasi Pendidikan Agama Kristen di Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Theology* 7:1 (2019), 89–90, <https://doi.org/10.46567/ijt.v7i1.8>.

within oppressive structures.²⁹ The aesthetic dimension of art is related not only to the realm of affection but also to the intellect. Justitia Vox Dei Hattu argued that it is a mistake to assume that the aesthetic dimension negates the intellectual in education, including in faith education.³⁰

Prison as a Liberating Third Space: Implications for Educational and Missional Ministry in Interreligious Engagement

Interreligious engagement through integration between religious formation and self-reliance developmental programmes provides new and relevant sources for prison educational and missional ministry as a liberating third space for female inmates. This process can be closely related to arts-based liberative pedagogy. The technique for making batik in a self-reliance developmental programme has been found to have a transformative impact on an inmate's resistance and resilience in prison. Through prison educational and missional ministry, the prison can become a liberating third space for female inmates in Indonesia. In this understanding, we can say that "making batik" in the prison is a process of "making the third space" – female inmates' own space of calming, soothing, and healing. It is a space of liberating where art and spirituality meet.

This idea proposes the importance of imagining hope and a future for educational and missional ministry in prison through three crucial areas to which ministers and religious educators must attend: multireligious co-living and communal flourishing; trauma and addiction; and politics and religious language.³¹ These three areas contain liberating differences in mission and pedagogical dimensions to become the basis of prison educational and missional ministry. These three crucial areas are explicated in the context of the Indonesian women's prison below.

Multireligious co-living and communal flourishing

In a pluralistic context, it must be acknowledged that prisons are multireligious environments. Therefore, a gospel message aimed at Christianization is ill-suited, especially given the context of the diversity of religions and beliefs in Indonesia. In this context, "prison religious education must help students navigate exposure to multiple religious practices as they seek to understand their pasts, make meaning of the present, imagine an alternative future, and learn to live well with the people around them."³²

²⁹ Wowor, "Weaving Ancestral Wisdom," 386–400.

³⁰ Justitia Vox Dei Hattu, *Mewarga dengan Hati: Pembelajaran Transformatif sebagai Respons Pedagogis Kristiani terhadap Tantangan Pendidikan Keorganegaraan dalam Konteks Indonesia Masa Kini* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2018), 12.

³¹ Green, "Can Religious Education," 89.

³² Green, "Can Religious Education," 89.

In a public video, a female Muslim former inmate named Asih Yulianti tells of her experience opening a batik business after leaving the Women's Correctional Institution in Semarang.³³ She felt that her successful batik business made people appreciate her. This was important to her because society often judges former convicts negatively. However, the strength of her resilience is also born from her ability to understand the past as a former inmate, make meaning of the present through her batik business, and imagine the future. Her understanding is strongly related to her willingness to live with other people. When she was released from prison, she continued teaching female inmates how to make batik to inspire hope that they, too, can have a better future. Yulianti reflected on her life and beliefs: "Everyone can judge our past, but no one has the right to judge our future!"³⁴ We can grasp Yulianti's message through the lens of interreligious encounters. This aligns with Russell's opinion that feminist missiology in a postcolonial perspective needs to build on "relational difference by forming coalitions across difference. This requires the development of networks that can sustain groups in their struggles, and provide opportunities for partnership as postcolonial subjects."³⁵

Theologically, interreligious interaction encourages churches not to restrict their participation in prison ministry to their respective programmes. Collaboration is necessary across denominations and even across religions. Our postcolonial interpretation of Matthew 25 has shown that Jesus was present among marginalized people regardless of religious background and belief. Regarding the batik-making developmental programme, for example, in an interreligious context, can we reflect on the presence of Jesus who made batik in the Class IIA Women's Correctional Institution in Semarang? Making batik in prison with Jesus is the offer of this article to become a metaphor for arts-based liberative pedagogy in prison educational and missional ministry. Can the church encourage the development of a self-reliance developmental programme by supporting the sale of batik and other products of the program? From here, the church can also provide opportunities for inmates or ex-convicts to carry out interreligious social action in society, allowing inmates to contribute to a broader context, like giving batik to be sewn into clothes for children in orphanages.

Trauma and addiction

To what extent can Indonesian churches work together with other religious communities to seek trauma healing for current and former inmates? The work of Septemmy E.

³³ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, "Becoming a New Person: The Story of Asih Yulianti," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=AMLoyyNiuLM>.

³⁴ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, "Becoming a New Person."

³⁵ Russell, "God, Gold, Glory, and Gender," 49.

Lakawa, an Indonesian feminist theologian who studies trauma and missiology, helps correlate the first and second areas identified by Green. Lakawa links trauma and interreligious contexts in theology by offering the metaphor of aftermath friendship as “a relevant feminist theological metaphor for the capacity and the role of women in negotiating difference and practicing healing from within the wounded interreligious relationship caused by religious violence. It is a practice of simultaneously building and recovering interreligious friendships that have been ruptured, for example, by the trauma of a religiously related attack on a church building.”³⁶ Lakawa reminds us that in the Indonesian context, many national traumas are associated with interreligious relations. Therefore, prison educational and missional ministry offers an excellent opportunity to contribute to trauma healing that is born through interreligious engagement in interactions that produce work and friendly relations through self-reliance developmental programmes. Wounded voices unite in prison, hearing each other and contributing to peace.³⁷ In fact, interreligious dimensions of trauma and healing have a very important role in missional formation in the context of Christian religious education and communal violence in Indonesia.³⁸ Thus, it becomes increasingly clear that fostering self-reliance developmental programmes in interreligious engagement cannot be separated from religious formation.

Politics and religious language

According to Green, prisons’ educational aspect must “encourage critique of the systems that oppress, particularly the criminal punishment system. Students should engage the religious concepts and language that is often used to judge and oppress them.”³⁹ This constitutes an invitation to reflect critically on life beyond prison. This is not only related to efforts to enable ex-convicts to survive after returning to society, but it also prompts consideration of what Erzen put forward: Is it our goal to make prisons a better place? Or should we try to keep people from going to prison? This also helps us see to what extent prisons are relevant in people’s lives.

Jason Lydon boldly revealed the theological basis of the penal abolition movement. He focused on theological explorations including Gustavo Gutiérrez’s theology of liberation and insights from womanist theologians. Lydon advocated siding with

³⁶ Septemmy E. Lakawa, “Aftermath Friendship: An Indonesian Feminist Theological Perspective on Trauma and Interreligious Peace,” *International Journal of Asian Christianity* 4 (2021), 236.

³⁷ Lakawa, “Aftermath Friendship,” 245.

³⁸ Septemmy E. Lakawa, “Teaching Trauma and Theology Inspires Lives of Witnessing Discipleship: Theological Education as Missional Formation,” *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (2018), 346.

³⁹ Green, “Can Religious Education,” 90.

marginalized groups and argued that a prison is a place of control and domination over them.⁴⁰ Therefore, Lydon stresses the importance of theology for liberation in developing a theology that fosters the strength to survive and heal together creatively to engage in the struggle for justice. In this understanding, prayer and interreligious engagement are seen as essential elements.

Lydon's critical ideas were born from his image of God as a liberator. From a Christian feminist missional perspective, God as liberator is a welcoming God "who invites us to be part of the work of restoring the creation that God intends to make new."⁴¹ We are further strengthened through the fact that our theological/biblical understanding, including our image of God, significantly determines our understanding of prison educational and missional ministry. In addition, we must also act in a liberating spirit with those who are marginalized and imprisoned. If we have space to convey this liberating theological meaning, we need to fill that space optimally. This is crucial for us as female pastors and teachers because the values and practices that support the prison system are often found in churches and theological colleges (sanctions, public confessions of sin, probations, etc.). This awareness is part of an essential praxis in facing the violence of systemic oppression, including gender violence in the prison industrial complex.⁴²

Finally, this study attempts to examine critically Green's thinking about the three crucial areas to which ministers and religious educators must attend. Lakawa's metaphor of aftermath friendship in the context of national wounds is also related to interreligious relations, which are often co-opted by oppressive political interests. Therefore, in the Indonesian context, the three areas described by Green cannot be separated. These three areas are integrated into prison as a liberating third space in a large area of resistance, resilience, friendship, and transformation. In this perspective, educational and missional ministry in prison can have an impact not only by transforming the lives of inmates but also by transforming church services so that they contribute to the lives of the wider community. "Aftermath friendship" creates an invitation to dream together that is born through interreligious relations in prison, with the hope that it can impact the individual's spiritual life, the church, and society through works produced in prison, including works of art with batik.

⁴⁰ Jason Lydon, "A Theology for the Penal Abolition Movement," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 23 (2011), 296.

⁴¹ Russell, "God, Gold, Glory, and Gender," 45.

⁴² Angela Y. Davis et al., *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2022), Kindle, 18.

Conclusion

Prison educational and missional ministry is significant in the context of prison services, especially for female inmates in Indonesia. It not only provides faith education and church mission but also plays a role in liberating female inmates trapped in multiple layers of oppression in the patriarchal culture of Indonesia. However, this liberation is realized not only through religious formation but also through integration with self-reliance developmental programmes. This important role of self-reliance developmental programmes is made clear from our study of the Class IIA Women's Correctional Institution in Semarang, Indonesia, where batik-making is one of the essential programmes. This programme has an impact on the spiritual reflection of female inmates. What is also crucial to educational and missional ministry in prison in the Indonesian context is the importance of interreligious engagement in the context of religious pluralism in Indonesia.

There is hope that educational and missional ministry in prison can provide meaningful action against oppressive structures in a patriarchal society. The hope is that fewer people will have to languish in prison. On from that, the ministry that we describe must be developed in further research: for example, about other forms of interreligious engagement related to the local context of each prison as well as the attention that can be given to the children of female inmates, who also bear the heavy burdens of their mother's incarceration. Through educational and missional ministry, the prison can become a liberating third space for female inmates in Indonesia.