



Beyond Crisis: Discernment in Decision-making for Sustainable Church Health

Hardiyana Triasmoroadi

United Theological Seminary,
Saint Paul, Minnesota, United States.

Balewiyata Institute,
East Java Christian Church, Indonesia

December 2024, republ. Jan. 2025.

Keywords

Social discernment, Ignatian discernment, contemplative artistic practice, decision-making, overcoming Church's crisis, Protestant Church in Indonesia.

Abstract

This study explores the integration of discernment into the decision-making framework. Focusing on the financial crisis within the East Java Christian Church, which led to opposition, distrust, and the collapse of peace within the Church, it identifies a disconnection between decision-making and spiritual awareness. By examining social discernment, Ignatian discernment, and contemplative artistic practice, the researcher proposes practical steps for implementation. Ultimately, this essay advocates for a comprehensive approach to discernment that not only addresses immediate crisis but also lays the groundwork for sustainable institutional health, trust, and peace within church communities.

Corresponding Authors: D. Min. Hardiyana Triasmoroadi, United Theological Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota, United States. East Java Christian Church. Email: adi.triasmoroadi@unitedseminary.edu

To quote this article: Triasmoroadi, H. 2024. "Beyond Crisis: Discernment in Decision-making for Sustainable Church Health". *Journal of Ethics in Higher Education* 5(2024): 215–239. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26034/fr.jehe.2024.6894>
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1. Introduction

The World Council of Churches (WCC) published a significant document in 2013, titled “The Church Towards a Common Vision.” This document emphasizes the Church as the body of Christ, tasked with a mission which is deeply rooted in God’s overarching design (or “economy”) for creation. It asserts that through the act and power of the Holy Spirit, the Church is empowered to carry out her life-giving mission through prophetic and compassionate ministry, thereby participating in God’s work of healing a broken world (WCC 2013:5). However, a problem arises. How can we understand the Church’s role as God’s agent in compassionate ministry while she grapples with profound internal crisis?

One of the most profound and illustrative examples for this problem is derived from the East Java Christian Church context. Starting from 2020/2021, the Synod of the East Java Christian Church in Indonesia¹ faced a significant crisis that undermined congregants’ trust. Initially triggered by financial losses due to improper decision-making processes, this situation led to distrust and dissatisfaction among some reverends and congregants. Many began to question the effectiveness of the executive board’s decision and work. As the crisis escalated, dissenting voices emerged within the congregants and stakeholders, forming into an opposition group that accused church leaders of corruption. This group portrayed the leaders as corrupt figures and launched negative campaigns on social media, exacerbating tensions, and distrust within parts of the Church community.

What happened? From an institutional point of view, based on reports by the internal church investigation team, the problem concerns mismanagement, particularly the failure of the decision-making process. The Church’s internal investigation team concluded that the executive board was investment

¹ The East Java Christian Church or *Greja Kristen Jawi Wetan* is a mainline Protestant church which exist and serve exclusively in the territory of the East Java Province in Indonesia, established since December 11th, 1932. See: <https://gkjw.or.id/tentang-gkjw/sejarah> accessed 10/18/2024

illiterate.² Then the new task force established by the general synod, namely “the Church Management and Revision Team,” also found that the relationship between power and participation among members of the executive board seems to have broken down and appeared disobedient to the rules of the Church’s leadership.³ As convener of this new task force, I found that power was not distributed to all members of the executive board but was instead concentrated in the hands of the President, Vice-President, and General Secretary. Not all members of the executive board were involved in the decision-making process. Consequently, there was a loss of internal peace and trust within the Church community. This resulted in decreased ministerial performance, such as distrust and dissatisfaction among some reverends and congregants, also stimulating the emergence of an opposed group. So how do we cope with the institutional crisis within the Church?

Drawing from the institutional crisis in the context of the East Java Christian Church, I argue that it is more than just a problem of bad governance or mismanagement. It is a spiritual crisis. In my view, the root of this problem lies in how to make good decisions which are inextricably related to spiritual awareness. Therefore, to navigate the institutional crisis and restore trust among congregations, it is essential not only to strengthen good church management but also employing discernment within any decision-making process.

2. Methodology

In doing so, in this essay, I employ qualitative analytical methods through literature reviews to explore and elaborate the role of discernment. My aim is to provide a theoretical perspective that contributes to the existing body of

² Team Investigasi, *Laporan Tim Investigasi Independent* (Malang: Majelis Agung GKJW, 2021). (*Investigation Team. Independent Investigation Reports Document*, 2021).

³ Tim Revisi Organisasi dan Tata Laksana Keuangan, *Laporan Interim TROK GKJW* (Malang: MA GKJW, 2022), 8. (*Church Management and Revision Team. TROK Interim Report*, 2022).

knowledge. At the same time, I intend offering practical guidance to demonstrate the integration of discernment into decision-making process that can restore trust, maintain peace, and improve institutional performance for sustainable church health.

3. The Heart of Discernment: Listening

The crisis inevitably immersed the Church in a state of liminality.⁴ Liminality refers to the transitional space between an ending and a new beginning, whether it applies to an individual, a place, an organization, or an institution (Beaumont, 2019: 5). It can also describe the disorientation of an entire era or civilization (Szokolczai 2009: 151). Liminality signifies a state between already and not yet, neither here nor there. In liminality, decision-making is particularly critical and must pass through a control level and a chain of command, which may appear paralyzed. How then can we maintain clarity about the purpose of the Church amidst the mystery and uncertainty arising from this crisis? To answer this question, I believe it is urgent to employ discernment to support the decision-making process.

The word “discernment” is derived from Greek *diakriseis*, which literally means “to determine, to separate, to distinguish, to decide between two things.”⁵ Walter Earl Fluker in his book, “Ethical Leadership” explains discernment as, “Looking around, cultivating intuition, looking deeply and pondering harder questions of values, developing self-reflection” (Fluker

⁴ The word liminality or liminal is derived from Latin, *limen*, meaning a threshold. As a term it was coined by Arnold Van Gennep in the field of anthropology in 1909 and popularized by the writing of anthropologist Victor Turner in the 1960s. See: Victor Turner. 1967. “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal period in Rites de Passage,” *The Forest of Symbols*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

⁵ Susan Beaumont stated, “To discern is to see through the essence of matter. Discernment distinguishes the real from the phony, the true from the false, good from evil, and the path toward God and path away from God. See Susan Beaumont. 2019. *How to Lead When You Don’t Know Where You’re going: Leading in a Liminal Season*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 68.

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2009: 176-180). Therefore, discernment can also be understood as spiritual judgment, assessment, and estimation.

However, at its core, discernment involves listening, to obey, and pay attention to God’s prompting, as well as God active presence, direction, and guidance. As Ruth Haley Barton contends: “It involves listening to each other and to what’s going on in the depths of our souls, where God’s Spirit witnesses with our spirit about things that are true” (Barton 2012: 202-203). Regarding communal listening on a broader level, Congregation-Initiated Community-Based Advocacy (CICBA) which seeks social transformation, has laid the groundwork for faith-based organization through what they called “three great listenings,”: (1) Listening to God led by pastoral leader through prayer, bible reading, bible study, and sermons as a way to pay attention to God and remembering that Holy Spirit is always present. (2) Listening to one another in a congregation using one-to-one relational meetings, which leads to forming relationships and informing concerns and interests. (3) Listening to neighbors within communities including those in poverty—thus engaging with a wider public (Fredrickson 2021: 21-24).

The challenges arise when we encounter strong resistance involving listening and discerning. Susan Beaumont reminds us that, “We have forgotten our discernment tradition, our centuries-old practices of discernment feel foreign and out of place in our religious institutions.” (Beaumont 2019: 67). However, in this runaway world, we often find ourselves busy fulfilling demanding tasks. Problems compel us to make decisions quickly, leading us to feel we lack time for pause or reflection. Meanwhile, a Chinese Philosopher, Lao Tsu, wisely stated:

“ Better stop than fill to the brim.
Over sharpen the blade and the edge will soon blunt.
Amass a store of gold and jade, and no one can protect it.
Claim wealth and titles, and disaster will follow.
Retire when the work is done.
This is the way of heaven. (Kellerman 2010: 2)

Lao Tsu emphasizes the necessity of employing spiritual awareness—to slow down, pause, stop, and draw a healthy boundary before being consumed by
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greed-driven desires that lead to disaster. In a nutshell, we should engage in discernment by disrupting the routine and engage in silence to deeply listen the Holy Spirit while it allows a critical introspection of thinking and actions that opens avenues toward positive transformation of the identified dissatisfying situations.

4. Problem of Decision-making Procedures

Etymologically, the word “decision” comes from the Latin word *decidere*, which means “to cut off.” Cindy Suarez, with the help of Prospect theory tools, had mapped the difference between decision making and choice (Suarez 2018: 54). However, in my view, the decision-making process always involves and incorporates choice, because to decide is to choose.

In the decision-making process, indeed, we need to employ rigorous rational approaches, as follows:

Step one	Defining the problem.
Step two	Looking for root cause.
Step three	Gathering data.
Step four	Interpreting data.
Step five	Brainstorming alternatives/options.
Step six	Establishing decision criteria.
Step seven	Evaluating alternatives.
Step eight	Assessing risk and return.
Step nine	Selecting an optimal solution

Table 1: Deciding Approach List by Beaumont (2019: 72)

However, the rigidity of decision-making procedures, as can be seen in table one is problematic, because it relies too much on human capacity. Beaumont succinctly addressed this problematic aspect by stating that, “Decision making is grounded in logical thinking and rational discourse. Decision-making assumes that we have the capacity to understand and solve our own problems and that this works best by maximizing available resources and maintaining order.” (Beaumont 2019: 71). Spiritually speaking, this logical

approach is called *cataphatic*. The word *cataphatic* is derived from Greek, rooted in *phanai* (speak), and *kata-phatikos* (affirmative).

Cataphatic engages “our reason, memory, imagination, feelings and will” (Bourgeault 2004: 44). The *cataphatic* approach, *via positiva* or positive affirmation, means to understand and express the nature of God. It is the way of knowing, utilizing words, voice, images, ideas, and concepts to approach God (Beaumont 2019: 81). Unfortunately, decision-making within a framework of rational control and a chain of straight-forward and critical analysis appears to be paralyzed in the context of liminality. Therefore, it is not enough to apply the *cataphatic* approach. It is also important to tap in a deep listening process and discerning God’s will in an *apophatic* way (Bourgeault 2004: 44).

Apophatikos means negative.⁶ The *apophatic* approach does not make use of faculties, it bypasses our capacities for reason, imagination, visualization, emotion, and memory (Bourgeault 2004: 45). Christine Valters Paintner explains the *apophatic* path as contemplative, meditative prayer, of moving beyond image to an experience of the sheer presence of God (Paintner 2011:51). Thus, to effectively navigate decision-making in the context of liminality, which is characterized by uncertainty, we need to employ an *apophatic* perspective as well.

We can engage in the *apophatic* approach through the evocative and aesthetic language of the arts. The artists’ deep yearning to find beauty, give it form, and expression encompasses both the *cataphatic* and *apophatic* approaches simultaneously. By cultivating contemplative and artistic practices that embody both *cataphatic* and *apophatic* approaches, we can give space for the beauty of the arts to speak and guide a decision-making process along an unknown path. Thus, the decision-making process needs to develop a new

⁶ Further elaboration of the apophatic theology can be read in Pseudo Dionysius, “The Complete Works, trans. Colm Luibheid. *A Volume of The Classics of Western Spirituality*, ed. John Farina. 1987. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press. See also John Peter Kenney, “The Critical Value of Negative Theology,” *Harvard Theological Review*. Vol. 86, No. 4, October 1993: 439-453. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000030650>
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language that not only upholds truth (*verum*) and goodness (*bonum*) but also embraces beauty (*pulchrum*).⁷

As discernment is crucial during liminality—characterized by uncertainty arising from crisis, it is vital to discuss practical steps involved in this process. Therefore, I propose three steps: (1) Three fundamental discernment questions, (2) Social discernment, and (3) The integration of the Ignatian discernment framework and contemplative artistic practices.

I have deliberately structured these steps to retrieve and employ the wisdom of ancient traditions, such as Ignatian discernment which is intended to help a person live in the moment and deal with uncertainty (Nullens 2019: 196). At the same time, I also integrate it with contemporary social and communal discernment involving contemplative artistic practices. By doing so, we can maintain a balance between personal and collective, inward and outward, *cataphatic* and *apophatic* approach in the discernment process. This synthesis embraces what I call a “comprehensive discernment model for decision-making” which I will elaborate on in the next sections.

5. Practical Steps

Step #1 | Discerning Three Fundamental Questions

Monica Sharma suggests that if we want to stand and manifest our greatness and make changes in the world we dream about and want to live in, then we must grapple with the question of being and doing (Sharma 2017:17). Furthermore, we need to exercise a willingness to learn from the context of the past, in order to rewrite the present and reframe the future. Therefore,

⁷ Further discussion regarding the artist’s rule to provide contemplative framework can be read in: Hardiyani Triasmoroadi, “Make Way for Beauty: The Role of Contemplative Artistic Practice in Navigating Religious Education along the Unknowing Path” *Theologia in Loco*, Vol.5, No. 1 (2023): 72-82. <https://doi.org/10.55935/thilo.v5i1.274>

amidst crisis and liminality, it is urgent to discern three fundamental questions that I adopted from Gil Rendle (2019: 339), as follows:

- “Who are we?”
- “What has God called us to do?”
- “Who is our neighbour?”

In the first step of the discernment process, three fundamental questions are important to exercise. The first question is addressing the aspect of being, or identity. The second question is concerning the aspect of doing, or mission. And the third question is particularly considering the context of existence.

After discerning these three fundamental questions, and as a practical consideration, the institutions should enhance their decision-making process through the guidance of social discernment and Ignatian discernment.

Step#2 | Employing Social Discernment

As a way to go beyond the personal dimension and lift up social concerns, Elizabeth Liebert in her book “The Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions,” teaches us how to dismantle injustice in social situations using what she called the social discernment model (Liebert 2015:135). The social discernment model is relevant to respond to the need of spiritual guidance when dealing with complexities of social systems, which comprises the following dimensions:

- *Insertion*: immersing oneself in the experiences of those involved as an attempt to notice, observe, and describe the current situation.
- *Social analysis*: deepening understanding and observation by examining the system’s dynamics to grasp its entirety.
- *Theological reflection and prayer*: incorporating a crucial part to discernment, namely contemplative prayer and spiritual listening, to receive Spirit’s guidance.

- *Decision and confirmation*: seeking the Spirit’s confirmation —as part of the Ignatian discernment—before finalizing decisions, balancing head work with heart work, *cataphatic* with *apophatic*.
- *Implementation and evaluation*: taking action with thoughtful planning, thinking, feeling, prayer and reflection that implementation will require (Liebert 2015:12-13).

The social discernment model does not have to be understood as hierarchical, but rather as following the flow of a pastoral cycle:



Figure 1: Social Discernment Schema by Liebert

In this way, the social discernment shows similarity with the theory of U. The theory of U reposes on a contemplative model and image that begins on the left side of “U” then descends into silence at the bottom, where it connects to the source of inspiration and will, allowing inner knowing beyond one’s mind to disrupt this introspection. And then ascends on the other side of the “U” into deeper ways of seeing and of being prepared for transformative action transcending old ways.

The key difference between the theory of U and the social discernment is that the social discernment places an emphasis on seeking spiritual confirmation before finalizing decisions. In social discernment, the discernor engages in community engagement, and contemplative listening to ensure that actions

stem from a deep spiritual freedom as a way to ensure spiritual confirmation before any action. Whereas the theory of U draws on secular interpretations of Eastern philosophies rather than Christian spirituality. It calls for “presencing”, which involves deep listening but does not include prayer or theological reflections. In summary, the theory of U focuses on organizational transformation through collective learning and innovation and relies on internal power without a specific religious orientation (Liebert 2015:140-142, Nullens 2019: 203).

Step#3 | Ignatian Discernment & Contemplative Artistic Practice

The social discernment derived from the Ignatian discernment model provides an effective spiritual framework for everyday life decision-making processes. Ignatian discernment emphasizes that God is present in our world and actively engaged in our lives. It is a pathway to deeper prayer, to make decisions guided by keen discernment, and an active life of service to others.⁸

In my view, it would be constructive to integrate the Ignatian discernment with contemplative artistic practice as a means of harmonizing the way of knowing or *cataphatic* and the way of unknowing or *apophatic*. I believe that a deliberate effort to incorporate and combine Ignatian discernment with contemplative artistic practices will be invaluable for the institutions, including churches, in cultivating its decision-making process comprehensively.

Thus, I present Jim Manney’s framework of eleven Ignatian steps for decision-making incorporating excerpts of Ignatius’ original text.⁹

⁸ Short definition of Ignatian spirituality taken from: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/what-is-ignatian-spirituality> accessed: 22 Oct. 2024.

⁹ An Ignatian Framework for making a Decision by Jim Manney taken from: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/an-approach-to-good-choices/an-ignatian-framework-for-making-a-decision/> accessed: 22 October 2024. Original text of “Ignatian Sixth Point of the First Way of Making a Choice” translated

Additionally, I juxtapose the framework with an offering to involve contemplative artistic practice inspired by Christine Valter Paintner (2011), Cindi Beth Johnson (2023), Julia Cameron (2021), and incorporates local Javanese tradition such as *Jagongan* and *Joged Amerta*, as follows:

Step	Framework Of Decision Making	Contemplative Artistic Practice
One	Identify the decision to be made or the issue to be resolved. <i>Ignatian discernment original text: [178] To place before myself the thing about which I wish to make a choice</i>	Contemplative walk. ¹⁰ Within identification process, cultivate walks as a way to listen to the ways the Divine speaks through the world. Listen to your own heart beating, listen to the ways that new ideas arise in this space.
Two	Formulate the issue in a proposal. <i>Original text: [179] It is necessary to have as my objective the end for which I am created, that is to praise God our Lord and</i>	Centering Prayer. ¹¹ Combine the proposal formulation with the Centering Prayer: - Prepare sacred and silent space. Engage in silence. - Whenever a thought comes into your mind, simply let

from Spanish to English by Timothy M. Gallagher. See Appendix: Complete Text of St. Ignatius in Timothy M. Gallagher, O.M.V. 2009. *Discerning the Will of God: An Ignatian Guide to Christian Decision Making*, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 112-114.

¹⁰ Christine Valters Paintner. 2011. *Artist Rule: Nurturing Your Creative Soul with Monastic Wisdom*, Notre Dame, Indiana: Sorin Books, 16-17. And Julia Cameron. 2021. *The Listening Path: The Creative Art of Attention*. NY: St. Martin’s Essentials, 13-30.

¹¹ Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, 18-19.

	<p><i>save my soul. In addition, I must be indifferent, without any disordered attachment, so that I am not more inclined or disposed to accept the thing before me than to refuse it, nor to refuse it rather than accept it, but that I find myself like a balance at equilibrium ready to follow whatever I perceive to be more for the glory and praise of God.</i></p>	<p>the thought go and return to that open, silent attending upon the depths. Not because thinking is bad, but because it pulls you back to the surface of yourself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a short word or phrase, known as a “sacred word,” such as “Jesus or peace” or “be still” to help you let go of the thought promptly and cleanly.
<p>Three</p>	<p>Pray for openness to God’s will and for freedom from prejudice and addictions.</p> <p><i>Original text: [180] To ask God our Lord that he be pleased to move my will and place in my soul what I ought to do in the matter before me that would be more for his praise and glory, using my intellect well and faithfully to weigh the matter, and choosing in accord with what is pleasing to his most holy will.</i></p>	<p><i>Lectio or visio divina.</i>¹²</p> <p>To welcome God’s will we can use prayer through sacred readings (<i>lectio divina</i>) or sacred images (<i>visio divina</i>) to let the depth dimension of Scripture and the story to meet us where we are at the time, no matter what our experience may be.</p>

¹² Christine Valters Paintner, *Artist Rule*, 17-18.
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<p>Four</p>	<p>Gather all the necessary information.</p> <p><i>Original text: [181] To consider by way of reasoning how many advantages or benefits accrue to me if I have the office or benefice proposed. Solely for the praise of God our Lord and the salvation of my soul; and, on the contrary, to consider in the same way the disadvantages and dangers there would be in having it. Then to do the same in the second part, that is, to look at the advantages/disadvantages and benefit/dangers in not having it</i></p>	<p>Engage in silence.¹³</p> <p>Combine the effort to compile information with silence.</p> <p>It is through silence and detachment that one can develop a receptive attitude and becomes open to new options and possibilities.</p> <p>Spend 5-10 minutes in sacred space/place in silence.</p> <p>Pay attention to your inhale-exhale process, your feelings, wisdom, and insights.</p> <p>Write or doodle about your solitude process.</p>
<p>Five</p>	<p>Welcome and open to receive God's will.</p> <p><i>Original text: [182] After I have thought and reasoned in this way about every aspect of the matter</i></p>	<p>Receive Picture.¹⁴</p> <p>Shift your notion of photography from "taking" a picture to welcoming and receiving a picture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Think of a picture as a gift, a mystery, an experience of

¹³ Cindi Beth Johnson in Hardiyani Triasmoroadi. 2023. "Make Way for Beauty: The Role of Contemplative Artistic Practice in Navigating Religious Education along the Unknowing Path", *Theologia in Loco*, Vol.5, No. 1, 80-82. <https://doi.org/10.55935/thilo.v5i1.274>

¹⁴ Cindi Beth Johnson in Hardiyani Triasmoroadi, *Make Way for Beauty*, 80-82.

	<p><i>before me, I will look to see toward which alternative reason inclines more: and in this way according to the greater movement of reason, I should come to a decision in the matter under deliberation.</i></p>	<p>wonder, and an opportunity for contemplation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare to receive pictures by holding your smartphone camera at waist level and focusing on what looks interesting. - Don't look through the viewfinder; instead, let the camera surprise you as you "receive" photos. - Afterwards, meditate on what you have received, noticing surprises and new insights.
<p>Six</p>	<p>State all the reasons for and all the reasons against each alternative in the proposal.</p> <p><i>Original text: [183] Having made this choice or decision, the person who has made it should with much diligence, turn to prayer before God our Lord and offer him this choice, so that his Divine Majesty may be pleased to receive and confirm it, if it is for his greater service and praise.</i></p>	<p>Collage as Reflection.¹⁵</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have a stack of magazines or catalogues nearby. - Thumb through them quickly but with a curious eye. - Approach the pages as though you are in a dialogue with the questions. - Avoid "visual proof-texting." "Visual Proof Texting" might mean that you look for a picture of a tree because you want a tree, because you think a tree is a symbol of hope. - This becomes more about illustrating (or doing a visual "proof text") as opposed to engaging a theme or concept.

¹⁵ Cindi Beth Johnson in Hardiyani Triasmoroadi, *Make Way for Beauty*, 80-82. *Journal of Ethics in Higher Education* 5(2024)

		Instead, think about listening to what you see.
Seven	Do a formal evaluation of all the advantages and disadvantages.	Take a cycle or slow walk-in silence without listening to any music. ¹⁶ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be conscious. - Welcome everything, receive everything. - Pay attention to your body, feelings, and surroundings. - Gently allow your breath to carry your awareness from your head down to your heart.
Eight	Observe the direction of your will while reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages.	<i>Jagongan</i> ¹⁷ There are some possible obstacles to Ignatian discernment that can hinder the process of discernment and decision making, such as: projections, disordered attachments like inferiority complexes, superiority complexes, or glorified self-images, “shoulds” or “oughts” that tyrannize, perfectionism, fears, materialistic greed and

¹⁶ Cindi Beth Johnson in Hardiyani Triasmoroadi, *Make Way for Beauty*, 80-82.

¹⁷ *Jagongan* is a traditional Javanese word that means hanging out, having conversations with others, spending time relaxing together or socializing informally. *Jagongan* is a public construction in that the Church invites people to enter and gather in the Church space. To explore more on *jagongan* see: Triasmoroadi, Hardiyani. 2023. Building Bridges of Multifaith Awareness: A Visionary Proposal from the East Java Christian Church. *Societas Dei*, 10(2):185-207. <https://doi.org/10.33550/sd.v10i2.406>

		<p>possessiveness, past hurts and self-pity, competitiveness that leads to envy, impatience with yourself or others, lust, ingratitude, and irreverence, desire for control, power, status, prestige, exclusiveness, and so forth.¹⁸</p> <p>So, in this process, you can invite the spiritual directors or employ <i>jagongan</i> as a group spiritual direction to accompany your journey toward clarity.</p>
Nine	Ask God to give you feelings of consolation about the preferred option.	<p>Visual Art Exploration.¹⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have some paper and crayons, markers, or colored pencils available. - As the memories, images, and feelings unfold, use color and shape to express some of what is moving in your prayer. - Just let the expression unfold without judgement; let it be a prayer and journey of discovery.
Ten	Trust in God and make your decision, even if you are not certain about it.	<p>The Artist Date.²⁰</p> <p>Do something that enchants or interests you such as: go to</p>

¹⁸ Jim Manney. See <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/making-good-decisions/an-approach-to-good-choices/an-ignatian-framework-for-making-a-decision/> accessed: 26 December 2023.

¹⁹ Christine Valters Paintner, *Artist Rule*, 21-22.

²⁰ Julia Cameron, *The Listening Path*, 13-30.

		<p>movies, visit a gallery, as a way to receive, listen, restore new ideas and images.</p>
<p>Eleven</p>	<p>Confirm the decision.</p>	<p>Movement exploration.²¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with <i>Joged Amerta</i> or Amerta movement ²² - Walking the spiral or labyrinth as symbol of integration and non-linear experience. - Take some time to center yourself, focusing on the journey and invite the Divine and community across time and space to be with you. - Listen to the invitation each moment, keeping an open mind and heart. - Take as long as you need to reach the center, listening to the wisdom and guidance of the cloud of witnesses as you travel. - Pause at the center to receive whatever gift offered.

Table 2: Ignatian Discernment Framework & Contemplative Artistic Practice

However, in our volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world, especially amidst of crisis, the arts have unique capacity to tap into the

²¹ Christine Valters Paintner, *Artist Rule*, 118-119.

²² Joged Amerta initiated by Javanese artist namely Suprpto Suryodarmo. See: <https://youtu.be/x2zhPvyoNyc> and <https://youtu.be/qcXIME9WJpY?si=L-cq5gQv2B0EQFb0> accessed: 14/11/2024

mystery and liminality. Through contemplative artistic practices, the silence aspect of prayer in Ignatian discernment, can be expressed in an aesthetic and evocative language without losing its *apophatic* nature. By integrating Ignatian discernment with contemplative artistic practice we can have a multifaceted approach to the discernment process that balance both *cataphatic* and *apophatic* dimensions. This integration not only enriches our understanding, but also enhances emotional processing and fosters community engagement. Furthermore, it strengthens active participation in the world, as a way to finding God in all things—as Ignatian profound adage. In that way, we can receive wisdom to navigate uncertainty with spiritual depth and creativity.

6. Recommendations

In order to make a good decision and avoid failure in the future, the Church as an institution or organisation should delve into comprehensive discernment diligently as a way to represent the Church as an organism or the body of Christ in the world. The comprehensive discernment model consists of employing three discerning questions in combination with the decision-making approach (*table one*), social discernment (*figure 1*), the integration of Ignatian discernment framework and contemplative artistic practice (*table two*), that I formulate in table three, as follows:

Process	Deciding approach	Social discernment	Ignatian discernment
One	Defining the problem	Insertion (noticing & describing)	Identify the decision to be made
Two	Looking for root cause	Social analysis	Formulate the issue
Three	-	-	Prayer
Four	Gathering data	Social analysis	Gather all the necessary information

Five	Interpreting data	Theological reflection	Welcome and receive God's will
Six	Brainstorming alternatives/options.	Theological reflection	State all the reasons and all the reasons against each alternative
Seven	Establishing decision criteria	Theological reflection	Do formal evaluation of all the advantages & disadvantages
Eight	Evaluating alternatives.	Decision and confirmation	Observe the direction of will while reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages
Nine	Assessing risk and return	Decision and confirmation	Ask God to give feelings of consolation
Ten	-	-	Trust in God and make decision
Eleven	Selecting an optimal solution	Implementation and evaluation	Confirm the decision

Table 3: Comprehensive Discernment Model for Decision-Making, summarized by Hardiyan

Within table three we can recognize points of similarities that intersect each other. The framework in table three can be further contextualized and customized to make it fit into the particular context. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind the principle to employ *cataphatic* and *apophatic* approaches, as a way to exercise both human ratio or logic and provide a proper space for the Spirit's guidance, while at the same time engage the contemplative artistic practice.

Finally, based on table three, I recommend the comprehensive discernment schema in circular mode, emphasizing that after the confirmation of the decision, there is need for prayer again as recognition of our human limitation

and vulnerability that lead us to the faith in God’s guidance through Holy Spirit, as follows:



Figure 2: Circular Comprehensive Discernment for Decision Making Schema, constructed by Hardiyani

I am cognisant of the fact that such a comprehensive discernment model for decision making is lengthy, posing a challenge for those seeking a straightforward, clear, and quick answer, or rapid solutions. Institutionally speaking, and in consideration that diverse people involved in the discernment process may not always share the same mindset or values. Therefore, an extensive respectful listening process and an open-hearted dialogue are necessary to build trust among all participants. We might tend to privilege fast cultures to move as quickly as possible toward action, instead

of dedicating ourselves to slowing down spirituality, deep listening, and give attention required to receive God's spirit working within us and our structures. Conversely, excessive analysis could lead to stagnation and indecision. However, as Liebert addressed, through grace, this meticulous pursuit can yield profound transformation as we gradually seek God amidst our systems.²³

7. Conclusion

The role of discernment encourages leaders, who rule at the top of the organisational pyramid, controlling money, ideas, and hold ecclesiastical power to learn and to let their power go in a *kenotic* spirit. The role of discernment, seriously applied, will enable leaders to listen, immerse themselves into a situation demanding solutions, embracing the margins, and communicating directly with those affected in the communities at grass-roots level, in true humility and genuine openness.

The use of discernment in the context of the Church, will allow and invite decision makers to employ theological reflection, contemplative prayer, and spiritual discipline to receive confirmation from the Holy Spirit, before acting or making decision. As vulnerable beings, we certainly make mistakes and rarely have the ability to make the right decisions. However, if we live in discernment and listening to the Spirit's guidance, at least we will be able to admit our weaknesses, accept limitations with all humility and trust God leading us on the way to a more compassionate, just and peaceful cohabitation with those we are called to live with on this earth.

Decision-making, therefore, becomes a social and spiritual practice, emphasizing the importance of slowing down to listen to God's guidance. Incorporating discernment that will influence decision-making processes, will transform institutional task into sacred practices. By aligning decisions with such a discernment that values critical introspection, spiritual disruption

²³ See Elizabet Kvernen, *The Soul of Discernment: An Interview with Elizabeth Liebert* <https://collegevilleinstitute.org/bearings/the-soul-of-discernment/> accessed 10/21/2024

and social consideration and empathy, the institutions can lead to actions that resonate with the divine will, in which at the same time they would be able to restore trust, reconcile the dispute, maintain peace, engage in ethical church governance and enhance institutional stability for sustainable church health.

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9. Short biography

Hardiyan Triasmoroadi is a Reverend of the East Java Christian Church (*Greja Kristen Jawi Wetan*), Malang, East Java, Indonesia. His academic pursuits are driven by a keen interest in exploring the nexus of arts and spirituality, as well as deepening his understanding of ecclesiology and constructive theology. From 2021 to 2025 he has been engaged in doctoral studies (Doctor of Ministry, D. Min.) at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, USA. Prior to this, he earned a Bachelor of Theology degree in 2005 from Duta Wacana Christian University, followed by a Magister of Theologiae in 2018 from Jakarta Theological Seminary (STFT Jakarta).

Email: adi.triasmoroadi@unitedseminary.edu