

## Integrity In Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian Ethical Analysis Of Deviations In The Implementation Of Congregational Council Decisions

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### Abstract

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*This study analyzes deviations in the implementation of decisions made by the Church Council in churches using the lens of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian ethics. This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The study was conducted at the Victory Tompasobaru GMIM Congregation, where discrepancies were found between the decisions of the council and their implementation, caused by weak leadership integrity and accountability. Using descriptive qualitative methods, the study examined the dynamics of church leadership, the presbyterial-synodal system, and the decision-making process. Bonhoeffer's ethical analysis—particularly the concepts of costly grace, Christus als Wirklichkeit (Christ as reality), and Stellvertretung (primacy/responsibility of representation)—was used to diagnose the root causes of these deviations. The results of the study show that deviations in the implementation of decisions are not only procedural violations, but also theological-ethical failures in fulfilling the call to responsible leadership before God and the congregation. As a solution, the study offers a holistic reconstruction that includes spiritual nurturing, strengthening accountability structures, and developing a culture of openness in church assemblies, so that the integrity and credibility of church leadership can be restored.*

**Keywords:** Integrity, Ethics, Bonhoeffer, Leadership, Session, Responsibility.

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## INTRODUCTION

The church is a community of people who believe in God and come together to worship, praise, and glorify His greatness. The church originally emerged from the faith of His disciples, who witnessed and experienced the life journey of the Lord Jesus Christ, which brought salvation and grace to believers. By carrying out what God has entrusted to them, the church recognizes the need for a system within the church to organize and manage its ministries according to each person's abilities and talents. Therefore, Christians must realize that, in order for the stewardship responsibilities within the church to function in accordance with His will, believers must carry them out earnestly for the glory of God's name—a matter of utmost importance today. Thus, the Church is an organization in which there must be both leaders and those led, each entrusted with specific responsibilities (Titihu et al., 2023).

The sense of responsibility that is instilled must meet the needs of the church—needs that must be addressed from within, namely by establishing an organizational structure within the church, so that its members can be organized, managed, and disciplined in both church ministry and the lives of believers.

Stewardship is something believers must pay attention to so that ministry within the church can run smoothly. Therefore, in organizing and managing, there must be an internal organization where a sense of responsibility is demonstrated in governing and managing. Successful and efficient stewardship is necessary so that the church can carry out all of God's missions to the fullest; conversely, poor stewardship can hinder the church's growth, both spiritually and physically (N. Waruwu et al., n.d.). Integrity is also essential in leadership.

Integrity is an essential foundation of Christian leadership. The word "integrity" comes from the Latin *integritas*, meaning whole, complete, or undivided. In the context of church leadership, integrity refers to the alignment between one's words, actions, and the values of faith held dear. A Christian leader of integrity not only carries out administrative duties but also serves as a role model in moral, spiritual, and ethical matters. Character is a byproduct of a living relationship with God. A person of character and integrity will do what God commands others to do to the best of their understanding and ability (Andrew Wommack, 2023).

Ideally, Christian leadership should embody a figure worthy of emulation and admiration, and one who lives in accordance with the truth of God's Word (E. Waruwu et al., 2025). A Christian leader is someone who is accountable for their words (a simple concept, yet one with profound meaning). As a leader, what they say should be something that those they lead can rely on and hold onto. What a Christian leader says is exactly what they do. What is done is what is said. It is not one thing on the lips and another in the heart; it is not one thing on the lips and another in action (this is also related to trust in the leader) (Pasande, 2020, p. 70). Leadership approaches in the church must indeed be grounded in biblical principles, which emphasize the examples set by the leaders in the Bible (Johanes Augustinus et al., 2023). The Bible provides many examples of leaders and highlights their integrity, such as Daniel, who remained faithful to God despite political pressure (Daniel 6:4), and Nehemiah, who led with transparency and accountability (Nehemiah 5:14–19). However, the most important concept of leadership in the church must be characterized by Christ-like humility, obedience, and loyalty to God (Rongrean et al., n.d.). Therefore, leadership in the context of the church is centered on biblical principles and the character of Christ, which serve as the foundation for servant leadership—a concept that the church must truly understand (Widiyanto & Zebua, 2022).

Integrity also encompasses honesty in the management of church resources, transparency in decision-making processes, and consistency between the teachings conveyed and one's personal life. Without integrity, church leadership is vulnerable to abuse of authority, conflict, and a loss of trust among the congregation (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 45-47). The erosion of integrity often begins with small compromises that are considered "normal" or "pragmatic." For example, manipulating report data, neglecting necessary actions for personal gain, or making decisions outside of official meetings. When integrity collapses, the first thing to suffer is the leader's credibility, followed by a decline in the congregation's morale and trust. Restoring integrity is far more difficult than building it, as it involves rebuilding trust that has been shattered (Blackaby & Blackaby, 2001, p. 48).

A leader must exude confidence and have clear goals; they must also make sound decisions and be able to solve problems within an organization. Leadership must indeed be approached with seriousness and care, as it is a central and highly influential factor within an organization—especially within a church organization. Leadership also shapes how a leader manages their organization (Susilo & Baskoro, 2024). A leader must uphold their integrity, because in putting Christian leadership principles into practice, they must surrender themselves completely to God as the source of strength for leading a church organization (Asso, 2022). Therefore, church leadership must understand what leadership entails—that is, leaders entrusted with responsibilities within the church must understand the organization’s structure to prevent deviations or decisions that are inconsistent with established guidelines.

Ethical decision-making for Christians is grounded in the truth of God’s Word as revealed in the Bible; therefore, anything that is not found in the Bible cannot serve as a basis for decision-making. Consequently, sound ethics will transform a person’s perspective on decision-making when it is grounded in God and the Bible (Sijabat et al., 2023). Decision-making within the church is highly complex and challenging, as the church—an organization accountable to its congregation and the community—must make sound decisions regarding its activities and spiritual ministries. (Luma et al., 2024a) Just like decision-making in a court of law, all decisions made in the Congregational Council meeting are final and cannot be challenged; the decisions that have been agreed upon include program plans as well as budget plans. Therefore, it is necessary to consider all relevant factors. Decisions made in the meeting must be carried out as intended or in accordance with reality. This is different from what happens in the congregation I studied, at GMIM Victory Tompasobaru, where the Congregational Council Executive Board—which, by definition, serves as the leadership of the church—does not realize that they are the leaders of the church. The Church Council Executive Board did not take decisive action regarding this matter but instead allowed it to continue and operated contrary to the decisions discussed in the meeting.

Previous Research Several previous studies have discussed the importance of integrity in church leadership by integrating modern management theory with the church’s spiritual context in a practical way. A focus on conflict resolution through structured decision-making processes (such as consensus meetings or voting) adds value. The journal also emphasizes visionary and Christ-like church leadership (Misahapsari & Stevanus, 2022). Previous research has also offered a sharp critical analysis by exposing the key contradictions within the Synodical Presbyterian system: on the one hand, it is designed to promote collegial leadership and wisdom, but in practice it is often controlled by the financial influence of individuals, which leads to injustice and the disregard of the voices of ordinary congregants (Luma et al., 2024b). Previous studies have discussed the integration of general management concepts with a biblical theological perspective, demonstrating that church administration is not merely an administrative matter but also an integral part of faith-based ministry. (Tanawany & Kokmala, 2022). And a journal on church governance strategies in the face of globalization, in which the authors examine not only fundamental biblical principles such as integrity,

transparency, and accountability (N. Waruwu et al., n.d.). However, these studies tend to be of a normative-theological or administrative nature, without delving deeply into deviations in the implementation of synod decisions as an ethical-theological failure. On the other hand, studies on Bonhoeffer's ethics have been applied in socio-political contexts, yet few have specifically linked them to the integrity of church councils and leadership accountability within the context of local congregations. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by applying Bonhoeffer's ethical framework to analyze the root causes of deviations in the implementation of church council decisions at the congregational level.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method used in this study is a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. A method is a process related to the procedures for achieving the objectives required for its application, thereby enabling an understanding of the target object in the effort to achieve the objectives or goals of problem-solving (Subagyo, 2011, p. 1). The purpose of descriptive research is to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate portrayal of the situation in society (Nazir, 2014, p. 63-64). The data was collected from 15 reliable informants who serve as special ministers in the church, and data collection was conducted through interviews with these informants. Thus, using this method, the researcher sought data relevant to the researcher's needs regarding the congregation—specifically concerning the integrity of a leader from within the congregation and its implementation during a congregational meeting—whether in the form of written or spoken words, to complete this study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Bonhoeffer's Ethics of Responsibility**

#### ***Costly Grace***

Cheap grace refers to grace that is sold in the marketplace like cheap goods. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, who is alive and incarnate. But costly grace is the treasure hidden in a field; for its sake a man will gladly go and sell everything he possesses. It is a pearl of great price for which a merchant would sell all his goods. It is the rule of Christ the King, for whom a man would pluck out the eye that causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ, in response to which the disciple leaves his way. Precious grace is the Gospel that must be sought again and again, a gift that must be asked for, a door at which a man must knock. Such grace is precious because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is precious because it cost the life of a Man, and it is precious grace because it gives humanity the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and it is grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it sacrificed the life of His Son for God: "You were bought at a price." And what has cost God cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not consider His Son too costly to pay for our lives, but gave Him up for humanity. The costly grace is the Incarnation of God (Bonhoeffer, 2015b, pp. 46-47).

#### ***Ethics as a Response to Christ Present in Reality***

Authentic Christian ethics is concerned solely with the reality of God, and that reality can become tangible in our lives and in the world around us. As Bonhoeffer noted, “The desire to be good exists only as the desire to be the reality that is real in God.” Christian ethics is not primarily about what we are meant to do, as if we were the most important agents of ethics. Rather, it is about how we participate in what God is doing. Bonhoeffer articulates his thought when he states, “To participate in the indivisible reality of God is the meaning of the Christian’s question about goodness.” (Kirkpatrick, 2024, p. 320). While ethical systems focus on our actions, Christianity’s sole concern is to address our entire being, to address the effects of the Fall, and to draw us back to God (Kirkpatrick, 2024, p. 319).

The Church is nothing other than that part of humanity in which Christ has truly taken shape. The Church is humanity that has become human, has been judged, and has been raised to new life in Christ. Therefore, fundamentally, its primary concern is not with what is called the religious function of humanity, but with the existence of all humanity in the world in all its relationships. The Church’s concern is not religion, but the presence of Christ and his form among a group of people (Kirkpatrick, 2024, p. 321).

Bonhoeffer argues that Christian ethics are not rooted in obedience to a timeless, universal system of rules, but in holding fast to God’s commands, which flow from His mouth anew each day. Although we can understand the foundations of Christian ethics in terms of what we aim to achieve, Bonhoeffer maintains that we cannot know in advance, in any given situation, what we are actually meant to do. There are several reasons why this is important. First, Christ is alive and continues to rule over us. He is the One who continues to speak to us through the power of the Holy Spirit in His Word. Therefore, Christian ethics must leave room for Him to speak to us. Second, only when we rely on Christ’s guidance in every situation can we be confident that we are able to navigate the complexities of our life experiences. When we are faced with limited or terrifying possibilities, only by relying on Christ—who can see every fact, nuance, and consequence of the situation—can we hope to find the right path. By relying on Christ’s command, we can have confidence in our actions through faith and be freed from the problems and conflicts of ethical decision-making (Kirkpatrick, 2024, p. 323).

### ***Hierarchical Structure (Stellvertretung) and Responsibility***

Bonhoeffer summarizes “responsibility.” Here, as those who enter into the lived experience of others—people who lay claim to our lives, and who recognize God’s will at work in their lives—responsibility literally means “responding” to the spiritual conversation and the reality created by this encounter. This conversation, in turn, is guided by two key concepts. First, “in accordance with reality” and, second, through “concrete representatives.” The lived experience of the church and the ways in which our representative actions are realized (Kirkpatrick, 2024, p. 329).

Bonhoeffer’s concept of responsibility shifts from “I-You-I” to “You-I-You,” that is, from a fictitious “mine” to be managed. For the relationship with you given in Christ and learned responsibly, church members are structurally “together” as designated by God. Church members are structurally “there for one another.” The principle of representative action [Stellvertretung] becomes the living meaning

of responsibility. The reformation of the church into the divine image occurs when church members are structurally “together” as designated by God, “become-for-one-another,” and are called to representative action [Stellvertretung] as the living meaning of responsibility (Reed, 2019, p. 127).

The call is addressed not to individuals, but to the collective community (Matthew 1:18). God’s people are not composed of isolated individuals called to atone for sins, but the community as a whole. Bonhoeffer then discusses the concept of representative action, that is, the meaning of Stellvertretung. He addresses the tension between individual and collective responsibility by referring to the local church community. This is the ‘proven center of activity’; therefore, it must always be considered in a way that is grounded locally, concretely, and empirically (Reed, 2019, p. 140).

Bonhoeffer also states that the centrality of the principle of representative action to Christian ethics of responsibility—the representative actions and sufferings carried out by members of the body of Christ—is itself the life of Christ striving to take shape within His members. The structure of responsible action within the local faith community involves a willingness to bear one another’s guilt, just as the structure of responsible action within the faith community on behalf of the wider society does: ‘Those who act responsibly bear the guilt—which is inevitable. For every responsible person, place this guilt upon themselves, not upon others.’ (Reed, 2019, p. 170).

Bonhoeffer argues that, in addition to individual responsibility, the church must also be understood as the authority entrusted with preaching—in a concrete sense—and with issuing ethical commands. In *\*Sanctorum Communio\**, Bonhoeffer has emphasized that the Church, and the “relative obedience” we owe it, is central to the ethics of proclamation. Bonhoeffer does not equate its authority with the “absolute authority” of God’s Word in the Bible. But as the Present Christ—Christ who is here now—He must still “speak authoritatively about His position regarding current events and the world in general.” Therefore, confessional obedience to the church as an institution, though not absolute, remains an important consideration for every Christian. For it is Christ present, in the flesh, manifested, in the form of a human organization. And Christ has the power to rule over us, even from within the veil of the church, and as Christ, he issues very concrete commands. Law in the church means concrete commands; it means fellowship with God based on the concrete words addressed to me. If the church is the body of Christ, the proclamation of God’s Word, the embodiment of His revelation, then it must also be able to speak exactly as Christ did. To render it mute on all matters except general principles is to deny its very identity. A deep knowledge of God’s Word in the Bible. But it also requires an understanding of its own weakness—namely, the forgiveness of sins—and God’s grace and mercy to cover the commandments as they are given. Therefore, it takes courage to speak in faith, and a willingness to take risks for the sake of those being addressed (Kirkpatrick, 2024, pp. 330–331).

### **Deviations In The Implementation Of Congregational Decisions In The Light Of Bonhoefferian Ethics**

Before examining this from the perspective of Bonhoefferian ethics, the researcher first conducted a study within a congregation to assess the results. The

findings of this study were based on the opinions of the informants regarding how decisions are made in church meetings and what constitutes good leadership within an organization. From the respondents' answers, I analyzed that. Characteristics of Leadership Considered Good: Respondents stated that good church leadership must possess integrity, strong spirituality, openness to criticism, decisiveness, and accountability for the decisions and tasks undertaken. Just as in the initial question posed to determine whether the special assistants and respondents are aware of the characteristics of a good leader. Furthermore, the Consequences of a Lack of Firmness and Accountability: A lack of firmness and accountability in leadership can disrupt the smooth functioning of the church organization, lead to mistakes that are not properly addressed, and undermine the credibility and effectiveness of leaders in the eyes of the congregation. Efforts to Improve Inadequate Leadership Skills: To improve inadequate leadership skills, leaders must engage in self-reflection, accept criticism, communicate effectively, and make wise decisions. In addition, it is very important to emphasize the application of clear, transparent, and consistent standards in our actions. In conclusion, the issue highlighted here is that when a leader fails to improve their attitude, it will lead to problems. A leader must understand what leadership entails within an organization—not for personal gain, but to accept criticism, communicate effectively, and implement decisions made in meetings wisely. Effective communication for a leader, particularly in a church, involves the interplay between norms, principles, and the church leader's delivery of messages so that congregation members can understand and grasp the messages received—especially regarding decisions that have been made, where communication serves as the key to evaluation (Sigiro, n.d.).

But questions have also been raised regarding decision-making during meetings. The decision-making process in BPMJ meetings is governed by the GMIM church constitution. Voting is used to make decisions, but sometimes decisions change or do not align with what was discussed during the meeting (Tata Gereja GMIM, 2021). The Impact of Changing Decisions: Instability and dissatisfaction among the congregation may arise as a result of the congregation's trust in the church and its leadership if decisions are changed or made without aligning with the discussions held during the meeting. Respondents stated that decisions made during the meeting should be reviewed and re-examined so that they can be held accountable and gain greater support from the congregation, but this has not been done. The entire process—from decision-making to evaluation—is essential within an organization; however, as indicated by the respondents above, the church council must be aware of their responsibilities as leaders within an organization, especially within the context of the Church. Respondents do indeed observe that there are many oversights in the decisions made by the council, and these are often not held accountable, which leads to ongoing problems. Therefore, the church council should not turn a blind eye but must acknowledge their mistakes. Church leadership must maintain high standards of leadership, ensure that everyone is aware of and accountable for the decisions made, and evaluate and revisit those decisions to preserve the congregation's trust and stability. In 1 Timothy 3:20, church leaders are called to live lives that align with Christ's teaching and example—a model of good leadership that serves as an example and guide for the

congregation, while also strengthening faith, unity, and trust within the church (Nababan, 2024).

Based on interviews with sources at the GMIM Victory Tompasobaru Congregation, it was found that deviations in the implementation of council decisions often occur due to a lack of integrity and ethical responsibility. For example, decisions regarding programs or budgets that have been agreed upon in council meetings are not carried out as agreed, or are altered without transparent re-discussion. These findings regarding deviations in the implementation of decisions—such as the failure to carry out council decisions or the unilateral alteration of decisions—can be sharply analyzed through the lens of Bonhoeffer. These deviations are not merely violations of administrative procedures, but rather a “theological ethical failure.”

### **An Analysis of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Ethics of Responsibility and Its Relevance to the Integrity of the Church Council**

Ethics is always a conscious and deliberate act. When ethical awareness is brought to the surface to be explicitly formulated, consciously discussed, and systematically organized, that is when we are dealing with ethics. Simply put, ethics is about what humans ought to do; about what is right, good, and proper. Ethics examines, analyzes, and then formulates its subject matter rationally and logically. It follows scientific procedures and employs scientific methods. That is why we say that ethics is a science (Darmaputera, 2018, p. 5).

For Bonhoeffer, Christian ethics is not merely obedience to laws or norms, but a concrete response to Christ’s call within the reality of life. For Bonhoeffer, the primary ethical question is no longer “What is permitted?” but rather “How does Christ become Lord in the concrete reality of this world?” The center of his ethics is *Christus als Wirklichkeit* (Christ as Reality). This means that God is not outside the world, but has entered into the broken reality of the world through the Incarnation. The task of Christian ethics is to recognize and respond to the presence of Christ amidst the complexity, ambiguity, and even sin of worldly situations, including in politics and organizational structures such as the church. In his book *Ethics*, as explained earlier, Bonhoeffer emphasizes that ethical action is a response to God’s grace present in real situations. This concept is crucial for church councils because it demands that leaders not only follow formal procedures but also listen to God’s voice in every decision made (Bonhoeffer, 2015b, p. 47).

#### ***Costly Grace***

Bonhoeffer distinguishes between “cheap grace,” which consists solely of forgiveness without repentance, and “costly grace,” which demands total commitment and a willingness to suffer (Bonhoeffer, 2015b, p. 43-44). In the context of a church council, “cheap grace” arises when the council makes decisions that avoid conflict, ignore injustice, or sacrifice truth in order to maintain a false sense of harmony and the comfort of the status quo. For example, allowing financial misconduct to go unaddressed because the perpetrator is an influential person. “Costly grace” demands that the council have the courage to make the right decision even if it is bitter, which may cause opposition, but that is precisely the form of true obedience. The council must be a place where the cross, the symbol of sacrifice, is

made the paradigm for decision-making. Leadership that merely seeks the safe or popular path betrays the calling to be a disciple of Christ.

### ***Ethics as a Response to Christ Present in Reality (Christ-Reality)***

For Bonhoeffer, ethics is a response to Christ's presence in the reality of the world. This means that every decision made by the council must be viewed as an opportunity to respond to God's presence within the context of the congregation. This requires council members not only to adhere to rules but also to pray, listen, and seek God's will in every agenda item. The decisions made must bring the church closer to God's mission of salvation, not merely resolve administrative issues. (Green, 1999, p. 210-211). A servant of God chosen to represent Christ on earth must ground his life in spirituality, living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and leading a holy life in the Lord (Sigarlaki, 2024). Therefore, every decision made must be carried out properly and correctly. Not every decision is beneficial, but every decision that has been made must be evaluated to ensure that Christ is present in every decision made.

### ***Hierarchical Structure (Stellvertretung) and Responsibility***

The concept of *Stellvertretung*, or "representation," emphasizes that leaders act as representatives who are accountable to others. Every member of the council is called to act not for personal or group interests, but as a representative of Christ and the congregation. In council meetings, every elder and pastor is present not as a representative of a group or their own interests, but as a "representative" of Christ, the Head of the Church, and simultaneously as a "representative" of the entire congregation they serve. This creates a two-way accountability: vertical (to God) and horizontal (to others). An elder must make decisions by asking, "Is this decision for the good of the congregation I represent, even if it conflicts with my personal desires?" This structure protects the session from self-serving decisions and ensures that the focus remains on service rather than power. This responsibility is collective and inclusive, prioritizing the common good and faithfulness to God's Word (Rasmussen, 2006, pp. 88–89).

From Bonhoeffer's perspective, this reflects a failure to understand "costly grace" and the responsibility of being Christ's representative. Such deviations not only undermine church governance but also obscure the church's witness in the eyes of the congregation and society. Bonhoeffer asserts that Christian ethics demand the courage to act rightly even when it is difficult, and the resolve to account for every decision before God and the congregation.

1. As a Rejection of "Costly Grace" When the Church Council Executive Board (BPMJ) allows the session's decision to go unenforced, they are in fact choosing "cheap grace"—a path that requires no effort, firmness, or risk of conflict to uphold what has been agreed upon as a shared truth. They sacrificed the integrity of the process for the sake of comfort and the avoidance of "costly" responsibility.
2. As a Denial of "Christ as Reality" By disregarding the session's decision, they implicitly declared that political realities, personal relationships, or pragmatic interests within the congregation are more influential and more real than the authority of Christ, who is present and speaks through the

collegial session process. They fail to see the council as the locus (place) of God's presence.

3. As a Violation of "Stellvertretung" BPMJ members who neglect to act have failed in their role as Stellvertreter (representatives). They no longer act for and on behalf of Christ and the congregation, but may have become representatives of their own personal interests, groups, or laziness. This is a serious breach of trust.

Bonhoeffer would view this phenomenon as a symptom of a church that has become "mature" in organizational terms but "childish" in terms of ethical responsibility. The solution lies not merely in administrative sanctions, but in profound repentance and spiritual renewal within the congregation, as well as the courage to practice a responsible faith.

### **Reconstruction Toward a Trial with Integrity**

According to Nainggolan and Tamibaha, there are five principles of ethical leadership: fairness, transparency, responsibility, efficiency, and the absence of conflicts of interest (Nainggolan & Tamibaha, 2023). With these five principles and Bonhoeffer's ethics of responsibility for building a church congregation of integrity, ethical and principled leadership is essential so that decisions made in the congregation can be carried out. Therefore, first, there must be ongoing spiritual training for council members on the ethics of Christian leadership. This means demonstrating sincere dedication, integrity, and morality in line with biblical truth (Arifianto, et al., 2024). and also includes an understanding of the costly grace and collective responsibility inherent in Bonhoeffer's perspective. Second, the structure of church governance must be strengthened with clear oversight mechanisms, such as meticulous record-keeping of decisions, periodic evaluations, and transparent complaint channels. Church leaders must ensure that leadership strategies not only meet the congregation's needs but are also adaptable to long-term changes within the congregation (Lusia Rante Tasik et al., 2024). So that the decisions made do not undermine the congregation's trust. Third, a culture of openness and accountability must be fostered, where any deviations can be corrected without fear. This reconstruction is not merely procedural but also spiritual, so that the church council truly becomes a space where God's will can be heard and realized. Effective church management is crucial as it prevents division among the congregation. Decisions that have been made, if not handled properly, can lead to division within the church and damage the church's reputation in the eyes of the community, while preserving its integrity as a Christian community (Luma et al., 2024a). In this way, we foster a culture of "courage to take responsibility" and "courage to be corrected." The culture of "deliberation to reach consensus" must be revived—not as a means to suppress differing opinions, but as a shared process of seeking God's will. A church leader must always be consistent and faithful in serving, and prioritize the interests of the congregation and the church community above personal interests. A leader within the Church can focus on the interests of the congregation (Indrajaya & Widianto, 2024). Elders and deacons must undergo a formation process that focuses not only on church governance but, above all, on the ethics of leadership. A Christian leader must recognize that the highest authority belongs to God, and therefore leadership must be exercised in the manner of Christ. Ultimately, this

reconstruction aims to restore the church assembly as a “community accountable before God,” where every word, decision, and action is grounded in the awareness that they are representing Christ and serving His people. With good leadership, church leaders can move toward a consistent vision and effectively carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them (Bandhaso, 2024). Only in this way can the church become a channel of blessing and truth, and prevent deviations that harm the body of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study examines the importance of integrity in decision-making by congregational councils using Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Christian ethical analysis. This study highlights that deviations in the implementation of council decisions, such as those occurring in the GMIM Victory Tompasobaru Congregation, are not merely procedural violations, but rather ethical and theological failures that reflect the absence of “costly grace,” a disregard for the presence of Christ in the reality of the church, and a violation of the responsibility as a representative (*Stellvertretung*) of the congregation and of Christ himself. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, this study affirms that church leadership with integrity requires alignment between words, actions, and the values of faith, as well as the courage to make the right decisions even when they are risky. The reconstruction of a church council with integrity requires spiritual formation, the strengthening of accountability structures, and the cultivation of a culture of openness so that the church council can become a space where God’s will is realized tangibly and responsibly.

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