NewSong Church

HARRISON, OHIO

POSITION PAPER

Church Government

Led by elders, governed by the congregation, under Christ.

OUR POSITION

Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Under Him, NewSong is led by a plurality of qualified elders and governed by its members, who together hold final responsibility for the church's membership, discipline, officers, and doctrine. Deacons and deaconesses serve the practical needs of the body.

POSITION PAPER

Church Government

Christ is the head

The church belongs to Christ. He is its head (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22–23), and He rules it through His Word. Every elder, deacon, and member serves under His authority. NewSong is an independent church, not governed by any denomination or outside body, though we gladly cooperate with like-minded churches (Bylaws, Article III).

Elders lead

The New Testament consistently describes churches led by a group of elders, not a single leader (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; James 5:14). The titles elder, pastor, and overseer all describe this one office (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1–2). Elders teach and preach the Word, shepherd and pray for the members, guard the church's doctrine and unity, and equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11–12).

A plurality of elders provides accountability, wisdom, and balance. At NewSong the pastors serve as elders, and “in matters of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between a Lay Elder and a pastoral elder” (Bylaws, Article V, Section 2C). No one man rules the church.

The congregation governs

Jesus gave the gathered church real authority. When a brother refuses to repent, the final step is to “tell it to the church” (Matthew 18:17). Paul instructed the whole church at Corinth, when assembled, to remove an unrepentant man (1 Corinthians 5:4–5), and later to restore him when he repented (2 Corinthians 2:6–8). The congregation chose the first deacons (Acts 6:3–5). Paul held whole churches responsible for the gospel they received (Galatians 1:8–9).

The 1689 Confession says elders and deacons are to be “chosen… by the common suffrage of the church itself” (26.9). Our New Members Class puts it this way: the gathered church, acting under Christ's authority, is like an embassy of His kingdom on earth.

Who decides what

MATTER	ELDERS	MEMBERS
Receiving new members	Recommend after the membership process	Affirm by vote
Church discipline, final stage	Recommend removal from membership	Decide by vote
Elders	Examine and nominate (unanimous)	Affirm by vote
Deacons and deaconesses	Nominate	Affirm by vote
Annual budget	Prepare with the treasurer	Approve in January
Statement of Faith, Member Covenant, Bylaws	Review and recommend changes	Approve by vote
Teaching, preaching, and shepherding	Preach and teach the Word, shepherd the flock, and equip the saints for ministry	Carry the work into every corner of church life: teaching, encouraging, admonishing, and caring for one another

The ministry of the Word does not belong to the elders alone. Christ gave pastors and teachers "to equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4:11–12), and He calls every member to let His word dwell richly among them, "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16). The elders lead and guard this work; the whole church carries it out.

Congregational votes require at least 75% of members present and voting, with two thirds of members present. Members meet in January, May, and September (Bylaws, Article VI).

Deacons and deaconesses serve

Deacons and deaconesses care for the practical needs of the body: benevolence, facilities, and the logistics of our gatherings (Acts 6:1–4; 1 Timothy 3:8–13). Their service frees the elders to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. The office does not exercise spiritual authority; it serves (Bylaws, Article V, Section 3).

Why this matters

This pattern protects the church. Elders who must win the congregation's affirmation lead by teaching and example, not by decree. Members who share responsibility for the church cannot be passive spectators; they must know the gospel well enough to guard it. Elder leadership and congregational responsibility together are one of the ways Christ grows His people to maturity.

KEY PASSAGES

Matthew 18:15–20; Acts 6:1–6; 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 2 Corinthians 2:6–8; Ephesians 4:11–13; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1–4. Bylaws, Articles III, V, and VI. 1689 Confession, chapter 26.

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