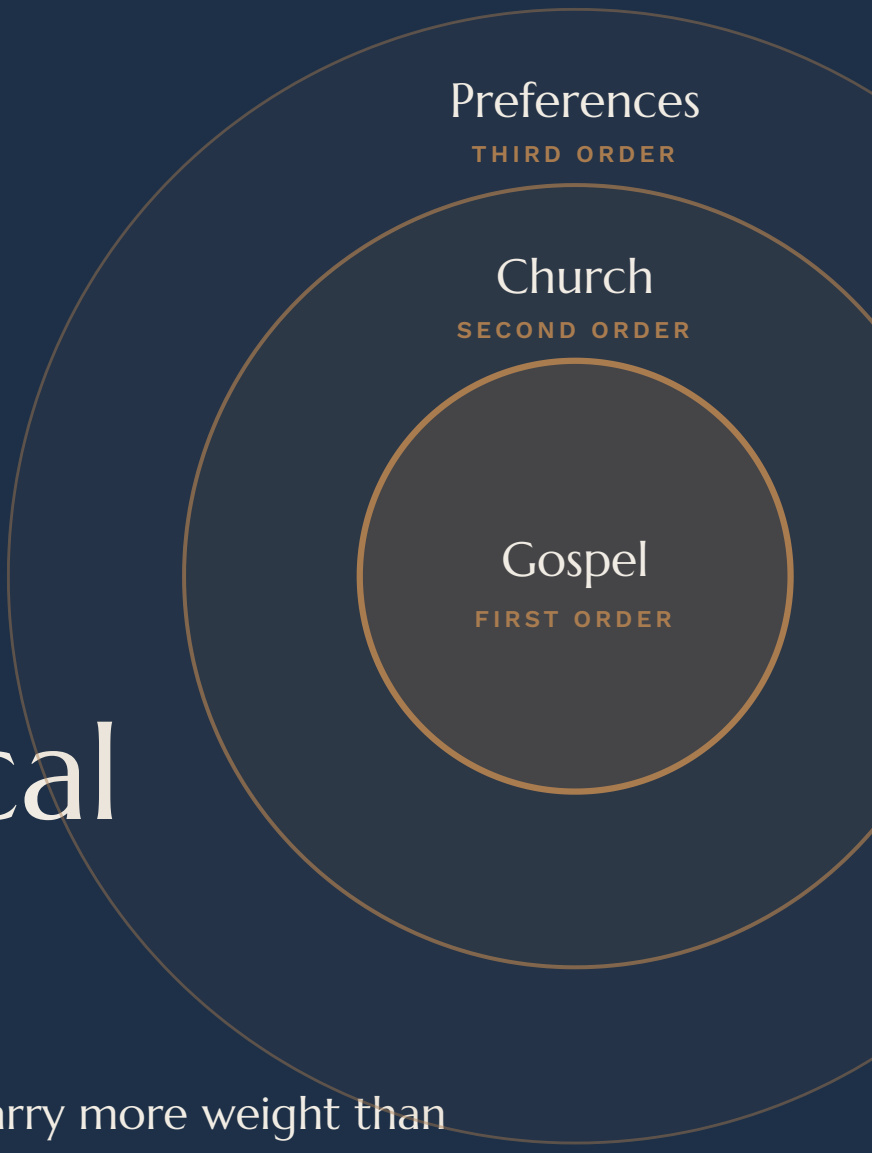
NewSong Church

HARRISON, OHIO



POSITION PAPER

Theological Triage

Some theological matters carry more weight than others.

FIRST ORDER	SECOND ORDER	THIRD ORDER
The gospel	The church	Preferences
Essential for salvation	Essential for church fellowship	Disagree and remain in close fellowship

FIRST ORDER

The gospel

ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION

> Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.
>
> For I delivered to you as of **first importance** what I also received: that **Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures**, **that he was buried**, **that he was raised on the third day** in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time...
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1–6

These are some of what are considered the essentials of the gospel. If you don't believe these things, then you are not born again.

These beliefs are:

1	The Trinity: one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
2	That Jesus was 100% God and 100% man
3	That man is guilty before God because of our sin
4	Christ's atoning death satisfied God's justice, bore our sin, and secured reconciliation
5	That we are justified by faith in Christ's perfect life, substitutionary death, and resurrection
6	Justification is by grace alone, not by works
7	Scripture is God's Word, is without error, and is completely sufficient for the believer to live out their faith
8	Jesus will return again for His bride, the church

SECOND ORDER

The church

ESSENTIAL FOR CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

The set of second-order doctrines are non-essential for salvation, but essential for church fellowship. They determine where you can join and worship in unity.

These might include:

Baptism

MODE

Immersion vs. sprinkling or pouring

TO WHOM

Believer's baptism vs. infant baptism

Church leadership and government (polity)

	Congregational	Presbyterian	Episcopal
AUTHORITY	Rests with the local congregation	Rests with a body of elders (presbyters), both teaching (pastors) and ruling (lay elders)	Rests with bishops who oversee clergy and congregations
DECISIONS	The whole body of members votes on major issues: choosing leaders, membership, and discipline	Elders govern the local church together as a session	Bishops appoint pastors or priests and make final decisions for churches under their care
STRUCTURE	Leaders: • Elders/pastors teach and shepherd • Deacons serve by caring for the needs of the body The whole church participates in discipline. Matthew 18:15–17 · 1 Corinthians 5:4–5	Churches are connected through courts of elders: • Session: the local elders of one congregation • Presbytery: a regional gathering of elders from multiple churches • General Assembly: the national body	A hierarchy: • Local parish led by a priest • Diocese led by a bishop • Archbishops or higher offices may oversee multiple dioceses

Other second-order matters

The Lord's Supper

- **Frequency:** weekly, monthly, quarterly
- **Presence of Christ:** memorial view, spiritual presence, consubstantiation
- **Who may partake:** open vs. closed communion

Age of the earth and creation views

- Young earth vs. old earth

Calvinism vs. Arminianism

- Nuances of each view

Spiritual gifts

- Continuationism vs. cessationism

Details of eschatology

- **Millennium:** amillennial, premillennial, postmillennial
- **Rapture:** pre-tribulation, post-tribulation
- **Order of events:** the exact order of end-times events, apart from Christ's visible return, which is essential

Role of men and women in the church

- Complementarian vs. egalitarian views of teaching and leadership
- Women serving as pastors or elders

Worship practices

- **Principle:** regulative vs. normative principle of worship
- **Practice:** use of instruments, liturgy, psalmody vs. hymns vs. contemporary songs

Church discipline and membership

- How discipline is carried out and the level of accountability in membership

THIRD ORDER

Preferences

DISAGREE AND REMAIN IN CLOSE FELLOWSHIP

Finally, third-order issues are doctrines over which Christians may disagree and remain in close fellowship, even within local congregations. Unlike first-order doctrines, they do not define Christianity itself, and unlike second-order doctrines, they do not determine church membership or denominational alignment.

Because they are not essential to salvation or the unity of a local body, they call for humility, charity, and a willingness to bear with one another in love.

These might include:

Bible translations

ESV, NASB, NIV, KJV, and others

Schooling choices

Public, private, or homeschooling

Cultural practices

Alcohol use, tattoos, birth control methods, holiday observance

Worship style

Hymns vs. contemporary worship songs; choir vs. praise band

Non-core ministry methods

Small group format

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