

WHAT WE BELIEVE

(GOD) We believe in the One True God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, creator, not created, the Giver of life, always present and everywhere, three divine persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), one Triune God, the Trinity. We believe God is eternal, righteous, unchanging, loving, merciful, and gracious. We believe God is relational and desires to be known by, and to be in relationship with His children.

(JESUS) We believe Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God and is the fulfillment of over three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament of the promised Messiah. We believe Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of Moses and the writings of the Prophets. (Matthew 5:17, Ephesians 2:14-16) We believe Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, fully God and fully man. He lived a perfect life and died once for all sin, past, current and future, as a perfect sacrificial sin offering to reconcile us to God. We believe Jesus died, was buried, after three days rose and ascended into heaven after His promise to return.

(HOLY SPIRIT) We believe the Holy Spirit is the same in nature and glory as the Father and the Son and is our Advocate and Comforter (John 14:26). We believe the Holy Spirit is the truth, the power, and the breath of God. The Holy Spirit is a seal of God in our spirit and soul, a foretaste of His future glory for us, and living water for us on earth. We believe that we are baptized into union with Christ through the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:7-8, Luke 3:15-16) We believe the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom, empowers us like the Apostles, and seals us as a guarantee for the day of redemption. We believe the Holy Spirit came forth from the Father and the Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement. (John 16:8) We believe the Holy Spirit equips His disciples with mercy and grace and is the power that helps believers live in freedom to demonstrate God's love, a love that shines like a lamp on a stand in the dark. We believe the Holy Spirit produces in the believer spiritual fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

(SCRIPTURE) We believe the Holy Scripture is God breathed, is infallible and should be taught and believed in its entirety. (2 Timothy 3:16) We believe the Bible, Old and New Testaments, proves the need for and provides guidance for all that is necessary for

salvation. While we acknowledge other sources of references: i.e. commentaries, concordances, dictionaries, devotionals, and study guides may help us understand biblical context, themes, or topics, they should not be a substitute for the Bible, but a supplement while reading the Bible. We believe God wrote the Bible through various men, led the translations from Latin and Greek, and inspired its codification into a single story for man about God. We acknowledge there are many valid and good translations of the Bible. We believe the translation disciples use is a personal preference and, if possible, suggest using multiple translations to more fully understand the totality of God's Word. We believe that in order to understand any single verse from God's Word one must understand the totality of the Bible. Each verse is a piece of the puzzle and using verses in isolation can lead to misapplication or misunderstanding.

(HEAVEN and HELL) We believe in life after death, and that Heaven and Hell are real places. We believe Heaven is the eternal conscious presence of God and can only be gained through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship comes through professing Jesus as Lord and Savior and confessing our sins and asking His forgiveness and then putting our trust and faith in Jesus.

We believe God desires all to live eternity in Heaven, but those who choose to reject God will spend eternity in Hell. Hell, therefore, is the eternal conscious separation from God.

(PRAYER) We believe that prayer is the way to communicate with God and draw closer to Him. We believe prayer is central to our faith and that it can help us find guidance, wisdom, and strength.

We believe that prayer opens our hearts to God's love and becomes a channel of God's love for the world. In prayer we learn to be still and listen to the voice of God. In our prayers we pray for others and give thanks to God for His blessings. We believe that God hears and answers our prayers.

(DOCTRINE) We believe that God is holy, righteous and just. We believe that man is not. We believe that man in his natural state is spiritually dead and will spend eternity separated from God. We believe there is a requirement for us to be brought back into a right relationship with God, a reconciliation that is eternal and certain where there is no condemnation for those that live in Christ Jesus. We believe what is required is something that we cannot provide ourselves - there are no good deeds or words that bring about

salvation without the shedding of the blood of Christ. We believe what we seek is the work of the Holy Spirit that sanctifies our spirit. We seek a grace that kills our sinful and dead nature and brings our new nature alive. We are adopted into God's family as a son or daughter, an heir of His eternal kingdom.

We believe this introduction into God's family begins a life designed to be deep and everlasting. It is a life of hope in grace where we want to abide in Jesus Christ, as Christ abides in the Father, where our hope and faith work itself out in love towards God and toward each other.

We believe that tradition, experience and reason shall guide our interpretation of scripture, but scripture is primary. Our goal is to encourage all who call themselves disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ to read scripture each day and be enlivened by God's Word.

We believe and hold dear the Apostles and the Nicene Creeds as part of our heritage.

(SIN) We believe man and woman were created perfect by God in His image. We believe that sin entered into man through Adam, and every descendant of Adam is by nature a child of wrath, a slave to sin, and not one person is perfect. Therefore, man is separated from God. The price of sin is impossible for us to pay on our own and the only way to reconcile us back to God is through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. (Romans 3:23, 6:23)

(GRACE) By grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited and loving action of God through the Holy Spirit. (John 1:16-17, 2 Corinthians 12:8-9, Ephesians 1:5-8, 2:4-10) We believe that through God's grace, we develop an understanding of the Christian faith and life as God intends it to be lived. A relationship with Jesus Christ is the only way to a heavenly reward.

We do not deserve, and we cannot earn God's Grace. We believe it is only by the Grace of God, through the immaculate birth, perfect life, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection of Jesus Christ, that God makes a way to reconcile us, sinful man, to Holy God. (Romans 5:8) Grace is a gift given by a loving Father initially through Jesus Christ's resurrection and perpetually through the Holy Spirit to have a deep and everlasting life.

While the grace of God is undivided, it precedes salvation as "prevenient grace," continues in "justifying grace" and is brought to fruition in "sanctifying grace."

Prevenient grace is grace that is ever present even before we knew we needed it.

Justifying grace is that grace that reaches the repentant believer in God's love. In justifying grace a change of the heart takes place in the believer under the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Sanctifying grace is that grace that through the power of the Holy Spirit guides us to increase our knowledge and love of God and in love of our neighbor, also known as Perfecting grace.

(SACRAMENTS) We believe there are two realms to the church; 1) The natural realm represented by people and natural elements and 2) the spiritual or divine realm, God. We believe God is present in our worship, prayer, and sacrifice in a divine way through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We believe there are times when God transforms, sanctifies, and uses the natural elements in the church in a divine way. These are Holy Moments, Sacraments. These moments are a reminder of God's presence. We encourage participation in these Holy Moments but not for salvation or proof of salvation, but as worship of the One True God working among us.

We believe that Sacraments are "High Holy Moments" that have been instituted, practiced or participated in by God through Jesus Christ and are special and visible means of grace that God has given us. We believe, while we encourage the participation of the sacraments are not necessary for salvation.

(Baptism) We believe in baptism and identify with Jesus' death in order that we might be raised up with him into a new life. (Romans 6:4) As on the Day of Pentecost we are baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), and brought into right relationship with God, and set on our journey as believers. (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:32-34)

We believe water baptism is a holy moment and is an outward sign of an inner confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. We believe water baptism is administered by one of three means, sprinkling, pouring or immersion, and is a personal choice. We believe the amount or type of water is unimportant. We believe water baptism is a public profession of faith and a first testimony for the new believer to express symbolically what they may not yet be able to tell others, the testimony of Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. We believe water baptism is also a profession of one's desire to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life, and live in Christian fellowship.

We practice water baptism with accountable individuals upon their confession that Jesus Christ is Lord and their promise to walk in a Christian faith with Jesus. (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:4-11, Luke 3:15-22, John 3:3-5, 2 Corinthians 5:17)

We also practice baptism of infants that are presented by their parents as a promise to God and the church to raise their children in the Christian faith.

(Holy Communion) We believe Holy Communion is a remembrance of the last meal that Jesus Christ shared with the original disciples and is not celebrated apart from Christ's death and the promise of His coming again. We believe we should receive Holy Communion anytime it is served. We believe God's table, like his offer of salvation, is open to all who seek and desire a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20, John 6:52-58, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

We believe when Holy Communion is served the elements, bread, crackers, juice, wine, etc., are not significantly important, until God sanctifies the elements presented to Him in prayer and thanksgiving. A reminder that the body of Jesus Christ had to be broken, that a sacrificial death must occur to pay for our sin and the blood of Jesus is what raised us out of death into everlasting life.

(Other High Holy Moments) We also recognize there are other High Holy Moments in the life of the church and believer to remind us that Jesus is near. We believe these to be works of the Spirit including healing, reconciliation, anointing, ordination, confirmation, marriage, prophecy and others as led by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Ephesians 4:13)

(Confirmation – Next Steps) We believe "Next Steps" is for those youth who were baptized as infants or children and those considering a baptism to gain an understanding of the Christian Life of discipleship (apprenticeship) under Jesus Christ and is the opportunity for them to profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

We believe "Next Steps" is also for adults who may or may not have been baptized and desire to gain a deeper understanding of the Christian Life of discipleship (apprenticeship) under Jesus Christ and is the opportunity for them to profess Jesus as their Lord and Savior and begin or renew their life following Jesus.

(SABBATH) We come together on Sundays and other special occasions as a remembrance of Christ's resurrection. (Hebrews 10:24-25) Jesus is the basis and cornerstone of our faith and we honor His request to love God and one another with our assembly. We understand that the Sabbath was first instituted in the Old Testament as a designated time of rest, as God rested on the seventh day, and is a time to be set apart from the world, a time to worship the Lord. Jesus tells us the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Jesus taught that God's intention for the Sabbath was to do His will rather than abstain from any activity.

We recognize that our Sabbath, our rest, is found only in Jesus Christ and is always available. (Hebrews 4:9) Jesus relied upon God the Father and drew His power from Him during his earthly ministry, we do the same in the name of Jesus. We affirm it is good to assemble and to worship on Sunday, and it is good to do God's will, in faith and in God's strength, every day. In doing so, we honor God's Sabbath and remember God is with us and for us always.

(SERVICE) We believe all those who profess to be disciples of Jesus Christ are called to a life of service and servanthood. As disciples (apprentices) we follow the call of the Lord. We affirm that all disciples are endowed with different gifts and talents. All are called to discern their gifts and talents bestowed by God and use them to their fullest extent in His service. (Romans 12:8, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:4-16, James 2:14-26) The gifts and talents can vary and are not a sign of more or less blessings or faith. Similarly, the eyes, ears, and mouth need the arms, legs and feet to work together as one. Let every believer receive their gifts with thanksgiving and let everyone acknowledge the value and glory of each gift and talent.

(TITHING) The tithe is first recorded in the Old Testament before the Law with Abram and then later with Jacob. (Genesis 14, 28) Abram gives a tithe of spoils won in battle, while Jacob makes a promise to God acknowledging God would support him and bless him. Later God commands the Tithe from Israel to support the priests because they did not receive an inheritance of land when they entered Canaan. (Leviticus 27, Numbers 18, Deuteronomy 14, 2 Chronicles 31) The tithe was a command that was defined as 10% of our time, talents and treasures.

In the New Testament Jesus observes the tithe in the temple worship, but his teaching isn't only about the action. He teaches about the attitude of the givers. For example, Jesus teaches us how the "religious men" go about measuring out, using weights and measures,

to make sure they observe the tenth to most absolute, but yet the least required. And yet Jesus commends the poor woman in the temple because what she gave was small but was given generously and with a thankful heart. (Mark 12:41-44)

We believe as disciples (apprentices) we are called to be givers. The worship of joyfully giving in a purposeful manner – meaning we prayerfully commit to what we are called to give and do it faithfully.

Therefore, disciples are called to support the church in its ongoing missions. We believe when Jesus explains the Law in the New Testament, the requirement is always more. We believe we should strive to meet the 10% meaning of tithe but acknowledge there are times when God's blessing allows us to exceed this amount. Anything above 10% is considered an offering to the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, we believe that all leaders of the church shall strive to tithe the full 10% in witness to their support of the Kingdom. (Malachi 3:8-10, Matthew 6:1-4, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

(Sanctity of Life) We believe in the sanctity of life and profess that life begins at conception. We believe it is not ours to decide on the taking of a life. We believe God when he told us that He knew us before we were knitted in the womb and that He knows the very number of hairs on our head. (Psalm 139:13, Jeremiah 1:4-5, Matthew 10:29-31)

(Marriage) We believe marriage is a covenant and holy union between one man and one woman (male and female as assigned at birth, by God) as defined in the Holy Scriptures. We believe that marriage is a covenant to be joyfully lived in sacrificial love with humility and faithful service to each other. The man is given to the woman and the woman is given to the man not for selfish enjoyment nor to be master and slave. Marriage is a remembrance that Jesus is the bridegroom and the church is His bride. We believe Jesus died for His bride. May we remember always that true love is expressed by the humbling of self and honoring of one another, even to death. (Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9, Ephesians 5:21-33)