

# **At St. Cloud Community Church, Florida,**

## **We believe...**

### **God the Father**

God exists as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God existing as three-in-one is commonly referred to as the Godhead or the Trinity (Matthew 28:19-20; II Corinthians 13:14, I Peter 1:1-2). The Father is God (Romans 1:7). The Son is God (Romans 9:1-5, Hebrews 1:8-9). The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4).

Each member of the trinity is equal in power, identical in nature, and have the same attributes. However, God chooses to behave in such a way that the Son and Spirit are in submission to the Father (John 14:10, 16-17, 31; John 15:26, John 16:13-15). God's nature is one of unity (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Mark 12:28-31, Ephesians 4:1-6).

God is eternal (I Timothy 1:17), existing before the world was created (Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-5). He didn't have a birth or beginning. He has always been and always will be (Psalms 90:2, Revelation 1:8).

God is unchanging (Numbers 23:19-20, I Samuel 15:29, Job 23:13, Psalms 33:11, Psalms 119:89-91, Proverbs 19:21, Ecclesiastes 3:14, Ecclesiastes 7:13, Isaiah 31:2, Isaiah 40:28, Isaiah 59:1, Hosea 13:14, Malachi 3:6, Romans 11:29, Hebrews 6:17-18, James 1:17).

God is all-powerful (Genesis 18:13-14, Job 42:1-3, Luke 1:35-37, Matthew 19:23-26).

God knows everything and is wise (Daniel 2:20b-22, Psalms 94:11, John 21:17, Romans 11:33-36, I Corinthians 1:18-25).

God exists everywhere, in all places, simultaneously (Job 34:21-23, Psalms 139:7-12, Jeremiah 23:23-24, Hebrews 4:12-13).

God is faithful and always keeps His promises (Psalms 100:5, I Corinthians 10:11-13, I Thessalonians 5:23-24, II Thessalonians 3:1-5, Hebrews 2:14-18, Hebrews 10:19-25).

God is always good (Nehemiah 9:32-35, Romans 2:1-5, Psalms 65:4, Jeremiah 31:14, Psalms 23:6, Psalms 145:9-10).

God is gracious (Romans 3:21-26, Romans 11:1-6, Ephesians 2:1-10, Titus 2:11-14).

God is truthful. His word is truth (John 17:13-19). God and His word are righteous which shows that He and His word are also truthful. God does not lie (Titus 1:1-4).

God is sovereign and rules over everything (I Chronicles 29:11-13, Psalms 97:1). What God intends to do, He will do (Psalms 135:5-7, Proverbs 19:21, Proverbs 21:30, Isaiah 43:13, Isaiah 46:8-13, Daniel 4:33-35, Romans 11:28-36, Ephesians 1:3-10, Hebrews 6:16-20).

God is holy (Exodus 15:11, Isaiah 6:1-4, I Peter 1:16, Leviticus 11:41-45, 19:1-2, 20:7-8) and loves righteousness (Psalms 33:5). God Himself is righteous (Psalms 116:5, Isaiah 45:21, John 17:25-26, I John 2:1-2, Romans 1:16-17). Everything that He says and does is righteous as well (Psalms 48:10, Psalms 145:17, Isaiah 41:9-10). God's word is right (Psalms 33:4), His laws and statutes are righteous (Psalms 119:137-138, 144), His commands are righteous (Psalms 119:172). His righteousness will endure forever (Psalms 111:2-3, Psalms 119:142, Isaiah 51:7-8).

God is just (Job 34:12, Romans 3:21-26, Romans 9:14-15, II Thessalonians 1:3-10, Hebrews 6:10).

Because God is just, He is also wrathful—insisting that injustice be dealt with forever (Psalms 2:10-12).

God's behavior is the perfect example of love. In fact, God IS love (Psalms 33:5, Psalms 23:6, Psalms 36:5-6, Romans 5:6-8, I John 4:7-21).

God is merciful (Psalms 65:1-4, Psalms 103:1-5, I Peter 1:3-9).

God is provident. He provides for salvation (Genesis 22:14) and for people's physical needs as well (Job 12:7-10, 33:4-6, Psalms 104:1-30, Matthew 6:25-27).

Although God is independent of people and does not need them because He is self-sufficient, He wants to have relationship with them and, in fact, He created people for that purpose (Acts 17:22-29).

God satisfies both His justice and wrath along with His love, mercy, and providence through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Those that believe in the finished work of Jesus Christ avoid God's wrath (Romans 5:6-11). So, God Himself offers rescue from His wrath (I Thessalonians 1:4-10, 5:4-11).

## **Jesus Christ, God the Son**

Jesus Christ has always existed and will always (John 1:1-2, 30, 8:58, 10:29-30). Jesus created everything that exists, and it is He that provides life to mankind (John 1:3-4).

Jesus took on the form of mankind, placing Himself in a human body, and living with mankind for a period of time (John 1:14) but, He remains co-existent and co-equal with God (John 5:18). Jesus Christ is unique because He is the only begotten Son of God meaning that only Jesus was actually caused to be born directly by God outside of the process of human conception. God predicted that Jesus would be born of a virgin and

be called, "Immanuel," meaning God with us (Isaiah 7:13-14). The birth of Jesus by a virgin mother was confirmed in the gospels (Matthew 1:18-21, 24-25; Luke 1:26-38).

Jesus Christ's humanity was shown through physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth (Luke 2:39-40). His humanity was shown through hunger (Matthew 4:1-2). His humanity was shown through fatigue and His need for sleep (John 4:4-6, Mark 4:35-39). His humanity was shown through thirst (John 19:28). And His humanity was shown through experiencing emotional pain (Luke 22:39-44).

While Jesus Christ is man He is still God. He is 100% man and 100% God. He did not lose His Godly attributes when He became a man. For example, before He met Nathanael, He knew who Nathanael was (John 1:48-49) which shows that He is all-knowing like the Father. Jesus knows all people (John 2:23-25). He is eternal (John 1:1-14, Revelation 1:18). He is present everywhere at all times (Acts 2:22). He is unchanging (Hebrews 1:12). He is holy (Mark 1:21-24, Acts 4:27-30). He is righteous (1 John 2:1-2). Jesus is not just truthful, He is truth (John 14:6). He is all powerful (John 1:3-5). Jesus demonstrated love (1 John 3:16a) and is, in fact, love (1 John 4:7-18).

Jesus Christ's death provided for our redemption and therefore, forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:12-14, Ephesians 1:3-10). Jesus Christ's death satisfied the requirement of the wrath of God (Romans 5:1-11). His sacrifice was sufficient to pay for the sins of the entire world. Hebrews repeatedly states, "once for all," to make that clear (Hebrews 7:26-28, 9:11-14, 9:23-28, 10:1-10).

Jesus died, was buried, and rose again victorious over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). He is now in Heaven seated on the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3, 1 Peter 3:15-25). The fact that Jesus is "seated" shows that His work is completed. His single sacrifice was, and is, completely sufficient to accomplish what God intended.

Jesus is the Advocate of the believer before the Father (1 John 2:1-2). He intercedes for believers (Romans 8:31-39, Hebrews 7:23-28).

## **God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit lives in believers, those that put their faith in Jesus (Galatians 2:19-20, Galatians 4:6). Furthermore, the "Spirit of His Son," and "The Holy Spirit," are one and the same. It is The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, God Himself that indwells the believer when he places faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, the son, was conceived from the Holy Spirit, so He was involved in the birth of Christ (Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:15). The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture to write what God wanted to be written (II Peter 1:19-21, II Timothy 3:14-17). The Holy Spirit today convicts people of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).

The Holy Spirit literally immerses believers in Himself. Those God-enveloped people are the body of Christ and make up the church of God (1 Corinthians 12:13). It is that

immersing by the Holy Spirit that seals and guarantees the believer's inclusion in God's family for eternity (Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 4:30). The Spirit lives within the believer (Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The Holy Spirit empowers the Christian (Acts 1:8, Hebrews 9:14). He guides and teaches all spiritual things (John 15:26, John 14:26). As the believer submits to the direction of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit (the good also results in love which is really the application of the fruit of the Spirit in our actions towards others (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

The Holy Spirit provides gifts to believers so that the church, operating in unity, and with individual believers in submission to Him, can accomplish the purposes of God (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). Believers are to employ those gifts in love (1 Corinthians 13) and, in fact, should eagerly desire Spiritual Gifts, especially those that minister to others (1 Corinthians 14:1).

The Holy Spirit possesses a will (1 Corinthians 2:11) and a mind (Romans 8:27). The Holy Spirit has all of the knowledge of God (John 14:26). He has the ability to speak (Acts 28:25).

The Holy Spirit can be grieved, or saddened (Ephesians 4:30). The Holy Spirit can be "quenched" like a candle can be snuffed out (1 Thessalonians 5:19). He can be resisted (Acts 7:51). The Holy Spirit can be insulted (Hebrews 10:29). To insult the Holy Spirit is to ignore His work.

## **The Bible**

The Bible, also called Scripture, is the written record of God's Word to man. Through the Bible, God reveals Himself (Genesis 1:1, John 1:1, 3-4, 9, 12). He established the law (Deuteronomy 9:10). He revealed His plan to rescue mankind from sin (2 Timothy 3:15, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). He shares His promises (Exodus 34:27, Romans 1:1-3a). He provides His instructions (Deuteronomy 33:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:6). He established a common ground of fellowship for believers (1 John 1:1, 3). He teaches pure doctrine, which in turn provide a means of rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). He provides a means of exposing attitudes and motivation (Hebrews 4:12). He works, through Scripture, in the hearts of believers (1 Thessalonians 2:13). He provides certain and specific knowledge of Christ's life (Luke 1:1-4). God expects His people, to "accept" or "receive" His Word (Proverbs 2:1-6).

In providing the Bible God gave His complete words by inspiration. The fact that the Bible comes from God is shown in at least sixty-four portions of Scripture...(Exodus 19:7, 20:1, 24:4, 24:12, 25:21, 31:18, 32:16, 34:27, 34:32; Leviticus 26:46; Deuteronomy 4:5, 4:14, 11:18, 31:19, 31:22; II Kings 17:13; II Chronicles 33:18; Job 23:12; Psalms 78:5, 99:7, 147:19; Ecclesiastes 12:11; Isaiah 30:12-13, 34:16, 59:21; Jeremiah 30:2, 36:1-2, 36:27-28, 36:32, 51:59-64; Ezekiel 11:25; Daniel 10:21; Hosea 8:12; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 22:31-32; Luke 1:1-4, 1:68-73; Acts 1:16, 28:25;

Romans 3:1-2; I Corinthians 2:12-13, 7:10, 14:37; Ephesians 6:17; Colossians 3:16; I Thessalonians 2:13, 4:1-3; I Timothy 6:3-5; II Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2, 3:7-8, 4:12, 5:12; I Peter 1:11-12; II Peter 1:21, 3:2, 3:15; I John 1:1-5; Revelation 1:1-2, 1:11, 1:17-19, 2:7, 19:10, 22:6-8) The fact that the Bible text was specifically inspired by God is mentioned seventeen times...(II Samuel 23:2; Matthew 21:42, 22:31-32, 22:43, 26:54, 26:56; Mark 12:24, 12:36; John 10:35; Acts 1:16, 28:25; Romans 3:2, 15:4; Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 3:7, 4:12; II Peter 1:19-21).

This inspiration of Scripture was actually done in several ways. In some cases, God provided the written text (Exodus 31:18). In other instances, God (the Father) provided the words, which were then written by a man (Exodus 34:27). Sometimes, the Holy Spirit provided spiritual direction, which was then documented by a man (2 Peter 1:21). Also, the Bible includes documentation of lessons taught by Christ to the apostles (I John 1:1-3a, 5).

The Scripture was eventually collected or gathered into books (Prophets, Gospels, and Epistles) (Jeremiah 30:2, Luke 1:1-4) and, over time, apostles and prophets, serving in local churches, confirmed that Scripture as God's Word (1 Corinthians 14:37).

## **Creation and Humanity**

God created everything that exists (Genesis 1:1-32). When God created humanity He placed them, man and woman, in a garden and instructed them to take care of everything on Earth, to enjoy it, and to maintain life through the gifts God had given (Genesis 1:28-30). At that moment, everything God created was perfect just as God had intended and designed it.

## **Sin and Salvation**

God gave one simple command to the first people—Adam (the first man) and Eve (the first woman) (Genesis 2:16-17). But the two choose to disobey that simple command (Genesis 3:1-7). Instead of trusting God, they chose to define right and wrong on their own terms. At that moment, the perfect relationship between God and each individual person was severed. Creation, including mankind, broke down and began to deteriorate. Separated from God, the creation began to waste away (Romans 8:18-25).

The result of sin, is to fall short of God's requirement (Romans 3:23) and the just punishment for that sin, is death (Romans 5:12, Romans 5:18, Romans 6:23a). Also, due to sin, mankind was destroyed spiritually, morally, socially, emotionally, and physically. For example, death became the norm on Earth whereas previously it was unknown. Mankind now has a tendency to return to the original dust from which we were formed (Genesis 3:16-19).

But from the very beginning, immediately after Adam and Eve sinned for the very first time in history, God made it clear that His intention to resolve the sin problem was for

Him to rescue mankind. God searched for Adam and Eve in the garden (Genesis 3:8-9). God's question (as if He didn't know the answer), "Where are you?" in verse 9, shows that He intended to rescue mankind and not simply give up on us. Even after Adam and Eve sinned, and while He could have simply decided to destroy them and start over again, God instead decided to pursue a course of action that would restore the shattered relationship between Him and them. God foretold that the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, would destroy sins hold on mankind (Genesis 3:15).

Being "born again" by believing in Jesus Christ resolves the broken relationship problem and those that are "born again" are rescued from the effects of sin (including death). Jesus Himself, the Son of Man, as "lifted up" on the cross in sacrifice in order to provide eternal life. Anyone that accepts His sacrifice by faith is given the eternal life that results from His rescue (John 3:1-21). Jesus' sacrifice, given "once for all," completely saves those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:27).

The results of being "born again", placing faith in Jesus Christ, are many including: the Believer is Made Alive through a New Birth (2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 6:3-4), the Believer is Adopted into the Family of God (1 John 3:1, Ephesians 1:3-6), God Deals with the Believer's Sin (Ephesians 1:3-8, Titus 3:3-7, Psalms 103:11-12, Micah 7:18, Hebrews 10:15-17, Romans 3:21-26, Romans 5:9-11, Hebrews 10:8-10, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:10), the Holy Spirit Lives in the Believer (Galatians 2:19-20, 4:6, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Ephesians 1:13-14), the Believer is Given Freedom and Liberty in Christ (Romans 8:18-21), the Believer is Assigned by God to Accomplish His Purposes (Titus 3:3-8, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21), the Believer is Becomes an Heir of God (Romans 8:15-17).

The relationship between the believer and God is restored permanently. It is an Eternal Relationship. The life given from God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is eternal. The one that places faith in Jesus Christ will never be removed from God's family. No one not Satan, not enemies, not family or so-called friends, not acquaintances, and not complete strangers can ever snatch the Christian out of God's hand (John 10:25-30, Romans 8:37-39, Philippians 1:3-6, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Ephesians 1:13-14, Hebrews 7:18-28).

## **The Church**

The church is made up of all believers, those who have placed faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:13-20, 28:16-20). Jesus is the Head of and loves the church (Ephesians 1:18-23, 5:25-33, Colossians 1:15-20).

As the church, believers are to act in unison to accomplish those things that God wishes to do through them (John 17:20-22; Ephesians 4:1-16). God has given gifts to individual believers to use to serve the church (I Corinthians 12:1-31) to use in performing those things that God wishes for the church to accomplish.

The local church is to carry out two ordinances instituted by Christ: baptism and the Lord's supper.

Baptism is the immersion and raising up of the believer in water identifying him with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-7). Baptism was demonstrated by Jesus (Mark 1:9-11) and was practiced by New Testament believers (Acts 2:40-41, 8:12a-13, 8:36-38, 9:17-19, 10:46-48, 16:13-15, 16:31-34, 18:7-8).

The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remind believers what the Lord did in humbly sacrificing Himself to provide a rescue from sin and a means of restoring man's relationship with God (I Corinthians 11:23-26). This ordinance was established by the Lord Himself on the night that He was arrested (Matthew 26:27-29). Paul wrote that the Lord's supper should be a time of close examination of one's personal relationship with God (I Corinthians 11:27-34).

The two ordinances together demonstrate the facts of renewed relationship with God — that the believer is immersed (baptized) in Jesus (John 14:19-20, 14:23, 17:22-23) and that God, the Holy Spirit, is in the believer (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30).

The early church gathered together frequently (Acts 2:42-47, 14:26-28). Based on the example of the early church, and the instruction in Hebrews, the church family should meet together often to accomplish the purposes of God.

The writer of Hebrews told believers that those that have placed faith in Jesus Christ should "spur one another on toward love and good deeds," and then told them to continue meeting together and encourage one another (Hebrews 10:19-25). The purposes of the gathering together of believers are to worship the Lord (John 4:23-24), is for the strengthening of believers (1 Corinthians 14:24-26), and for fellowship (I John 1:3).

The elders are God-designated leaders of the church (Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 12:28). Elders have roles of leadership and oversight (1 Peter 5:1-4). Elders are appointed by other elders (Acts 14:21-25, 2 Timothy 2:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

Believers should respect and honor authority within the church every bit as much as civil authority. For example, in Hebrews 13 the author tells the church family that they are to both "have confidence in their leaders" and "submit to their authority." Clearly God has set up the church with leadership instituted to lead and a church family to submit and obey just as we are all to be in obedience and submission to the Holy Spirit. So, the church family is to respect, honor, and obey those elders (Hebrews 13:17, Acts 16:4-5, I Thessalonians 5:12-13, I Timothy 5:17-20, Philippians 2:12-18). All of these references make it clear that 1) elders are to lead, rule, shepherd the church family and 2) the church family is to respect, honor, and obey those elders.

The church, collectively and individually, have been assigned by God to accomplish His purposes in this present world in our present bodies first, by doing good works (Titus

3:1-8) and second, by representing God on Earth as His representatives, His ambassadors, so that others can become believers too (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). We can think of those good works as being the cost of doing business as God's ambassadors. If we are not good, then we aren't correctly representing God who is love. When we do speak of Jesus Christ, the way we behave should resonate with the one we're sharing with. There shouldn't be a jarring difference between what we say with our words and what we say with our actions.

The Bible defines the term "marriage" as the God-sanctioned joining of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union. God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage. Therefore, as one example of doing good works and being ambassadors of God on Earth, and in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local body of Christ, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, and indeed all members of the church, must accept this statement on marriage and conduct themselves accordingly.

However, every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are repudiated and are not in accord with scripture nor our beliefs.

Furthermore, all members of the church must agree to avoid any sin pattern, sexual or otherwise, with which they may struggle and seek the help of the Holy Spirit and other believers to do so.

## **The Future**

Jesus Christ will someday return to take believers to Heaven, and then will spend all eternity with them (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

After the Day of the Lord (when Jesus will ride from heaven on a white horse, with His army of believers, to win the battle of Armageddon and establish His reign on earth), Satan will be allowed to deceive the nations and stir up one final rebellion against God (Revelation 20:7-15). After that final rebellion, the dead (those that have not placed faith in Jesus Christ throughout all of history, are judged at the great white throne to confirm that they are not children of God (Revelation 20:11-15).

Finally, the heavens and earth will be destroyed, and a new heaven and a new earth will be created along with a new Jerusalem (2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:1-8). The church, the bride of Christ, will spend eternity serving Him in the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-10).