**Here at Orange, we believe that everyone has a place in God’s story! We seek to be a home that intentionally welcomes, nurtures, equips, and sends all people so that they can find their place in God’s family, their community, and the world. Everything that we do as a church is pointed towards fulfilling that vision and mission.**

**You**

At Orange UMC, we believe that all persons are of sacred worth, and that everyone, in all their particularities and complexities are welcome. We affirm the value and dignity of all people; we are all created in the image of God. We strive to create a safe and welcoming environment, so that all who walk through our doors feel celebrated and embraced.

Here at Orange we happily welcome visitors! Whether you are looking for a spiritual community to call home or just in town for a short time, we would be honored to have you.

**God**

We believe that there is only one living and true God, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, full of love and glory.

God loves and cares for every life and is like a loving parent. While God is often referred to as “Father”, we find that God is also described in the Bible like a nurturing and caring mother.

We believe in Jesus Christ, only Son of God who was born to the Virgin Mary, was both fully human and fully divine. Christ took on human flesh, and though he was still divine, he experienced the full condition of human existence. He was crucified, died and buried, and on the third day was resurrected. Through his life, death and resurrection, we are offered forgiveness of sin and abundant life. The life of Jesus Christ is our example for how to live a Christian life.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third member of the triune God, is continually at work in our world today and in our lives. The Spirit of God is described in the Bible to be like a wind. We may not know where it comes from or goes, but we feel its effects. Through the Holy Spirit, God is present with us, offering us guidance, encouragement and growth.

**The Bible**

The Christian Bible is a library of 66 books, letters, poems, and songs compiled over the span of thousands of years. The Hebrew Bible (often referred to as the Old Testament) comprises the books of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. The New Testament, comprises the gospels of Jesus Christ, the stories of the early apostles and letters written to various spiritual communities. When reading the Bible, it is important to consider several questions.

*What did this passage mean to the original audience?*

*What does it mean in conversation with other texts from the Bible?*

*How could God be using this text to speak to me, my loved ones and my community?*

The authority of the Bible is not something magical, rather that it has been “tested by faith [and] proven by experience.” As John Wesley said, that the scripture contains “all things necessary to salvation”. We believe that the Holy Spirit guides us we interpret the scripture and seek to discover meaning for our lives today.

**The Way of Salvation**

In the Methodist tradition, we believe in what is called “The Way of Salvation”. This may sound like a magical term, but in actuality, it is our understanding of how God works in and transforms our lives. It is less a series of clearly defined steps and more what we believe are the expressions of God’s grace in the Christian life. One common way that this process is described is as visiting a house, with the different rooms and aspects of the house related to the different parts of the Way of Salvation.

Prevenient grace, or “grace that goes before” is our understanding of how God is already present in our lives, our relationships, our communities and our world. We can feel this through the love shared between family or friends, a community working to meet the needs of one another, and even in nature itself. In the metaphor of the house, prevenient grace is likened to being drawn toward the house, the moments on a road that point you toward it, and a porch that invites you to come inside.

Justifying grace is the work that God does to reconcile us back to God, and to one another. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, understood this grace as a deep and profound trust that he was accepted by God, and that God had forgiven his sins. We believe that this reconciliation with is something that we believe cannot be earned and is instead something to be embraced. Justifying grace is a like a door into the house of God. There is no way to earn an invitation inside, because all are already welcome, most welcome. To cross the threshold and enter the house is to embrace a new way of living.

We believe that the work of grace does not stop at the moment we accept God. Sanctification is the word that we use to describe the ways in which we are nurtured by God over the course of our lifetime. John Wesley spoke about striving toward Christian Perfection. This does not mean that if we accept God, that we could never make mistakes and live a perfect life. Rather, Wesley believed that the Holy Spirit works in our lives to guide us and teach us so that we continue to grow. Sanctifying grace is to be drawn further into the house of God, to explore its hallways and rooms and to grow closer to God.

**Baptism**

Here at Orange, we believe that baptism is an integral part of the Christian experience. Baptism is said to be “an outward sign of an inward grace”, meaning that the water itself is not magical, instead it symbolizes the washing away of our sins and our acceptance of the loving compassion of God. This is not just a personal act, but also a communal one. During the baptism ceremony, the individual affirms their desire to “repent of their sin... to resist evil, injustice and oppression... and to trust in Jesus Christ”. After these vows, the community reaffirms their own baptismal vows, as well as their commitment to the baptized person, to nurture and care for them.

Among the first Christians, the act of baptism was meant for people of all ages, genders and ethnicities. We too believe that anyone who desires to be baptized can do so here as a part of the OUMC community.

**Communion**

At Orange UMC, we practice Open Table communion. We believe that everyone is welcome to the table of God. This invitation to the communion table is from God, so we do not have the right, or the desire to turn anyone away. All are most welcome to receive the elements. We believe that the bread and juice that we share represent the body and the blood of Jesus Christ, that he freely offered to all.

During the COVID pandemic we have used “celebration cups” out of necessary precaution for the health of our congregants. In more normal times, we share from a single loaf of bread. After the bread is broken, and shared with an individual, they then dip it into the juice. We intentionally use juice, as a practice of the United Methodist Church, to stand in solidarity with those struggling with alcohol abuse.