

Program Guidelines for Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles at ERUUF

A healthy, vital UU community is made up of people who are deeply connected to the spiritual, intellectual, caring, social, and service aspects of the UU movement and our own congregation. Like many UU fellowships across the country, ERUUF's Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles support these connections through intentional practice.



What are Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles?

Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles are small groups (typically 8 to 10 members) that meet regularly for spiritual exploration, reflection, personal sharing, deep listening, and service. These groups are open to all members and friends of ERUUF.

Each group

- develops a covenant statement that, along with the UU Statement of Principles, serves as the foundation for the group's practice
- follows a meeting format designed to foster participation and engagement of all members
- meets for about two hours, at a regularly scheduled time
- is led by a trained facilitator who is a member of ERUUF

How are Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles different?

Covenant Groups typically meet twice per month. Members recommit to the group annually if they so choose. Each group performs two service projects annually, one for the congregation and one for the larger community.

Chalice Circles meet once per month. Chalice Circles complete one service project.

What happens in a typical group meeting?

Each group develops its own preferences over time. However, all groups follow a basic structure which includes these elements:

- opening ritual, which may include the chalice lighting, a reading, a moment of silence
- "check-in" period when members share what is in their hearts and minds
- exploration of a topic, with time for individual sharing and deep listening
- closing ritual

Topics for reflections are chosen by the group. They range from world religions and sermons themes to personal, ethical, or spiritual issues such as forgiveness, balance, community, or nature. Related questions might include, "What are my core beliefs?" and "Where did they come from?" Topics may also be chosen to facilitate personal sharing, such as "a place that has deep meaning for me." For every topic, the emphasis is on sharing feelings and thoughts based on personal experiences rather than opinions or analyses. Carefully crafted, open-ended questions serve as a good starting point for sharing our stories with each other.

How do I join a group?

The first step is to fill out an information form, available during coffee hour from mid-August through mid-September. Forms are also available at the ERUUF office and on the website at www.eruuf.org. (Select *Connect, Groups and then Covenant Groups*)

When and how are people assigned to groups?

People are assigned to groups in September (the deadline for applications). As space allows, members can join an existing group from November through March. New Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles begin meeting in October. October is also the primary time when new members join ongoing Covenant Groups as space allows.

The Covenant Group and Chalice Circle program is overseen by a leadership team in consultation with ERUUF's ministers. The team generally consists of five ERUUF members who have all had experience in facilitating groups. This team has the important responsibility for making group assignments.

Group formation is based on the first UU principle of honoring the worth and dignity of every person. Our intention is to connect people across age, gender, ethnicity, and other differences. Although it is understandable and natural to want to gravitate toward a group that includes friends and people with whom we have much in common, people in Covenant Group and Chalice Circle program often say that the most rewarding experiences result from meeting with people unlike themselves.

Do you have other questions?

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact the Steering Team at covenant@eruuf.org.