



Covenant Groups & Chalice Circles at ERUUF

*...helping to light our way
to deeper connection
with each other and the world*

2009-2010 Program Guidelines

Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

4907 Garrett Road, Durham, NC 27707 919-489-2575

Overview: 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.

All ERUUF members and friends have the opportunity to be part of a group of 8-10 people who will meet regularly at the ERUUF or in homes to engage in:

- **Spiritual seeking** - To deepen our spiritual lives and build on the benefits we receive from our regular worship services.
- **Community building** - To foster positive connections among newer and long-time members of our congregation.
- **Ministry** - To extend the ministry at ERUUF by caring for and ministering to one another.
- **Intellectual exploration** - To expand our understanding of the world and ways to demonstrate our UU principles in our lives.
- **Living our values** - To engage in service projects to benefit the ERUUF community, the neighborhood, or the larger society.

All groups are led by trained facilitators who are ERUUF members.

The Covenant Group/ Chalice Circle program is an ongoing, fellowship-wide engagement that involves the minister and staff, the Board, and all members and friends of our congregation. Its purpose is to help us better realize our mission as a religious community.

Expectations for Groups and Group Members

Regular meetings: Covenant Groups usually meet for two hours twice a month. Chalice Circles meet once a month. The location may be at ERUUF or in member homes.

Confidentiality. Meetings provide a safe environment for members to share their deepest thoughts. Groups make a covenant to keep confidential what is shared in the group.

Attendance. Group members make attendance at their Covenant Group or Chalice Circle meetings a high priority in their lives. If a member cannot attend a particular meeting, he or she is expected to notify the facilitator in advance.

Follow a format. Although each group develops its own preferences over time, all groups will include these basic activities: opening ritual, check-in, program/ discussion, and closing ritual.

Open membership. From time to time new members may be added to existing groups as space allows. An “empty chair” at all Covenant Group meetings symbolizes the group’s openness and welcome to new members. Because Chalice Circles meet for only one school year, they usually do not add more members once they have formed.

Covenant. Each group develops a Covenant Statement that, along with the UU Statement of Principles, serves as the foundation for the Group’s practice.

Service. Each Covenant Group will be expected to undertake at least two service projects a year, one for the congregation and one in the larger community. Chalice Circles are expected to do at least one service project.

Connection to ERUUF. Each group will send a representative to the Covenant Group/ Chalice Circle Quarterly Leaders Meetings to help with the planning, coordination, and leadership development of the program.

What the Covenant Group/ Chalice Circle Ministry is intended to offer participants:

- ❑ A way to deepen our spirituality through shared practice.
- ❑ A way to come together to explore important and interesting topics.
- ❑ A way to deepen our connections with the congregation.
- ❑ A way to organize and practice service to the larger community.
- ❑ A way to connect across age, gender, ethnic, economic, and other differences.
- ❑ A way to help newer members engage with our community.
- ❑ A way to explore and deepen our practice of our shared UU principles.
- ❑ A way to be engaged, included, and heard in a safe, nurturing environment.

What Covenant Groups & Chalice Circles are not intended to be:

- ❑ A social club, although ties between ERUUF members deepen through CGM.
- ❑ A debate society, although many important topics are discussed.
- ❑ A support or therapy group, although the atmosphere is positive.
- ❑ A worship service, although there is a strong spiritual aspect to the meeting structure and topics.
- ❑ A rigid template of activities, although there are general guidelines to follow.
- ❑ A closed "fraternity," although groups must be limited in size to be effective.

Assignment to a Group

Any one who is interested in joining or being assigned to a Covenant Group or Chalice Circle at ERUUF should complete the Request to Join a Group information sheet and turn it into the ERUUF office, fax it to 489-9149, or email it to covenant@eruuf.org. Forms are available at the ERUUF office, the web site at www.eruuf.org, or from Dan Grandstaff or Carolyn Worthing, coordinators of the Covenant Group/ Chalice Circle program (email them at covenant@eruuf.org or call them at 942-8094).

Go with the flow. Group formation is based on the first UU principle honoring the worth and dignity of every person, and is intended to connect people across age, gender, ethnic, and other differences. Although it is understandable to gravitate toward a group that includes friends and people with whom we have much in common, people in Covenant Group programs around the denomination say that the most rewarding experiences result from meeting with people unlike themselves.