

ERUUF's Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles Program Policies

2019

The Covenant Group/Chalice Circle (CGCC) program is guided by one of ERUUF's ordained ministers and the Covenant Group Steering Team (CGST). The steering team is charged with overseeing and supporting the Covenant Group/Chalice Circle program and ensuring its continued success and growth. The team is authorized by ERUUF's Coordinating Team to make decisions about the CG/CC program and to carry them out.

Program Purpose

The Covenant Group and Chalice Circle program encourages people in their spiritual growth, helps them develop relationships of substance and depth, and meets their needs to worship, to serve, to be in community, and to strengthen individuals' ties to the fellowship. Participation in a covenant group or chalice circle is open to ERUUF members and friends.

Time Commitment & Meeting Frequency

The Covenant Group/Chalice Circle "year" begins in October when new groups are formed and new participants are added to existing groups that have openings. Covenant Groups meet twice a month on an ongoing basis; Chalice Circles meet once a month. Groups engage in one or more service activities each year to benefit the congregation and/or the larger community.

Characteristics of Covenant Groups & Chalice Circles

These characteristics are critical to a healthy group:

- Welcoming to new members
- Intentional about member changes (additions and departures) and willing to embrace a new group dynamic
- Encourage personal and spiritual growth
- Commit to attending the group's meetings
- Support an atmosphere of honesty and kindness
- Create strong ties to the congregation and the larger community by committing to service

Leader Criteria

The following criteria are important aspects for group leaders:

- ERUUF membership and active participation in congregational life
- Commitment to the Covenant Group structure and guidelines, including covenant, service projects, and welcoming of membership changes
- Self-awareness, ability to manage group dynamics, and willingness to continue learning
- Participation in initial training and quarterly leader enrichment meetings
- Integration of new group members with a welcoming ritual and session plan (offered by the CGST)

All new leaders attend leader training with the minister and steering team in August or September of each year. All leaders participate in quarterly enrichment meetings with one of ERUUF's ordained

ministers and the CGST; these meetings include mutual support as well as the exchange of information and resources. Enrichment meetings follow the covenant group format and include “Braggs & Snags,” an opportunity for leaders to learn from each other and to seek help from the steering team and minister as needed.

Group Formation

Groups and their members are assigned only by the Covenant Group Steering Team, primarily by availability and location preference, with as much diversity of age and gender taken into account as possible. An optimal group size is 8-10 members. Wherever possible, each newly-formed group will be assigned 10 members.

New program participants are required to attend a 30-minute orientation session with the minister and CGST before being assigned to a group. Content includes program purpose, participant responsibilities, meeting format, covenant, and commitment.

The CGST will follow up with new participants and leaders to determine that the expectations for groups as outlined during orientation have been met.

If issues or concerns arise, group members are encouraged to speak first with the group leader to address the issue. Any member of the steering team can be contacted directly if the leader is not responsive or needs assistance in understanding or negotiating the issue. Wherever possible, the CGST will conduct exit interviews with participants leaving groups to discuss their decision to do so.

Group Renewal & Member Recommitment

Toward the end of the program year, participants are asked to consider whether they want to recommit to their group for another year. At a meeting of their group before August, participants will announce their choice. Group members have the option of staying with a group if it is ongoing, to join another group, or to leave the program.

Continuing groups must have at least four members to continue, as well as a commitment from one of the existing members to lead the group for the new year. Before the last day in August, each group leader is required to notify the steering team of group status and the person identified as next year’s leader. For groups with fewer than 4 members remaining, those members will be asked to join another group, if so desired (by completing a new application form).

Participants joining the program during the year will be added to covenant groups that have openings on an ongoing basis. The cut-off date for adding new members to chalice circles is March 15.