

Orientation to Small Group Ministry
By the Covenant Group Steering Team
Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Durham, NC

At Eno River UU Fellowship, all new SGM participants attend a required 30- minute orientation session with the minister and CG Steering Team before their first Covenant Group meeting. The session covers meeting format, group covenant, and member expectations, and includes a listening exercise.

Three sessions are offered to accommodate participant schedules: 1 Sunday after church service, 1 Sunday evening, and 1 weekday evening. Orientation session times are displayed at the sign-up table during the month of September.

A reminder email goes out to all new participants prior to the orientation dates, giving location, times, and a description: “This 30-minute session explains how groups work, what happens in a group meeting, and what participant expectations are. The purpose is to ensure that everyone gets the most out of the group experience.”

The advantage of these orientation sessions is three-fold: participants know going in how CGs work; they know this is different from a “discussion” or affinity group; and the group facilitator can simply review important points as the session moves along.

This statement is included in the Program Policies: “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 following instructions are in the Program Guidelines distributed at the signup table and posted on the CG webpage:

Step 1: Fill out an information form with preferred meeting days/time/place.

Step 2: Attend an Orientation session with the minister and the Covenant Group Steering Team, a requirement of all new participants.

Orientation covers program purpose, participant responsibilities, meeting format, covenant, and commitment. Times offered in September: Sunday after service, Sunday evening, and Tuesday evening. Choose what works for you.

For those joining a group later during the year, orientation is provided in person or by telephone. For an outline of Orientation content, write to covenant@eruuf.org.

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