

WELCOMING CEREMONY FOR NEW MEMBERS
Ines Hoster, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta
Covenant Group News, September 2004

Our group of 8 had been working together for about 7 months when we were told that two new members were going to join us. That idea was met with some resistance from some members. Being the co-facilitator of the group with my husband, I was concerned about the old members' reluctance and the new people feeling like outsiders. To overcome "estrangement" I was guided to offer the following ceremony, which enabled the whole group to accept and welcome the new persons and to express an immediate feeling of warmth and caring presence.

At the beginning of the meeting, after lighting the chalice candle and a reading we started the welcoming ceremony. The chalice light stood in the middle of a platter and around it I had arranged as many tea lights as were people present. As we passed the platter from one person to the next, each lit a candle from the chalice candle and expressed in a sentence a wish for the new person representing what they had gotten out of the chalice circle membership. Then, at the end, the new person would light their candle and express what they wished to bring to the group. All the lights were burning throughout our meeting.

It is a very simple ceremony yet bestows enlightened significance to the moment and allows everyone to reach out to each other.

We are members of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta and we thoroughly enjoy being a member of a chalice circle. Establishing a small group with meaningful, open sharing moments has enriched our UU experience – new people have come into our lives and blessed us with their richness we have established more caring relationships - I would not want to miss.
Thanks for your work