

The Flaming Chalice Symbol of Unitarian Universalism

The flaming chalice in a circle is the symbol of Unitarian Universalism. The flaming chalice is a flame burning the holy oil of helpfulness and sacrifice—spreading warmth and light and hope. The circles in which it is contained represents the Unitarian and Universalist heritages with its concept of worldwide community.

The chalice has been a symbol of liberal religion since the fifteenth century, dating to John Hus in Transylvania. The flaming chalice was adopted by the Unitarian Service Committee in 1941. Its modern story is an interesting one.

Hans Deutsch was an Austrian refugee who lived in Paris until France was invaded in 1940. He had worked in many European countries as a musician, drafter, and portrait artist. Having contributed many cartoons with unflattering content (about Nazism) to several newspapers in Vienna, he fled Paris and finally settled in Portugal. To earn a living he gave lessons in English,

one of the eight languages he spoke, and drew portraits. In Portugal, Deutsch joined the staff of the Unitarian Service Committee for six months as secretary and assistant to Dr. Charles E. Joy, then the executive director of the USC.

Dr. Joy asked his new assistant to work in his spare time on designing a symbol for the Committee. The Flaming Chalice was created in response to this request and given to the Committee by Deutsch in appreciation of its humanitarian work.

When Hans Deutsch was threatened with imprisonment in Portugal in June 1941, the USC assisted him in escaping to the United States, where he resides under the name of John H. Derrick.

Recently, the chalice was redesigned and made the official symbol of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

