



## **Home Connection September 2009**

### **Unity**

#### **Chalice Lightings:**

May Unity and peace abide within us.  
May wholeness and joy touch our hearts.  
May kindness and compassion fill our universe  
and reverence fill our days.  
May we see the light that shines in all.  
-- Gary Kowalski

We light the flame of knowledge;  
may understanding be with us.  
We light the flame of love;  
may caring be among us.  
We light the flame of holiness;  
may the unifying spirit be within us.  
-- Edwin C. Lynn

#### **Story:**

### **The Story of Jan Hus A Story of the Chalice and the Flame**

The spiritual roots of our Unitarian Universalist heritage go back much further than the formal foundings of either our Unitarian or Universalist traditions. We see the roots of our faith in the stories of many of the early reformers of the Christian Church. One such story is that of the Bohemian priest Jan Hus.

Jan Hus was born in Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic) in about 1371. He studied to become a professor of theology and in 1400 was ordained as a priest. In 1402 he became the rector of the University in Prague and preached in its Bethlehem Chapel.

This was a very complicated time in the history of the Western Church. Several men claimed to be Pope all at the same time and each man had many strong and powerful supporters. Hus and those who followed him refused to take sides. Hus was becoming influential and was supported by the political leaders in Bohemia. But, refusal to take sides did not keep him from disagreeing with some of the teachings of the church.

Jan believed that the priest needed to preach in a language the people could understand, not in Latin. He also believed that the way in which the church offered communion was wrong. In those days, the priest shared the blessed bread with those taking communion, but the chalice with the blessed wine was reserved for the priest alone. When Jan offered communion to the people, he allowed them to drink from the cup as well. Hus felt that keeping the cup for the priests only went against the teachings and customs of the early church and was something imposed later by church officials to set the priesthood above the common person. Hus believed that the church was made up of all the people, not just the popes, cardinals, bishops, and other priests.

Church officials threatened to ban him from offering services and to ban him from the church unless he stopped preaching his radical ideas. But he continued. Eventually, he had to leave Prague and his church because the threats were no longer aimed just at him, but also at the other priests and bishops in the city. He continued to write about his beliefs and had many followers.

Eventually many of the religious and political leaders knew that there had to be an end to the many controversies within the church, and a council was called in 1414 in the city of Constance (in modern Germany). The Bohemian king was eager to put an end to the arguing in his church, and Hus was interested settling the argument as well. When the king offered Hus safe passage to the conference, Hus agreed to go. Many of his friends were anxious for him, but Hus was sure that if he could be allowed to explain himself and how his ideas came from the Bible, he would be seen as right and the church officials would agree with him.

Jan Hus was never allowed to share his ideas. He was arrested and brought to trial as a heretic. He was offered the opportunity to say that he had been wrong. He refused saying that no one had shown him in the Bible where he was wrong. He was brought into the Cathedral, and was sentenced to death. They dressed him in all his priestly robes, and handed him a communion chalice. He was offered one last opportunity to admit that he was wrong and when he refused, the church authorities pulled the chalice from his hands, tore his robes from him, and led him off to be burned at the stake as a heretic.

Many of his ideas lived on after his death. His followers became known as Hussites, and Moravians. He is seen by many as an important influence on Martin Luther and the growing reformation. The Czech people see him as a martyr and

national hero. There is a statue of Jan Hus in the Old Town Square in Prague. His birthday is celebrated as a national holiday.

The chalice and the flame that symbolized Hus' sacrifice came together again during World War II, when the Unitarian Service Committee was seeking a symbol to represent their work among those seeking to flee oppression from the Nazis. They asked the Austrian born artist, Hans Deutsch to create a symbol that would make their papers look official and give them dignity and importance. His drawing of the chalice and flame became that symbol. Over the years the flaming chalice has become more than a symbol for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. It is more than a symbol on paper. In many of our congregations the lighting of the chalice is part of the Sunday morning worship service as well as other gatherings. It is worn as jewelry, and made into works of art. For many Unitarian Universalists the sight of the Flaming chalice is the sign that tells them they are home.

### **Story Questions:**

- What is the most important part of the story to you, and why?
- How does knowing part of our Unitarian Universalist story help unite you with other Unitarian Universalists?
- Aside from the Flaming Chalice, what connects you to other UUs -- those in our congregation, in our cluster, around the world, and throughout history?

### **Possible Activities:**

- Create a chalice for your home or office. Chalices can be made out of many things. Many candle holders will work, but it is fun to explore stores that sell used household items. Look around and think outside the box. Many glasses and vases work very well. Just be sure that it is flame proof or use one of the battery operated tea lights or votive candles. You could build a chalice from a flower pot and saucer. Instructions can be found at <http://clf.uua.org/betweensundays/earlychildhood/chalice1.html>.
- Have a conversation with family or friends about what you share in common. Focus on values, and beliefs.
- The Story of Jan Hus is not just a Unitarian Universalist story. It is a part of the story of the Christian faith tradition. Rather than focusing on our differences, spend some time considering what stories, beliefs, values, and traditions connect us to the various religions of the world.

- Explore some of our Unitarian Universalist History. Some book resources are listed below. A great On-line resource is the Unitarian Universalist Historical Society <http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/>.

## Resources:

### Books for Children:

The following stories focus on oneness, unity, and acceptance.

- Grandmother's Garden, John Archambault, Silver Press, 1997
- Whoever You Are, Mem Fox, Harcourt Brace, 1997
- We All Sing With The Same Voice, J. Phillip Miller, Sheppard M. Greene, & Paul Meisel, HarperCollins, 2000.
- All I See Is Part of Me, Chara M. Curtis, Illumination Arts, 1992

The following books and activity books are on Unitarian Universalism for children.

- Unitarian Universalism is a Really Long Name, Jennifer Dant, Skinner House, 2006
- The UU Kids Book, Anne Fields & Charlene Brotman, Brotman-Marshfield, 1995
- Seven Principles Activity Booklet: Pictures, Puzzles, Mazes and More, Terry Stafford, Skinner House Books, 2009
- A Lamp in Every Corner: Our Unitarian Universalist Storybook, Janeen K. Grohsmeyer, Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004

### Resources for Parents:

The following are some alternative stories about our Flaming Chalice that you might find more appropriate for younger children.

The Healing Cup: The Story of the Flaming Chalice.

<http://www.uua.org/spirituallife/worshipweb/readings/submissions/5963.shtml>

The Flaming Chalice: Symbol of Unitarian Universalism

[http://clf.uua.org/betweensundays/earlychildhood/chalice\\_story1.html](http://clf.uua.org/betweensundays/earlychildhood/chalice_story1.html)

This is from the Church of the Larger Fellowship's resources for children and families called Between Sundays. The Web Site <http://clf.uua.org/betweensundays/earlychildhood/chalice1.html> includes two activities for families around the Flaming chalice.

### Resources for Adults:

Explore the following readings in Singing the Living Tradition published by the Unitarian Universalist Association. (Our hymnal)

- # 434 Anonymous
- #436 by David Pohl
- #440 by Phillip Hewett
- #445 by Joy Atkinson
- #460 by Sharon Alden Ripley
- #464 by Judy Chicago
- # 474 by Keshab Chandra Sen arranged by John Haynes Holmes
- #499 by William Wordsworth
- #529 by Rabindranath Tagore

#550 attributed to Chief Noah Sealth  
#576 by Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley  
#580 by Mark Morrison-Reed  
#614 by Black Elk  
#647 by W. Waldemar W. Argow  
#651 by Norman Cousins  
#705 by Hosea Ballou

Oneness: Great Principles Shared by All Religions, Jeffrey Moses, Fawcett Columbine, New York, 1989.

The Transcendent Unity of Religions, Frithjof Schuon, Quest Books, 1984

The Unity of the Universe, D. W. Sciama, Dover Publications, 2009

Transforming Compassion Project information at <http://transformingcompassion.typepad.com/>

Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide: Fourth Edition, edited by William Sinkford, Skinner House, 2004.

Unitarian Universalism: A Narrative History, David E. Bumbaugh, Meadville Lombard Press, 2000.

The story of another of our spiritual forbearers is that of Michael Servetus. The following book tells that story. Out of the Flames: The Remarkable Story of a Fearless Scholar, a Fatal Heresy, and One of the Rarest Books in the World, Lawrence and Nancy Goldstone, Broadway, 2003