

IVY WREATH



The custom of forwarding an ivy wreath for the memorial service of a deceased minister in our Association began nearly fifty years ago. It is a means of honoring a minister's contributions to the movement and accordingly a symbolic recognition of her or his professional status. The aim was for a simple but dignified piece that would be appropriate for a memorial service and for occasions when no flowers were requested.

The shape of a circle symbolized collegiality and friendship and of course is related to the circles used by the denomination, symbolic of the universality of our cause. The ivy, being evergreen, is an expression of the immortality of personality as well as the living tradition of the ministry itself.

In some sections of the continent where ivy is not available, laurel is used to fashion the wreath, but even then there is effort to have some ivy woven into it. Of course, the classic tradition of the wreath was used by the ancient Greeks to crown not only the victors in the Pythian Games but also as a mark of distinguished leadership and responsible offices, and in some traditions the laurel wreath was used to indicate academic honors.

Like all symbols and traditions, the meanings of the wreath have evolved over the years, but mainly our hope is to express our lasting respect and affection for the leadership and service, the life and witness, of one who has been a faithful Unitarian Universalist minister.

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