

# THE HYMN SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

## John Richard Watson honored as Fellow by The Hymn Society

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Waterloo, Ontario. John Richard Watson has been honored by The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada at its Annual Conference in Waterloo, Ontario, July 19, 2017 by being named a Fellow of The Hymn Society. This award, the highest honor given by the organization, was conferred because of Professor Watson's work as an eminent scholar of hymnology and tireless advocate for hymns and hymn-singing.

Born in Ipswich, Suffolk, England, John Richard Watson studied at Magdalen College, Oxford (BA and MA) and the University of Glasgow (PhD). He is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Durham where he was previously Professor of English and Public Orator. His distinguished academic career in the professional study and teaching of English literature has included publications on Milton, Wordsworth, Hopkins, Larkin, Gaskell, and the publication of nine books on poetry in the Victorian era. Professor Watson is also a Life Vice-President of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland and was the general editor of *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*. Prior to his tenure at Durham he was lecturer in the English departments at the Universities of Glasgow and Leicester. He was also Chairman of the Modern Humanities Research Association; President of the Charles Lamb Society; Farmington Professional Fellow at St. Chad's College, Durham; and Honorary Fellow at Harris Manchester College in Oxford. Professor Watson is also the former Vice-President of the Charles Wesley Society.

In addition to being a renowned scholar of English literature, J.R. Watson is regarded as the leading British hymnologist of his generation. 'Dick' Watson has always been a friend to the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland giving generously of his time to be with members at their annual conference, as well as being a much-appreciated lecturer and contributor to the *Bulletin*. He undertook the monumental task of General Editorship of the Canterbury Press project of 2001 to prepare a successor to Julian's massive Dictionary of Hymnology (1892, 1907), which resulted in the much acclaimed internet publication of *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* for which he continues to be co-editor with Emma Hornby. He has authored many articles and several books on hymnology including *The English Hymn, a Critical and Historical Study* (1997), *An Annotated Anthology of Hymns* (2002), and *Awake My Soul: Reflections on Thirty Hymns* (2005). He also edited the companion book to the British Methodist hymn book *Hymns & Psalms* (1983), *Companion to Hymns & Psalms* (1988) with Kenneth Trickett.

His colleague Margaret Leask (Canadian editor of *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*), noted that Watson "has a deep, abiding passion for hymns and congregational song." She added that he is "an observant listener with a keen sense of humour, a linguist, a writer, a musician, first-class teacher, and scholar whose hallmarks are structure, insight and perseverance. He is also kind, caring and compassionate."

Founded in 1922, The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada is an ecumenical organization of people who are passionate about hymns and congregational song. We recognize the importance of the people's song in worship and want to assure its vitality in the future. The Hymn Society community, open to all, is made up of scholars, church musicians, poets, composers, choir directors, choir members, clergy, worship planners, song leaders, music publishers, music educators, and people who love to sing. We believe that the holy act of singing together shapes faith, heals brokenness, transforms lives, and renews peace. Our mission, therefore, is to encourage, promote, and enliven congregational song.

For further information about The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, contact Jan Kraybill, Executive Director, 7111 W 151st St, #374, Overland Park, KS 66223, or call 800-THE-HYMN. Please visit the website at [www.thehymnsociety.org](http://www.thehymnsociety.org).