

## THE HYMN SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

John Ambrose honored as Fellow by The Hymn Society

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Waterloo, Ontario. John Ambrose has been honored by The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada at its Annual Conference in Waterloo, Ontario, on July 18, 2017, by being named a Fellow of The Hymn Society. This award, the highest honor given by the organization, was conferred because of Ambrose's work as an editor, compiler, and encourager of congregational song, and for his significant contributions to the work of THS.

John Ambrose was born in Ottawa, Ontario. He studied at Carleton University (BA), Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto, a theological college of The United Church of Canada (MDiv), and later at the University of Notre Dame (MA, Liturgical Studies). Following his ordination, he served as pastor for churches in western Canada and Ontario. Ambrose also served the larger church when he was called to create the Office of Worship at the national headquarters in 1973, nurturing the "Celebration" contemporary worship movement, and exploring the surge of then-"contemporary" church music. In the 1990s, Ambrose served as managing editor of *Voices United*, the denominational hymnal of The United Church in Canada. In retirement Ambrose has continued to work as an interim minister with several congregations. For his outstanding service to the entire denomination, he received the honorary Doctor of Divinity from his *alma mater*, Emmanuel College, in 1996.

Ambrose served on the Executive Committee (EC) of The Hymn Society for six years, including two years as president. During his tenure, he challenged the EC to practice intentional hospitality. In addition to welcoming Annual Conference attendees, particularly first-timers and international visitors, Ambrose advocated creating safe space for people of differing points of view to share their songs and stories. He was the project coordinator of *Hymns in Times of Crisis (HITOC)*, a digital resource of THS. Ambrose conceived of the collection as a pastoral response to tragedy, such as the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. *HITOC* provides congregational song to communities immediately and at no cost in times of crisis to help them express their sorrow, rage, and helplessness through the healing act of singing together. The model developed by Ambrose has resulted in a second THS digital collection on the theme of welcome for refugees.

Dr. Fred Graham, FHS (professor emeritus, Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto), described his friend and colleague as a "hymn lover, liturgical guru, parliamentarian extraordinaire, faithful and innovative pastor, and bundle of boundless energy." These words are aptly demonstrated by a life dedicated to nurturing the church's song, ranging from editing a major hymnal to encouraging a small congregation to use its own musical voice instead of YouTube videos.

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, songleaders, 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).