



THE HYMN SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

Dr. Patrick Matsikenyeri honored as Fellow by The Hymn Society

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Patrick Matsikenyeri has been honored by The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada (THS) at its annual conference in St. Louis, Missouri, July 18, 2018, by being named a Fellow of The Hymn Society. This award, the highest honor given by the organization, was conferred because of Matsikenyeri's work as a professor, director of choirs, organizer of church music events, compiler of hymns, and advocate for the inclusion of global hymnody throughout the world.

Born in Biriiri, Zimbabwe in 1937, Matsikenyeri served as the Conference Music Director for the United Methodist Church in

Zimbabwe (1968-1990). Upon completing his studies in music from Shenandoah University, he returned to his home country in 1993 to head the music department of the newly opened Africa University, founded in 1991. As Lecturer in Music in Faculty of Humanities he developed a four-year music major. Matsikenyeri gained international recognition for his work with the World Council of Churches and the United Methodist Church in the United States. A founding member of the Global Praise Working Group of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church in the early 1990s, his influence was felt throughout their many broader global song collections, but specifically in the *Africa Praise Songbook* (1998) complete with a CD prepared by the Africa University Choir and *Njalo* (2006). He also contributed songs to the three volumes of *Global Praise*. With Maggie Hamilton, he edited *Sing! Imba! Hlabela! Zimbabwe: Short Songs and New Compositions from Zimbabwean Churches* (1998) in the UK. Most recently he published *Njalo (Always): A Collection of 16 Hymns in the African Tradition* (Nashville Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2006) with Daniel Damon, FHS. He is the first person from the African continent to receive the honor for Fellow of THS.

Matsikenyeri has been active globally in the composition, collection, promotion, teaching, and enlivening of congregational song for at least fifty years. He tirelessly promoted congregational singing in indigenous styles and carried songs from his continent to the world church music community. As one of the most highly regarded church musicians in Zimbabwe he contributed to the 1964 publication of *Ngoma*, the first United Methodist hymnal in his country. Along with I-to Loh, FHS, and Pablo Sosa, FHS – he was one of three world class church musicians who enlivened the singing at the ground-breaking World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1983. In 1998 Matsikenyeri prepared the conference choir for the WCC Eighth Assembly held in Harare and served again as animateur. In addition to original songs, he has also composed music for Charles Wesley texts, giving Wesley what Michael Hawn, FHS, calls a “truly global flavor and freeing the Wesleys from the cultural shackles of British and American musical styles.”

Speaking of his friend and colleague, Hawn, (University Distinguished Professor *Emeritus* of Church Music, Perkins School of Theology) noted that when his country was seeking its independence from white rule in the late 1970s, Matsikenyeri's music making saved his life. Hawn comment that “he had friends and former students on both sides of the conflict for indigenous rule, a circumstance that literally kept him from being killed by one or the other of the warring groups.” For Hawn, singing with Matsikenyeri is like being “pulled into an act of music-making unlike most others we would experience—an act of musicking that involves the voice, the body, and one's entire being.”

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 J Michael McMahon, Executive Director, 5 Thomas Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20005, or call 800-THE-HYMN. www.thehymnsociety.org.