



For Immediate Release
July 16, 2020

MARY LOUISE BRINGLE HONORED AS FELLOW OF THE HYMN SOCIETY

Mary Louise Bringle has been honored by The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada (THS) during its all-digital Annual Conference on July 16 by being named a Fellow of The Hymn Society (FHS). This award, the highest honor given by the organization, was conferred because of her work as a hymnwriter, translator, educator, scholar, hymnal committee chair, and for her service to The Hymn Society.

Bringle was born in Ripley, Tennessee. Her family was active in the Presbyterian Church U.S., where her mother taught Sunday School and her father was a deacon and a ruling elder. Mel participated in children's and youth choirs before leaving home for college. Her A.B. in French and in Religion was obtained from Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina. Subsequently she was an auditing student in Christianity and Culture at the Institut de Sciences et de Théologie des Religions, Institut Catholique de Paris. Her PhD in Theological Studies was awarded by the Division of Religion at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, with an emphasis in pastoral and practical theology.

Bringle is first and foremost a teacher. Currently a Professor of Religious Studies at Brevard College, Brevard, North Carolina, she has been chair of the Humanities Division, and is the Coordinator of the Integrated Studies Major. Before she arrived at Brevard College in 2000, she taught at St. Andrews Presbyterian College, Laurinburg, North Carolina, and was a consultant on eating disorder issues with the Office of Health Ministries, Presbyterian Church USA.

In addition to her teaching at Brevard, Bringle has delivered the Erik Routley Lectures at three Presbyterian Association of Musicians Worship and Music Conferences at Montreat, North Carolina, and once for the conference at Mo-Ranch, Texas. She will again be the Routley Lecturer for the 2020 Worship and Music Conference at Montreat. Bringle has also been invited to deliver guest lectures for the Institute of Liturgical Studies at Valparaiso University, The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, Samford University, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Furman University, Bangor Theological Seminary, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, St. Olaf College, Columbia Theological Seminary, and Princeton Theological Seminary, among others.

Bringle began hymnwriting in 1998 and won three international hymn competitions in 1999. She was presented as an Emerging Text Writer at the 2002 conference of THS in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Two collections of her texts have been published by GIA: *Joy and Wonder Love and Longing* in 2002, and *In Wind and Wonder* in 2007. She is currently translating Spanish-language texts into English for GIA. Bringle says translations are "a particular passion of mine" and has declared Catherine Winkworth, "another impassioned translator," as "my hymnological hero."

Mel served as President-Elect, President, and Immediate Past President of THS from 2006–2012.

As Chair of the Presbyterian Committee on Congregational Song, Bringle steered the process of selecting content for the 2013 hymnal *Glory to God* (Westminster John Knox Press [WJK]). That work led to the publication of *Introducing Glory to God* (Geneva Press, 2014), as well as articles and study series on hymnody for *The Presbyterian Leader*, *Presbyterians Today*, and *Horizons: The Magazine for Presbyterian Women*.

In the area of pastoral theology, Bringle has published books exploring three of the seven cardinal (or deadly) sins: *Despair: Sickness or Sin?* (Abingdon, 1990), *The God of Thinness: Gluttony and Other Weighty Matters* (Abingdon, 1992), and *Envy: Exposing a Secret Sin* (WJK, 2016). She is also a contributor to *Feasting on the Word* (WJK, 2008), a twelve-volume series of pastoral and theological reflections on the three-year Revised Common Lectionary, and her articles frequently appear in such journals as *The Christian Century*, *Christian Reflection*, *Word and World: Theology for Christian Ministry*, and *The Journal of Pastoral Care*.

A recipient of a Fribourg Foundation Grant and a Danforth Fellowship in her student days, Bringle has also been honored with awards for her teaching. Chosen as the Faculty Member of the Year at Brevard College in 2004, she twice received the Brevard College Humanities Faculty Member of the Year (2006, 2007), and in 2012 was awarded the Johnie H. Jones Sabbatical Award for Teaching Excellence. Her other awards include the “Unsung Heroine” Award from the Emory University Women’s Center, and the Sam Ragan Award for Contributions to the Arts in North Carolina.

Speaking of his friend and colleague, David Eicher said “Mel Bringle brings a passionate joy to everything she does. From her skills at PowerPoint to her love of hymnody and its history, Mel is able to teach and enrich the lives of so many. I count my work with her on *Glory to God* as among my most treasured experiences.”

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. 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.

This information is provided by J. Michael McMahon, Executive Director of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, 5 Thomas Circle, NW, 4th floor, Washington, DC 20005-4153. For more information, please contact Dr. McMahon at mike@thehymnsociety.org or 800-843-8966.