



## Lim Swee Hong Honored as Fellow by The Hymn Society

Lim Swee Hong was honored by The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada at its Annual Conference in Washington, DC, in July 2022, by being named a Fellow of The Hymn Society. This award, the highest honor given by the organization, is being conferred because of Lim's work as a scholar, hymnwriter, educator, ecumenical worship and music leader, and for his service to The Hymn Society.

Born in Singapore into a Christian household, his father (Baptist) and mother (Presbyterian) instilled in him the value of service to God. Lim learned to play the piano at an early age and developed a passion for music-making. During his high school years, he joined a Methodist congregation that had both traditional and contemporary worship services. There he served as both the choir pianist in the traditional worship service and the keyboardist in the Praise and Worship band.

He received the degree of Bachelor in Church Music, magna cum laude, from the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music in the Philippines where he studied with I-to Loh, FHS and Francisco Feliciano. At Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Texas, he studied with C. Michael Hawn FHS and received the Master of Sacred Music, summa cum laude. Lim completed his PhD in Liturgical Studies from Drew University, New Jersey, where his dissertation earned the Helen LePage and William Hale Chamberlain Prize for Outstanding Dissertation.

Lim has taught in several educational institutions in Asia and North America, including Trinity Theological College in Singapore; Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky; Chung Chi Divinity School of The Chinese University of Hong Kong; and Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Presently, he is the Deer Park Associate Professor of Sacred Music and the director for the Master of Sacred Music program at Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto.

Lim is a prominent and prolific Asian hymnwriter. Since the 1980s, he has composed and written numerous hymns, choral anthems, and liturgical responses. These have been published and sung in North America, Asia, and Europe. As a Methodist, he enjoys setting Charles Wesley's texts to new tunes. His compositions draw on a variety of cultural expressions and styles. These are then set to a variety of musical forms. His music-creation efforts offer a significant contribution to congregational song in the twenty-first century.

He is also a productive and influential scholar in the fields of hymnology and liturgics. Lim advocates for the appreciation of contextual worship and sacred music practices. His writings contain two foci: 1) For the Global South, Lim emphasizes the importance of hybridity and heterogeneity, where churches need to embrace both their Western missional heritage and their local (non-Western) cultural expressions. 2) In the Global

North, particularly in North America, Lim calls for churches to understand the Contemporary Praise and Worship phenomenon.

Besides his contribution as a sacred music composer and scholar, Lim is active as a worship and music leader for international and ecumenical conferences. Presently, he is the Director of Music for the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to be held in Karlsruhe, Germany (2022). Previously, he served as the Co-Moderator of the Worship Committee for the 10th General Assembly of WCC in Busan, South Korea (2013), and as a member of the Worship Planning Committee for the WCC's Ecumenical Peace Convocation that convened in Kingston, Jamaica (2011). From 2006–2011, he chaired the Committee on Worship and Liturgy for the World Methodist Council, designing and supervising the 20th World Methodist Conference's worship services in Durban, South Africa (2011).

He is equally passionate about nurturing the next generation of leaders around the world. This passion is evident in his service as the Director of Research and supervision of the Emerging Scholars' Forum for The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada from 2014–2020. He encourages his students to create and submit music compositions for publication consideration. He also urges them to present at academic conferences and publish their research findings. Some of these have been featured as sessions at conferences of The Hymn Society. Along with his active teaching and leadership in North America, he frequently travels to many parts of Asia to give lectures and workshops on worship and sacred music. He strives to help local believers understand contextualized worship, equipping them with the necessary skills to carry out their pastoral leadership responsibilities in their contexts. As his student, Saya Ojiri, notes, "Swee Hong opened my eyes to view Christianity through my cultural lenses, and encouraged me to write songs with local expression. He reminded me to embrace my Japanese identity as a gift of God."

*This information was prepared by Saya Ojiri, and is provided for release 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](mailto:mike@thehymnsociety.org) or 800-843-8966.*

*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.*