

Hymnist Thomas Troeger dies at 77

by [Dawn Araujo-Hawkins](#) in the [May 4, 2022](#) issue



(Courtesy of Yale Divinity School)

Influential preacher and hymn writer Thomas Troeger died from complications related to cancer on April 3. He was 77.

According to Yale University's Institute of Sacred Music, hymns composed by Troeger appear in the hymnals of most denominations.

Troeger also wrote 24 books on preaching, poetry, hymnody, and worship during his career, which began at Colgate Rochester Divinity School in 1977.

From 1991 to 2005, he taught preaching and communications at Illif School of Theology, and he spent the final decade of his career teaching Christian communication at Yale Divinity School.

Additionally, Troeger served as national chaplain to the American Guild of Organists, president of the Academy of Homiletics (which he helped to found), and president of the international guild Societas Homiletica.

In 2014, the University of Basel in Switzerland awarded Troeger an honorary doctorate in theology for his development of “a contemporary religious language which does justice to both aesthetic and theological demands.”

In an open letter, Yale Divinity School dean Greg Sterling shared his favorite story about Troeger, which took place when Troeger was being welcomed at a presbytery event:

Tom was asked about his personal faith, and he responded by pointing to a Presbyterian hymnal sitting on the church pew. He said, “If you open to hymn #xxx, you will discover what I believe about creation. If you turn to hymn #yyy, you will find what I believe about Christology. If you turn to hymn #zzz, you will read what I have to say about the Holy Spirit.”

In a statement, Abingdon Press associate publisher Paul Franklyn called Troeger one of the top five hymn writers of the 20th century and noted his lasting influence. “He defined and taught the methods and skills needed for creativity and imagination in preaching and worship,” he wrote. “Tom’s creativity lives on.”