



# Faithful Servant Award

The Faithful Servant Award is presented to those who demonstrate a life-time of shared faith and dedication to the expression of worship and music in the Church and have served with distinction in ALCM roles of leadership. The award recognizes that the value of faithful serving is reflected in the hearts and lives of those who have been indelibly imprinted by the wisdom, skill, and friendship of the recipient. The growing list of those who receive the prestigious Faithful Servant Award exhibits the continuum of ALCM members whose legacy has contributed to the strength and vitality of the organization as a whole. Recipients of the Faithful Servant Award are nominated by the membership, reviewed and recommended by a committee of peers, chosen by approval of the Board of Directors, and presented with the award at each Biennial Conference. The 2013 Faithful Servant Award is presented to John Ferguson.

**John Ferguson** retired spring 2012 after 29 years as the Elliot and Klara Stockdal

Johnson Professor of Organ and Church Music and Cantor to the Student Congregation at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota. His responsibilities included directing the church music-organ program, teaching organ and conducting the St. Olaf Cantorei. Ferguson came to St. Olaf from Minneapolis where he served Central Lutheran Church as Music Director and Organist, an appointment accepted in 1978 after a 15-year tenure on the music faculty at Kent State University. While at Kent State he also served as Organist-Choirmaster of the United Church of Christ, Kent, Ohio during which time he served as music editor for the United Church of Christ *Hymnal*, 1974. He has spent summers as visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame and was invited to spend sabbatical leave time as visiting professor at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music.

During his tenure at St. Olaf, he had the privilege of serving as a “clerk of the works” for three major projects: the renovation of space adjacent to the music building into an organ recital hall housing a new III/42 Dobson tracker action organ; and the complete renovation, acoustical upgrade and installation of a new III/90 Holtkamp organ for Boe Memorial Chapel; and a new suite of organ practice rooms housing the school’s 7 practice organs including 3 mechanical action instruments (Dobson, Schlicker, and Wilhelm), three electropneumatic instruments (Holtkamp and Schlicker) and a large Allen organ which also serves as the instrument for Skoglund Center Auditorium. This auditorium is the venue for the annual Christmas Festival concert now broadcast around the world, viewed on American television and twice in live feeds to theaters across the country. During his tenure the organ department has defied national trends as it has grown in enrollment and in quality now producing many national competition winners and sending students to the major graduate programs in the country.

A native of Cleveland, Ferguson's degrees are from Oberlin College, Kent State, and the Eastman School of Music where his doctoral study in organ was with Russell Saunders. He is respected as a fine teacher and performer, and his skill as improviser and leader of congregational song has received national acclaim. Each year he prepares and leads many festivals across the country both for local congregations and professional gatherings. A Ferguson hymn festival is much more than an inspiring organ recital, according to Emily Brink, Past President of the Hymn Society, “He involves everyone present in a glorious community of sound. Everyone gets to perform.”

Dr. Ferguson is the author of numerous books and articles on church music and organ building. His choral and organ music (over 150 anthems and organ volumes in print) is published by Augsburg, Concordia, Galaxy, GIA, Hope, Kjos, MorningStar, Selah, and Stainer and Bell. In 2005 his composition, “Who Is This” for choir and viola was awarded the prestigious Raabe Prize for Excellence in Sacred Composition.

Since joining the St. Olaf faculty, Ferguson’s skills as choral conductor and creative arranger have become more widely known. He brings a special combination of experience as choral singer (Oberlin College Choir under Robert Fountain), church musician (both





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part-time and full-time) and participant in the St. Olaf choral tradition to his workshops in conducting and repertoire for church choirs which are considered highlights at conventions of professional organizations. He has been invited to design and present hymn festivals for national and regional conventions of both The American Guild of Organists and The American Choral Directors Association as well as many national, denominational gatherings of church musicians. He has presented such events abroad as well, both in Asia (Seoul, Korea) and Europe (in the National Cathedral of Norway, Nidaros Dom, Trondheim, as a part of the celebration of the millennium of the birth of St. Olaf). Some of his most treasured memories of such events include the privilege of designing and leading two “church events” for national ACDA conventions first at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, and at Rockefeller Chapel of the University of Chicago. In both instances he recalls with a grin that all he really needed to do was remind everyone of the tune and then let the assembled singers take over! Also he has toured nationally and abroad with St. Olaf Choir and the St. Olaf Band as well as assisting in many of their CD recordings for St. Olaf Records. Three CDs of live programs of his choir, the St. Olaf Cantorei, are available from GIA Publications.

Ferguson is married to Ruth Hofstad, an organist herself, and their son Christopher teaches history at Auburn University. In his spare time, John enjoys his Corvette, his dirt bike, and driving and caring for his collection of antique military vehicles.



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