

Reverend Thomas Droege – The 2002 HMA Wilkerson Droege Award Recipient...

Dr. Thomas Droege, affectionately known by all as Tom, has been an integral visionary and founding member of HMA. It is with great pleasure and deep admiration that the Health Ministries Association honors Tom Droege as one of its inaugural recipients of this prestigious award. This award is presented annually to an HMA member who is known for creative leadership, compassionate ministry and visionary faithfulness to the faith health movement. Tom has exemplified these attributes throughout his life and throughout his dedicated membership to HMA.

One hour each afternoon belonged to Dr. Thomas Droege. Alone. For that hour, the Lutheran pastor and theology professor put his work for the Carter Center's Interfaith Health Program aside. He put his golf game and writing aside. He meditated. He meditated while focused on two objects: a circular wall hanging, which drew him into its center and a sculpture of a woman holding a baby. The concept of being held was very much a part of his theology, the overall concept of being held by the Creator, the Earth, and its people.

It was 1967 when Dr. Droege met Dr. Foege in India at a conference on theology and medicine. Dr. Foege is a past director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and former executive director of the Carter Center. Dr. Droege retired from Valparaiso University, moved to Atlanta and joined the interfaith health project. Through the Carter Center, the Interfaith Health Program trained church members locally and globally as health promoters who coordinate efforts to prevent disease and to promote wellness.

Dr. Droege, author of five books, was interested in the combination of theology and medicine, the same interest of the Carter Center program begun in 1992. He had a great deal of experience and passion on the theological basis of health and healing and had practical experience in how to improve medical mission programs.

Tom served on the HMA board, been an advisor and mentored the organization and its members. He was blessed with the ability to speak and write on the subject of faith and health with clarity and wisdom.

Dr. Droege died in April, 2007 of multiple myeloma at the age of seventy-five. He is survived by his loving wife, Ester Droege, was a devoted father and grandfather. Tom had such a gentle, caring spirit. It was apparent that his faith along with his meditation brought a great deal of calmness to his life, brought a peace to him. He embraced his call to give his life for others and he shared that with peace with each of them.