

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

'Back in black'

APCE celebrates financial turnaround, presents full schedule of innovative programming

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Chicago

Contemplative worship led by Nanette Sawyer, Shawna Bowman, and Luke Hyder—incorporating poetry readings by diverse voices, breathing and body prayers, and song—transitioned this morning (Jan. 29) into a near party as the executive council of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE) announced its present success and future plans at the organization's annual event here.

"We have a strategic plan for the next three years, we are on sound financial footing again, and we are moving into the future with hope, enthusiasm, and lots of dreams," said the Rev. Zeta Touchton Lamberson, outgoing APCE president, to applause.

And then the "wild rumpus"—Christian educator style—truly began as Charlotte McGowan, APCE's treasurer, took the stage.

Removing a shiny red jacket to reveal an all-black ensemble while dancing with great abandon to pulsating music, McGowan shouted, "We are back in black and I'm so excited!"

McGowan, who said she had worn red sweaters at the event for the past two years, announced APCE's net gain of roughly \$29K as compared with the previous fiscal year's \$77K loss.

"In one fiscal year we had a \$100,000 turnaround," she said. "Do you know how incredibly awesome that is?"

McGowan attributed the organization's dramatic reversal to members' and leaders' hard work, the success of the prior year's annual event in Baltimore, moving APCE's journal, "The Advocate," online, an increase in membership, and the reduction of operating costs by leadership.

"What are we doing with the \$30,000 gain," McGowan asked. "We opened an investment account—a reserve account—to save what we don't need today for a lean tomorrow...Friends, you have turned APCE around. You make me feel like dancing."

In other business of the corporation, the new members of APCE's leadership council were installed: Von Clemans, president; Holly Inglis, president-elect; and Katie Estes, secretary. After Lamberson received a standing ovation for her leadership, thanks were offered to all of those rotating off the leadership council.

The morning session concluded with three "Ed Talks," APCE's own spin on "TED Talks, a new way to facilitate discussion, share new ideas and spark creativity at the gathering.



Rodger Nishioka —Emily Enders Odom

Presenters Kathy Dawson, associate professor of Christian Education at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia; John Vest, assistant professor of Evangelism at Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Virginia; and Rodger Nishioka, associate professor of Christian Education at Columbia Seminary, spoke on the topics, "Collaborative Learning Communities—Do you have one?," "God Is Not an Idea," and "Giving New Attention to Our Educational Ministry with the Family" respectively. Each talk was accompanied with questions for table discussion.

Following lunch—in many cases hosted by PC(USA)-related seminaries—the afternoon's program included workshops on a variety of topics followed by another innovation, "Ignite" presentations. Ignite is a series of speedy presentations, five minutes in length, in which presenters get a total of 20 slides to speak to their topic.

Among the six presenters were Karen Ware Jackson, pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, N.C., and the Desler family—Amy, Ariel, and Cassidy—of First Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas.

Ware Jackson spoke about the church's "PrayGround," a dedicated space for children at the front of the sanctuary with interactive prayer activities, where families are free to move and experience worship in a unique way.

"Why is the PrayGround bringing new life to our community," Ware Jackson asked. "Because the Holy Spirit began to move and we took off after her! Intergenerational worship can bring new life to any church, my friends, it depends on you. You are the ones that make this real in your community."

Amy Desler and her daughters, Ariel and Cassidy, told the gathering how "Little Stewpot Stewards" came about. Established in 1975 by First



Charlotte McGowan, APCE Treasurer, dances on the platform —Emily Enders Odom

Presbyterian News Service

EMILY ENDERS ODOM

Presbyterian Church, The Stewpot is driven by a mission to provide the homeless and at-risk in the community the resources they need for basic survival and opportunities to start a new life.

As Desler came to the realization that children could also be transformed by The Stewpot's ministry of outreach, she mobilized a group to do fundraising toward buying and distributing resources to the ministry's homeless clients.

"For our family, volunteering at The Stewpot gives us an opportunity to talk about God," said Desler. "How easy it is to start a program like this. Just find a group that needs your help, think of something they need, organize a fundraising endeavor, and distribute what they need. I challenge each of you to how to engage your children in making the world a better place."

All six "Ignite" presentations—including those by Max Hill, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville; Andy Morgan, campus minister at UKirk, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville; Debbie Streicher, Milestones Ministry; and Emily Cox, First Presbyterian Church of Waco, Texas—will be made available on the APCE website.



left to right: Cassidy Desler, Ariel Desler, Amy Desler —*Emily Enders Odom*

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