

As an educator who began as a volunteer and now as a professor, Kathy Dawson is an example of everything APCE stands for in excellence in Christian education.

Kathy grew up in California where she attended California State University at Long Beach. It was here that Kathy's life-long passion for education began. Following her graduation, she taught elementary school for the Los Alamitos and Palm Springs Unified School Districts, where she was named Teacher of the Year. As Kathy volunteered in Christian education in her local church, a deep passion for CE was igniting within her.

After nine years in public education, Kathy left California and moved to Richmond, Virginia to enroll in the Presbyterian School of Christian Education. While studying for a Master of Arts degree in Christian Education, Kathy was ordained as a Ruling Elder and chaired the CE Committee in her local congregation. Kathy went on to Columbia Theological Seminary to complete a Master of Divinity degree, serving Shallowford Presbyterian Church in Atlanta as a Director of Christian Education. Kathy was ordained as a Teaching Elder in the PC(USA) in 1994 and served Spring Hill Presbyterian Church in Mobile, Alabama as the Associate Pastor for Christian Education and Youth. While there, Kathy became a Certified Christian Educator in 1996.

Kathy's heart for teaching led her to Princeton Seminary to pursue a Ph.D. in Practical Theology with an emphasis on Christian Education. Beginning as Assistant Professor of Christian Education for Children and Youth at Union-PSCE in 1998 and currently at Columbia Theological Seminary, where she is tenured as Associate Professor of Christian Education, Kathy's academic career has been filled with seeing opportunities and possibilities, the needs of those in educational ministry, and envisioning ways to meet the needs in partnership with others.

After she arrived at Columbia Theological Seminary in 2004, Kathy became part of a conversation about the possibility of offering a Doctorate of Educational Ministry degree. Her gifts in creating institutional and collaborative partnerships propelled this conversation into reality. Kathy was instrumental in creating the academic content, promoting the program and its potential impact for the church and, as a result, Columbia has graduated 26 D. Ed. Min. students and is currently the only Presbyterian institution to offer this degree.

As other Presbyterian seminaries were eliminating faculty positions and closing degree programs, Kathy perceived a need among those who sought additional training in various areas of practical theology. Her vision led to the development of the Masters of Arts in Practical Theology (MAPT) degree. Again through creative collaboration and garnering the support of her colleagues and the institution, the first MAPT classes were held in the fall of 2010, with concentrations in pastoral care, Christian education, worship and leadership.

Kathy saw yet another need and collaborated with the Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association to create The Compass Points Certificate Program as a partnership between the PCCA and Columbia Theological Seminary, enabling those involved in camp and conference ministry to deepen their understanding and their skills. The first five certificates were awarded in November, 2013.

Kathy's leadership and vision for educational ministry extends far beyond the seminary classroom. She currently serves on the Educator Certification Committee and teaches certification courses in Human Growth and Faith Development. In 2013, Kathy, along with

Professor Rodger Nishioka from Columbia Theological Seminary, guided the APCE Cabinet as they began the revisioning process for the organization.

Throughout her career, her work and her passion has focused on the spiritual development and faith life of children and on equipping both professional and lay leadership within the church to be more effective in all areas of educational ministry.

One of Kathy's greatest contributions to the church's ministry with children is her professional involvement and personal interest in church-housed schools. Over the course of her academic career, her research has focused on the role church-housed schools have in the spiritual development of children. At APCE workshops in 2008 and 2009 she described her efforts to create a national Network of Presbyterian Preschools. Once again, Kathy perceived a need and a vision emerged; the vision of preschool directors in Presbyterian settings to be more connected and empowered to view their ministry as an important part of the emerging faith of children.

Kathy is the author of *Confessing Faith: A Guide to Confirmation for Presbyterians*, two books on children and grief published by AfterLoss Publications, as well as numerous journal articles and reviews. Since 2006, Kathy has been the written voice of "Gracie the Fish" for the One Great Hour of Sharing children's materials. She has also served as writer, editor and consultant for the We Believe children's curriculum since 2003 and produced and directed the We Believe: Songs for All God's Children CD. She is a sought-after workshop leader and has provided continuing education events to churches, presbyteries, and synods on a wide variety of topics: Multiple Intelligences Theory/Spiritual Gifts, Children's Ministry, Godly Play, Spiritual Development, Adult Education, Confirmation, Bonhoeffer and Children, and Death and Grieving.

Kathy exemplifies authentic spiritual leadership; listening, caring, recognizing leadership in others, calling forth, lifting up and empowering those leaders to become even better leaders within their communities. Her humble spirit is a model for educators as we walk alongside those in our churches, see the work that needs to be done, empower others to discover a vision for educational ministry and help to nurture the vision into life.

When you see Kathy at the annual conference in Baltimore, ask her to sing a few bars of "It's a Small World," because when Kathy is not in a seminary classroom, leading a workshop, serving the denomination, or leading Christian education activities at Oakhurst Presbyterian Church, where she is a member, she may well be on her way to Disney World to use her annual pass.

A keen intellect, a genuine heart for ministry, a passionate vision for education, and a love of imagination – all these and more describe a truly outstanding Christian educator, Dr. Kathy L. Dawson.