



## Investor Profile: East Liberty Presbyterian

For the past 17 years, Patrice has served as Director of Mission Ministries at East Liberty Presbyterian Church, which she first joined in 1996 as Director of Outreach for the Family Enrichment Ministry. For 14 years she has also served on the board of East Liberty Development Inc., where she continues to serve as president. A former board member of the Oikocredit Western Pennsylvania Support Association, Patrice also has served on the board of Oikocredit USA.

Patrice grew up in Indianapolis, Indiana and went to Purdue University extension in Indianapolis, where she received a BS in psychology and completed one year of study towards an MA in Education. But it is the degree she recently received that marks her unforeseen journey from Indiana to Pennsylvania—from potential teacher to actual minister: on May 31 she graduated from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary with a Masters of Divinity.

Patrice's theological career began inauspiciously—her first job was in retail at L. S. Ayres, a large department store in Indianapolis. With two small children at that time, she soon discovered that "retail and parenthood did not work together," she says. "Social service was never my intent. I thought I would use my psychology degree working in schools, but I found I did not have a gift for teaching."

So she took a position with Community Centers of Indianapolis, an organization of 11 social service agencies. This marked the beginning of the community work she came to embrace. She found her work "home" at a settlement house, Christamore, where she spent 11 years. "I was first assistant director of operations and budget. In a way, it was a quasi-ministry from a managerial perspective," she says. "I ended up as Executive Director of Christamore House."

When her family moved to Pittsburgh, Patrice joined the staff of East Liberty Presbyterian Church. "At that point I just needed a job," she says. "The Church had an opening that they thought I would fit into well. It was to put together resources needed in the community, providing social service support and family enrichment programming for the vulnerable families in the community. The title was Director of the Family Enrichment Ministry. **After a while," she says, "the pastor of the church recognized something in me that he wanted me to develop...things I didn't recognize myself.** Here I was, a Baptist girl working for a Presbyterian church. He said to me, 'Go out there and do what the community needs done,' So I became Director of Mission Ministries. Over time the Church redefined how we did ministry, supporting all of its mission, both local and international."

Investing in Oikocredit was a major way in which the Church's ministry addressed the global concerns of its members. East Liberty Presbyterian Church was an early institutional investor in Oikocredit USA, with an initial investment in 1988 and then a much more significant \$500,000 investment in the 1990s. "The Church's investment demonstrates its mission efforts beyond our local community," says Patrice. **"It is not easy for a local church to have an impact on a global level, but Oikocredit provides this opportunity. Investing in the Oikocredit portfolio is part of our social justice mission. Parishioners are aware and proud of this commitment."**

The Church's work—local and international—deepened Patrice's commitment to a new direction in her life. A significant event, she says, was her acceptance as one of 50 individuals from across the country to participate in the Harvard Divinity School Summer Leadership Institute for Church-based Community and Economic Development. "The program focused on Christian-based development, which was something I had been working

on as part of my position with Mission Ministries," she says. "For me, this program was a life-changing event. I was not a minister, nor an attorney, like any of the other attendees.

"One of the attendees told me that she thought I should be a minister; she saw something in me that I had not seen in myself. I explored this over time and thought...not yet. Then one day I knew it was time. I became a Baptist minister, licensed and ordained in 2005. And I decided to start my theological education...as a Presbyterian. **I decided to grow where I'd been planted, in the Presbyterian Church.**" With her Masters of Divinity now in hand, Patrice plans to work toward her ordination as a Presbyterian minister.

Although her Ministries work focuses more locally, Oikocredit's work remains a key interest for her, she says. This summer she will join a mission group going to Bolivia as part of a social justice exploration. While there, she hopes to visit some Oikocredit projects. **"While our church's investment in Oikocredit has been generated by our investment committee, I see more movement toward increased engagement from a social justice perspective. I see more opportunities in the near future to become more engaged."**

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