

Name: **Gwen Arneson**

Current Positions: Lay Pastoral Asst., Organist/Choir Director - Christ, Cottonwood, MN; Piano Studio, Cottonwood, MN

Congregation of Membership: Christ Lutheran Church, Cottonwood, MN

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 11/02/1953

Previous Positions:

Classroom music teacher - Wood Lake Middle School, Wood Lake, MN
Classroom music teacher - E.C.H.O. Charter School, Echo, MN

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

B.A. Summa Cum Laude - Augustana College (now University), Sioux Falls, SD, 1975

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Synod Council and Executive Committee as Synod Vice President - SW MN Synod; Lead Team - SW MN Synod Funding Initiative; Synod Personnel Committee - SW MN Synod; Synod Long Range Planning Committee - SW MN Synod; Congregational Council, Worship Committee, Christian Education Committee - Christ Lutheran Church, Cottonwood, MN

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Augustana College (now University) Board of Regents and Executive Committee; ELCA Nominating Committee; ELW Training Team for SW MN Synod; SW MN Synod Evangelism Task Force; SW MN Synod Assembly Planning Committee; Worship Planning Team for SW MN Synod Fall Theological Conference; Congregation Coordinator/team member God's work.

Honorary Degrees:

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of vice president?

I find joy in serving in God's church, and I bring curiosity and excitement to discover where God is leading and calling us in the days to come. Others have often told me that I offer a sense of calm, hospitality, compassion, servanthood, dependability, collaboration, humor, leadership, encouragement, and graciousness to a situation. I bring 17 years of applicable experiences as a synod vice president. I am a good listener who can also follow through with a helpful course of action, if needed.

What is your concept of the primary role of the vice president of the ELCA?

Constitutionally, a vice president's role is to help facilitate the important work of the ELCA Church Council. This is achieved by setting a hospitable tone that encourages respectful and inclusive dialogue as routine business is conducted; assumptions are tested; fruitful change is initiated; barriers are dismantled; dreams are envisioned; and work is done to realize common goals in the midst of the God-given mission we share. The vice president also plays a role as an ambassador and mission interpreter for the larger church. Being church together, we celebrate the lay person's voice and perspective offered by the vice president.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

One who leads in the church is able to effectively communicate, through words and actions, the boundless love and hope we have through Jesus Christ in joyful and compassionate accompaniment with others on the journey. A leader may not necessarily seek a title or higher office. A leader's vision is both nearsighted and farsighted - always looking through the lens of the cross, focusing on Jesus, responding to his call to faithful discipleship and humble service in God's name, and inviting others to "come and see", as well.

How do you practice care for others and for yourself?

It is important for me to have regular quiet, reflective devotional and prayer time, usually in the morning, for the care of my heart and soul. I try to maintain a relatively healthy diet and get sufficient rest. I aspire to live as one who notices and celebrates beauty in nature and music, in people and relationships, in ideas and dreams. Philippians 4:8 comes to mind as I write these thoughts. I strive to be generous with encouragement and gratitude toward others. I have a compassionate heart and pray that I will notice and sense the needs of others, and then respond appropriately, as I am able.