

Susan Armstrong's parting remarks at the 2010 Synod Assembly

Susan Armstrong of Mason City concluded two terms as vice president of the Northeastern Iowa Synod Council this year. She was recognized at the 2010 Synod Assembly for her eight years of service. Armstrong told the Assembly that serving as vice president of the synod was a happy experience:

The unique gifts and abilities that I brought to the office of Vice President were quickly realized, utilized, and appreciated by Bishop Ullestad and the synod staff. It was an occasion whereby the role of vice president was flexible enough to call forth my interests, abilities and leadership style. It was a win-win opportunity for stewardship and mission.

One of the distinctions about the office of Vice President is that it is fundamentally a volunteer position. Yes, the office holds some clout, but at the end of the day I didn't have to sweat the small stuff because the well being of the synod rests in the body of Christ—in your hands and also in the very capable hands of the professional guardians of the synod—in the office of the Bishop and with the Synod Staff.

The final reason for my happiness lies in the profound resources of our Synod Staff. In my professional life as a psychotherapist, I've spent 30 years analyzing family and work place systems. And of all the groups that I've worked with personally and professionally, the Northeast Iowa Synod staff—the Bishop, his assistants, and the support staff—are among the healthiest organizations I've encountered. As a whole, this group of individuals is hardworking, healing, harmonious, hopeful, and inherently democratic. They are excellent communicators, deeply inspirational, self-examining, resourceful and open to change. They can make sweet-tasting lemonade out of life's lemons, which makes them a can-do organization—although occasionally you might hear them declare, 'Won't do!' Above all, the Northeastern Iowa Synod staff operates with inclusiveness and transparency, and this is what engenders our trust and confidence in them. In short—they embody Mother Theresa's famous quote: "We may not all do great things in life, but we can all do small things with great love".

I'm proud to be a part of a synod whose favorite food group is sweet corn—but on a deeper level, it is the small doses of bread and wine that makes us hunger for 'something even better.' And that 'something even better' is right here in our midst! Thank you for this remarkable opportunity to serve and be served—to love and be loved. I'll miss you.