

Biography as a Vestry Candidate:

Eileen Vernor

Faith Journey, Service, and Vision for Christ Church Cranbrook

My Religious Upbringing

My spiritual journey began in the Unitarian Universalist tradition, which my parents discovered while living in West Texas in the 1950's. From an early age, I learned the importance of open-mindedness, the value of respecting diverse beliefs, and developed a strong commitment to social justice, all tenets of the Unitarian Universalist faith. These formative experiences laid the foundation for my faith and were instrumental in shaping my core values.

During my childhood years as an expat in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, I grew increasingly interested in various religious traditions, including Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Baha'i faith. During my middle school years in Indonesia, I explored my faith in Bible studies with local Baptist missionaries, which helped me deepen my spiritual exploration, even as I sometimes found myself at odds with certain aspects of their dogma.

I met my husband, Geoff Drutchas, at Syracuse University, where we connected through our shared Unitarian Universalist tradition. We were married at the Birmingham Unitarian Church, where Geoff grew up, not far from Christ Church Cranbrook. After five years as a Unitarian minister on the East Coast, Geoff accepted a calling as a United Church of Christ (UCC) minister, which moved us to Michigan. Through our Downriver UCC church, where I sang in the choir for over 30 years, I developed a love of a more traditional Christian church service, deepening my understanding of community, inclusiveness, and the transformative power of collective worship.

Professional Experience and Commitment to Support

Throughout my 40+ year career, I have held leadership roles in human resources across a wide range of industries and organizations. My professional journey has included positions at Harvard and Northeastern Universities, Stanley Black & Decker, Masco, DTE Energy, Detroit Medical Center, AlixPartners, Joyson Safety Systems, NSF International, Urban Science, and most recently, Slate—an innovative electric vehicle start-up dedicated to creating affordable transportation solutions. These varied experiences have shaped my approach to leadership and strengthened my dedication to supporting individuals in the workplace.

During my career, I have navigated the challenges of two significant layoffs, events that fueled my commitment to help others facing similar transitions. I regularly provide career counseling and resume coaching to those experiencing professional changes, finding great fulfillment in offering guidance and reassurance during times of uncertainty. The

positive feedback from former colleagues who have shared that my support made a meaningful difference in their lives has been deeply rewarding and continues to inspire my service to others.

I have learned the value of giving back from my parents, who were lifelong volunteers. For the past 12 years, I have served as an advisor to the Vista Maria board of directors, serving both on the board development committee and on a CEO search committee. Over five years ago, I joined Impact100 Metro Detroit, a women's collective giving organization that has granted over \$2.0 M to worthy local nonprofit projects. Both volunteer experiences have fed my commitment to social justice and supporting my community.

Involvement at Christ Church Cranbrook

Upon Geoff's retirement from ministry three years ago, we relocated to West Bloomfield and began visiting local churches. It was at Christ Church Cranbrook that we found both a warm welcome and spiritual fulfillment. From our very first service, we were drawn to the church's genuine hospitality and inclusiveness. I was especially moved by Christ Church Cranbrook's commitment to serving the broader community, which resonated deeply with my own values and faith journey.

Since joining Christ Church Cranbrook in 2022, I have had the privilege of engaging in a variety of ministries and committees that serve and enrich our congregation:

- Engagement Committee
- Periodically staff the Welcome Table during coffee hour
- Member of Love Wins
- Sing with the Parish Choir

Goals for Serving on the Vestry

If elected to the Vestry, my foremost goal is to help expand our inclusiveness and strengthen Christ Church Cranbrook's identity as a welcoming church. I believe that every person, regardless of their background or identity, should feel embraced and supported in our congregation as they develop a personal relationship with Christ. Based on my 40+ years of HR experience, I offer my support to the Personnel Committee, working to nurture and empower our dedicated staff, whose efforts are vital to the life and mission of our church.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve and look forward to supporting Christ Church Cranbrook's mission and ministry as a potential member of the Vestry.