

Name: Cheryl G. Stuart

Current Positions: Vice President, Florida-Bahamas Synod; Attorney (of counsel) Hopping Green & Sams, Tallahassee, FL

Congregation of Membership: St Stephen--Tallahassee

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 11/14/1955

Previous Positions:

Florida-Bahamas Synod Vice President (year 7); prior service on Synod Council. With my law firm since 1986, practicing public finance & governmental law & lobbying; chaired Recruiting, Business Development & Compensation Committees; led practice group for 20+ years. Now working part time. Also worked for Mich & Wis. Public Svc. Commissions

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

University of Wisconsin-Madison, J.D. and M.A. (Public Administration) 1986: Order of the Coif.
Michigan State University, James Madison College, B.A., (Socio-Economic Policy Problems) 1978.
Continuing Education Credits over 30 years of law practice (both teaching and learning)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Vice President, Florida-Bahamas Synod; Chairperson, Region 9 Council (ELCA); ELCA Discipline Committee; Member, ELCA Attorneys Association; ReconcilingWorks (co-chair). Professional/community memberships include: Tallahassee Women Lawyers; Florida Association of Women Lawyers; Florida and Wisconsin Bar Associations; Leadership Tallahassee, PFLAG.

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Prior to service in the Synod, I held numerous positions in my home congregation, including congregational President, Vice President and Stewardship Coordinator. Also served on Vicar (Intern) Committee, walking with an intern through her time with us.

Honorary Degrees:

None. Numerous professional recognitions, e.g., Florida Trend "Legal Elite", Best Lawyers in America, FL Super Lawyers etc.

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

I am an independent, intuitive and creative thinker. I am intellectually curious. To tackle a problem, I look first to build coalitions. In a group or meeting, I foster inclusive discussion, but am unafraid to be decisive. I am comfortable sharing my faith. I have a strong sense of, and passion for, social justice. A long legal career and work in the legislative process have honed my ability to be an effective advocate and communicator and to "speak truth to power".

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

The ELCA Constitution gives minimal description of what the ELCA Vice President must do. This allows the role of the VP to adapt to the needs of the church and the gifts of the person called by the Spirit at this time. As chair of the churchwide council, the VP needs to lead effective decisionmaking in the conduct of church business. The VP is also one face of the ELCA in the public square, and should be comfortable in varied settings. As a lay person, the VP should encourage and promote lay leadership and faith development throughout the church.

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

The ability to effectively communicate as the situation requires is a key skill. This requires listening to what is being said--and sometimes what is not said. Articulating a vision, sharing one's own faith story, delivering difficult news, advocating a position, translating complex issues in an understandable way--all require authenticity and passion to be effective. A leader in the church should inspire and empower people to nurture and use their gifts as they live out their faith journey, as well as help people realize our interconnectedness and unity in Christ. While communication styles differ, effectiveness is key.

How do you practice care for others and for yourself?

Self Care: To de-stress, I enjoy watching a good softball, baseball or hockey game. I find special joy in a leisurely meal and conversation with good friends. My husband (Steve) and I enjoy cruise vacations where cell phones "don't work"!
Care for others: I continue to find that "being present" is often the most meaningful gift to another. Being where s/he is, in the moment, speaks volumes. Other times, creating the right "small community" around someone is helpful, and I am able to do that.