

Pastor Judy Johnson – Counselor-in-Residence

It's been an enormously stressful year.

Congregations have struggled with how to be church, when our familiar patterns for being church *together* are disrupted. Pastors have struggled with how to provide leadership and care without compromising the health and safety of those we care for. Communities have struggled with how to grieve without the traditional patterns of gathering in person and eating together. Individuals have struggled with isolation from their loved ones. And while we have grown in utilizing technology as a means of connecting with one another for meetings and for worship, this growth has come with a steep and sometimes exhausting learning curve and, let's face it, it's *not the same*.

It has been an enormously stressful year. And all of the challenges mentioned are simply a product of the pandemic. Add to those the *additional* stresses of a culture beset by political rancor, racial tension, and the very real threat of violence on a level we have not ever seen before, and it should come as no surprise that groups as well as individuals are tired and cranky.

Stress impairs function. We are not at our best when operating under stress; and we are physiologically as well as psychologically incapable of clear, creative, or innovative thinking.

My role on the synod staff is to provide support for synod staff members, congregational leadership, and rostered leaders. To that end, I work with individuals and groups, providing:

- confidential therapy services
- support group facilitation
- conflict resolution
- training in healthy boundaries and communication
- leadership team building

I believe that these services are valuable during the best of times. They are of vital importance during difficult times. I work for the synod on a part-time basis (one day a week), and can be reached through the synod office or directly:

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