

SACRED *play*

Alaska Professional Church
Workers' Retreat

October 7-9, 2022

So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 8:15

August 25, 2022

Dear friends and colleagues,

You are invited to the 2022 Alaska Professional Church Workers' Retreat! The retreat will be October 7-9 in Anchorage. We'll begin at 9 am on Friday and end after dinner on Sunday, so please plan your travel accordingly so you don't miss any of the activities. For those who are bi-vocational and will be working on Friday, please try to be present at 9 am on Saturday.

Everyone should arrange to be away from their home church on Sunday morning as we will be worshipping together at the retreat. A cohort is preparing a Laity Sunday service for churches to use on October 9 if they choose. If you have a significant conflict that Sunday, please let me know.

The purpose of this retreat is to embrace **play as a sacred act**, to offer an **intentional respite** to those who have been ministering in a variety of ways during this very difficult time, and **to connect and build relationships** with one another.

In Alaska, we have a broad range of people engaged in professional ministry, so this retreat is open to all professional church workers - pastors, deaconesses, home missionaries, LLPs, CLMs, elders, deacons, camp directors, and more, both active and retired. This retreat is specifically geared toward those who have been actively engaged in ministry during these challenging times and need space to breathe, process, and play.

We will follow the same COVID protocols for in-person meetings as practiced by the Greater Northwest Cabinet. Masks are required during sessions indoors, and participants should take a COVID test each morning before the meeting. If you test positive or are not feeling well, please inform me or Pastor Christina and do not attend.

Traditionally, those attending the retreat have used their local church professional expense fund to pay for travel and accommodations. We know that not all professional church workers have an expense account and that many churches are struggling financially right now. As a **one time gift to show our deep gratitude for your tireless effort**, we are exploring ways for the Alaska Conference to pay for a portion of your expenses. We will keep you informed about financial support.

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The locations for our activities and accommodations are still being confirmed, but you may go ahead and book your travel to Anchorage. If you are located in the Anchorage area and have a guest room available, I encourage you to reach out to a colleague and invite them to stay. For those who are local or within driving distance, please help with carpooling so we can keep transportation costs to a minimum.

Each day will be divided into two parts - a morning program called Sacred Play followed by afternoon adventures, which will be small group activities so we can have fun together. The morning program will be facilitated by Sue Magrath. See below for more information about Sue and Sacred Play.

My prayer is that this will be a restful, renewing time for you, filled with friends, fun, and laughter.

Peace,

Rev. Lisa Talbott

Alaska Conference Director of Connectional Ministries

Sacred Play with Sue Magrath

As clergy, you are engaged in sacred work, bringing the word of God's love to your congregations, and guiding them toward acts of caring and justice. That's on the good days. But the life of ministry is fraught with ill-defined boundaries, overwork, budgetary concerns, and unrealistic expectations—and that's BEFORE the pandemic took all our expectations about clergy life and threw them out the window! Since then, most attempts at self-care have gone by the wayside, and balance has been next to impossible. Yet balance is vitally important if we are to continue to do the work of God in our churches, communities, and world.

Sacred play offers a way to restore balance, to restore ourselves. We need play in order to remember who we are as children of God. Play allows us to spend time with God and loved ones in a context where we don't have to be productive or perfect. During this retreat, we will explore societal views on play and what gets in the way of a healthy permission to engage in playful activities. We will look at scriptures that support taking time to play. We will discover the benefits of play, learn what play is and what it isn't, and take time to actually PLAY! This will be a time of thought-provoking discussion, but also laughter, fellowship, and FUN! Come prepared to have a good time!

Sue Magrath is a retired spiritual director, retreat leader, and counselor specializing in the integration of spirituality and psychology. She received her Master of Counseling degree from Arizona State University in 1996 and completed the Upper Room's two-year Academy for Spiritual Formation in 2007. Sue is passionate on the subject of clergy wellness and has led several workshops and retreats on this topic, ultimately authoring the book, *My Burden is Light: A Primer for Clergy Wellness*. Using a holistic approach, Sue blends her knowledge of psychology, Scripture, and spiritual practices to lead participants to a place of wholeness, growth, and renewal.