

Spring Learning Event 2026

April 16–18 | Girdwood Chapel, Girdwood, Alaska

Grounding Scripture: Psalm 16 – Second Week of Easter

“You show me the path of life.” — Psalm 16

Overview

This Spring Learning Event gathers pastoral and lay leaders for worship, learning, and shared discernment rooted in Easter hope. Guided by Psalm 16, our posture is one of simplicity, attentiveness, and trust in God’s unfolding path of life.

All churches are expected to participate in the Holy Conferencing session Thursday evening. Participants may attend the full event or register for individual sessions, workshops, or discussions that best fit their role, interest, or availability. Several sessions are offered in **hybrid format (in person + virtual)** to encourage wider participation across the Conference.

Thursday, April 16

Arrival & Orientation

Who Should Attend

Pastoral, lay, and conference leaders; council and committee chairs; and anyone involved in local church conferencing or administration.

Theme: *Easter Welcome | Listening for the Path of Life*

 **4:00–4:45 pm | Opening Worship** (sanctuary)

Psalm 16 | Easter Welcome

 **5:00–6:30 pm | Holy Conferencing (Hybrid)** (sanctuary)


Supporting Local Church Conferencing

Facilitators: Conference Administrator, Crystal Feaster & Conference Superintendent, Kristi McGuire

Ideal for: Pastoral leaders, lay leaders, council chairs, conferencing teams

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/93882853568>

 **6:45–8:00 pm | Dinner (On Site – Girdwood)**
Hightower Pub

 **8:00–9:00 pm | Evening Fellowship Gatherings**
Optional informal connection

Friday, April 17

Learning, Formation & Connection

Who Should Attend

Pastoral and lay leaders seeking practical tools, formation, and conversation around structure, finances, vitality, grief, and leadership.

Theme: *Practice Seeing (ὁπάω)*

 **9:30–10:00 am | Morning Devotional** (sanctuary)
Psalm 16 | Practice Seeing

◆ Morning Workshops (Choose One – In Person)

10:15–11:45 am (90 minutes)

Option A: Simplifying Local Church Structure (sanctuary)

Panel Discussion: Facilitator, Conference Superintendent, Rev. Kristi McGuire

Best Practices & Church Transitions

Ideal for: Clergy, council leaders, SPRC, administrative leaders

Option B: Grief Workshop (green room)

Facilitator: Jill Jefson

Explore how your church can walk alongside those facing loss through Christian grief support ministry programs, equipping leaders to compassionately guide healing journeys.

 **11:45 am–1:00 pm | Lunch & Fellowship**

◆ Afternoon Break-Out Groups (Choose One)

1:00–2:30 pm (90 minutes)

Option A: Time for Treasurers (Hybrid) (sanctuary)

Annual Financial Review Training

Facilitator: Benée Braden

Ideal for: Treasurers, finance chairs, pastors

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/93882853568>

Option B: COLA & Minimum Compensation (In Person) (green room)

Facilitator: Leadership Team President, David Means

Ideal for: Clergy, SPRC, finance teams

◆ 2:45–4:15 pm | Concurrent Sessions

Option A: Congregational Development & Vitality (In Person) (sanctuary)

Ideal for leaders wanting resources for local church vitality.

- Visioning & Strategy – Director of Connectional Ministries, Rev. Kristi McGuire
- Intercultural Competence – Executive Director of Intercultural Competence & Equity, Rev. Lisa Talbott

Option B: ACLU Training | Know Your Rights (In Person) (green room)

Ideal for those desiring this training during this season of ministry.

Conference Lay Leader, Melanie Venables

◆ 4:30–5:15 pm | Concurrent Hybrid Sessions

Option A: Apportionment Calculations (Hybrid) (green room)

Conference Treasurer, Brant Henshaw

Ideal for: Treasurers, pastors, finance leaders

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/93882853568>

Option B: Delegation Overview & Q&A (Hybrid) (sanctuary)

We will be electing General Conference and Western Jurisdiction Delegates at Annual Conference 2026. This is an information session for those interested in serving or learning more about the process.

Conference Secretary, Rev. Meghan Woods

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/98256694273>

 **5:15–6:45 pm | Optional Nature Walk / Hike**

 **6:45–8:00 pm | Evening Dinners**

- Laity Dinner (Location TBD)
 - Pastoral Leaders Dinner (Location TBD)
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Saturday, April 18

Integration & Sending

Who Should Attend

Clergy, lay leaders, ministry partners, and those engaged in youth, equity, housing, candidacy, and justice-focused ministries.

Theme: *Sightings of Grace*

 **9:00 – 9:30 am | Morning Devotional** (sanctuary)
Psalm 16 | Sightings of Grace

◆ Morning Break-Out Groups (Register for One)

9:45–11:15 am (90 minutes)

Option A: Housing & Hunger (Hybrid) (sanctuary)

A continuation of networking and sharing on this ministry priority.

Facilitator, Rev. Dan Wilcox

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/93882853568>

Option B: Ministry Candidates Gathering / PMU Restructuring (Hybrid)
(green room)

Ideal for ministry candidates and licensed local pastors.

Facilitator, Rev. Charles Ensminger & Rev. Bob Jones

<https://greaternw.zoom.us/j/98256694273>

Option C: Equity: Alaska Conference Covenant (In Person) (kids/dining room)

We will work together on an Alaska Conference Covenant to integrate our values and commitment to the MILE in our policies and procedures.

Facilitator: Conference Superintendent, Rev. Kristi McGuire & Conference Lay Leader, Melanie Venables

 11:15 am–12:00 pm | Lunch & Fellowship

Service & Reflection Project

12:00 –2:45 pm

Practice Seeing (ὁπάω): Sightings of Grace

Join [Challenge Alaska](#) to improve the lives of people with disabilities, their families and the whole community through adaptive sports, therapeutic recreation, and education!

 3:00–4:00 pm | Closing Worship (sanctuary)

Psalm 16 | Sending Forth