
Wisdom Ways Program Update

April 2026

This update covers the February–June 2026 program season and Soul Conference planning, and concludes with **a time-sensitive Board Member Call to Action (see second page!)**.

Spring 2026 Programming

This season's programs have engaged audiences in contemplative practice, theological education, interfaith encounter, and experiential learning — all building toward Soul Conference in June.

Participant feedback has been consistently positive, and we continue to refine future offerings based on what we learn.

Programs completed since the February board update:

- Hedgerow Institute: The Cosmic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin, twelve-part series February 2–April 13
- Lenten *Lectio Divina*, six-part series February 23–March 30.
- Let's Talk Series: Climate Change, Christian Communities, and Communication presentation and workshop with Prof. Emma Frances Bloomfield, March 12.
- Community Iftar: Creation Care and Community in partnership with Islamic Resource Group, March 7
- Holy Saturday Meditation, April 4

Still to come:

- Grounded: An Immersive Sound Bath for Deep Restoration, April 16
- Sustain: Cooking Demo and Community Garden Tour in partnership with Healthy Roots Institute and the Food Access Hub, two-part series April 24 and 25
- Unearth: Self-Discovery Through Creation and Dialogue About What We Throw Away, May 23

Marketing, Outreach & Audience Development

One of our ongoing priorities is expanding and diversifying the audiences we reach. This season has offered meaningful evidence that our approach is working, alongside learning about where capacity is still needed.

What's working

- Social media presence is growing: we have gained new followers on Meta platforms and have seen that interest convert into program participation by individuals who are new to Wisdom Ways — a key indicator that we are successfully reaching beyond our established base.
- We have introduced paid advertising for selected program offerings, specifically those with higher costs to us, and will be monitoring return on investment as we refine our marketing strategy.
- Accola's Marketing and Communications Manager, Sam Fernandez, has been an outstanding collaborator and contributor.

Where we are still building capacity

- While not the only factor at play, the extent of marketing efforts for any given program directly impacts registration numbers. This impacts both the number of participants served and our program revenue.
 - Marketing capacity remains a constraint. Sam's capability is not in question, but effectively advancing our goals requires more bandwidth than the current staffing model supports. Adding capacity in this area is a strategic priority heading into FY26-27.
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Soul Conference 2026: Stronger Together

Soul Conference 2026 is a public gathering planned for June 27–28 at the Wilder Center in Saint Paul. Our theme, "Stronger Together: Community and Resilience in a Changing Climate," responds to the urgent issues of climate change and our divisive political climate. We call attention to the wisdom traditions that can guide us forward toward wholeness and a more just future: the stories and practices that embody and teach kinship, reciprocity, and right relationship within an interdependent web of life.

This project significantly contributes to advancing each of our key goals for the transformation and relaunch of Wisdom Ways, by: tying spiritual enrichment more explicitly to social justice action, deepening our relationships with mission-aligned community partners, reaching new and more diverse audiences, and developing earned revenue streams.

Community outreach

Over the course of this planning process, our outreach materials have been viewed by hundreds of individuals, significantly expanding our visibility and network within the broader community. We have personally engaged with more than 150 individuals about presenting at or representing their organization at Soul Conference. These include changemakers and leaders in community initiatives and nonprofit settings, university educators, and spiritual practitioners. Beyond that, we've engaged with more than 40 contacts in the local business community. Not all of these conversations will convert to direct participation in, or sponsorship of, this year's conference. Yet every one of them raises the profile of Wisdom Ways and Accola and positions us as a dynamic organization responding to the needs of our community, building a basis for future support and collaboration.

What is in place

- Venue contract is finalized and an outline of our conference schedule has been posted.
- Keynote speaker is confirmed. Additional presenters are lined up for panels and breakout sessions. The deadline for presenter proposals is next week and submissions will be reviewed to fill remaining slots.
- Sponsorship procurement is underway.
- Soul Conference website is live and registration is open.
- Marketing campaigns are active across email and social media.

Recent staffing change

A recent staffing change—the unplanned departure of Katie Cornet as Wisdom Ways' Events and Programs Specialist—presents us with a new challenge. The work she completed will continue to serve as a strong foundation for our ongoing work in conference planning. However, this development removes events expertise, key community relationships, and 1/3 of our overall staff capacity at Wisdom Ways. At the time of this report, we are considering several possible adjustments to the planned scope and format of Soul Conference. The Programs & Opportunities Committee received a full briefing on these developments at its April 13th meeting.

Board Member Call to Action

Support from board members is requested in the form of warm introductions to mission-aligned organizations and businesses that may be interested in reaching our audience and supporting Soul Conference.

Please access the Board Member Sponsor Invite document (shared through the Board Portal) and review the included lists of Partner Prospects, In-Kind Needs, and Target Industries.

Send a note to Haven (651-758-1383, hgreen@accolamn.org) ASAP with one or more names you'd think could be a fit. We'll ask some questions, then take it from there!
