

Wisdom Ways October Program Update

Wisdom Ways is making progress in program design and implementation. As we roll out Fall and Winter offerings and begin planning for Q3-Q4, our programming matrix deliberately includes a mixture of the familiar and the new. Care is being taken to use budgetary resources wisely for maximum impact, and we are investing time and energy to identify and put into practice new strategies for audience development and retention. The hiring of Sam Fernandez as Accola's Marketing & Communications Manager filled a critical gap for Wisdom Ways, adding capacity and expertise in the kind of marketing we need to meet our goals.

Wisdom Ways re-launched programming with an Autumn Community Bonfire on September 26th. Turnout indicated that we were successful in designing an event with broad appeal and effectively marketing it. The gathering drew a multigenerational crowd that included members of the CSJ Consociate community, other past participants in Wisdom Ways programs, and a substantial number of new faces.

At least half of event attendees were completely new to Wisdom Ways. Many participants reported that they'd heard about the event through channels other than our email list. These alternative channels include WW-owned social media accounts, promotion by our presenters to their respective audiences, and the digital equivalent of word-of-mouth promotion: community members being excited enough to share our marketing collateral, unprompted, in online forums where they themselves saw a likely audience.

Highlights from our redesigned post-event participant survey, which asks what individuals found most meaningful, included:

- "Being with people and listening to stories was so much fun and peaceful."
- "Authentic human connection that was so high value and simple."

In addition to post-event participant surveys, we have created a template for timely and consistent post-event presenter contact which includes a survey about their experiences and observations to assist us in continuous improvement.

Offerings Completed and Currently Underway:

- Autumn Community Bonfire: An Evening of Song and Story (Sept. 26th)

- Hedgerow Institute: Green Saints and Ecofeminist Theologians (Sept. 22nd-Dec. 1st)

Offerings Upcoming in Q2:

- Democracy and Christian Nationalism Lecture with Q&A online (Oct. 23rd)
- Labyrinth Walk & Workshop onsite at LIS & Minneapolis Institute of Art (Nov. 15th)
- D.I.Y Nativity Workshop Series online (TBD Nov. 16th & 23rd or Nov. 23rd & 30th)
- Advent Contemplative Retreat onsite at Carondelet Center (Dec. 6th)
- Advent *Lectio Divina* Series online (Dec. 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd)
- Interfaith Trivia Night onsite at LIS (TBD December date)

Looking ahead at Q3-Q4, our planning process includes assessing the feasibility of reviving Wisdom Ways' Soul Conference, which once took place annually. This work leverages the skills of Program & Events Coordinator Katie Cornet, whose professional background includes planning large conferences for corporations and professional associations. A prospective timeline has this event taking place in June 2026.

In the meantime, active community outreach is a priority as we seek to build upon our existing public profile and create inroads with additional communities and mission-aligned organizations. For example, we will be tabling again next month at the annual conference of the Minnesota Multifaith Network (MinnMN). Tabling at this event serves a dual purpose. In addition to networking with and listening to diverse faith leaders, it's an opportunity to recruit volunteers with cultural competency and language skills relevant to serving LIS learners and residents at Sarah's. Wisdom Ways is eager to continue integrating our work with the broader work of Accola with the help of Julie Pinomaki, newly onboard as Accola's Volunteer & Community Partnership Manager.