Interfaith Baccalaureate 2021

Thursday, May 6, 2021
6:00-7:00 p.m.
Welcome

Dr. Sarah R. Bolton
President

Call to Mindfulness

Erin Guzmán, M. Div
Interim Director of Religious & Spiritual Life

Lighting a Candle of Inclusion and Community

“Chalice Lighting for Challenging Times,”
by Rev. Lisa Doege
Religious Studies & Environmental Studies
Manchester, Michigan

Moment of Silence for All Affected by Covid-19

For all in our community and across the globe impacted by Covid-19, racialized violence and injustice or discrimination of any form, economic collapse and the displacement of peoples, war and armed conflicts, death and the grief carried by so many … We lift up the people and communities near and far who are hurting, tired, and seeking relief.

Prayer for Compassion

Nasua Labi
Adapted from “Interfaith Prayer for Justice Makers” by John Saxon
(Christianity, West-African Spirituality)
Economics
Tema, Ghana

Readings

“Hanuman Chalisa/Gayatri Mantra/Karagre Vasate Lakshmi” Dhwani Parsana
(Hinduism)
Neuroscience (Biochemistry & Molecular Biology)
Rajkot, Gujarat, India

“The Story of Prophet Yusuf (alayhi salaam)” Joseph Nasar (Islam)
Political Science, Spanish minor
Cleveland, Ohio

“Unending Love” by Rabbi Rami Shapiro Ella Lang (Judaism)
Anthropology, Environmental Studies minor
New York, New York
Visual Reflection and Meditation
“The Wisdom of the Universe” (2014), by Christi Belcourt

Baccalaureate Message
New Hopes, Same Hearts
Erin Guzmán, M. Div
Interim Director of Religious & Spiritual Life

Unison Prayer
Devin Henson (Religious Society of Friends - Quaker)
Archaeology, Earth Sciences minor
New Vienna, Ohio

Spirit of Life, in this time of transition in hope for new beginnings—We gather together in a posture of compassion, with a desire to find comfort and community. Though we are physically scattered in many places all over the world, we need not feel distance in our relationships and connections to one another. We acknowledge where there is or has been struggle over this past year, but know that cannot and will not define the entirety of our existence. We also acknowledge our past and present joys, and where there are unexpected pleasures and opportunities for growth in our lives. Today, we hold precious space for gratitude, celebration, accomplishment, and hope. Fill each graduate with pride and encouragement. Remind them daily of the lessons and love that have taken root while here at Wooster, and all that awaits them in each season of growth from here onward. May we work to create a more just and equitable world, where the dignity and worth of all people is fully realized. May we be inspired to seek peace and purpose, to practice kindness, and to see our integrity and passions as good and worthy gifts to share. May your guiding presence be with us, now and always. Amen.

Readings
Tarot Reading + Reflection
Kennedey Bell (Hellenic Paganism)
Communications Studies, Elementary Education minor
Gambier, Ohio

“L’Dor V’Dor”
Louis Schwartz (Judaism)
Chemistry, Theatre & Dance minor
Shaker Heights, Ohio

“Ae zindagi, tu shaane udaas chhe”
Mili Barai (Hinduism)
Physics
Rajkot, Gujarat, India

Closing Words & Benediction
Erin Guzmán, M. Div
Interim Director of Religious & Spiritual Life
Welcome to the 2021 Interfaith Baccalaureate Service at The College of Wooster

Greetings to everyone tuning in to this year’s service, from wherever you are in the world! We welcome you to this virtual Interfaith Baccalaureate Service and Celebration, honoring the Class of 2021. Despite the challenges and transitions of navigating life in the Covid-19 era, we’re grateful for the ability to gather and utilize technology to create meaningful spaces and occasions, where we can celebrate the lives and accomplishments of our incredible students. Baccalaureate is a special time to honor and share the rich traditions, backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, and values of our community. Although we are not physically together this year to mark this occasion, we lift up each and every graduate with hope, courage, and resilience, knowing that wherever their paths and journeys take them, they will be surrounded by a community that reaches across the world, encouraging them in their growth and pursuits of all kinds. It is my sincere hope we all feel that same embrace and support, as we sojourn into whatever is ahead of us.

–Erin Guzmán, M.Div, Interim Director of Religious & Spiritual Life

A Note on This Year’s Theme

The Interfaith Baccalaureate Service of 2020 focused on resiliency in spite of the challenges and quickly evolving situation of the early stages in the Covid-19 pandemic. While we continue to wade through the challenges of this season, we are emerging into a new paradigm of being and doing. We have had to learn quickly and re-calibrate, leaning into new hopes and plans … and yet, we are still the same people we were before the pandemic. Even when so much has changed, we are still members of the Wooster community. We are still students, scholars, activists, family members, believers and seekers, leaders, and care-givers, doing our best to nurture ourselves and one another. We hope this reflection of hope and compassion will encourage all – especially our graduates – to move into the rest of 2021 with courage, strength, and care.

Artwork in Visual Reflection

The Wisdom of the Universe (2014) is an acrylic on canvas work, part of the Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists exhibit at the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Christi Belcourt, a Métis artist living and working in Canada, has long been an advocate for Indigenous and First Nations peoples in Canada and uses traditional Métis beadwork as inspiration for her paintings. Belcourt’s art focuses on questions surrounding identity, culture, place, and divisions within communities. To learn more about this work and read the artist’s statement, visit: americanart.si.edu

The Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists exhibit is the first major thematic show to explore the artistic achievements of Native American women. Its presentation at SAAM’s Renwick Gallery includes 82 artworks, dating from antiquity to the present, made in a variety of media from textiles and beadwork, to sculpture, time-based media and photography. The exhibition is organized by Jill Ahlberg Yohe, associate curator of Native American Art at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and Teri Greeves, an independent curator and member of the Kiowa Nation.

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Special Thanks This Year

Though we are not in-person for this service this year, there are still many people to thank and appreciate for their time and energy making this event come together. The Interfaith Baccalaureate Service would not be possible without the incredible work of the Communications and Marketing Team. We’re grateful for Melissa Anderson and all the members of her team, for their organization and handling the technology to make this service available to our Wooster community and family, spread out all over the world. We express our deep gratitude to President Bolton for her leadership, grace, and support for this event, as well as providing encouragement and guidance for the entire Wooster community during this challenging year.

This service, of course, wouldn’t be what it is without the incredible and creative contributions of our brilliant students. We appreciate the thoughtfulness, intentionality, inspiration, and hope shared in their readings, reflections, and offerings. We give special thanks to the following students: Benjamin Hassan, Dhwani Parsana, Joseph Nasar, Ella Lang, Devin Henson, Kennedey Bell, Louis Schwartz, Nasua Labi, and Mili Barai.

Thank you for tuning in, for sharing your support, and for honoring the lives and accomplishments of our graduates. May we all remember that we are bound together in hope and love—maintained by this community and all our relationships—so that we never walk the path of life alone.