

Invocation

Director of the Rachel Lord Center for Religious and Spiritual Life [Oliver L. Goodrich](#)

Aug. 29, 2023

Good afternoon. We're gathering today as a group that represents many different backgrounds, traditions, and religions. And even with our many and varied backgrounds, I would like each of you to join me in a shared spirit of reflection and contemplation, as I offer this invocation.

Will you join me in a spirit of reflection?

We're looking through a season of human existence where the myriad problems we face each day tempt us to despair over the fate of our shared world.

Perhaps some of you chose to pursue your studies at Bowdoin in the hopes of better understanding and finding solutions to the most pressing problems that are facing our age and our land, like climate collapse, wealth inequality, and access to basic supports like food, water, shelter, healthcare, and education, to name only a few.

And so as you prepare to enter your studies at Bowdoin, and journey toward expertise in your respective fields, my deepest hope and prayer is that you will embrace what the Zen Buddhist monk Suzuki-Roshi called "beginners' mind."

As you meet new people, may you suspend your desire to categorize and judge them, and instead greet them with wonder and curiosity.

As you grapple with challenging new ideas and concepts in your courses, may your intellectual pursuits awaken in you an unquenchable thirst for learning.

As you make mistakes in the lab, or on the field, or in the studio, may you have the courage to learn from your failure, trusting that failure will be the gateway to new learning and insights.

As you experience fear and anxiety as you try new things, whether it is your first time skiing or your first attempt with the Maine lobster, may you be overcome with the childlike joy of discovery.

As you become acquainted with Maine's woods and waters and people, especially the Wabanaki who have long stewarded this land, may you become more deeply rooted in who you are, and find your unique place in the vast web of belonging.

And as you feel tempted to despair at the immensity of the challenges that confront our world today, may you be surprised to discover that the compassion, creativity, and capabilities you already possess are more than sufficient for the task at hand.

May Bowdoin bless you with the gift of beginners' mind. I ask all of this in the spirit of salaam, of shalom, of shanti, of peace. May it be so.