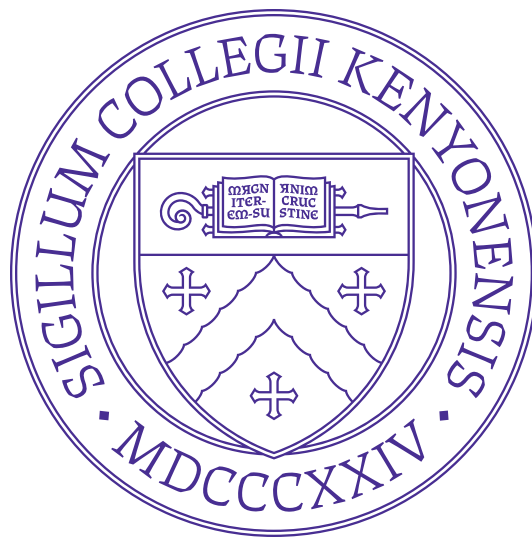


Kenyon College Baccalaureate Service



May 15, 2026
1:30 p.m.
Barrett A. Toan Indoor Track
in the Lowry Center

Program

Processional*

The Scioto Brass Ensemble

The Invocation*

Rev. Rachel C. Kessler '04

College Chaplain; Co-Director, Spiritual and Religious Life; Rector, Harcourt Parish

Welcome

Julie C. Kornfeld

President

Texts From a Kenyon Education

Fine Arts Division

A passage from *A Letter from Georgia O'Keeffe to Sherwood Anderson, Lake George, September 1923*

Read by Sarah Lanier Goodrum for the Department of Art History

Humanities Division

A passage from *A Brave and Startling Truth* by Maya Angelou

Read by Lisa Torrecillas-Jouault for the Department of Philosophy

Natural Sciences Division

A passage from *The Late Emmy Noether*, by Albert Einstein

Read by Molly Katrina Haag for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics

Social Sciences Division

A passage from *The Dignity of Difference* by Jonathan Sacks

Read by Alexander Francis Barnes for the Department of Economics

Interdisciplinary Programs

A passage from *The Tell-Tale Brain* by V.S. Ramachandran

Read by Samantha Ofori for the Department of Neuroscience

Texts From Our Religious Traditions

Buddhist Tradition

A passage from *Hardcore Zen* by the Zen teacher Brad Warner

Read by Lucca Delisle Burgess

Christian Tradition

A passage from *After College: Navigating Transitions, Relationships, and Faith*

by Erica Young Reitz

Read by Joshua Nelo Breard

Hindu Tradition

A passage from *Satsaṅga*, an interview with Pūjya Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Read by Anjali Zumkhawala-Cook

Islamic Tradition

A verse from the Quran and the poem

“Knowledge and Love,” by Allama Iqbal

Read by Yasha Zehra

Jewish Tradition

Excerpts from *God Was in This Place & I, I Did Not Know* by Lawrence Kushner and *On the Doorposts of Your House* from the Central Conference of American Rabbis

Read by Isabel Braun

Anthem

“Be Thou My Vision”

Music: Irish folk melody

Words: Attributed to St. Dallan Forgaill

(ca. 530 – 598); translated by Mary Elizabeth

Byrne (1880 – 1931) and versed by

Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860 – 1935)

Sung by Benjamin R. Locke, James D. and Cornelia W. Ireland Professor of Music

The Baccalaureate Address

“Why I am an Optimist”

David M. Rowe

Harry M. Clor Professor of Political Science

The Benediction*

Marc W. Bragin

College Chaplain; Co-Director, Spiritual and Religious Life; Director, Kenyon Hillel

Recessional*

The Scioto Brass Ensemble

*Audience standing, as able

Texts from a Kenyon Education

Fine Arts Division

A passage from *A Letter from Georgia O'Keeffe to Sherwood Anderson, Lake George, September 1923*
Read by Sarah Lanier Goodrum for the Department of Art History

I feel that a real living form is the result of the individual's effort to create the living thing out of the adventure of his spirit into the unknown — where it has experienced something — felt something — it has not understood — and from that experience comes the desire to make the unknown — known ... The artist's form must be inevitable — You mustn't even think you won't succeed —

Whether you succeed or not is irrelevant—there is no such thing. Making your unknown known is the important thing — and keeping the unknown always beyond you — catching crystallizing your simpler clearer version of life — only to see it turn stale compared to what you vaguely feel ahead — that you must always keep working to grasp — the form must take care of itself if you can keep your vision clear.

Humanities Division

A passage from *A Brave and Startling Truth*
by Maya Angelou
Read by Lisa Torrecillas-Jouault for the Department of Philosophy

We, this people, on this small and drifting planet
Whose hands can strike with such abandon [...]
Yet those same hands can touch with such
 healing, irresistible tenderness
That the haughty neck is happy to bow [...]
Out of such chaos, of such contradiction
We learn that we are neither devils nor divines

When we come to it [...]
Have the power to fashion for this earth
A climate where every man and every woman
Can live freely without [...] crippling fear

When we come to it
We must confess that we are the possible
We are the miraculous, the true wonder of
 this world
That is when, and only when
We come to it.

Natural Sciences Division

A passage from *The Late Emmy Noether*
by Albert Einstein
Read by Molly Katrina Haag for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics

Beneath the effort directed toward the accumulation of worldly goods lies all too frequently the illusion that this is the most substantial and desirable end to be achieved; but there is, fortunately, a minority composed of those who recognize early in their lives that the most beautiful and satisfying experiences open to humankind are not derived from the outside, but are bound up with the development of the individual's own feeling, thinking and acting. The genuine artists, investigators and thinkers have always been persons of this kind. However inconspicuously the life of these individuals runs its course, none the less the fruits of their endeavors are the most valuable contributions which one generation can make to its successors.

Social Sciences Division

A passage from *The Dignity of Difference*
by Jonathan Sacks
Read by Alexander Francis Barnes for the Department of Economics

Because we are different, we each have something unique to contribute, and every contribution counts. A primordial instinct going back to humanity's tribal past makes us see difference as a threat. That instinct is massively dysfunctional in an age in which our several destinies are interlinked. Oddly enough, it is the market — the least overtly spiritual of contexts — that delivers a profoundly spiritual message: that it is through exchange that difference becomes a blessing, not a curse. When difference leads to war, both sides lose. When it leads to mutual enrichment, both sides gain.

Interdisciplinary Programs

A passage from *The Tell-Tale Brain*

by V.S. Ramachandran

Read by Samantha Ofori for the Department of Neuroscience

How can a three-pound mass of jelly that you can hold in your palm imagine angels, contemplate the meaning of infinity, and even question its own place in the cosmos? Especially awe inspiring is the fact that any single brain, including yours, is made up of atoms that were forged in the hearts of countless stars billions of years ago. These particles drifted for eons and ... now form a conglomerate — your brain — that can not only ponder the very stars that gave it birth but can also think about its own ability to think and wonder about its own ability to wonder. With the arrival of humans, it has been said, the universe has suddenly become conscious of itself. This, truly, is the greatest mystery of all.

Texts from Our Religious Traditions

Buddhist Tradition

A passage from *Hardcore Zen* by the Zen teacher Brad Warner

Read by Lucca Delisle Burgess

We all want to be deceived by others. We want to pretend we believe in idiotic philosophies we find comforting. But in the end, no matter how much we try, we can't possibly be deceived. Reality is always there. You can pretend the sky is green with orange polka-dots, but when you open your eyes and look up, it never is.

Zazen will put you directly in touch with the source of yourself. It will bring you into direct contact with something that has never departed from you, something that could never leave you ... Reality is the one and only constant thing in this universe. It's always right there. Just as it is.

Christian Tradition

A passage from *After College: Navigating Transitions, Relationships, and Faith*

by Erica Young Reitz

Read by Joshua Nelo Breard

“The big struggle of our times ... is the fundamental choice between cynicism and hope ... Hope is not a feeling; it is a decision.” Though there are factors we cannot control about transitional times, we can choose our attitude. On most days we will have a decision to make about the outlook we adopt: Cynicism or hope? Apathy or anticipation? Fear or trust? We can enter the postgraduate years with a mindset that will wreck us, or we can embrace the opposite. We can choose to believe that a life of flourishing is possible, even if the first few months or years out feel bumpy. Despite our circumstances, hope believes that the story is not over — good can and will prevail.”

Hindu Tradition

A passage from *Satsaṅga*, an interview with Pūjya Swami Dayananda Saraswati
Read by Anjali Zumkhawala-Cook

Quite often one faces the conflict of dharma (morality) and adharma (amorality) while endeavoring to achieve one's goals ... In the Vedic culture, human ends, puruṣārtha, are four-fold — dharma, artha, kāma, and mōkṣa.

... Artha is the pursuit of wealth, power, name, and security. Kāma is various avenues of pleasure. Dharma does not sub-serve artha and kāma. Since dharma can be in conflict with the pursuit of artha and kāma, it is considered as an end to be accomplished by a human being.

Dharma is familial-dharma, teacher's-dharma, students-dharma, devotee's dharma, husband's dharma, wife's dharma, son's dharma, doctor's dharma – there is dharma for every role. Therefore, no achievement is worth it at the cost of dharma. This is indeed a big recognition.

Islamic Tradition

A verse from the Quran and the poem "Knowledge and Love," by Allama Iqbal
Read by Yasha Zehra

"And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good."

—

Knowledge said to me, Love is madness;
Love said to me, Knowledge is calculation —
O slave of calculation, do not be a bookworm!
Love is Presence entire, Knowledge nothing but
a Veil.

The universe is moved by the warmth of Love;
Knowledge deals with the Attributes, Love is a
vision of the Essence;

Love is peace and permanence, Love is Life
and Death:

Knowledge is the rising question, Love is the
hidden answer.

The luxury of destination is forbidden in the
religion of Love;

Fighting the storms is permitted, but the comfort
of the shore is forbidden.

Knowledge is the child of the Book,
But Love is the mother of the Book.

Jewish Tradition

Excerpts from *God Was in This Place & I, I Did Not Know* by Lawrence Kushner and *On the Doorposts of Your House* from the Central Conference of American Rabbis
Read by Isabel Braun

"I didn't realize that this moment was history.
I thought it was just another ordinary moment
... if everything is connected to everything else
... We are already of history."

—

"May we find the world in our lifetime
our completion in the World to Come,
and our hopes realized in those who follow us.
May our hearts meditate in understanding,
our mouths speak wisdom,
our tongues sing songs of jubilation ...

... Now, on the gleaming jewels of dew,
the splendor of the setting sun!
And now you come to me
bearing gifts.
I cannot remember picking flowers,
yet my hands are quite full!"



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