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Commencement 2021, 3:00 PM Invocation

Emma Garcia 2021

Multifaith Ambassador, Illinois Wesleyan University

Hailey Stephens 2021

Multifaith Ambassador, Illinois Wesleyan University

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**Commencement Invocation For the Class of 2021
May 2, 2021, Illinois Wesleyan University**

Emma: Non-stop...

Hailey: Suffocating...

Emma: Disappointing...

Hailey: Obnoxious...

Emma: Uncertain...

Hailey: These are the words used to describe this year by our senior classmates. When we started our senior year, we weren't sure if we would even be standing here together getting ready to walk the stage at an in-person commencement. Despite all of the challenges that we have endured in the past year, despite all of the negative adjectives that come to mind when we reflect on how we got here, **we are here.**

Emma: This academic year has truly been a once in a lifetime experience. Because Illinois Wesleyan has provided us with a diverse community, we were better equipped to come up with a diverse set of solutions for the problems we faced this year. Looking toward the future, we *are* better equipped for the next chapter of our lives. As we brainstormed ideas for this invocation, using the skills we learned as Multifaith Ambassadors, there were so many different people and worldviews we could call upon to invoke wisdom, hope, and inspiration. We have selected several voices that have inspired us throughout our lives, and hope they inspire you as well.

Hailey: Stan Lee: "We live in a diverse society – in fact, a diverse world, and we must learn to live in peace and with respect for each other."

Emma: Malala Yousafzai: "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world."

Hailey: Eleanor Roosevelt: "With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts."

Emma: J.R.R. Tolkien: "There is some good in this world, and it's worth fighting for."

Hailey: My great grandma Jeanne Willis: "If you give God an hour of your time, he'll give you the rest of the week to do what you need to do."

Emma: Je' Hooper: "Let us see in this moment that we are enough and that we are in 'this' together; there is nothing that we cannot do if we work together for the good in each other. Let us be all we need at this moment."

Hailey: Marie Curie: "Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."

Emma: Julian Castro: “My grandmother’s generation and generations before always saw beyond the horizons of their own lives and own circumstances. They believed that opportunity created today would lead to prosperity tomorrow.”

Hailey: We chose to share these quotes with you because they are reminders that no matter who you are or what you believe in, we all need inspiration sometimes. These people give us strength, and give us the hope we need to continue on into the world and change it for the better. As we all move into the next chapter of our lives, we hope you will be inspired to do the same. Whether you find inspiration in the quotes we shared today, in quotes from others who inspire you personally, or from the peers we shared these four years at IWU with, all of us will go on to do great things.

Emma: On behalf of those gathered here today, we ask that you also take inspiration from the voices we shared, and use that inspiration to bestow well wishes upon today’s graduates. For those who will pursue further education, grant not only the knowledge they will need in their chosen fields, but also wisdom to apply that knowledge to life as it really is. For those who will be going directly into the workforce, give a sense of what is right and good and appropriate in the often-confusing issues they will face. Finally, let us go forward from our time at Illinois Wesleyan University using words like hope, strength, power, dedication, peace, joy, and love.

Both: Thank you.

Written by: Interim University Chaplain, Monica Corsaro, Emma Garcia '21, Hailey Stephens '21