Bethel stands in solidarity with those affected by executive orders

*February 2, 2017*

“Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ.” A plaque inscribed with this Rule of St. Benedict greets those who enter Agape Center in Richert House on the Bethel College campus. But it is not just in the house with the plaque that Bethel heeds Jesus’ words in Matthew 25:35 – “ I came as a guest and you received me” – nor only there that Bethel exhibits a universal, unconditional love regardless of circumstances. Our college is named from the Hebrew: Bet-El, “House of God.”

And so, across our campus and within our community, we strive not just to welcome all as Christ but also to demonstrate care for the the stranger and the foreigner, the immigrant and the refugee. Bethel’s vision to “welcome with open hearts” inspires our collective work. Bethel’s values, including service, which “prizes compassion and concern for the powerless," ground our institutional character.

The executive order issued Jan. 27, that suspends admission into the United States of people from seven majority-Muslim nations, directly conflicts with Bethel’s vision and values. The order challenges all seven of our fundamental values – discipleship, scholarship, service, integrity, community, peace and social justice, and diversity – and promotes misleading perceptions of a particular portion of the world’s population.

“When we associate terrorism explicitly with a specific group of people and not the act itself, we’re undermining justice,” Bethel student Jacob Miller wisely noted in his 2015 award-winning speech (“For the Sake of Peace, Please Remember that Not All Terrorists are Muslim”) in the C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest.

As we work together to achieve our mission “to prepare students to be critical thinkers and engaged global citizens,” Bethel College remains unwavering in its commitment to diversity, inclusion and justice.

Our diverse campus community enriches and enlightens the entire Bethel experience. Bethel College administration reaffirms the statement issued Jan. 10, to do everything within our legal and moral authority to protect our students and employees — regardless of immigration status, religious or ethnic background, or sexual orientation.

We stand in solidarity with those in our midst who are affected by this order. May Bethel be a beacon of love that transcends the words and actions of our nation’s leaders, and may they understand that God is always on the side of the oppressed and marginalized.