



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 26, 2018

Thus says the Lord: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow ... (Jeremiah 22:3).

I am dismayed by the Supreme Court's recent decision concerning the president's authority to restrict travel into the United States. It applies to travelers from certain countries based on those countries' inability to provide information necessary for immigration vetting. Strong vetting procedures have already been authorized by Congress and reviews of applications for possible links to terrorism are also in place.

Therefore, restricting all travelers from certain countries simply because they are citizens of those countries is deeply troubling. In the past, we have seen the sometimes horrific effects of excluding and marginalizing (or worse) whole classes of people based on their ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender identity or other characteristics.

Our social statement, "For Peace in God's World," provides theological guidance for the church to respond by offering wise words of caution:

Citizens need to give careful attention to how we in the United States perceive our national interest and interpret our national identity, since what states do depends in large measure on their views of their own interests and identity. Sin's power often makes itself felt in arrogant and self-righteous views of national identity, and in narrow, short-term, and absolute views of national interest.

We expect expressions of our nation's identity to build on the best of our traditions, to respect others' identity, and to open up paths for mutual understanding. For the sake of a greater good or for reasons of conscience, citizens may need to oppose a prevailing understanding or practice of national identity and interest.

With this court decision, we are again reaching a point where the assertion of "national security" by the executive branch of government results in the rejection of all other considerations in national policy discussions. Our social statement also reminds us: "In bondage to sin, we fall captive to fear." Jesus taught us to love one another. The social statement calls us to "a dynamic vision of difference in unity."

In a time ... when an idolatrous allegiance to one's own community endangers our oneness, we must voice with clarity the powerful vision of difference in unity. This vision calls us to engage differences, not to ignore or fear them. The hope for earthly peace challenges people to strengthen their own particular communities in ways that promote respect and appreciation for people in other communities, for all share a common humanity.

Let us recall that all people are created in God's image and, therefore, rather than have suspicion be our assumption, let us attribute to them honor and respect as God does.

God's peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Eaton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America