March 10, 2020

Dear Member of Congress,

As bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), a denomination of 3.5 million people of faith, we call on you to work together and pass the National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants Act (NO BAN Act) to ensure that no one is denied entrance to the United States based on religious or nationality-based discrimination.

On Jan. 31, the administration issued Executive Order 13769, extending the ban on travel to the United States from seven majority-Muslim countries to 13. The new ban suspends the issuing of immigrant visas, which can lead to permanent residency, to those from Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Nigeria, as well as visas available through the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program lottery to applicants from Sudan and Tanzania who otherwise would not be allowed to emigrate to the United States.

These actions concern us as individual Christians and as leaders in church and society. As ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton expressed in a recent pastoral letter on this matter, “This expanded policy separates families from loved ones already here. Further, it prevents people — especially those escaping perilous or life-threatening situations in several of these nations — from coming to safety in the U.S. It does not enhance our safety or reflect our vocation as Christians.”

The expansion of this policy reflects racial and religious discrimination. Federal courts have recognized this already by blocking significant portions of the ban, finding them discriminatory, anti-Muslim or unconstitutional. Concern for the well-being of others lies at the very heart of Christian faith, and these bans contradict our church’s and our nation’s commitments to be a place of welcome and safety for others.

We ask God to guide our nation in ending all forms of religious and racial discrimination and to promote our commitments to pluralism and welcome. To that end, we ask for your decisive action to pass the NO BAN Act. Thank you for your service in Congress and to our nation.

Sincerely,

1. The Rev. Abraham D. Allende, Bishop
   Northeastern Ohio Synod
   Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

2. The Rev. Jon Anderson, Bishop
   Southwestern Minnesota Synod
   Redwood Falls, Minn.
3. The Rev. Jim Arends, Bishop
   La Crosse Area Synod
   La Crosse, Wis.

4. The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, Bishop
   New Jersey Synod
   Hamilton Square, N.J.

5. The Rev. Susan J. Briner, Bishop
   Southwestern Texas Synod
   Seguin, Texas

6. The Rev. Laurie Larson Caesar, Bishop
   Oregon Synod
   Portland, Ore.

7. The Rev. Susan Candea, Bishop
   Central States Synod
   Kansas City, Mo.

8. The Rev. H. Jeffrey A. Clements, Bishop
   Northern Illinois Synod
   Rockford, Ill.

9. Rev. Yehiel Curry, Bishop
   Metropolitan Chicago Synod
   Chicago, Ill.

10. The Rev. Patricia Davenport, Bishop
    Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

11. The Rev. Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt, Bishop
    Southern Ohio Synod
    Columbus, Ohio

12. The Rev. James S. Dunlop
    Lower Susquehanna Synod
    Harrisburg, Pa.

13. The Rev. Paul Egensteiner, Bishop
    Metropolitan New York Synod
    New York, N.Y.

14. The Rev. Paul D. Erickson, Bishop
15. The Rev. R. Guy Erwin, Ph.D., Bishop
   Southwest California Synod
   Glendale, Calif.

16. The Rev. Katherine Finegan, Bishop
   Northern Great Lakes Synod
   Marquette, Mich.

17. The Rev. Dr. William O. Gafkjen, Bishop
   Indiana-Kentucky Synod
   Indianapolis, Ind.

18. The Rev. Michael K. Girlinghouse, Bishop
   Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod
   Tulsa, Okla.

19. The Rev. William (Bill) Gohl, Jr., Bishop
   Delaware-Maryland Synod
   Baltimore, Md.

20. The Rev. Jim Gonia, Bishop
    Rocky Mountain Synod
    Denver, Colo.

21. The Rev. James Hazelwood, Bishop
    New England Synod

22. The Rev. Mark W. Holmerud, Bishop
    Sierra Pacific Synod
    Sacramento, Calif.

23. The Rev. Robert F. Humphrey, Bishop
    Virginia Synod
    Salem, Va.

24. The Rev. Deborah K. Hutterer, Bishop
    Grand Canyon Synod
    Phoenix, Ariz.

25. The Rev. Patricia Lull, Bishop
    Saint Paul Area Synod
    St. Paul, Minn.
26. The Rev. Brian Maas, Bishop
   Nebraska Synod
   Omaha, Neb.

27. The Rev. John S. Macholz, Bishop
   Upstate New York Synod
   East Syracuse, N.Y.

28. The Rev. Gerald L Mansholt, Bishop
   East-Central Synod of Wisconsin
   Appleton, Wis.

29. The Rev. Leila M. Ortiz, Bishop
   Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod
   Washington, D.C.

30. The Rev. Michael Rinehart, Bishop
   Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
   Houston, Texas

31. The Rev. Peter Rogness, Bishop
   South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
   Madison, Wis.

32. The Rev. S. John Roth, Bishop
   Central/Southern Illinois Synod

33. The Rev. Craig A. Satterlee, Ph. D., Bishop
   North/West Lower Michigan Synod
   Flint, Mich.

34. The Rev. Laurie Skow-Anderson, Bishop
   Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
   Chetek, Wis.

35. The Rev. Kevin L. Strickland, Bishop
   Southeastern Synod
   Atlanta, Ga.

36. The Rev. Pedro Suarez, Bishop
   Florida-Bahamas Synod
   Tampa, Fla.

37. Rev. Ann Svennungsen, Bishop
   Minneapolis Area Synod
38. The Rev. Andrew A. Taylor, Bishop
   Pacifica Synod
   Santa Ana, Calif.

39. The Rev. Bill Tesch, Bishop
   Northwestern Minnesota Synod
   Moorhead, Minn.

40. The Rev. Steven Ullestad, Bishop
   Northeastern Iowa Synod
   Waverly, Iowa

41. The Rev. Shelley Wickstrom, Bishop
   Alaska Synod
   Anchorage, Alaska

42. The Rev. Lawrence Wohlrabe, Interim Bishop
   Eastern North Dakota Synod
   Fargo, N.D.

43. The Rev. Herman R. Yoos, Bishop
   South Carolina Synod
   Columbia, S.C.

44. The Rev. Samuel R. Zeiser, Bishop
   Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod
   Allentown, Pa.