



Southwestern Washington Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

The Rev. Richard E. Jaech, Bishop

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Late last week President Trump issued an executive order blocking the immigration of refugees from seven predominantly Muslim countries. This deeply troubles me and I must oppose it. To put it plainly, it violates the American Constitution and runs counter to the way of Christ.

From my earliest days in elementary school, the one key truth about our nation that was taught to me again and again is that America is founded on freedom of religion. From the Pilgrims onward, our forebears migrated to America with the guarantee that they could worship God according to their own beliefs. For the United States to now rank or screen immigrants according to a person's faith is a mortal blow to our nation's character and soul.

More deeply than that, it is contrary to the way of Christ. Jesus said to the crowds, "Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) When Jesus was asked, "When was it that we met you as a stranger and welcomed you in?" Jesus said, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did to me." (Matthew 25:38-39)

Over the past seventy-seven years, Lutherans in the United States have welcomed and assisted over 500,000 refugees coming to our shores from war-torn and impoverished nations, such as Vietnam, Bosnia, Cambodia, Iraq and Syria. Through the work of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), people around the world discovered that Lutherans stand up and help when faced with the suffering and anguish of others. We cannot let our Christian discipleship be blocked.

I want to be clear that I support an appropriate screening of refugees to prevent extremists from entering our country. However, those screening methods are already in place. Syrian refugees settled through LIRS have gone through a two-year screening process in which they were interviewed by seven different US government agencies. The new executive order now rejects all Syrian refugees

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indefinitely, leaving the families of Aleppo once more forgotten.

The 65 million people throughout the world displaced by war, famine and persecution are calling to us. Muslim and Jewish people now experience the highest risk of persecution. I encourage you to use your rights as a citizen and contact your elected officials. LIRS suggests five ways that you can support refugee resettlement, which you can find at their website <http://lirs.org/support-refugee-resettlement/> Jesus is present among us with a love that casts out fear. It is Christ's path of love for others that we are now called to walk.

In Christ,

Bishop Rick Jaech