

From the January 6, 2021 Bethelite

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# Reaching Out Reaching In

## Bethel Crafts New Welcome Statement

There is something special about Bethel. And there has been for over 165 years. In recent years, Bethel has found itself at the geographic, political, and cultural center of a community that has fractured. Competing groups develop lists of insiders and outsiders. In view of this situation, the Bethel Joint Council decided that it was time to reassert Bethel's special character in the community. The Council believed that Bethel needed to be clear not just to ourselves but also to the community about exactly who is welcome.

To this end and for more than a year, a special steering team has been networking, connecting, and talking with members of Bethel to identify the key ingredients of a Bethel welcome. The results are lovely and beautiful. Please read and pray through the following welcome statement that was accepted and approved with joy at the December meeting of the Bethel Joint Council.

***We welcome you to Bethel. We see you as we see ourselves, vulnerable to the challenges of human relationships, and deeply beloved by God.***

***We welcome you who have ever felt excluded by the church because of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental ability, family or economic status, or for a reason known only to you. We welcome you whether church life is familiar to you or your faith journey is new, whether you are certain in your beliefs or unsure what you believe.***

***We invite you here because God is inviting you to be here. Striving to create a place where all feel safe and can find peace, let us share the unconditional love of God and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, work together to extend grace, mercy, and justice – within Bethel, in our communities, and the world.***