The beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year at Bethel has been a time of reflection, but also of celebration. We have been challenged to review our budgeting process, but we have also welcomed our largest incoming class of first-year students in more than 30 years. In April, the board of directors approved new mission, vision, and value statements that have been generating conversation across campus. The vision statement contains four components that seek to increase human flourishing (shalom) in society: owning and enacting faith, demonstrating compassion for the powerless, engaging in critical thought, and bringing value to the workplace.

Students are able to enact and strengthen their faith through weekly chapel services; centering prayer; acting as student chaplains; bible study in the classroom as well as outside the classroom; annual Menno Simons, Staley, and Bible Lecture series; a new student-led Bethel Worship Center service on Sunday mornings; and in the new interfaith worship room.

The annual service day was held September 18. Every student on campus takes part as classes are cancelled, as do many faculty and staff. Other service opportunities occur throughout the year, such as nursing students traveling to Haiti to serve in local clinics. September also saw the beginning of the Bethel Food Pantry organized by the student life office.

Bethel continues to maintain its commitment to creating critical thinkers through its Common Ground core academic program. All students start with the first-year seminar to build community and then participate in convocation; a cross-cultural experience; a peace, justice and conflict studies course; and end with the Basic Issues of Faith and Life course and a senior project.

Through our values of creativity, vocational discernment, dialogue, holistic wellness, peace and justice, global consciousness, and high values and expectations we strive to create whole human beings that are able to flourish in the professional world. Many students already work in campus positions or in the community, and we are exploring ways for every student to have meaningful work experience as part of the curriculum. This will also make Bethel more affordable, leaving graduates with less debt as they enter the workforce.

With our values as support, and our vision as guidance, Bethel is prepared to carry out its mission of preparing students for meaningful lives of work and service through faith formation, the liberal arts, and practical experience in career pathways. But we do not do this alone. There are many organizations we lean on for support, and we thank you for being one of them throughout the years. Together we can grow knowing we all stand upon the foundation that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

-Ben Lichti, coordinator of church relations
September 2019