

Baylor offers prayers for Muslim students

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WACO—During finals week, Baylor University assured its Muslim students—who number about 150—whatever rhetoric they hear around the nation, they are welcome and safe at the Texas Baptist school.

More than 400 students, faculty, staff, plus a few Waco residents, participated in a ceremony of prayer and support for Muslim students on campus Dec. 11.

With print, radio and television media looking on, participants gathered at the Judge Baylor statue. They read aloud words of support and love, and they voiced prayers for victims of violence and for Muslims at Baylor. They then sang the hymn “For the Healing of the Nations.”

“People sang out,” said University Chaplain Burt Burleson, who helped organize the 25-minute event. “It was very powerful.”



Participants tie supportive messages to a wall that will be given to Muslim students.

(Baylor Marketing & Communications/ Robert Rogers)Also moving, he added, was seeing people write positive messages on strips of cloth that were then tied to a board.

Those messages included “No more injustice,” “We are all children of God” and “We stand with you,” as seen in photos on Baylor’s Facebook page.

“We are going to gather them,” so Muslims students can see the love and support they enjoy at Baylor, Burleson said.

Burleson noted he’s seen little pushback to the event and the sentiments behind it.

One person commented on Facebook the victims of terrorism should have been the focus of Friday’s prayers. Burleson pointed out one of the Muslim students replied, “We did do that.”

And someone from Dallas sent an email expressing hope that participants in the prayer gathering didn’t mean it when they referred to Muslims as brothers and sisters.

But the vast majority of responses, including some from some conservative evangelicals, communicated the message, “This is what we should be about,” Burleson said.

A conversation about a week before the event sparked it, he said. A friend asked how—in the midst of anti-Muslim rhetoric swirling through the media—the university’s Muslim students were handling the pressure.

“I said: ‘I’m glad you asked me. I will find out,’” he said.

It isn’t an unusual step, he added. When natural disasters strike other parts of the country, Baylor students from those regions typically are contacted and offered support.

Muslim students report feeling respected and welcomed at Baylor, Burleson said.

“We’ve invited them here, so it’s about hospitality in the biblical understanding of that word,” he said.