



Western Iowa Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church In America

Iowa Bishops Respond to False Allegations

February 6, 2024

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." -Matthew 22:37-39

On Sunday, February 2, General Mike Flynn shared a post on X (formerly Twitter) that claimed money was being laundered through religious organizations and specifically named the "Lutheran" faith. The post contained a picture of a spreadsheet showing payments from the Department of Health and Human Services to Global Refuge (formerly LIRS) and to a number of Lutheran Social Service organizations across the country. Elon Musk commented "*The @DOGE team is rapidly shutting down these illegal payments.*"

The claims that these federal grants are illegal or that these federal grants are connected in any way to money laundering are complete lies. The falsehoods strike at the heart of our caring institutions and cast doubt on every Lutheran's integrity.

Shutting down federal grant payments puts Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) employees and their families at risk along with the clients and families that rely on the array of services provided including early childhood education and parental support, mental health counseling, behavioral health interventions for adolescents, services for people living with disabilities, foster care and adoption services and resettlement accompaniment and services for legally present immigrants and refugees. Currently, there are 190 legally documented people being resettled in Iowa and 108 of them are children. We must stand by our promise of support to these children and adults as they flee from their own countries.

Lutherans have been providing care for our neighbors in need through these agencies for generations. LSI has been serving Iowans for 160 years! We read about LSI's great work in many of our church newsletters every month. We have a long tradition of supporting their work through generous donations of cash and in-kind gifts. We are right to be grateful and even proud of the work we do together with these agencies here in Iowa and across the country. Please don't let one false and misleading post cast doubt on what you know from personal experience.

Global Refuge and Lutheran Social Services (like LSI here in Iowa) bid on government contracts to help resettle legal immigrants in our country and in our state. LSI, also, bids on state and federal grants to sustain the other important programs that support Iowans. Contracts are awarded by the government and regularly audited. This work has taken place through administration after administration, no matter which political party holds power in our federal government. There is nothing illegal or unethical about this work. We expect our government to honor its contracts and pay people for honest work done in service to our country and our neighbors.

As ELCA Bishops serving the three Synods in Iowa, and as members of the LSI Board of Directors, we want you to be confident in the exemplary work and ministry of LSI and Global Refuge. We support the hard-working employees of these agencies especially during these unwarranted attacks and false assertions. We remain grateful for the many ways Lutherans in Iowa love the Lord our God *and* love our neighbors in tangible, caring, and helpful ways.

The ELCA remains committed to our core mission of feeding people who are hungry, caring for those who are sick, and advocating for justice, peace, and the dignity of all people. This has been the calling of the church for over 2,000 years, and that will not change.

Please tell the true stories about the work and impact of Lutheran Service in Iowa, Lutheran Services in America, and Global Refuge, so that together, we can spread the truth about the mission of caring in the name of Jesus Christ through these organizations and many others like them.

Bishop Kevin Jones, Northeastern Iowa Synod, ELCA

Bishop Amy Current, Southeastern Iowa Synod, ELCA

Bishop Lorna Halaas, Western Iowa Synod, ELCA