

This past weekend, Elon Musk shared a post that suggested government funding of non-profit social service agencies affiliated with the Lutheran Church amounted to “money laundering.” An accompanying screenshot named Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas as one such recipient of government funds. You can read about it in a [recent Charlotte Observer article](#), but having heard from several of you concerned about this in the past few days, here’s what I want you to know about the situation:

1. Lutheran Services Carolinas provides services to people across a broad range of needs, things like: housing and supportive care for people with traumatic brain injury; training of foster parents; adoption services; skilled nursing care; assisted living; rehabilitation services; support for refugees legally admitted to the US by the federal government; disaster response; and residential care for people with disabilities. They accept federal contracts and reimbursements from Medicaid and Medicare for this work. So yes, they work with federal funding, but in a non-profit capacity. All funds received pay for the services they provide. But federal funds don’t even cover what it actually costs to provide those services. LSC does this anyway, because their mission is to care for people, not to make money. You can [review their 990s here](#) and request other financial reports if you need them. They are audited every year by third-party auditors and there’s nothing to hide.
2. Lutheran social service agencies are partners of the ELCA and the NC Synod, but they are separate organizations with separate budgets. No funding comes to congregations, synods, or the ELCA from these separate entities. We do have a shared mission to care “for the least of these” (Matthew 25) that is informed by our shared Christian (and Lutheran) heritage. But the suggestion that the government is somehow funding Lutheran religious activity or propping up religious institutions is absurd.
3. Lutherans aren’t the only ones who have been targets for these unmerited accusations. Vice President Vance has made [similar accusations](#), implying that the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, who advocate for a welcome of refugees, might be in it for the money. Care for the stranger and the foreigner in their need is [one of the most consistent calls of scripture](#).
4. Our Lutheran affiliated organizations do this work very efficiently, despite deeply challenging circumstances. Global Refuge (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) has a 100% rating on Charity Navigator, with more than 93 cents on every dollar going to direct program services. Lutheran Services Carolinas is the largest provider of non-profit skilled nursing beds in North Carolina, including Aston Park here in Asheville.
5. The refugee resettlement office operated by LSC in our building has been impacted and is still operating. Plans were underway to receive Afghan refugees who had supported the US efforts in Afghanistan in January and February. St. Marks was making plans to be a circle of welcome for one of those families, but executive orders cancelled existing travel plans. In other offices across NC and SC, families arrived in the days before the order having been promised support to get on their feet, only to find that all federally funded services were immediately revoked. I anticipate that the Asheville office in our building

will continue to operate in support of refugees already here, but will be tremendously handicapped by the withdrawal of contracted federal support. Keri and I will be making a gift to LSC this month (over and above our regular annual support) to help them meet the tremendous challenge of supporting recent refugee arrivals without federal funds.

The scope and breadth of the changes happening across the federal government are like nothing we've ever seen. Reasonable people might have different opinions about the size of the federal government and appropriate spending levels, and the results of elections do matter. But it is deeply troubling to me that the people effecting the drastic cuts either: 1) don't understand what it is they are actually cutting (evidenced by the baseless accusations discussed above) and what the effects will be; or 2) they are intentionally misrepresenting what is happening for their own purposes. Either situation is extremely problematic. I understand that you may not appreciate your pastor's commentary on issues deeply tied up in politics. But when the unelected, not vetted, richest man in the world seems to be remaking the federal government to suit himself, and is specifically accusing *Lutherans* of corruption and illegally receiving funds, I think some context from your *Lutheran* pastor is probably necessary. If you'd like to hear from some other Lutheran voices on recent events, I'll link their statements below.

Pastor Matt

Lutheran Services Carolinas:

[Call for Action Video](#)

[Call for Action on Refugee Support](#) (pdf)

Outgoing NC Synod Bishop on [Speaking Publically in Solidarity](#)

Jan 27 [Statement on Hope in Action](#) (pdf) from the six ELCA Bishops of Region 9

ELCA Presiding Bishop Eaton:

- Video [Response to false accusations on X](#) (formerly Twitter)
- [Pastoral message to the church on the executive orders.](#)
- [Statement on immigration executive orders.](#)