



Talking Points for Synod Bishops

ELCA Prepared by ELCA Strategic Communications

Subject: False statements posted on X about federal funding received by Lutheran entities

Date: Feb. 1, 2025

Background

On Feb. 1, “General Mike Flynn” (handle on X/Twitter) posted: “Now it’s the ‘Lutheran’ faith (this use of ‘religion’ as a money laundering operation must end)” and inferred that Lutheran organizations like Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) and Lutheran Services in America receive way too much federal grant money with no transparency regarding its use. Elon Musk shared this post adding the comment, “The @DOGE team is rapidly shutting down these illegal payments.” DOGE = Department of Government Efficiency, a new governmental department co-led by Musk and created by the Trump Administration.

Responses

ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has issued a video message in response to these false allegations: <https://youtu.be/Liqz0VdZG1E?si=gHsTJOU-gKyFb1oF>

Neither claim was accompanied by proof to support the false and dangerous notion that Lutherans use religion to launder money or that grants to support the work of Lutheran organizations for decades are in any way illegal.

The Lutheran organizations targeted by name in these false claims on X have done the same work for 85 years in serving legally admitted refugees and immigrants.

As church, we follow the 8th commandment from the Scriptures, which states, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

Last October, the ELCA Conference of Bishops released a statement about the need to speak the truth and a refusal “to accept the ongoing normalization of lies and deceit.” Statement: <https://www.elca.org/news-and-events/8247>

The ELCA strongly urges political leaders at all levels of government to use their offices and platforms responsibly and consider the impact of misleading statements and speculation.

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.