



February 6, 2025

Dear Synod,

In light of recent social media posts attacking the humanitarian work of Lutheran social service agencies, I reached out to Katharyn Wheeler, my representative on the board of Lutheran Social Services National Capital Area (LSSNCA), for her perspective. The response that follows addresses two crucial points: our steadfast commitment to supporting LSSNCA and similar organizations and how we can effectively respond on social media when confronting injustice—whether related to this situation or other instances of wrongdoing in our community.

En Cristo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leila M. Ortiz".

Bishop Leila M. Ortiz

Beloved Community,

This has been a trying time for many of us as we see rollout after rollout of Executive Orders that undermine the ministry we are called into. This weekend, we saw many Lutheran agencies attacked through social media. I have been serving as the synod ex-officio board member of Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area ([LSSNCA](https://lssnca.org)) since 2020. I am writing on behalf of the synod today to share insights not just into our partnership with LSSNCA, but in regards to how to respond to the deluge of misinformation that has been coming from every media outlet.

It is important in this time to understand how social media algorithms work and to determine individual and organizational responses that support the agencies and work that are important to us and not feed into promoting the negative. Each time we engage in reposting information of any sort we are feeding into a system that highlights that for others. Even if we are responding in negativity, the algorithm determines this is important and bumps it up in people's feeds.

We saw this happen with Bishop Budde's sermon as the president shared on social media his thoughts the next day. His choice to highlight her promoted this sermon and each person who commented and shared added to the significance on a technical level. What could have been seen and commented on by a few thousand people catapulted to a worldwide viral event.

By commenting, sharing, or reposting, even in a negative way, we give validity and a wider platform to the original post. To that end, it is vital that we consider what we want to post and how to do so. While showing original sources is important in transparency, doing so through the statements from the source we want to lift up helps the relevancy of the information we actually want to support to be what goes into the algorithm. Understanding how our engagement feeds the data for the algorithm means we can use our platforms to magnify ministries that are doing work we believe in. In this case, silence is not always complicity. Discerning what to edify and not commenting in a way that amplifies the wrong message is faithful.

Learn more through Global Refuge's [Statement on Misinformation around our Humanitarian Work](#) or [LSSNCA Sets the Record Straight on Our Work : Newsroom](#).

The Metro D.C. Synod is fully aligned with the mission and work LSSNCA has been doing to directly impact individuals who live in our communities since 1917. Much of their work is in conjunction with Global Refuge, as the local provider of services.

The best way to support this and other ministries right now is to look at and share their messaging. For example, LSSNCA has a [newsroom page](#) and has posted on social media regular updates as they learn how their services and funding are being affected. Second, the financial need is real. While your talents are and will be invaluable in supporting the work of these agencies, right now knowing there are funds available for the immediate needs as government funding continues to fluctuate is essential to their ability to function. If you can give financially, the organizations directly impacted need your support. Finally, communicating with your representatives on local, state, and federal levels about what is important to you as a constituent is an important part of being both a citizen and Christian in this time.

Serving on the LSSNCA Board at the request of Bishop Ortiz is something I have been incredibly proud to do for these past five years. The impact I see this organization make transforming the lives of so many marginalized peoples inspires me daily. They truly embody the love of Christ and extend it to everyone seeking services. Bishop Ortiz and I hope you will look at how you can renew or support for the first time this organization that is doing incredible work throughout the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod.

Blessings,

Katharyn Wheeler
Administrative Assistant to the Bishop
Intern Coordinator for Youth+Family Ministry