



First English Lutheran Church and Child Development Center  
a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God Loves. We Love. Everyone!

## **Benevolence Task Force Report to the Congregation Council, FELC**

**April 14, 2024**

The Benevolence Task Force (Claudia Barlow, Teresa Ringness, Benjamin Rode, and Merrily Porter) worked together with a goal of choosing organizations that reflect the values of our congregation. During the course of this process, the congregation was invited to share input on organizations that members of the congregation support for inclusion as benevolence partners with FELC.

When we came together we identified many organizations, local and global, that are doing good work here at home and worldwide, and that would benefit from support from FELC. Ultimately, we settled on intentional support of our **Lutheran organizations**, focusing on **LuMin**, working right here in our own backyard, and **Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services)**, working nationally/globally. We feel that both organizations have a proven record of reflecting the values of First English and that both are good stewards of their resources. This year, we also want to support our own **FELCDC**. We recommend that the committed benevolence funds be divided equally between the **three organizations, LuMin, Global Refuge and FELCDC**. (As we understand the budget, these designated benevolence funds are in addition to the line item designated to support Micah 6. Therefore, we did not include Micah 6 in this recommendation.)

**LuMin** is a ministry of the Southwestern Texas Synod and the ELCA Churchwide Organization to establish a Lutheran presence (ELCA) for the communities of higher education (primarily, The University of Texas) in Austin, TX. While maintaining a faithful ministry of Word and Sacrament for the campus community and developing leaders among those who affiliate with the campus ministry, the reach of this ministry is much farther. This campus ministry is a witness to inclusion, ecumenical partnerships, listening, grace, and service to the **whole academic community**. On a personal note, at the most recent Tailgate Tuesday, an event put on by LuMin under the direction of Pastor Brad Fuerst, **there were at least eight (8) members of First English who had volunteered to prepare a meal, cook a meal, serve approximately 400 students and then clean up after**. Pastor Brad told me that it costs \$1200 to \$1500 to put on one Tailgate Tuesday, which happens each week during each of the Fall and Spring semesters. This wonderful and well-appreciated meal relies on the support of local congregations for both financial and volunteer resources.

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**Global Refuge was formerly known as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services.** The name has changed but the mission has not. This is a non-profit organization that welcomes and supports refugees and migrants entering the United States. It is one of several refugee resettlement agencies working with the Office of Refugee Resettlement and one of only two that serves unaccompanied refugee minors. From the mission statement of Global Refuge: ***As a witness to God's love for all people, we stand with and advocate for immigrants and refugees, transforming communities through ministries of service and justice.*** With immigrant and refugee challenges only escalating due to war, famine and global disasters, this organization continues to need more and more support. Three members of First English asked that the task force consider including Global Refuge as a benevolence partner.

**First English Lutheran Child Development Center** has a long history as a mission and ministry of our congregation. Childcare is a necessity for most young families and, as a whole, the child care services are not well-supported by our society. In particular, infant care is difficult to find and expensive to provide. For the first time in its history, FELCDC is now offering infant care and with that comes the need for special equipment and supplies for our youngest children. One member of First English who asked that we consider making the CDC a benevolence partner said the following: ***The cost of--and need for--childcare is a significant issue not only in our city, but everywhere. FELCDC really does offer something wonderful and I think we would all like to see it continue to grow and be a sustaining ministry of this church. I think one way of doing that is for the church to offer a degree of financial support to our child care center ministry. While perhaps symbolic at first, this support could grow over the years to even become a fixed benevolence budget line for the church.***

As a committee, we wholeheartedly support the work of all of these organizations and offer this recommendation for the consideration of the congregation council.

**Action Item: Recommendation that LuMin, Global Refuge, and FELCDC be named as benevolence partners of FELC for the purpose of allocation of pooled benevolence funds for 2024.**

Respectfully submitted.  
Merrily Porter  
Chair  
Benevolence Task Force