

2016 Little Rock Congregations Study

Executive Summary

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OVERVIEW

The 2016 Little Rock Congregations Study grew out of an interest in better understanding how the community and political activities of religious organizations influence their congregants. Four years ago, the 2012 Little Rock Congregations Study looked at five churches in Little Rock and found that congregants who report hearing political messages at church may be more likely to be politically active. In 2016, Dr. Rebecca Glazier of UA Little Rock partnered with Dr. Warigia Bowman of the Clinton School of Public Service to expand student participation in the research and to study 17 different religious organizations across the city. In 2016, the research focused on both community engagement and political engagement.

FINDINGS ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Sermons on community engagement are much more common than sermons on political issues.** For instance, 76% of respondents report regularly hearing sermons about helping those less fortunate in their community, compared to 20% who report regularly hearing sermons about abortion.
- And these sermons seem to be having an impact. Statistical models of community engagement indicate that, all else being equal, **congregants who report hearing more sermons on community activities—like volunteering and helping those less fortunate—are more likely to be active in the community.**
- Additionally, **congregants who hear sermons on helping in the community also have higher levels of political efficacy**—they believe that they can make a difference.
- **Places of worship that are more engaged in the community have more engaged congregants.** Based on in-depth interviews with clergy and multiple congregation site visits by students, we quantified the community engagement of each place of worship and found that it has a significant impact.
- These findings indicate that **clergy can encourage socially-positive community engagement and political efficacy through talking about community issues and modeling engagement.**

STUDENT RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Nearly 70 undergraduate and graduate students participated in this research project in the fall of 2016. Four UA Little Rock undergraduates presented their original research at the Arkansas Political Science Association annual meeting in March and five student research displays will be available in the Fine Arts galleries on UA Little Rock's campus during the community event on Thursday, April 13, 2017.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Learn more about the 2016 Little Rock Congregations Study at a public event on Thursday, April 13, 2017 in the Fine Arts Building at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock! Register to attend at: ualr.at/race-ethnicity. You can also contact Dr. Rebecca Glazier at raglazier@ualr.edu.

BE PART OF THE 2020 LITTLE ROCK CONGREGATIONS STUDY!

Are you a clergy member with a congregation in the city limits of Little Rock? You can participate in the 2020 Little Rock Congregations Study! We would like to survey and interview as many clergy members as possible. If you are interested in adding your voice to this important research, please contact Dr. Rebecca Glazier at raglazier@ualr.edu. If you aren't a religious leader yourself, please feel free to pass this information on to your clergy member or other interested parties. Thank you!