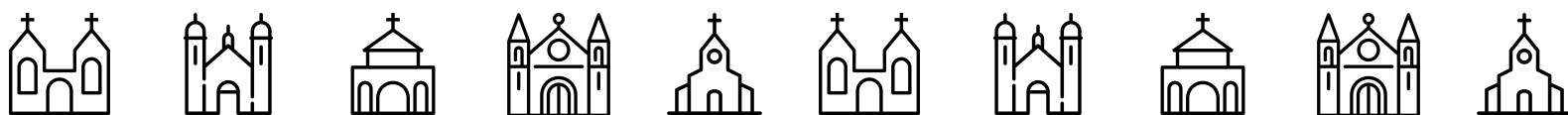


Opportunities for Collaboration

An Executive Report of Results from the
2019 Little Rock Congregations Study
Survey of Nonprofit Organizations





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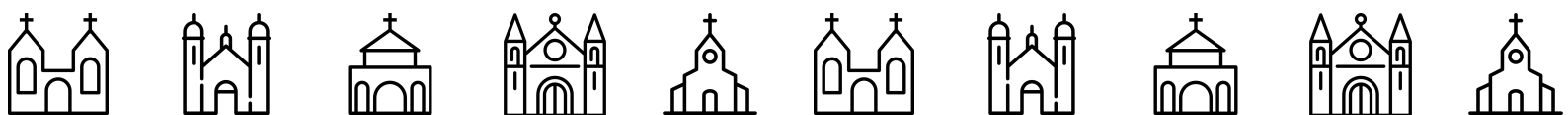


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Project Website:
<https://research.ualr.edu/lrcs>

Project Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/LittleRockCongregationsStudy>

About the Little Rock Congregations Study

The Little Rock Congregations Study (LRCS) is a community-based research project that engages students in learning about the impact of faith-based community engagement.

The Little Rock Congregations Study is led by Dr. Rebecca A. Glazier, an associate professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Dr. Glazier leads an interdisciplinary research team including Dr. Kirk Leach, who studies nonprofit organizations, and Dr. Gerald Driskill, a communication scholar. The research team also includes both graduate and undergraduate students. Since the study began in 2012, over 170 students have been involved in the research.



Little Rock Congregation Study research team in 2019.

Since 2012, we have been researching the impact of community engagement by congregations. Beginning in 2018, we began to look more closely at the role of nonprofits. We surveyed and interviewed religious leaders in 2018 to learn more about the collaborative relationships their congregations have with nonprofits. A report on our findings is available on our website.



In 2019, the LRCS focused on surveying and interviewing nonprofit leaders to learn more about how and when collaborations with congregations occur. We reached out to the organizations that were specifically mentioned by clergy as partners, but also to the broader nonprofit community. This executive report focuses on the results of the fall 2019 research.



Dr. Rebecca Glazier and Jessica Olson, from the LRCS research team, promoting the survey at a City Connections lunch with local nonprofits.

Study Goals



Learn more about the impacts of local faith-based community engagement



Get students out of the classroom and into the community



Provide relevant and meaningful findings to the community

Learn More About Our Findings

On our website:
<https://research.ualr.edu/lrcs/>

On our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/LittleRockCongregationsStudy/>

Friends and Neighbors Network at First United Methodist Church: A Different Kind of Food Program

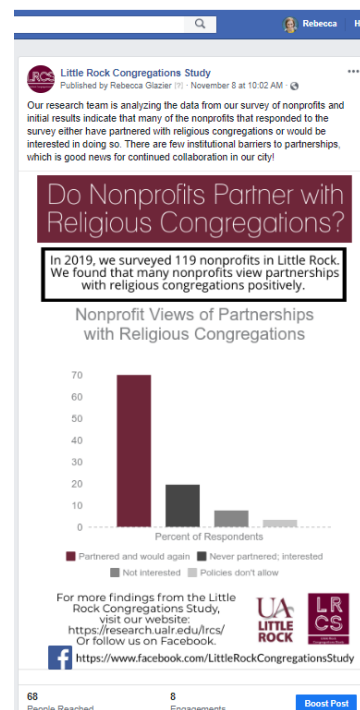
June 5, 2019 by Rebecca Glazier

By Madison Rodgers

In 2015, the First United Methodist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas adopted a program called FANN, or Friends and Neighbors Network. FANN is a food co-op program created for families struggling with food insecurity so that they may receive regular food assistance at a low price. FANN is a member-run organization. Members pay \$5 to join and \$3 to get a basket of food at each meeting. The \$3 goes directly to the community fund and the members ultimately decide how the community fund is distributed. The program runs two times a month: on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month and the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month. On Tuesdays, the program is geared towards single-family households. On Wednesdays, the program is geared towards families with young children that are still in school.



FANN started out of a congregational book study on the book "Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (and How to Reverse It)" By Robert D. Lupton. The program aims to build relationships with families rather than something that is merely transactional. The book talked about the idea of food co-opting, which in turn sparked the



Methodology

In fall 2019, the Little Rock Congregations Study (LRCS) conducted surveys and interviews of nonprofit leaders to learn more about the services nonprofits provide and the conditions under which collaborative partnerships occur. The research team reached out to every Little Rock-based nonprofit for whom we could find contact information (n=329). Using publicly available data from the IRS and the internet, we reached out via email, Facebook, and through local organization listservs to invite nonprofits to participate in the study. We made a particular effort to reach those nonprofits who were mentioned by clergy as partners in previous interviews and surveys.

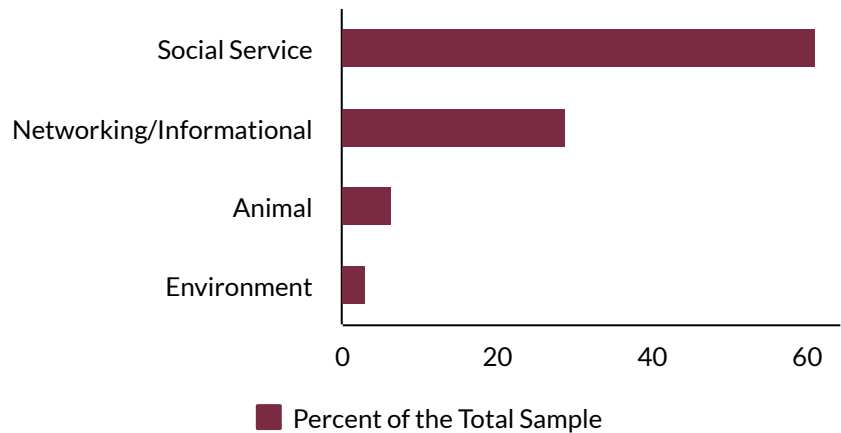
A total of 118 nonprofit leaders from diverse organizations participated, a very good response rate of 35.8%. The following figures provide additional information about these respondents and the organizations they represent.

"I first was approached about the Congregation Studies...over a year ago. As I've been keeping up with it on Facebook and engaging a little bit with Dr. Glazier and some of the students, I have realized that it is really making a great impact. I've seen some of the followup reports that they put out and it's great content."

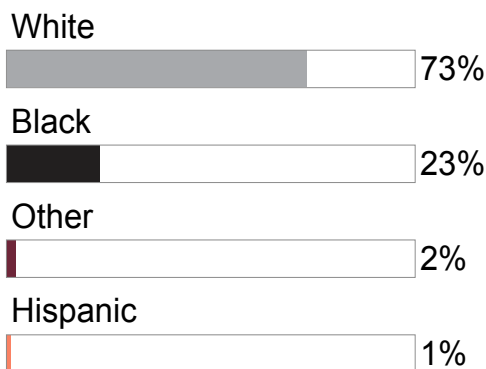
Cynthia Ramey, Executive Director, Family Promise of Pulaski County



Organization Type

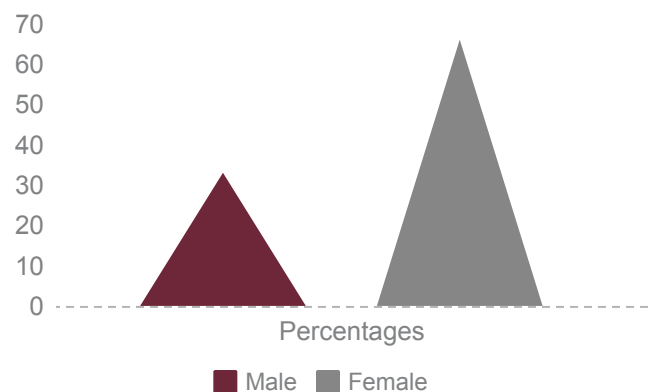


Sample Make up by Race/Ethnicity of Responding Nonprofit Leader



Note: 35 respondents did not answer the question about their race/ethnicity

Sample Make up by Gender of Responding Nonprofit Leader



Note: 35 respondents did not answer the question about their gender

How do Nonprofits View Partnerships with Congregations?

"Churches may have been more focused on people in their congregations in the past; but now, more than ever, they're raising their heads and looking around their community for opportunities to serve."

Lauri Currier, Executive Director, The CALL

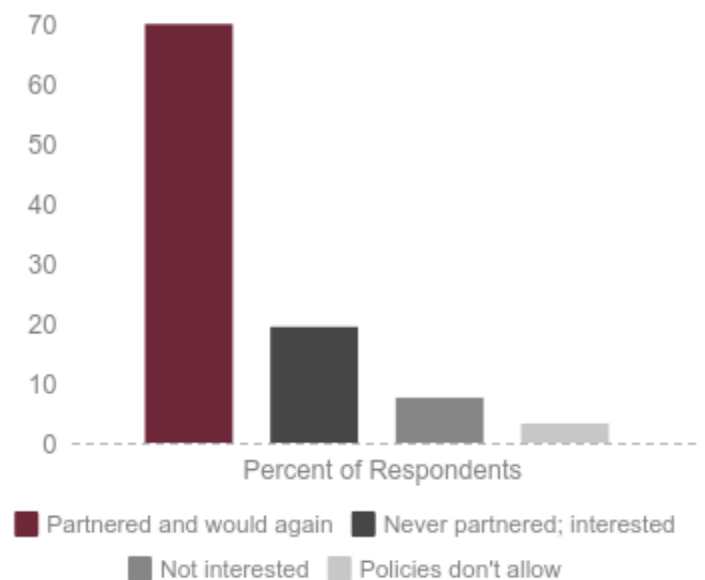


"Our partners only have the capacity to do so much. But with our combined capacities, we can do at least a bit more."

Ryan Davis, Agency Director, Children International



Nonprofit Views of Partnerships with Religious Congregations



When we asked nonprofits about their views on partnering with congregations, we found them to be overwhelmingly positive. Seventy percent of our 118 respondents reported partnering with congregations in the past. Of these past partners, all of them were interested in partnering again and none of them expressed a negative experience that would keep them from partnering in the future.

Of the remaining 30% that had never partnered with congregations, 20% expressed interest in partnering in the future, 7% said they were not interested in partnering, and only 3% said their organization's policies would not allow partnerships with religious organizations.

A lack of interest is not preventing partnerships. Nonprofit policies are not preventing partnerships. In fact, nonprofits are actively seeking partnerships. Our conclusion from these data, and from the clergy survey in 2018, is that more partnerships will happen as more connections across organizations are made. We hope to facilitate such connections through our 2020 study.

It is important to remember that while this is a significant sample, it is not a random sample of nonprofits in Little Rock. Because of our history of working with congregations in Little Rock over the past 8 years, the responding nonprofits are probably more likely to be positively inclined towards partnering with congregations than a random sample of nonprofits would be. Even given this caveat, 9 out of 10 responding nonprofits report an interest in partnering with congregations. This is a great opportunity for collaboration going forward.

Attitudes Toward Collaboration

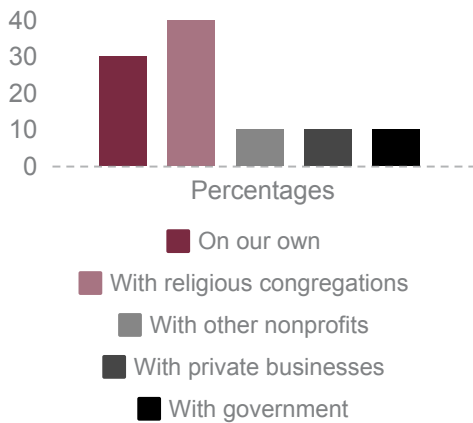


Many factors determine whether or not a collaborative relationship will develop, but the vast majority of nonprofit leaders who responded to our survey partner on their most important programs and plan to partner in the coming year.

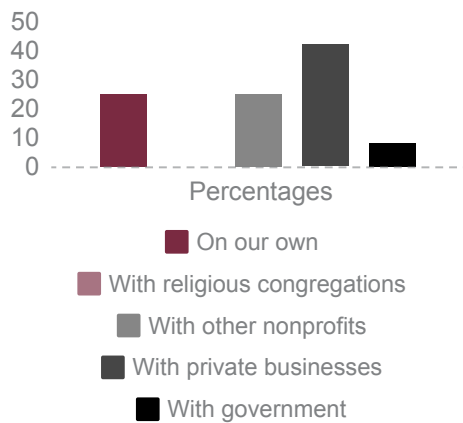


Partnerships are Influenced by Issue Area

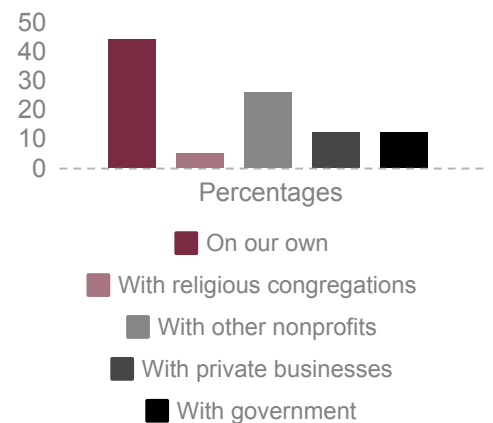
How are Food Pantry Services Provided



How are Health Services Provided



How are Education Services Provided



When it comes to providing food aid, religious congregations are a common partner (40%). Looking at health and education services, however, religious congregations are almost never partners in providing these services, with private businesses the most common partners for health services (42%) and other nonprofits the most common partners for education services (44%).

As many congregations care deeply about education, and likely have the skills to contribute to education services provided by nonprofits, this is an area where future collaboration may be possible.

Spotlight on Current Collaborations

The vast majority of nonprofits (79%) are already collaborating with other organizations, including congregations, to deliver needed social services in our community. Collaborations between congregations and nonprofits are commonly thought to occur because of a need to share resources or as a cost-reduction strategy, and 13% of responding nonprofit leaders cited this reason.

The data we collected, however, shows the most popular reason for collaborating is to connect with the community--19% of responding nonprofit leaders gave this reason, as did 30% of responding clergy in our 2018 survey. The next most popular motivation for collaboration is because of the topic. Nonprofits in our community are forming collaborative partnerships when they connect with other organizations that are passionate about addressing a problem and want to help the community.

Be Mighty! An Example of Collaboration in Little Rock

More than 287,000 children in Arkansas rely on free or reduced-price school meals. Unfortunately, for one in four Arkansas children, the arrival of summer break means that they no longer have school meals to depend on. A collaborative project between the Central Arkansas Library System and the City of Little Rock, the Be Mighty campaign is an organization dedicated to connecting kids and teens with after-school and summer meal programs. The program is open to all children, with no need for proof of income or identification. All the children have to do is sign in when they arrive at the meal site.



Children enjoying meals from a Be Mighty meal site.



Little Rock Mayor Frank Scott, Jr. talking about the Be Mighty program.

Project Manager, Kay Kay DeRossette, reached out to congregations to get them involved by sponsoring a meal site, co-sponsoring a meal site, or volunteering with one of the 30 existing programs. Through these partnerships, and working with the Arkansas Department of Human Services, many more children had healthy meals this summer.

Opportunities in Our Community

80% of responding nonprofits say that demand for their services is increasing

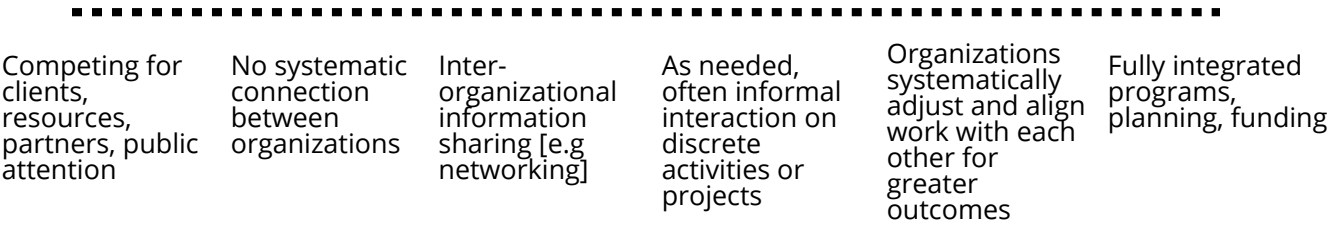
Partnerships can help nonprofits meet increasing demand

What kind of partnerships do nonprofits want?

We presented respondents with the following collaboration spectrum and asked where their ideal partnerships would fall on this spectrum. Their responses indicate that more involved partnerships are preferred.

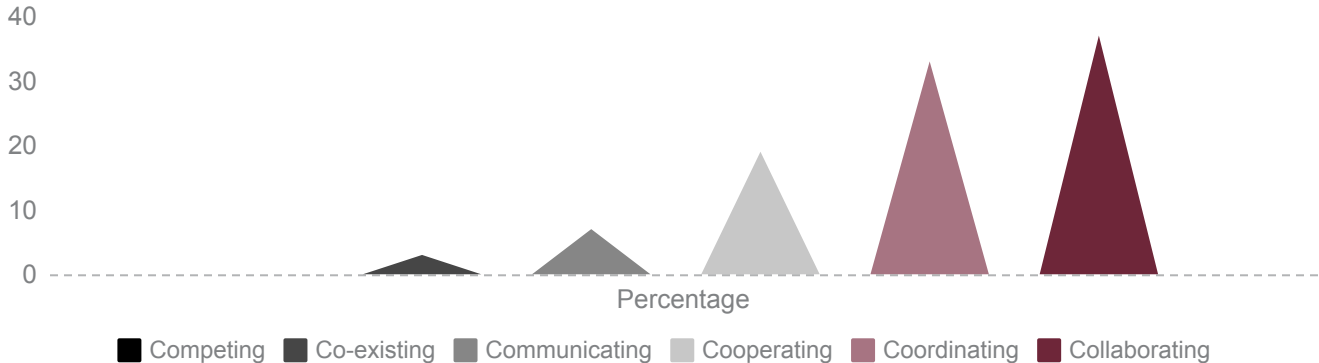
The Collaboration Spectrum

Competing Co-existing Communicating Cooperating Coordinating Collaborating



Source: Tamarack Institute

Preferred Partnership Relationships



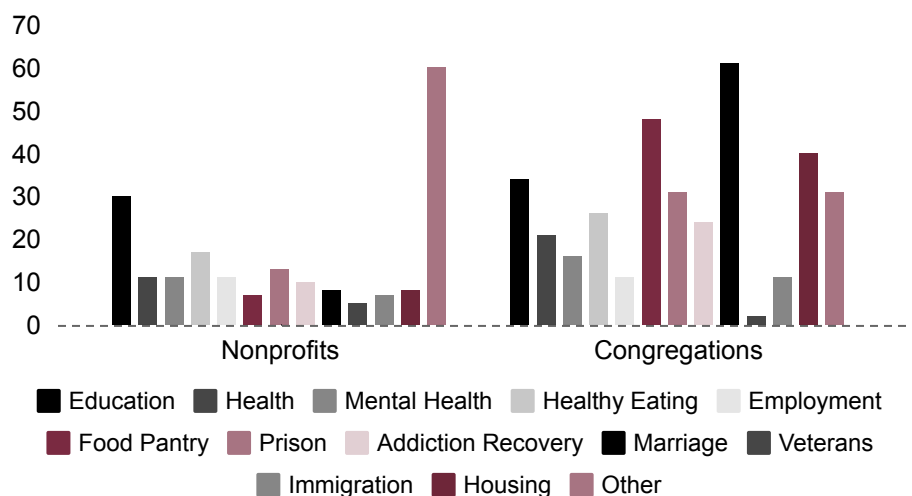
Services Provided: Comparing Congregations and Nonprofits

In fall 2018, the Little Rock Congregations Study (LRCS) surveyed religious leaders about the services their congregations provide to the community (113 of the 359 congregations in Little Rock responded, a 31.5% response rate). In 2019, we asked similar questions to 118 responding nonprofit leaders. A comparison of their responses follows.

Conducting the clergy survey and nonprofit survey in subsequent years revealed that the services provided by nonprofits are much more diverse than the services provided by congregations.

Sixty percent of nonprofits responded with "other" when we asked them about the services they provided. They told us about missions involving community gardens, pregnancy testing, and entrepreneurial support, which are topics that never came up in our surveys and interviews with congregations.

Percent of Responding Organizations Providing Services by Category



While the services provided by nonprofits are quite diverse, the strongest single substantive category is education (30%), followed by healthy eating (17%).

For congregations, marriage and relationship counseling are the most popular services (61%), followed by food pantries (48%). Thirty-four percent of responding congregations provide education services.

Nonprofits and congregations are different kinds of organizations, with different goals and missions. However, these data reveal some areas of potential collaboration. For instance, many congregations host food pantries and many nonprofits focus on healthy eating education. Working together, the two types of organizations could get more and healthier food and better nutrition information to people in need in our community.



Left: Students with the Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) at UA Little Rock serving meals

Right: Community members picking up food from the collaborative pantry housed at St. Mark Episcopal Church



About the 2020 Study

The Little Rock Congregations Study is an ongoing research project. We are planning to take what we learned from our research on nonprofits in 2019 and apply it to improve our 2020 study.

In 2020, we will distribute electronic surveys to participating congregations. The surveys will include questions about community issues congregation members see as most important in our city, if they would like their congregation to be active on those issues, and if they would be willing to volunteer to help. Congregation leaders can use this information to prioritize their community engagement initiatives.

We will also use this information to connect congregations to one another and to nonprofits that are working on the issues they are most interested in.

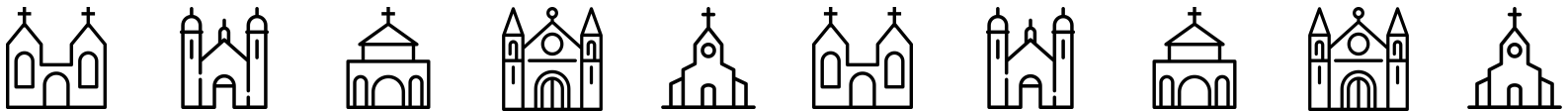
All congregations within the city limits of Little Rock are invited to participate in the 2020 study.

Participating Congregations Will Commit To:

- Completing a congregation leader survey and interview
- Distributing the LRCS electronic survey link to their members

Participating Congregations Will Receive:

- A report on the responses of their congregants
- A comparative report on findings from the entire sample, allowing religious leaders to see comparisons across congregations
- Information on the issues their members are interested in working on, along with contact information for nearby nonprofits and other organizations that are actively working on those issues



Interested congregations are encouraged to contact:
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Clergy Advisory Board



Rev. Ryan Davis
Bullock Temple
Christian Methodist
Episcopal Church



Pastor Ray Williams
Fellowship Bible Church,
City Church Network



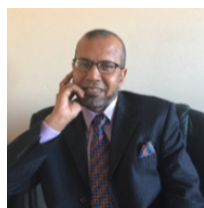
Pastor Preston Clegg
Second Baptist Church
Downtown



Rev. Lindy Vogado
Second Presbyterian
Church



Fr. Mark Wood
St. Theresa
Catholic Church



Imam Mahmoud
Hassanein
Islamic Center
of Little Rock



Pastor Earnest Thomas
Saint Mark
Baptist Church



Outreach Minister
Ceanne Warner
Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

The Little Rock Congregations Study Clergy Advisory Board is made up of religious leaders from diverse backgrounds across our city. They advise the research team both on methods (question selection, survey distribution, inclusive question wording, etc.) and on outreach (congregation recruitment, networking, etc.).

Board members serve rotating two-year terms.



Project Website: <https://research.ualr.edu/lrcs>
Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/LittleRockCongregationsStudy/>
For more information, contact Dr. Rebecca Glazier: raglazier@ualr.edu

