

“God and Country: Veteran Services in the Little Rock Religious Community”

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In many ways, military veterans in the United States are in crisis. The suicide rate for veterans is 22% higher than for non-veterans, and more than 40,000 veterans across the country are homeless. For some veterans, a local religious organization might be the best source of help. How regularly is such help provided? This project seeks to find out what kinds of services religious organizations in the Little Rock area provide for veterans and under what circumstances they work with non-profits to do so. Although some research examines provision of health, education, or drug treatment services by places of worship, very little research looks specifically at the support congregations may provide for veterans. This research will be conducted in partnership with the Little Rock Congregation Study and through a multimethod approach. Every congregation leader in Little Rock (n=378) will be contacted with a survey request. The survey will include a question about providing services to military veterans. The clergy who indicate that they serve veterans will be contacted and interviewed regarding the nature of these services, the population they serve, and any potential partnerships with nonprofits they have. Through both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, we will be able to better understand the circumstances under which religious organizations provide help to veterans in need. We plan to share the results of our research with the Little Rock community, and hopefully encourage congregations and nonprofits to work together to address these pressing problems.