

# Executive Summary

## *Maintaining Vital Connections*

The role of faith communities in providing social services, healthcare, education, community development and a wide array of other supports to people in need has received much attention from policymakers, faith communities, researchers and nonprofit practitioners since the U.S. Presidential Faith Based Initiatives. Yet the research on this topic focuses on either activities of congregations or faith-based organizations (FBOs), with little attention to the important relationship between them.

This project compares differences among faith communities at several different levels. We use the term **faith community** to refer generally to any religious community that supports a given faith based organization or set of organizations. For example, the faith community might be a single congregation like a Quaker Meeting that is connected to four organizations: a school and two aging services agencies it founded and an interfaith coalition. Faith community may also refer to a geographical community, like the Jewish communities in Baltimore or the greater Washington area or interfaith organizations concentrating on one suburb or city neighborhood. Or the faith community could be a higher level adjudicatory or general reference to people sharing a particular faith, like an archdiocese, the coalition of synods that support the Lutheran organizations in this study, or networks of Evangelicals that support the Pregnancy Help Center.

This report addresses this relationship, sharing what we have learned from an in-depth study called *Maintaining Vital Connections Between Faith Communities and their Organizations*. The project was funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., with research activities beginning in March 2008. It examines the relationship between faith communities and 59 organizations founded by Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Evangelicals, Quakers, and African American churches located in Philadelphia and Northern Virginia and several locales between them. A second phase of the study, still in progress, expands this research to the Midwest and South. A brief report on this second phase appears at the end of this document. The study focused on the following questions:

- 1. How do faith communities understand their practical theology (enacted expressions of faith and religious values regarding their work in the world), and how does that practical theology play out in stewardship of organizations?** What practical guidance would best serve faith communities and what groups or individuals (clergy, lay committee members, organization board and key staff, etc.) should receive advice and training on stewardship and related issues?
- 2. How do strategies for guidance and support differ among the various branches of Christianity (mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Peace Churches, Catholics, African American churches) and Jews?** How should guidance to those faith communities be tailored for each religion and denomination? What lessons apply to all faith communities?
- 3. What strategies can a faith community use to address concerns regarding the faith- base in organizations under its care or affiliated with that religion?** How do strategies differ depending of the level of formal control that the founding faith has over the organization? How does a faith community remain stewards of an organization

when it is legally independent of its founding religious body?

The project is unique because it explores the role of specific religious and denominational theology and religious culture in service activities, providing concrete products specific both to that religion, as well as more general theologically grounded materials. Rather than subscribe to one universal typology for identifying an organization as faith based, the project expects that various religious traditions would organize provision of social welfare differently. The project completed a pilot study in 2006 that primarily examines this issue from experience in organizations.

This report provides an overview of findings from the project's second phase, which focuses on guidance, stewardship and connections from the standpoint of both founding faith communities and faith based organizations, with particular attention to the relationship between founding community and FBO governance structures. The rich pool of data we have collected addresses many specific issues, but several key findings stand out:

### **Practical theology:**

- ❖ ***Although all faiths use similar techniques to support and guide their organizations, the theological rationale and strategies for providing guidance differ across denominations and religions.*** Mechanisms like fundraising, board appointments, providing in-kind supports, the nature of informal connections between faith community and organization each varied based on the **practical theology** of the particular founding or supporting religion. The project developed a working definition of **practical theology** as:

*The formal and informal strategies a community uses to carry out its theological teachings, religious-based values, everyday practices, and religious culture in faith community activities and interactions with nonprofits affiliated with that religion.*

- ❖ ***Embedded religious values are as important as explicit references to a given faith. Our research also revealed significant differences in the extent and ways that the various faiths used God language and included faith-based messages in their programming.*** The notion of **embedded theology** refers to:

*Unstated values and/or expressions that may not be vocally articulated, but define the particular faith community.*

The pilot study suggested that organizations could strongly rely on their faith traditions without exhibiting any of the open expressions of faith that most typologies uses to identify an organization as faith-based. In fact, several of the organizations clearly follow through on religious teachings in their programming without any outward signs of a particular religion. Organizations appeared on a continuum from Jews, where religious values were often embedded in organizational practice but rarely mentioned in programming or materials to Evangelicals, where every aspect of the organization may be suffused with explicit expressions of religion. In general, religions that see faith as individual commitment, such as the Evangelicals, African Americans and some Mainline Protestants, were more likely to use expressive language while religions with strong focus on communal religion by birth or

commitment such as Jews and some Catholics used fewer references to faith in their organizations.

In addition, the pilot study suggests that those religious traditions that strongly emphasize religious tolerance and an appreciation for theological diversity tend to embed their religious commitments more implicitly within their service organizations, rather than make those commitments explicit. This appears to be driven by a desire to avoid imposing religious views on others, independent of other factors analyzed here. This current study provided further evidence that embedded practical theology remains important for faith based organizations and that faith communities look for these embedded cultural attributes in their evaluation of the faith based organizations they support.

Additional information on practical theology and embedded versus explicit religious aspects in the activities of nonprofits and their relationships with their faith community is available in chapter four of the full report.

**Mechanisms for Maintaining Vital Connections:** This study explored a variety of mechanisms to maintain connections between faith communities and the organizations they had created. Key findings include:

- ❖ **Stewardship means more than a founding faith community's provision of resources to the organizations it created.** In some religious circles, particularly among Mainline Protestants, stewardship is currently understood as garnering and managing resources – particularly funding – for faith communities and organizations. This research revealed that the guidance and support relationships encompassed much more than supplying funds, in-kind supports and volunteers.
- ❖ **Faith communities are much more willing to support organizations that reflect their current beliefs and religious culture than institutions that simply have a historic connection to that faith.** Organizations with strong connections to their founding communities interacted on many levels, with faith-based organizations and their supporting faith communities in a dynamic relationship based on practical theology that reaffirmed and strengthened both nonprofit and the faith community. In these successful relationships, faith communities do not define stewardship of their organizations as only providing funding or other tangible resources, as is commonly understood in some religious circles. As a result, our research reclaims earlier, broader definitions of **stewardship** as:

*The faith community's efforts to maintain its practical theology of justice and charity in the activities of the nonprofits affiliated with that religion or denomination.*

Relationships were maintained through both formal and informal mechanisms:

- ❖ **Formal Relationships**
  - **Board recruitment and composition** – What percentage of the board is required in the bylaws to come from the founding faith community? What percentage is expected to come from the faith community given unspoken assumptions about who should be responsible for the organization? This can range from 5 percent or less in the case of some religious orders, to 50 percent in the case of many Quaker organizations, to as much as 100 percent in some

evangelical agencies. Even though many organizations do not stipulate a minimum number of board members, the majority of their board members may still be drawn from the founding faith. For example, while few Catholic and Jewish organizations stipulated a percentage of board membership had to come from the founding religion, board were generally exclusively or predominantly from the founding religion. On the other hand, Mainline Protestants and Quakers tended to specify that a percentage of board members come from the founding faith or denominations from affiliated congregations and often had much more diverse boards. This has relevance for stewardship of religious connections in several ways:

- In general, an agency's board is charged with preserving faith community identity, particularly if a majority of the staff and/or clientele are NOT from the faith community.
  - The ability of board members to provide guidance on the faith community's values and practices, however, varies enormously, depending on the board members' understanding of their faith.
  - Boards also varied widely in the practices they used to orient members on faith traditions and practices.
- **Staff recruitment and composition** – Strategies varied from advertising in the faith community's media (Jewish agencies and some Catholic), to ascertaining that prospective staff agreed with the philosophy of the agency even if they were not members of the faith community (other Catholic agencies, Jewish, Quaker), to not asking at all. With the possible exception of some evangelical agencies, most staff persons are not *required* to be members of the faith community.. In some cases, however, it is an unstated preference.
  - **Leadership** - Most of the organizations that maintain strong ties to their faith have executive directors and other key leaders (e.g. fundraising or outreach staff) who come from the founding faith. Unless the organization is founder-driven, organization leadership is usually chosen by the board. The importance that the board places on the leaders belonging to the founding faith, identifying with a specific denomination or branch of that faith, or sharing the core values of the faith sets the tone for the retention of religious values within the organization. As a result, leadership was often chosen based on its ability to represent the embedded culture of the organization, if not the faith community's explicit beliefs,
  - **Umbrella organizations proved important resources for both faith communities and organizations and vital links to maintain the faith base for non-profits.** Umbrellas took several forms - communal structures like Jewish Federations, Catholic order-created systems, interfaith organizations, nonprofit professional organizations like Friends Services for the Aging, Catholic Charities USA, and the various Jewish professional organizations. Mainline Protestant and Evangelical organizations were least likely to participate in professional associations, though they might take part in informal local networks and coalitions such as interfaith or clergy networks.
  - **Formal reporting requirements** – Formal reporting mechanisms vary and are not always used. They range from annual oral reports to the founding congregation, to an expectation that annual reports or newsletters will be provided to the founding faith community, to specifically-mandated yearly third-

party financial audits, to the formal contracts requiring regular written reports that a Jewish organization typically has with its federation.

- **Evaluation of staff on their success in providing service in a manner in keeping with faith community values and philosophy** – There were wide variations: Does this kind of evaluation happen at all? How formal is the evaluation process? Who does the evaluation – a faith community board member or the agency supervisor?
- ❖ **Informal strategies to maintain connections:** Implicit, embedded practices are as important a form of stewardship as are formal relationships. These may include styles of fundraising or simply the fact that members of the faith community pay attention to the organization and comment on its ability to live up to cultural hallmarks of faithfulness.
  - **Informal monitoring practices:** The informal practices that the faith community used to monitor organization activities ranged from faith community members communicating with board members or organization leadership to writing articles or opinions in faith community media regarding their view of the organization. Faith community members' informal comments on the quality and faith base of the services was carefully watched by boards and staff as indicators of whether or not the organization was behaving in ways expected by its supporting community. Organization leaders understood that negative comments could lead to dwindling support of the organization.
  - **Faith community media:** In communities with local newspapers for the faith, local or ethnic community, organizations could become the subject of media attention and letters to the editor. Organization leaders paid careful attention to the media and often encouraged positive press. They also used media to reach out to faith community members.
  - **Social networks:** Organizations providing direct service to faith community members often had strong informal connections with members. This could range from sending children to a religious school, participating in a social service program, or occasionally using a hospital or clinic sponsored by a particular religion.
  - **Volunteers:** Volunteers are the heart of the faith-based element within most Mainline Protestant, Evangelical and African American church organizations we have studied, but their importance varies for Jewish and Catholic organizations. Volunteers and board members often interpret their work as an extension of their personal theology, viewing service both as an obligation and as an expression of faith. However, faith in action rather than theological exactitude tends to be the primary concern for volunteers. For example, feed the hungry was often understood as (enacting religious teachings, but volunteers were less concerned with the specific activities behind their acts of generosity. Volunteers' sense of their obligation to the organization is generally tied to how they perceive its activities as matching their own ideas of stewardship.
- ❖ **Resources:** Resource stewardship involves both the mechanisms by which the faith community supports its organizations and the forms these supports take. Generally, faith communities provide their organizations with similar kinds of resources: funds, in-

kind supports, the use of faith community property, volunteers, and sometimes back office supports like centralized insurance, recruitment and religious training. However, the mechanisms for sharing these resources varied greatly among faiths:

- ❖ **Although most faith-based organizations can identify what they expect from their founding faith communities, most faith communities had limited understanding of how to successfully guide and support to their organizations.** With the exception of Jews and some Catholic orders, few faith communities had educational tools or clear goals for organizational stewardship. Agencies often appointed board members without much guidance on their role in the organization or responsibility to report back to the founding faith community. This suggests that developing and disseminating tools for faith communities to prepare board members, lay leaders and clergy as stewards of their organizations is a critical need.
- ❖ **Informal mechanisms to maintain relationships were often more important than formal mechanisms in fostering vital ongoing connections between faith communities and organizations.** Organizations that kept in close contact with their supporting faith communities and vice versa thrived, while organizations lacking those informal connections had trouble gaining support from their founding communities.

#### ***Suggestions for Improving Connections:***

- ❖ **Educate the agency leadership (board and key staff):** Leaders must regularly articulate the faith base of the action for it to remain alive.
  - Boards and other selectors of staff should seek leadership who can articulate the stewardship focus.
  - Organizational leaders should consider implementing or adapting Jewish organizations' tradition of rotating board members through different organizations and various committees in the faith community and individual agencies to encourage a full understanding of the organization.
- ❖ **Clarify faith communities' role as stewards of their organizations.** Tools and materials need to be developed for faith communities on such topics as what stewardship means, strategies for developing strong board members, and appropriate mechanisms for the organization to share its work regularly with the faith community.
- ❖ **Build informal relationships.** Both faith communities and faith-based organizations should pay attention to ways that they develop social capital networks through fostering a variety of ways that faith community members can become involved with or learn about the organization and its activities. Strong informal relationships lead to more successful fundraising, organizational operations, and ability to carry forward agency mission. In turn, involvement with the agency can strengthen commitment to the faith community for members or draw new members to that religion or denomination.

Additional information on strategies to maintain connections between faith communities and faith based organizations is available in chapter six of the full report.

#### **Faith Tradition Systems:**

- ❖ **While each religious group employs unique strategies, we identified three broad systems that religious communities use to organize their connections to organizations under their care that reflect practical theology and stewardship strategies. These systems come out of the faith communities, shaping both the stewardship strategies of religious institutions and the ways that nonprofits from that religious tradition approach faith communities for support and guidance.**

Identifying systems is important because the best practices, weaknesses, and logic behind non-profit activity are specific to each system. While organizations coming from another system could adapt some approaches from another system for their use, wholesale attempts to use strategies appropriate for another system are unlikely to work because they run counter to the cultural and theological logic behind the founding relationship between faith community and organization. As such, these findings have implications both for public policy and practice.

**Institutionalized** systems organize and centralize supports at the community level, with expectations that the entire community is responsible for those in need. Jews and Catholics used this system, though they differed in their structure. Catholic systems were integrated into either the archdiocese or order while Jewish systems centralized all social and health services, with the synagogues remaining independent from the service system.

Institutionalized systems evolved from a theology that insists the community/church as a whole is responsible for caring for those in need. This obligation may be conceived as applying only to members of that religion or the whole world. In Jewish traditions, key theological constructs include *tikkun olam* (responsibility to care for the world - which sometimes means all Jews and other times means anyone in a particular group) and a series of Talmudic concepts related to an obligation to support the community and those in need within it. For Catholics, key founding theology includes the expectation that Catholics, as the church universal, are responsible both for all Catholics, and by extension all potential converts to Catholicism. Encyclicals (formalized moral teachings) regarding preferential treatment of the poor, universal health care, etc. that come from the Pope and the Council of Bishops also contribute to the general framework of religious activity.

**Major features of Institutionalized systems are:**

- They centralize fundraising, volunteer recruitment, training and sometimes facilities management.
- They have a strong tradition of planning at a centralized level for the community or its institutions as a whole.
- Centralized bodies occasionally encourage or force mergers or collaborations among organizations in the community for the greater good of the systems as a whole.
- They have the ability to share resources across the system through either Federation allocations or Catholic Order or Archdiocese-sponsored agreements to share resources.
- They develop strong networks of religiously based national umbrella organizations in addition to the local centralized systems that provided additional support and networks for organizations for that religion.

- There is a tendency for organizations outside the centralized umbrella to still develop ties with other organizations either through interfaith entities or independent groups of organizations from the same faith. Schools are connected with the wider faith community and the centralized umbrella (federation, order, archdiocese), but most Catholic and Jewish schools in some communities are under the direct sponsorship of congregations.

**Congregational** systems see congregations as the central organizing force for justice and charity work, viewing ministries as coming from individual or corporate calls for service that congregations support. Ministries or programs, such as a church food pantry, may begin as efforts within a congregation but they usually become institutionalized as independent nonprofits. Nonprofits sponsored by individual congregations or groups of congregations tended to turn to their sponsors for all forms of support. In this study, Mainline Protestants, some African American churches, and Quakers fell into the congregational system. While none of the Evangelical nonprofits in this study sample fell into this category, it is likely that some evangelical groups do use this system as well.

The theology behind congregational systems comes out of the Protestant reformation and the religious movements that created the peace churches. This religious tradition emphasizes the local congregation as the primary vehicle for carrying out the mandates of faith in a community (though congregations may be supported in this task by centralized denominational structures). The organizational impetus comes from ministries of individuals within a congregation or from the congregation as a whole. These organizations either formalize as separate 501c3 nonprofits or become projects of the church with independent advisory committees and sometimes separate bank accounts. Well-established organizations maintain strong ties to congregations or at least retain vestiges of these congregational roots through board appointments and other mechanisms.

**Major features of Congregational systems are:**

- Their ministries often formalize as either independent programs of their founding congregation(s) with independent advisory committees and separate accounting systems, or spin off into independent 501c3 organizations with limited ties to congregations or form as interfaith entities.
- The organizations maintain ties to one or more congregations through board appointments, appeals for resources, volunteers and in-kind supports.
- Most of our congregational organizations saw volunteering as an important component of organizational activity, and it created volunteer opportunities for people from their denomination and others.
- Established congregational organizations usually maintained ties to their founding faith by requiring that a percentage of board members be from the founding faith or founding congregations.

- In some cases, the relationship between congregational organizations and their founding faith communities involved the organization serving in such a way that community members were drawn to the congregation.
- Congregational system organizations from Mainline Protestant and Quaker organizations often embedded their faith in more general values, with many specifically stating that they valued theological diversity within a general spiritual or Christian context, and on principle they did not proselytize.
- Congregational system denominations created fewer umbrella organizations like professional associations for their organizations, and the organizations tended to belong to fewer umbrella groups.

**Network** systems transcend congregations, drawing together people with a similar faith-based vision to carry forward the work based on either social networks of the founders or institutional/virtual networks of people with a similar vision. Network based nonprofits may be connected with one or multiple congregations, but their decision-making and support systems reside outside the congregational system. Organizations in network systems differ from congregational systems in two important ways 1) the ministry is supported by a network of individuals focused on a specific ministry and 2) the people who staff these organizations either as volunteers or paid staff share the faith approach of the organizations founders, using this faith as a prime motivator in their work. In contrast, congregational organizations draw staff and involved volunteers interested in the service or ministry of the program but do not necessarily share similar approaches to faith or come from the religion of the founding congregation(s). The Network-based organizations in this study ranged from small emergency services programs founded by one congregation member to a multisite pregnancy center working to prevent abortions, and from a young evangelical Christian school to a nearly 200-year-old multiservice organization that provided support through well-established ministry centers.

**Major features of Network systems are:**

- The organizations frequently become a faith community for staff, active volunteers and sometimes program participants.
- These organizations rely on a combination of staff and volunteers, but almost all people involved with the organization share the founding faith or have some other personal connection with the ministry and their involvement is motivated by that faith.
- Resources come through networks of like-minded believers, and often organizations highlight their faith or trust in God as a source for resources for the organization.
- Since these organizations are supported through personal networks, they are more likely to end when the pastor or founder moves on. In older, established organizations, ministries can change as the leader's calling or gospel vision changes.

- One main subset of this group is formed by evangelistic organizations, for which sharing their faith is a key element of the ministry.
- ❖ **Social capital was an important ingredient in maintaining vital connections between faith-based organizations and their sponsoring faith communities.** Social capital refers to *social networks based on reciprocal, reenforceable trust that people and organizations use to garner resources*. Social capital includes both networks of individuals and institutions, with organizations able to maintain support over time from their founding faith communities and its institutions based on the trust-based connections developed by the agency over time. As demonstrated over and over in this study, organizations with strong ties in their founding faith communities succeeded in maintaining support and guidance from their communities, while those that had lost those networks struggled in this regard. Organizations also depend on their knowledge and manipulation of cultural capital, elements of the founding community's culture that have become symbols of membership in order to garner support from their constituent communities.

Social capital was an essential element to encourage civic engagement among faith community members, but networks among organizations and faith communities often was as important as individual networks. **Civic engagement** refers to *activities to support the common good* and may not necessarily involve long-term, reciprocal trust between those providing donations or in-kind goods and the agency receiving support.

Three forms of equally important social capital operate in the relationships between faith communities and their organizations. **Bonding** social capital refers to *densely linked networks of people who share similar culture and beliefs*. The networks within the African American, Jewish, evangelical, Quaker and to a lesser extent local Catholic and Mainline Protestant denominational communities are examples of bonding social capital. **Bridging** social capital *crosses boundaries of race, class, culture, or belief*. However, *bridging social capital involves trust based ties across groups developed over time, not weak ties*. **Linking** social capital refers to *ties across power hierarchies such as the links between an archdiocese or federation and its member organizations*.

This research discovered that each of these systems used social capital differently:

- **Institutionalized systems** relied on high bonding social capital among both individuals and institutions to support nonprofits in these systems. In addition, institutionalized system organizations had strong, linking social capital within their communities and the multiple regional or national umbrella organizations helped agencies develop linking ties nationally both as institutions and for their staff as individuals.
- **Congregational system organizations**, on the other hand, depended on bridging social capital through interfaith groups and outreach to congregations from a variety of denominations to maintain their organizations. While welcoming bridging ties, these organizations equally depended on bonding social capital with networks of individuals or key supporting congregations often as their primary source of support. They had weaker linking ties within their faith communities, although they regularly developed these ties with major government or foundation funders. Local level organizations often had weak

linking ties to denominational structures, while denomination-wide organizations like Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services relied on the denominations both for support and as a conduit to connect to local congregations.

- **Network-based organizations** relied almost solely on bonding social capital. Networks could come through congregations or lay associations like right-to-life networks as well as individuals. These organizational, social capital ties became particularly important in garnering civic engagement for these organizations.

Understanding how each system uses social capital differently also provides strategies for organizations within each system. In all systems, organizations with strong social capital thrived while those lacking social networks did poorly. But institutionalized system organizations that focused on bridging ties outside of the founding religion without equally developing ties in their bonding community were far less likely to maintain strong support within the founding community. Likewise, few congregational system organizations could survive without strong bridging ties. Often, lost or attenuated social capital came from an organization losing the cultural markers that encouraged members of the community to support it.

Additional information of faith tradition systems and social capital is available in chapter five of the full report.

### **Challenges and Opportunities Facing Faith-Based Organizations and Faith Communities**

The project identified several challenges and opportunities that faith-based organizations and faith communities jointly face on a regular basis. Some of these were related to the life cycle of either the nonprofit or the faith community. Chapter seven of the full report provides detailed observations regarding such topics as growth and formalization of faith-based organizations and a discussion of ways that faith-based organizations respond to major demographic changes in their supporting faith communities or the populations they serve. Some key issues included:

- ❖ **Leadership transitions:** Leadership transitions have an impact on the religious culture in the nonprofit and the relationship between the faith community and organizations. Transitions in leadership in either the faith community or nonprofit usually bring new direction to the organization. Faith community leadership transitions can change the relationship to the nonprofit regardless of whether it is directly under the care of the faith community or an independent organization. Faith-based organization leadership transitions profoundly shape connections to its founding faith community. Boards and other faith community leadership concerned about the faith base or the version of the faith that the organization practices pay particular attention to leadership changes. However, leadership changes that fail to emphasize the faith elements and ability of new leaders to create enduring networks with members of the faith community can lead to an organization losing connections to the faith community.
- ❖ **Participatory attenuation:** Faith communities and faith-based organizations must develop a strategy for responding when the relationship between them becomes less strong or attenuates.
- ❖ **Contextual change: Impact of the 2008-2009 global recession on FBOs and their supporting faith communities:** Throughout 2008 the U.S. economy underwent a

steady recession that included a major collapse of real estate values and the failure of multiple national and local banking institutions. Because many of the institutions that we studied were directly engaged in countering the effects of poverty and homelessness and were dependent upon philanthropic support, public support, or fee-for-service income, the impact of the economic downturn and the agency responses to it was dramatically evident in the data we gathered. Major findings include:

- **Despite the increased demands that the weak economy has placed on these groups, initially few of the organizations considered service cutbacks to be a viable response to the situation.** In fact, several service agencies believed that they needed to expand their capacity, their service offerings, and their target community to meet emergent need. However, as the recession deepened, some cut staff or programs in an attempt to balance the budget.
- **The effectiveness of the various organizational strategies during the economic downturn seems to be largely contingent on two factors: adaptability and credibility.** However it is important to note that the various denominations and religions defined adaptability and credibility differently.
- **Organizations that took immediate steps responding to the economic downturn received enthusiastic support from their preestablished funding and volunteer base, but their visible rapid action was also essential to motivating new sources of support from other sectors and organizations.**
- **In an economic downturn, organizations attached only to a small number of congregations, particularly aged or lower-income congregations, had the hardest time finding sufficient resources.** Not all organizations have seen an increase in funding during the economic downturn, and several have experienced significant financial pressures based on decreased giving and increased need. Two of the organizations being studied during this project closed due to severe financial problems.

#### ❖ **Positive Strategies in Response to Challenges and Opportunities**

- **Understand the role the organization plays in the lives of those actively involved, regardless of their formal role as staff, board, volunteers or program participants**
- **Create open lines of communication between volunteers and board members**
- **Incorporate the multiple generations in all aspects of maintaining connections between the faith-based organization and faith community**
- **Define the faith community expectations for the agency and vice versa**
- **Clarify accountability processes for both the faith-based organization and supporting community**
- **Encourage greater integration through strengthening social networks between the organization and the faith community**

- **Encourage organizational self-assessment and self-examination that includes reflection on stewardship of faith connections**

**Conclusions:** Chapter eight provides conclusions and recommendations based on this research. Overall, the project found that four factors influenced the relationship between faith communities and their nonprofits:

- ❖ **Practical theology of that religion:**
  - **Faith communities that used stewardship strategies to convey their practical theology to their organizations successfully over time were more likely to maintain strong relationships with those non-profits.**
  - **Organizations that reflected the embedded culture of their founding faith had broader and stronger support from their supporting faith communities.**
  - **Relationship tensions often reflected concerns that an agency or certain of its activities no longer reflected this founding practical theology from parts of the faith community.** However, these concerns could reflect two very different situations:
    - **Faith community consensus that the organization did not reflect current values**
    - **Faith-based nonprofits as a target for ongoing theological debates in the faith community.**
- ❖ **History of that faith community in the United States**
- ❖ **The quality and nature of social capital between faith community and organization.** This finding suggests several strategies to strengthen connections between faith communities and organizations:
  - **Both organizations and faith communities need to pay equal attention to building social capital as a way of clarifying their stewardship mechanisms and practical theology for organizations.**
  - **Developing and strengthening umbrella organizations is another important aspect of both maintaining connections and building healthy organizations.**
- ❖ **The nature of the service provided.** We found much in common in the organizational forms and service provision of the various schools, social service agencies, retirement communities, healthcare institutions, community development entities, and emergency services organizations that participated in this study. As such, stewardship strategies necessarily differ depending on organization type. However, we simultaneously found similarities and differences among organizations providing the same service, with those differences often reflecting the founding faith traditions. These dual strategies are best understood not as contradictory forces in opposition, but as two equally important strands of maintaining healthy organizations that provide quality services from a clear mission.

The report is designed provide a general overview of our key findings for discussion among faith community leaders, nonprofit leaders, and others interested in these questions. These findings and material on other topics will be developed into a series of practical tools for practitioners, best practices and case studies, academic publications, and policy recommendations, available at <http://www.faithandorganizations.umd.edu/>. Please address any communications to

[jschneid@gwu.edu](mailto:jschneid@gwu.edu).

The full report provides an overview of findings on our research questions and key findings that came out of this first phase of our study. A companion volume looks at these same issues in more depth for each major religious group (Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Evangelicals, Quakers, and African Americans).