

## *SURVIVAL MODES*

### SURVIVAL RESPONSES - FIGHT, FLIGHT OR FREEZE

Fight, flight, and freeze are responses normally engaged when an immediate threat to safety or survival is perceived. These three survival modes are reactionary and have discernible patterns as employed by congregations.

#### Fight Survival Mode:

- ▶ aggressive posture
- ▶ vigilant, leery of the stranger - including new clergy
- ▶ oppositional or defiant with an angry edge

#### Flight Survival Mode:

- ▶ defensive posture
- ▶ avoidant behaviors; denial, ignore, tune-out
- ▶ emotionally distant, flat

#### Freeze Survival Mode:

- ▶ passive posture
- ▶ *goes along to get along*
- ▶ operates by *shoulds* and *oughts* rather than by ownership or relationship

As with individuals whose development of self-identity is interrupted by a perceived need to enter one of these survival modes, congregations can become fixated in a response pattern of fight, flight, or freeze. The more frequently the defensive survival pattern is engaged the more the development of full self-awareness is compromised. The defensive posture distorts and diminishes self-image and continually denies “personal” power and responsibility. It leads to living an identity of being the victim. With repeated utilization, the pattern of fight, flight, or freeze becomes the modus operandi for the congregation. These

congregations, similar to those with attachment issues, settle into a maintenance frame of mind.

These congregations learn to be reactionary and are fixated, stuck in their development living in a maintenance mode. They are not going to be interested in outreach, mission, or growth. A congregation stuck in maintenance often becomes focused on the past, on a time when there was meaning. It remembers being the largest church in the community, or having the best choirs, or being Norwegian, or German, etc. It more clearly remembers what it was, than knows who it is. Its perspective of the congregation's early formation is lost and what remains is a romanticized view of its history. While at one level it knows it will never be like that again, at another, it desperately attempts to hold on to its past identity. It may provide the traditional ethnic dinner or host the historic celebration long after the number of members of the ancestral heritage has become a minority in the congregation.

Many function with basic survival as their goal; resources, in particular financial, always being just at a survival level. Even well liked clergy can become a perceived threat to the congregation's existence. Parishioners from congregations in a survival mode have stated, "The pastor is taking all our money." Translation, the congregation is the victim, their survival is threatened by this clergy person expecting a professional's salary.

Why some congregations develop one particular survival mode over the others is not clear. What is recognizable are the basic identifiable behaviors associated with each mode. These behaviors form the default pattern offering a

standard solution to almost any challenge. There is no indication that these patterns are not based in the personality type of the congregation. To the contrary, a mode of survival takes root in the lack of personality development that leads to a healthy self-differentiated congregation. If the congregation is not sure who it is, or what it is to be about, it will not have the self-awareness to respond to challenges in a manner that proactively engages its gifts and abilities. It will react defensively. The lack of understanding its identity has led many congregations to defer to their clergy for identity, purpose, and direction for service and mission. Yet, they reserve the right to be critical and judgmental, or to remain detached. Without a clear understanding of its identity the congregation existing in a survival mode is prone to exhibit anxious and insecure behaviors at the seemingly most insignificant challenge. It exists defensively in one of these survival modes: Fight, Flight or Freeze.

Fight.

The fight mode is an aggressive mode. The congregation in this mode employs a stance of when anxious, be hold on to your past. It has an edge of defiance that it calls independence and yet tends to be very rigid in its expectations, especially of clergy. Often there is a strong sense of allegiance to a particular pastor from their past. The perceptions and memories of that pastor have become the idealized standard against which all others are measured. If the new comer (active member or clergy) divulges holding an agenda for the congregation that is framed in needing change or becoming

healthier, before trust is developed, the congregation will become defiant. Hostility and anger will be triggered by unfulfilled unspoken expectations or a breach of trust. Because of basic insecurities this mode invites the building of alliances and the choosing of sides with a goal of determining winners and losers. Often a group or family in the congregation stands opposed to the others; it is the altar guild or the choir, the clan whose great-grandfather put the cross on the steeple, or the cemetery committee. The cause is championed with words such as, “We have to defend our church from those people,” or, “This is our church and we are going to take it back.”

At the crossroads of two state highways in the agricultural Mid-West is the community of Sonsville. The old gas station is closed and if it weren't for the liquor license, the little general store would have closed long ago. There are about three-dozen homes in this community, with many more people living on family farms in the surrounding area. The one church in the area, Sonsville Christian Church, has a sordid history with clergy not staying more than three to five years. As one octogenarian told me, “They are always fighting over our pastor.” Indeed, there were two clans, the Johnsons and the Olsons. They had a history of taking turns ruling the church. When it was time to find a new pastor members and supporters of the clan controlling the governing board were elected to the search committee. The other clan pulled back. Then after a few years that second clan would become assertive. They would get elected to the board and become increasingly critical, especially of the pastor. Once the pastor left they became the dominant ones on the next search committee. And,

so, the dance goes on.

While in the grip of this reactionary fight mode it is virtually impossible for either side to clearly see and acknowledge their own motivations. In the fight mode it is not about resolving the conflict, it may not be about any 'real' threat. It's about insecurity, about fear and anxiety. It's about winning because winning proves who is right; or so our society teaches. But because it is about survival they can never see how winning ultimately means losing.

As with humans, congregations who do not have a clear understanding of their identity tend to act out in ways that are inappropriate. Many congregations are insecure and have not yet learned who they really are. In reaction to a stressor those in the survival mode of fight become more aggressive and hostile to authority, the bully on the block. In some severe cases, when this energy has been directed negatively toward the clergy in a reoccurring pattern, they have been dubbed a "Clergy Killer" congregation. Some congregations act-out like the student in school trying to cover-up their inability to read or do division. Choosing unfamiliar hymns, chiding the congregation to be missional, or expecting them to know whether Joel is in the Hebrew Scriptures or the Christian scriptures will trigger the insecurity. Asking them, "Why do you do it that way?" will generally be a trigger for defensive reactions. The disruptive behavior has an ultimate goal to neutralize the insecurity by changing the focus. It may mean getting rid of the one who keeps hooking the insecurities, reminding it of how it doesn't measure up, the clergy.

The opposite also needs to be admitted; as there are Clergy Killer

congregations, there are “Congregation Killers” among the clergy. Arrogant and condescending attitudes, behaviors, and speech are detrimental to the health and life of the congregation. Congregation and clergy may dissolve into childlike behaviors of arguing over who started it. Unfortunately the real dilemma is not oriented to hindsight but to consequence. Abuse has a self-perpetuating energy as the abused become abusers, clergy and congregations. Abuse tends to occur when there is a disparity in power, when one is perceived as strong and the other as weak, or when one’s regard for the other is inflated or minimized compared to self. Self-differentiated congregations and clergy make for a healthier church.

Persisting in a survival mode will lead to the development of recognizable patterns of behavior. Consider Dailyville. On the 13th of January 2000 an interim started ministry at Dailyville Christian Church in the aftermath of severe conflict between some members of the governing board and the now previous pastor. One board member claimed the pastor had lied and was not trustworthy. Conflict within the board erupted and sides were chosen. The conflict was as much between board members using the disputed behavior of the pastor to choose sides. The pastor left, and so did some of the members.

On that first Sunday, Herman greeted the interim in the pastor’s study. Herman was a past president of the congregation. Professionally he was a retired community college professor. In introducing himself to the interim, Herman indicated he was Chair of the Scholarship Board and had a scholarship to present. He sought permission for awarding the scholarship

during the announcements. Herman began to leave the office, but turned and with an impish smile on his face, he requested time to give a second announcement he would like to make at the end of the service. Further, since a number of the people are in the habit of leaving during the closing hymn, he sought the interim's support to encourage all to stay. Of course the interim innocently agreed. The interim later confessed he naively assumed Herman would be announcing a reception welcoming him.

Toward the end of the worship, during the closing hymn, the interim walked down the aisle, and before the dismissal, acknowledged Herman. Herman did not just stand for a brief announcement as the interim had assumed. Instead Herman marched up to the lectern, adjusted the microphone, pulled out a small ream of papers from the inside pocket of his suite coat, and began to read. The dissertation started with an invitation for sympathy. Herman had recently been ill and hospitalized. In his desire for pastoral care he reached out to a former clergy, Pastor Pence. Next came the apology; he had been President and involved in the controversy that he judged had contributed to Pastor Pence leaving four years earlier. He also acknowledged how, at that time, the congregation had hired Pastor Pence against the wishes of denominational leaders. As Herman droned on the interim spotted the vice chair of the governing board sitting in the last pew. He motioned to him and the vice chair followed him out into the foyer. The vice chair responded to the inquiry about Herman by simply shrugging his shoulders and slightly shaking his head as he said, "Well, that's just Herman."

To abbreviate his six pages of text, Herman had a number of petitions for the congregation to sign. They included: Dump the congregational President who is a snowbird and is in Texas for three months. Seek to have high school youth play instruments during worship — an obvious swipe at the organist. Ignore the denomination's expectation there be an intentional interim to deal with the conflict over the previous pastor by immediately establishing a Pastor Search Committee. "We don't need time for healing here," Herman pointed out. And, elect Pastor Pence to be the pastor again.

Following the end of the service, not only was there no reception planned for the interim, the building was empty in about five minutes flat. Only one person said anything related to Herman's inappropriate behavior. He was a self-identified-inactive-member who told the interim, "I came back on your first day hoping things would be different." He shook his head and declared, "I now know DCC will never change. I'll not be back."

One very interesting phenomena is the generally universal expectation placed on the next "new" pastor. The expectation is for the pastor arriving after the schism to be able to bring all the now former and inactive members back into full participation. This responsibility handed to the new pastor frequently serves as an early barometer of the pastor's ministry in this new assignment. Is this expectation born out of guilt or naiveté? The answer is probably both. Its as though the warring parties want confirmation that it was not their fault, their fighting, that turned members off and caused them to leave. Regardless, it is a trap for the incoming pastor. Unrealistic expectations are grounded in

the inadequate self-awareness of the congregation and fueled by underlying emotional tensions lived out in the Fight mode.

The thirteen-month intentional interim at DCC ended with the congregation “hiring” a new pastor. All went well for about four years until a board member revealed the pastor was prematurely moving in with her fiancé prior their scheduled wedding. While this is generally accepted in society, it is judged as less than professional for a member of the clergy. Nevertheless, it was an invitation for the board to fall into their default pattern and members took sides. Some supported the pastor, others were firm in their conviction that this behavior was wrong for a member of the clergy. The judicatory leader intervened and recommended the pastor resign. This was interpreted as the judicatory leader taking sides. The split over loyalties heightened as a number of the board members, along with others of the congregation, left when the pastor, whom they supported, resigned. And the pattern is repeated.

The survival response of fight can be displayed in varying forms from all out battle to rather obtuse, passive-aggressive, behaviors. Consider the piano. Countryside Christian had a spotted history of fighting interspersed with periods of relative calm. The conflicts varied: Spending money on property maintenance has often been a focal point of their choosing of sides. In the past there were periodic issues with another congregation with whom they were yoked for pastoral leadership.

The more recent pastor managed to preside over a period of relative peace. He was a city-boy and knew little of rural life. Curious by nature he was open

for the challenge of Countryside Christian in the heart an agricultural area. For him this was a cultural learning experience in which he delighted. He was willing to defer to the powers-that-be for the sake of the relationship and the adventure. In time his spouse had a career opportunity in another part of the country and he left.

Countryside retained the services of an interim pastor. Rev. Bach was well acquainted with small town congregations in rural America. One avenue he found for bringing a congregation together was through music in worship. He was a skilled pianist and Countryside had a beautiful baby-grand piano in the front of the sanctuary. Shortly after he arrived the organist informed him she would be away and her attempts to find a replacement failed. Rev. Bach stepped in and led the worship from the piano. Occasionally thereafter he provided special music. Then, one Sunday morning, desiring to introduce some new musical pieces to the congregation, Pastor Bach turned the piano slightly from sitting with his back to the congregation to a position allowing him eye contact with most of the worshippers. Nothing negative was said, but on Monday he noticed the piano turned back to its original position. This scenario repeated itself for several weeks. Then, one Saturday, as he was preparing for Sunday's worship, he approached the piano and found this unsigned declaration, *THIS PIANO SHALL NOT BE MOVED!*

This passive-aggressive approach to fighting was nothing new to Countryside. The note may have been anonymous, but this manner of fighting was accepted practice. Many pastors heed the advice to choose their battles

wisely, but all too often a fight can erupt over something the pastor thought was an insignificant 'no-brainer'. The congregation that is guided by the fight response will not be, cannot be, selective in its battles.

## Flight

The flight survival mode is more about the perception of a threat than an actual threat. Congregations can be very skillful at flight. As aggressive as those engaged in a fight response carry on their battles, those governed by the flight response focus their sense of survival on conflict avoidance and denial. They are driven by the need to be someplace safe; emotionally and theologically safe. When anxiety appears, they try to flee back into their past to a time when they felt church was safe. Challenge them with evangelism and they flee back to the sixties when people just came to their church and they had the largest Sunday school classes. Suggest a financial stewardship program and they will flee to the 30 years of ministry with Rev. Sobre and how he never had a need to preach on money.

The most common characteristic of a congregation living in the survival response of flight is there is little or no social interaction among the members. The people come to church just on time, or a little late, and once the worship is over, head straight for the door. Consequently, beyond worship, there is little or no involvement in ministry by members. Congregations in this mode of flight generally have a very flat affect and are rather aloof; often unable, or willing, to identify deep concerns. They work hard to keep emotions suppressed; not

engaging in fellowship, studies, or other activities helps ensure the lid stays on. One gets the sense members are proverbially “walking on eggshells.” Emotions are held under wraps and often affection and affirmations are withheld. “We can’t offer too much praise. We wouldn’t want the pastor to get a big head,” a member of the governing board told me in response to my inquiry into his congregation’s past practices for affirming their leaders and staff. Criticisms are more common, with the goal of correcting the behavior of others and thereby mitigating the stress. Ironically, the criticizer is usually oblivious to the additional stress and anxiety generated by their criticism.

A pastor will do well as long as the focus is oriented toward keeping the peace and not ‘rocking the boat.’ The clergy may even sense they are accepted and trusted. Trust in a flight congregation lasts until a stressor is introduced. If the cause of the anxiety is from outside the congregation then the pastor is expected to protect the congregation. If, however, it is the pastor who has opened the floodgates of anxiety trust is broken. Heightened agitation can be created simply by querying the congregation about an emotionally laden topic, such as money and their debt or tithing, anything to do with sexuality, or the affect of the previous pastor’s alcoholism. Healthy clergy cannot maintain a high level of energy and focus for ministry in settings where a posture of avoidance is expected and must be sustained.

In the artificial atmosphere of muted emotions, occasionally a member will act-out and be inappropriate. The general response of the congregation is to retreat into a pattern which includes avoidance and ignoring, but seldom

confrontation. They support their own lack of confronting with the wishful thinking, 'if we don't talk about the problem it will go away.' It gets excused and rationalized, "Oh, that's Maude. She gets that way ever so often." In this climate inappropriate behavior is tolerated and even openly accepted as one takes on the role of being the tolerated voice expressing the fearful projections of the community. Many congregations have at least one "Maude" on whom they can count to speak-up and identify what many are thinking or feeling. At the same time they can, and do, dismiss the person when the-now-spoken-truth hits too close to home and the anxiety level elevates solely at the thought of the issue being disclosed.

Many congregations, existing by this survival mode of the flight response, have limited experience of ever having been honored for who they are. They primarily judge they have never measured up to the expectations of their clergy. In the present the congregation tries to "be good" by strictly conducting worship the right way; beyond worship, other functions are at a minimum. The congregation has no clue how it is gifted for ministry or of its identity apart from the pastor or the denomination. What they have learned they pass on to each succeeding generation: God is serious. Church is serious. We don't measure up. Don't volunteer unless you are ready to be criticized. When in doubt, depend on the pastor to tell you what is right or what you should do. Do not initiate an idea or project in church. Seek the pastor's approval for everything. Blame the pastor for anything that causes criticism. Keeping the tradition, whether the meaning is understood or not, keeps the peace with

God, the pastor, and other members who seem to fear the consequences of doing something different.

When it is judged the pastor has gone too far or stayed too long, a stressor for some congregations, a passive tactic is employed; freeze the salary until the pastor leaves. They really don't want a big fight. They are afraid to talk about it. They just want the pastor to leave when it is time.

Congregations in the flight mode tend to have a revolving door with their clergy, frequently hiring first call clergy right out of seminary. Clergy serving their first congregation stay 3 years on average. This fairly abbreviated period is short enough for both congregation and pastor to avoid having an emotional investment in the relationship. They flee from commitments leading to forming deeper, lasting, trusting relationships. This applies to both congregations and clergy, "We know she will leave us in three years" or "I am planning only to stay here until I get my three years in." The prophecy is self-fulfilling; the flight from having to emotionally invest in the other is maintained.

Kleinberg Church was in the flight mode. In 1995 they called Pastor Bob. Pastor Bob had 16 years of experience and had served three previous churches. His children were in high school. He was looking for a place where he could raise his family and maybe settle in for the long haul. In the fall of 1999, after his last child graduated from high school, the congregation began to screech and flap its wings. Pastor Bob didn't think much of it, in part because there was no defined focus of concern. The congregation was exhibiting free-floating anxiety. As this unrest continued Pastor Bob consulted

with the judicatory leadership. A counselor who had been trained in conflict mediation was engaged. The counselor worked with the pastor and the congregation. Although nothing of significance surfaced the anxiety of the congregation seemed to subside. All was looking good and Pastor Bob was confident about his ministry in and with the congregation. He was, however, caught off guard in 2003 when again the congregation began to screech and flap its wings even more. Petty complaints were made against him in the monthly board meeting concerning an aspect of the youth program. Parents of youth group members, sitting on the board never spoke-up even when they knew the complaints were unfounded. Finally one person accidentally revealed the issue, "We understood you would leave when your children graduated from high school. They did that before the previous unrest. We want to make sure you leave this time." Pastor Bob was hurt and felt betrayed and abandoned. Shortly after that meeting he announced he would look for another church and would be leaving as soon as possible. Although his search extended for a longer period than either pastor or congregation hoped, the congregation was at peace.

In looking back over their records, subsequent to the founding pastor, the church had a succession of pastors leaving after three to five years of service from the early 1950s until 1980. In 1980 the congregation was served by a pastor who was retirement age. He served for 12 years. Then in 1992 another first call pastor served for just three years. (Note: In this denomination the expectation is for clergy, after graduating from seminary, to stay in their first

congregation for a minimum of three years.) Pastor Bob followed this seminary graduate. In 2005, after an interim period, the congregation called a pastor to serve part time. He was in his late 60s and lived in a neighboring community. The pastor fully retired after serving this congregation for seven years during which there was no screeching and flapping of wing by this congregation.

It is easy to see the flight plan of this congregation, three years and start over, unless one is at retirement age, older, safe, and not going to challenge. This pattern is governed not by trauma, but by unspoken expectation. The experience of revolving pastors shapes expectations supporting a congregational self-justification for not emotionally investing in relationship with its pastors, "You are going to leave us soon anyway." It also fosters non-involvement in activities or programs promoted by the pastor and is justified by the assertion that the next pastor will want to do something different. The "conflict" with Pastor Bob fit their three to five year cycle. This congregation became very anxious when the third or fourth year approached and Pastor Bob was not leaving. Pastor didn't read the indirect communication of unrest and anxious behavior as telling him his time was up and he was expected to leave. Since he made no indications of leaving after his children graduated, the end of the first three or four years, the congregation made sure a second three years would be the limit. The retirement-aged pastors obviously are seen as being safer for this congregation. The emotional risks are lower and tolerable, and the levels of insecurity with heightened anxiety are kept in check.

The survival mode of flight with its avoidance behaviors gives an

illusionary sense of safety as it creates a protectionist mindset of being against everything that calls into question the shell with which they have veiled themselves. This continually erodes any possibility of engagement in service and mission, of moving the congregation out of a focus of self-protection, into addressing the needs of its social context.

Congregations in the fight or flight modes tend to always be on guard against anything new, defensive against change and, in general, prone to being nervous or anxious. They will be among the first to fight against, or flee from, any unpopular decision, or direction, promoted by the pastor or the judicatory. A number of denominations have provided study materials encouraging their congregations to openly discuss human sexuality and inclusivity of people, including clergy, whose orientation is other than heterosexual. Some congregations left their denominations prior any final vote or decision. Trying to initiate a discussion was too stressful for them.

In many cases anxious pastors foster anxious congregations. The congregation, not being differentiated, receives the transference of the anxiety. Any discussion of the topic in question fuels their already anxious state. Denominational mergers, slavery, prohibition, war and amnesty, civil rights, use of Hebrew, Latin, the-mother-tongue, the ordination of women, and taking a stance on other social issues have led anxious behaviors for decades. For congregations in a survival mode these stressors heighten the anxiety to an unacceptable level and they will feel forced to fight or take flight.

In congregations governed by the fight or flight behavioral modes their identity becomes focused on what they are against, on the “no’s”. They become more insular. The self-differentiated congregation is better equipped to stay connected and foster healthy relationships, while addressing challenges/opportunities within, and engaging the needs in their social context.

### Freeze

The freeze mode exhibits significantly different behavioral characteristics, even as it shares a similar goal with the other two modes: mitigating the threat. The congregation in the freeze mode wants to create a zone of safety. For the congregation frozen in this mode the issue is not overt conflict, but the lack of healthy tension and engagement in life. There is no hostile aggressive behavior. Quite the opposite, congregations in the freeze mode can not be too passive. The survival technique is to become inactive, motionless, don’t risk movement, play dead.

These congregations can be warm but cautious, open but hesitant, agreeable but non-supportive; they are passive/passive in their behaviors. A congregation may acquiesce and follow the strong energy of a leader who goes off in a new direction, but never fully embrace the idea or change. Authority dependent congregations will agree to a new program “because the pastor wants it” but then they do not support it with their own participation. The motivation is appeasement of the pastor, not a desire to engage in a program for enhanced life of the congregation. The clues to this self-effacing mode are

heard in what they say, “We don’t know what is going on.” “Oh, this is the pastor’s program.” “This to shall pass.”

Whereas congregations in the fight and flight modes tend to have a stable but declining membership, many congregations in the freeze mode, the maintenance mode, have a higher turnover of newer members around a stable core of long-term members. The congregation in the freeze mode appears pleasant and somewhat open. In contrast to the expressions of fear and anger, too often experienced in the fight and flight modes, the members operate under a strong expectation they are to keep the peace. Visitors sense how members are friendly with each other although not too welcoming of strangers. The pastor is often attentive and very engaged, to the point of over-functioning. The visitor is attracted to the pastor’s hopes and visions for ministry in this congregation. Visitors join thinking this is a place where they can make a difference. They get involved with other fairly new members. Soon they find themselves over-involved and burning out. The stable membership sits on the sidelines, occasionally cheering, too frequently offering their “helpful” suggestions. The newer members serve at all levels of leadership, while, in some indefinable way, never feeling fully accepted. They trust the acceptance will come with time. They work to support the basic programs and try to work within the system to initiate new ventures. Eventually they come to realize it doesn’t really make a difference; they can’t make a difference. Nothing is going to change. If the congregation doesn’t want “new” or “change” then they really don’t want them. They judge they have never been accepted and feel used. They

leave.

Many congregations in a survival mode use maintenance of the system as a way to convince themselves they are active. They try to involve new members by placing them on committees and in positions of leadership. The new members feel a sense of obligation to the system and trust they can make a difference by working within it. The frustration many ultimately experience, but never understand, is that their allegiance supports an unhealthy system with a primary purpose to work to control “new” and to limit “change.”

The congregation in the freeze mode wants to move forward; they say they need to move forward, especially while in the search process for a new pastor, but when it really comes down to it, they are stuck, frozen in place. Their inability to initiate and act, even to honestly follow the pastor’s lead, reveals the disparity between their words and their actions. A congregation in such a state often becomes attached to a clergy who is going to take care of it and allow it to continue to be needy and over-dependent. While some clergy have kept congregations dependent for their own emotional needs, many clergy serving a congregation in the freeze mode, have, quite unconsciously, held congregations developmentally dependent, in part, because they, as clergy leaders, have not been equipped to lead congregations into a healthy state of self-differentiation. By training, clergy emphasize biblical literacy, worship, pastoral care, and mission, but not congregational identity development.

Serving congregations in the freeze mode, clergy frequently over function by personally assuming responsibility for practically every task. “Bud” was

pastor of a small congregation. He personally took responsibility for doing almost everything. Eventually his health got the best of him and his doctor told him he better seriously consider early retirement. He did, but stayed until the Sunday before the interim started. On the first Sunday of-life-after-Bud, following the worship and having greeted the parishioners on their way to coffee, the new interim noticed the offering plates still on the altar. He found the president of the congregation, coffee in hand, talking to several board members. Inquiring who had responsibility for counting and depositing the offering, he was met with an unexpected response, "Oh, Pastor Bud always did that. We don't know what has to be done." The interim asked, "So who took care of it when Pastor Bud was on vacation?" "In the 24 years he was here," replied one of the older board members, "Pastor Bud would take a vacation, but he was always back for Sunday worship. He always took care of it!" Clearly this was the pastors issue and the congregation was complicit.

Congregations in the freeze mode protect themselves from ridicule and attack by trying to run under the radar. They under-function. Generally this mode stems from a prevailing sense of purposelessness. It becomes a type of corporate depression; "we are powerless to change anything, powerless to make a difference." Often the primary goal is merely to keep the peace and bury the dead; to just maintain. This posture is fostered in a non-reflective life style wherein the congregation ceases to discern who it is or what it is to be about. The greater question may not be, "In which mode is the congregation?" Spending energy trying to decide how it got there may equally be fruitless. The

challenge before leaders of congregations in a survival mode is to understand the key to the congregation's defensiveness, its fear of risk, and how to curtail the anxiety. The fundamental issue is insecurity grounded in the lack of self-identity resulting in low, or no, self-esteem. Affirming the congregation in its personality, and its spirituality is essential to move it to a place of greater self-awareness, greater health.

Many congregations in a survival mode simply have never been nurtured into their personality. In a survival mode they appear to function very much like a teenager whose whole life was spent bouncing from one set of foster parents to the next. Each set tries to redeem the child by applying what has worked for them in their life. The teen learns to survive by ignoring or denying self and trying to become what the new set of foster parents want. They know quite clearly what others want of them, they do not have a sense of who they are or could be. Many congregations in a survival mode have had "foster pastors" who bounce in for a few years, try their best to redeem the congregation by doing what worked for them elsewhere and then move on. The teenager and the congregation each know not to trust such authority figures and learn not to trust themselves. However, these congregations are typified with a rather blind allegiance to authority. Tradition is often a more acceptable "authority figure" than any "outsider," clergy included. They then protect themselves with unhealthy rules like, "We've never done it that way before," or, "Don't rock the boat." By holding on to traditions supported by unhealthy rules, rather than allowing the traditions to hold them, they don't really learn

anything new about who they are, and continue to be less than healthy. They merely learn to survive and convince themselves that this is being faithful.