

Part One



MOMENTUM

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MOTIVATIONS

MOMENTUM

Momentum, resources, and strengths create strong, healthy congregations.

Five qualities contribute to a congregation having momentum . . . having a strong track record of action, implementation, and momentum.

Momentum begins with a motivational match.

Momentum grows as persons achieve key objectives.

Momentum develops power with an effective long-range plan.

Momentum moves forward as we discover the value of excellent mistakes and as we recognize that some objectives are worth not doing.

Momentum deepens as we value memory, change, conflict, and hope.

Without these qualities, congregations do not have a strong track record. Regrettably, some congregations have become preoccupied with meetings and coordination, indecision and analysis paralysis, inertia and impassivity, despair, depression, and despondency.

As you help your congregation, think through which of these five qualities are already present and which ones you can grow forward as you move toward your congregation's future. This chapter and the remaining chapters on momentum discuss these qualities in depth.

MOTIVATIONS

Momentum begins with motivation. Motivations stir momentum. Strong, healthy congregations create a motivational match.

The major motivations present in people and in congregations are:

- Compassion
- Community
- Hope
- Challenge
- Reasonability
- Commitment

Frequently, I refer to these as motivational resources. Motivation is internal, not external. These are the constructive motivational resources inside a person with which persons motivates themselves forward.

All six are present in every person. God blesses every person with all six. You can grow any of the motivations forward in your life. For a variety of reasons, people tend to have grown forward one or two as their primary motivations for this time of life. Life is a pilgrimage. Life is a search. At another stage of life, you might grow forward another of the motivational resources.

The primary motivational resources influence how (and whether) people give their strengths, gifts, and competencies to the life and mission of the congregation.

Compassion has to do with sharing, caring, giving of one's self, and supporting. Many people do what they do in life and in their congregation out of the spirit of compassion.

Community has to do with good fun, good times, fellowship, affiliation, belonging, and the sense of family and home. Many people do what they do in a congregation out of this sense of roots, place, and belonging.

Challenge has to do with accomplishment, achievement, and attainment. Some people rise to the bait of an excellent

challenge. They thrive on accomplishing things that others claim cannot be done. Some people do what they do in the congregation out of this sense of challenge, accomplishment, and achievement.

Reasonability has to do with data, analysis, logic, thinking, and “it makes good sense.” Some people do what they do in life and in their congregation out of this sense of reasonability.

Commitment has to do with dedication. Some people do what they do in life and in a congregation out of a sense of duty, vow, obligation, loyalty, and faithfulness. They have a deep commitment to the congregation’s surviving, thriving, and well-being. They have a commitment to the congregation’s work and mission.

All of these motivational resources are present in a given congregation. Two of the six are predominant among the key leaders. Two are predominant among the grassroots. Two are predominant in the pastor (and staff). Two tend to predominate among many of the unchurched in the community. These distinctive motivational configurations constitute the motivational map of a congregation.

A MOTIVATIONAL MATCH

I am with many congregations who say to me, “Dr. Callahan, we want you to know our worship attendance is strong, many people attend, many people do most of the work, and many people give generously.” I immediately know I am with congregations who have a motivational match.

Congregations with a strong track record of action, implementation, and momentum have an excellent match of motivational resources between key leaders, the pastor (and staff), the grassroots in the congregation, and the unchurched in the community.

The motivational match happens whenever the key leaders, grassroots, pastor and staff, and unchurched find a motivational

match a common motivational resonance with two of these three:

- Compassion
- Community
- Hope

We do not need resonance on all three. We will have strong momentum when we have a match on any two. A match occurs

A Motivational Match in Strong, Healthy Congregations

	Key Leaders	Grassroots	Pastor Staff	UnChurched
Compassion	●	●	●	●
Community	●	●	●	●
Hope				
Challenge				
Reasonability				
Commitment				

Compassion: sharing, caring, giving, loving, serving
Community: good fun, good times, belonging, family
Hope: confidence, assurance in the grace of God

Challenge: accomplishment, achievement, attainment
Reasonability: data, analysis, logic, it makes good sense
Commitment: duty, vow, obligation, loyalty

A Motivational Gap: Weak, Declining and Dying Congregations

	Key Leaders	Grassroots	Pastor Staff	UnChurched
Compassion		●		●
Community		●		●
Hope				
Challenge	●		●	
Reasonability				
Commitment	●		●	

when two of these are the prevailing motivational resources in the congregation. There is a strong sense of continuity, reliability, and stability in the congregation. There is a healthy spirit of momentum. We act swiftly.

A strong, healthy congregation develops a motivational match between the key leaders, the grassroots, the pastor and staff, and the unchurched. A weak, declining congregation creates a motivational gap. A dying congregation makes the motivational gap wider.

A MOTIVATIONAL GAP

I am with many congregations who say to me, “Dr. Callahan, we want you to know our worship attendance is meager, the same few people attend, the same few people do most of the work, and the same few people give most of the money.” I immediately know I am with congregations who have a motivational gap. Wherever there is a mismatch of motivational resources, there is a weak or nonexistent track record of implementation.

I share this suggestion with both the key leaders and the pastor: “You want to bridge from your predominant motivational resources to those that are present among the grassroots. Then, you will motivate and mobilize the strengths, gifts, competencies, and financial resources of the grassroots.”

The way forward is to **bridge** the motivational resources to create a helpful match.

Frequently, the reason some things do not happen in a local congregation is because what motivates the key leaders and the pastor differs from what motivates the grassroots of the congregation, and does not resonate with the unchurched. The keys leaders and the pastor share the same motivational resources, but the grassroots motivate themselves out of different motivational resources. They do not resonate well . . . fit well together.

There is a “motivational gap.” Note . . . it is not a commitment gap. Sometimes, that is what pastors and key leaders mistakenly conclude, particularly as they tend to work out of the motivational resource of commitment.

In a motivational gap, the key leaders and pastor broadcast on the radio wavelengths of challenge and commitment. The grassroots and the unchurched have their radios tuned to compassion and community. There is no resonance. There is no match. It is a motivational gap.

In committee meeting after committee meeting, the key leaders and the pastor say to one another, "If people were only more committed and would rise to the challenge, this blooming venture would get better." The hook, the catch is that the grassroots and the unchurched do not motivate themselves in high challenge, deeply committed ways.

Regrettably, high challenged, deeply committed keys leaders look for pastors who look like them. They create a wider motivational gap. In this situation, I gently suggest to the key leaders and the pastor, "Good friends, your *challenge* is to develop a strong *commitment* to doing what you do out of the two motivational resources of *compassion* and *community*." This is the *reasonable* thing you can do focus on the motivational resources of compassion and community." This is a motivational *bridge*.

I will ask key leaders whether they have grandchildren. They do. They have pictures. They joyfully share their delight. They speak of all the good fun things they do with their grandchildren. They say, "If we knew how much fun grandchildren were going to be, we would have had them first."

I suggest to them that they live the motivations of compassion and community with their grandchildren. These are the motivations present in their grandchildren. I suggest they will do well when they relate to the grassroots the same way they relate to their grandchildren. It is a motivational *bridge*.

MOTIVATING GRASSROOTS MEMBERS

It happens again and again in congregations. People say to me, "Dr. Callahan, there are only a few of us who do everything." This happens because of a motivational gap. Often, the faithful

few are motivated by commitment. Thus, the leadership recruitment is pitched toward commitment. The grassroots members do not respond to commitment. They respond best to compassion or community.

In thinking through how to raise funds for a fellowship hall and church school facilities, you can design a giving campaign to appeal to the persons who you hope will be generous givers. Do you want to raise the money primarily with the key leaders? Do you want to raise the money primarily with the grassroots?

I once asked each person on the finance committee to list these six motivational resources on a sheet of paper. I invited each of them to think which two motivational resources influence the grassroots of their congregation. I reminded them not to think about leaders but rather the grassroots. Independently and individually, each person of the finance committee checked “compassion” and “community” as the major motivational resources influencing the grassroots.

I said to them, “The best thing you can do is to launch the giving campaign with the best good-fun, good-times fellowship, community-oriented, family reunion supper this congregation has ever seen. In the brochure, do not focus on the square footage of the buildings. Instead, you can show *people pictures* of who will benefit from the new facilities. Describe the mission and programs that will take place in the new facilities. Share how the new facilities will help advance forward person’s lives and destinies in compassionate, community ways. Share how people will discover the grace of God.”

These key leaders motivate themselves primarily by challenge and commitment. They wanted to raise the money primarily from the grassroots. They remembered their grandchildren. They remembered what I had suggested. They decided *not* to launch the campaign with a Loyalty Sunday that appealed to commitment. They decided *not* to have a “challenge thermometer goal” of a specific dollar amount that *must* be reached in order to do this project. They decided not to remind people of their “commitment vows.”

They had done all of these things in previous campaigns. They had usually “fallen short.” The giving had come mostly from key leaders. Little came from the grassroots.

I had told the finance committee, “If you prefer to raise the money from among *only* the key leaders in this congregation, be sure to focus on the motivations of challenge and commitment. You will raise the money primarily from among the key leaders. This is what you have taught me about your previous campaigns. The lesson to learn is to focus on the motivational resources prevalent among the grassroots if you hope to raise the money with the grassroots.

In weak and declining and dying congregations, I find many of the key leaders originally became part of the congregation out of the motivations of compassion and community. But, over the past twenty-five years, the few remaining key leaders have changed the focus of their motivations to challenge and commitment. To be sure, the only people left are those people who are committed to the challenge of trying to keep this congregation going so that it might minimally survive.

I find reasonability a major motivation in communities that have a high density of engineers, scientists, and data processing persons. In small college towns, with a high density of professors, reasonability will be a major motivation.

Sometimes, I discover a congregation that has been badly burned by several traumatic events in recent years. In this setting, the key leaders learn the motivation of reasonability. Understandably, people in this situation will hesitate—want to make sure a plan makes good sense—before they put their hand into the flame yet another time. The last few times they did, they got burned.

Now, I have never yet met a couple who got married out of the motivation of reasonability. If it made reasonable sense, most people would not be married. People get married out of compassion, community, and hope. Then, they rationalize why it made sense to get married earlier rather than later.

An overworked motivation is commitment. Someone says to me, “Dr. Callahan, what we need in our congregation is more commitment.” My response is “Good friend, you have just taught me you are a long-time Christian. The early

motivations that draw all of us to the Christian life are compassion, community, and hope. Then, over twenty or more years, some grow forward the motivation of commitment.”

I add, “If there were lots of longtime Christians out there, we would do well on commitment. What are out there are persons who are unchurched . . . who are on the verge of beginning their early years in a Christian life.”

I go on to suggest, “You have taught me that a major motivation out of which you do what you do is commitment. But, good friend, many persons do what they do in the congregation out of compassion, community, hope, challenge, or reasonability. You are wanting people to motivate themselves the way you motivate yourself. You will do better when you focus on the actual way people motivate themselves.”

Some key leaders and pastors, with a primary motivation of commitment, press the congregation to “remember their membership vows.” For persons for whom *compassion* is their primary motivation, the phrase “remember your membership vows” may end up sounding like “remember to clean up your room.”

To be sure, the membership vows of many denominations were written by people whose primary motivation was commitment. They were longtime Christians when they wrote the vows. The early vows are more like, “Will you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength? Will you love your neighbor as you love yourself?”

In some congregations, it would be helpful during giving campaigns to have compassion cards rather than commitment cards. It would make better sense to have a Love Sunday rather than a Loyalty Sunday. It would be more helpful to have a Community Sunday rather than a Commitment Sunday.

COMPETENCIES AND COMMITMENT

Most ministers are competent as ministers. It is not true that all ministers are incompetent. It is not true that only some ministers are incompetent. It is true that some people are incompetent

as ministers. That does not mean they are incompetent. It means simply that they are incompetent only for the position of minister.

Shortstops are competent as shortstops. It is not true that shortstops are incompetent. It is true that some people who are competent as shortstops are incompetent as pitchers. Some persons do not have the competencies for some positions. They do have the competencies for other positions.

Some people who are incompetent as ministers use the bludgeon of commitment to excuse their own ineptness. As a matter of fact, the ploy of charging people with lack of commitment is often an effort at guilt transference. Some people are aware of their own ineptness and incompetence as ministers but try to transfer guilt to the members by using the push for commitment.

When things don't go well, some ministers blame the grassroots for a lack of commitment. In fact, the problem may be their lack of specific competencies. They miss the fact that the grassroots motivate themselves on compassion, community, or hope. To miss this is evidence that one is incompetent. Sometimes, a declining worship attendance is due to the lack of a preaching competency. Some few ministers, rather than working on their preaching, fall back on blaming the grassroots for a lack of commitment.

Some ministers preach sermons on commitment that are really sermons of displaced anger, dumped on a congregation. You are welcome to preach a sermon on commitment. Do it with a spirit of compassion. It will be a helpful sermon.

Preaching, however stumbling and inept, which focuses on the motivations of compassion, community, and hope will go further than the preaching which pulverizes people for their lack of commitment. It is regrettable that commitment has become an overworked motivation resource in many congregations. Further, it is regrettable that inept, incompetent persons use the excuse of lack of commitment as their way to divert responsibility. Commitment and compassion are good friends in strong, healthy congregations.

COMPASSION AND COMMUNITY

Many, many unchurched persons are attracted to congregations that share a sense of compassion and community rather than a sense of commitment. Commitment is a motivational resource developed among “longtime Christians.” What draws and attracts new people to a congregation is their search for compassion . . . sharing and caring in which they can participate. What draws people to a congregation is their search for community . . . roots, place, belonging. What draws people to a congregation is their longing for hope. New people are frequently drawn to a congregation by the major motivations of compassion, community, and hope.

One new congregation mailed out a brochure in its community. The cover of the brochure read, “Come, join in the challenge of starting a new (*denominational name*) church.” The brochure focused on and appealed to persons motivated by challenge . . . high achievement and accomplishment-oriented people . . . who are already a part of that denomination. Inside the brochure were lists of activities. The reader was urged to come and fulfill his commitment.

The brochure for another new congregation has on the front a line drawing of a church, several people, and of a home. The only words on the front of the brochure are, “Your friend next door.” It is an appeal to compassion and to community. Inside the brochure were pictures of people sharing events of compassion and community with one another.

Some of the mainline Protestant denominations are experiencing decline because their focus is principally on the motivation of commitment. It is somewhat like a focus on the “advanced trigonometry” of church membership—when in fact many, many people seek out congregations that focus on the “basic math” of compassion, community, and hope.

Do a thoughtful analysis of the predominant motivations present in your congregation. It is not as simple as pounding on commitment. In many areas, dominated by high-tech industry, many key leaders have the two primary motivations of challenge

and reasonability—they are scientists and engineers, with an entrepreneurial spirit.

The grassroots of some congregations match with challenge and reasonability. These congregations have a strong track record of action, implementation, and momentum because of this excellent match. This can occur in a community where the two primary motivations are prevalent in both the community and the congregation. Indeed, large numbers of people in these communities share the same two major motivational resources—namely, challenge and reasonability. It is an excellent match across the board.

I find this analysis of motivational resources most intriguing and most helpful. I have developed this material out of my own research and reflections. At the same time, on each occasion I share this with groups and give them the chance to compare the motivational resources among key leaders, grassroots, pastor, and the unchurched, it becomes increasingly self-apparent to them why some congregations have a strong track record of action, implementation, and momentum, and some do not.

In your congregation you can encourage forward a motivational match among key leaders, grassroots, pastor, and unchurched. The more bridging of a motivation gap, the more likely the momentum is to grow. The closer the match, the stronger the track record of action, implementation, and momentum. A motivational match stirs momentum.