

Segment **C14: Boomers and Boomerangs**

Baby boomer adults and their teenage and young adult children sharing suburban homes

Resource: Mosaic by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious perspective: *It's the right thing to do!*

Common Spiritual Issues: *Feeling lost, lonely, or discarded*

Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group Booming with Confidence	Frequent Neighbors
B08 Babies and Bliss	C11 Aging of Aquarius	B07 Generational Soup
H26 Progressive Potpourri	C12 Golf Carts and Gourmets	D18 Suburban Attainment
L41 Booming and Consuming	C13 Silver Sophisticates	Q62 Reaping Rewards
	C14 Boomers and Boomerangs	

General Comments

Boomers and Boomerangs are part of a growing population of households with 20-something children living at home. Although they are disappointed not to have the immediate freedom of empty-nesting, these households tend to be remarkably harmonious because family is as important as career. Parents and young adult children often share traditional lifestyles and right-of-center points of view. Their sense of wellbeing is tempered by money management concerns.

The generations represented in the household may well differ about the importance of church. The fact that 20-something children do *not* attend church means that their parents are apt to become *less involved* in church now that the kids are back home. The churches that sustain their interest are usually larger, resource size churches; or church plants. These churches tend to be more upbeat and informal in worship style, but continue basically traditional worship structure. The senior pastors are often younger than the paid staff. Churches provide a wide variety of short term activities, and have a strong external focus for evangelism and/or social service. They have a “glocal” perspective, and like to link local social action with global issues.

Boomers and Boomerangs usually prefer churches that can offer multiple options in every program area. Blending worship styles, learning methodologies, or other programs tends to leave everyone dissatisfied ... but they will gladly share the same fellowship experiences and then gravitate to whatever program suits their interests.

General Comments

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How do I, as a leader, perceive the spiritual expectations of people in our community?

How can we, as a board, research and understand our community better?

How can we, as a church, build closer relationships with this lifestyle segment?

Color Key

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
---------------	-----------------	--------------

Leadership Preferences

Resource: *Spiritual Leadership* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

THE CONSTANT LEADERS		THE ORGANIC LEADERS		THE EXTREME LEADERS	
Caregiver	x	Discipler	x	Visionary	
Enabler		Guru		Mentor	
CEO				Pilgrim	

Senior pastors are especially focused on the challenge to mature and multiply Christians. They model the DNA of the church and set high standards for spiritual life. Pastors manage a paid and/or unpaid team that defines measurable outcomes to change lives, grow Christians, call "ministers", equip volunteers, and send servants. They organize the church to move people from hospitality, through worship and spiritual growth, to serving in gifted and called ways in the world as conscientious Christians. Therefore, these leaders focus on lay training and high accountability. Leaders may or may not be certified by a seminary and ordained by a denomination. They may be good preachers, but must be excellent coaches and mentors. Administrative tasks are often delegated to an Executive Minister.

Spiritual leaders need to understand lifestyle and demographic diversity, and be sensitive to the different kinds of anxieties that lie behind each generation's quest for meaning. They tend to avoid hasty generalizations about preferred religious practices or worldviews, and are good listeners. Their credibility is based on life experience as well as academic training.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe your pastor now?

How might your pastor adapt to be more empathic in the future?

How can you equip, train, and/or support your pastor in any transition?

Hospitality Preferences

Resource: *Worship Ways* by Thomas Bandy and Lucinda Holmes (Abingdon Press)

TRADITIONAL		MODERN		POSTMODERN	
	The Basics	x	Multiple Choices		Take-Out
			Healthy Choices		

Boomers and Boomerangs may drive separately to church and require extra parking. They expect informality, but greetings should be warm and sincere. A Welcome Center provides all the information they need to know. The pastor may be in conversation with newcomers, but the musicians must mingle with members. They are considered "front line" evangelists for the church.

"Boomers" and "Boomerangs" may attend different worship services, and they might "hang out" in the refreshment area while their family members are in the sanctuary. Refreshments are provided before, during, and after worship. Provide wireless environments and TV screens that allow them to watch religious programming from within or beyond the church.

People in this lifestyle segment are not content with basic coffee and donuts, but neither do they prioritize healthy foods. Offer multiple choices of food. Quality can vary from cold pizza to fresh apple pie. Always provide real cream for good coffee, with optional flavor shots. However, espresso is too fancy. They are more likely to appreciate the standard fair trade coffee and environmentally friendly foods, than more exclusive coffee brands and national grocery store chains.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe your hospitality ministries now?

How should hospitality ministries change to be more relevant to this lifestyle segment?

What additional training do greeters, ushers, and servers need to be more empathic?

Worship Preferences

Resource: *Worship Ways* by Thomas Bandy and Lucinda Holmes (Abingdon Press)

TRADITIONAL		MODERN		POSTMODERN	
	Care-giving Worship	x	Inspirational Worship		Mission-Connectional Worship
	Educational Worship		Transformational Worship	x	Coaching Worship
	Healing Worship				

The multiple generations in *Boomers and Boomerangs* tend to participate in a blend of inspirational and coaching worship services that are contemporary in style and more traditional in structure. Worship is usually simple, and the order of service projected by rarely printed. The basic structure of approach, confession, thanksgiving, education, and commissioning is still discernible in worship, especially if Eucharist is included.

There is usually a practical "how to" theme around which worship is shaped. Music reflects the theme, and is supplemented by music video, live drama or video clip, or even comedy. The message is informal and may last longer than 20 minutes. It coaches participants to live better Christian lives and align daily living to God's purpose. Scripture is a constant reference point, and is used to give practical advice about moral behavior and problem solving. Eucharist may be important for some, but will often be celebrated informally like an Agape meal.

Worship is often characterized by upbeat, lyrical "praise music", but the tastes of this lifestyle segment are increasingly sophisticated and the old 70's music no longer works. Contemporary music must be more *urban contemporary*, and tends to include sounds and instruments associated with jazz, blues, rock, and rap. These people listen to the radio during commutes, at work and play, the Christian content must be conveyed in current popular sounds. LCD screens and amplified sounds are common.

As church plants or establish churches grow, worship becomes more intentionally diversified. Generations may arrive in different vehicles, park in different parking lots, and attend different services occurring simultaneously in the building. However, worship options often follow similar themes and scripture lessons. The transition from blended to multi-option worship can be stressful, since this often requires different preachers and different sermons, and different music leaders and m

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe your worship service(s) now?

How should you customize one or more worship services to be relevant to this segment?

What additional training do preachers, musicians, readers need to meet expectations?

Education Preferences

Resource: See, Know, and Serve by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

FORM		CONTENT		GROUPING	
	Curricular		Biblical		Generational
x	Experiential	x	Topical	x	Peer Group

The Sunday school may not be large in churches that bless *Boomers and Boomerangs* because there are fewer young children. Each Sunday school "class" tends to stand alone, and participants may be sporadic in their attendance (depending on the topic of the day ... and the sports venue anticipated in the afternoon). The 20-somethings living at home often prefer midweek small groups to Sunday school because they enjoy the night life on Saturdays and are less likely to get up early. If they attend, the class will function like a small affinity group. The same is true for the 50-60 year old parents, although some of them may participate in more traditional Bible study classes.

The units of education are quite experiential. They prefer dialogue to reading, and enjoy discussion topics of interest. Content may be provided by internet or DVD. The content may address a lifestyle topic or issue (like addiction recovery, faith in the workplace, interpersonal relationships, etc.), but it often focuses on specific missions or mission projects in which participants are actively involved. Increasingly outreach and education go together in action/reflection methodologies and ongoing mentoring.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe children, youth, and adult education in your church now?

How would education strategies need to change to be relevant to this lifestyle segment?

What changes in leadership selection and training would make education more effective?

Small Group Preferences

Resource: See, Know, and Serve by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

LEADERSHIP		CONTENT	
x	Trained Leaders		Curriculum Study
	Rotated Leaders	x	Shared Affinity

Boomers and Boomerangs have wide ranging and eclectic interests ... from fishing to motorcycling, and from bird watching to active sports. Almost any shared enthusiasm can become an affinity on which to base a small group. Small groups are attractive to this lifestyle segment because it provides an effective way for the two generations to interact. They can participate in a shared enthusiasm that includes prayer, significant conversation about life and faith, and Bible reading (or other devotional practices).

Be creative and think outside the box. Affinity groups can often be taken "on the road" to be part of a mission trip ... or be fun and innovative (e.g. a "tail gate" party strategy for sports fans). Most groups are about discovering oneself or exploring one's relationship with God. Some more advanced groups mentor spiritual habits and coach personal mission. Still others are based around active participation in a mission (e.g. Habitat for Humanity). All groups have strong interpersonal relationship goals.

The nature of leadership depends on the affinity. Some affinities require expertise, and others simply invite the expertise already shared by participants. If the real goal of small groups is fellowship, leaders may be rotated. If the real goal is spiritual growth, leaders are usually designated and trained. Leadership training and accountability is very important. A Small Group Developer is usually the next staff addition (after additional worship or music leadership). Group leaders need to be trained in processes that not only build trusting relationships (which overcome personality conflicts), but also faith formation processes (which are open to hard questions).

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe the Small Group strategy in your church now?

How would Small Group strategies need to change to be relevant to this lifestyle segment?

What changes in leadership and content would make Small Groups more effective?

Outreach Preferences

Resource: Strategic Thinking by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

	PERSONAL NEED	READINESS TO VOLUNTEER
Basic Survival		
Health and Wellness		
Quality of Life		X
Addiction Intervention	X	
Interpersonal Relationships	X	X
Human Potential		X
Salvation and Human Destiny		

The gap between generations living under the same roof may not be as big as some might suppose. Parents and their young adult children often share similar values and worldviews. Nevertheless, they appreciate any ministry that helps them increase sensitivity between generations and learn how to work, play, and communicate with one another. They lead active lives, although fitness may not be their top priority.

The young adults are very interested in opportunities to explore personality types and spiritual gifts, expand and deepen friendships, and develop careers. Their interest in addiction intervention ministries may combine a weeknight Recovery Worship service with various small groups for addiction intervention and mutual support. Small group affinities related to developing human potential are also welcome. The topics may include career choices and job skills, gifts discernment and personality typing, personal spiritual disciplines.

Boomers and Boomerangs may not be very interest in environmental issues, but they can enthusiastically support other outreach ministries that improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods and communities. They often prefer hands-on missions endorsed by the church. They are not big financial donors, but offer time and talent to short term projects.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

What outreach categories does your church emphasize now?

What outreach categories would be more relevant to this lifestyle segment?

What outreach priorities and tactics should change for the church to bless this segment?

Facility Preferences

Resource: See, Know, and Serve by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

PROPERTY		TECHNOLOGY		SYMBOLISM	
	Ecclesiastical	x	Modern	x	Classic Christendom
x	Utilitarian	x	Postmodern		Contemporary Post–Christendom

Boomers and Boomerangs tend to be conservative and practical. They avoid ostentation and extravagance, although they value top-of-the-line technologies and facilities. They prefer multi-purpose facilities with spacious hospitality and activity rooms; worship centers that are more "concert style", with a versatile stage and curved rows of contemporary theater seating. The most visible technology in the worship center is usually not the organ, but the drum set (usually surrounded by an acoustical Plexiglas screen) and microphone stands. If there are cup holders beside each seat, so much the better! Education rooms may use craft tables rather than desks, and provide storage space for technology, sports equipment, and other "stuff". The property often includes a sports field or gymnasium; perhaps a separate space for youth gatherings, picnics, etc.

The exterior of the building may resemble a high quality entertainment venue, but the inside uses symbols and architecture that communicates spirituality. The images are easily recognized Christian symbols, along with pictures of their own people in acts of service. Technology is a blend of modern and postmodern (easily accessible by either generation in this lifestyle segment). The facility is wireless with lots of space and electrical outlets for laptop computers, but it also has printed resources in abundance.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

What renovations and/or upgrades need to be made in our church facility?

What symbols of faith would be most relevant to this lifestyle segment?

If we started another site of ministry for this segment, how should we design it?

Financial Preferences

Resource: See, Know, and Serve by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

GIVING TARGET		GIVING METHOD	
	Unified Budgets and General Funds		Informed Philanthropy & Pledging
x	Designated Programs & Mission Projects	x	Lifestyle Coaching & Family Financial Planning

Both the parents and young adults among *Boomers and Boomerangs* appreciate a stewardship program that offers lifestyle coaching. They want to know how to adjust their lifestyles in order to become more generous people. They are less concerned about percentage giving, but they can be very generous responding to emerging crises or natural disasters. Their generosity often combines financial giving with hands-on service.

Stewardship methods vary between generations. The parents still prefer fall campaigns that include every member visitations and information meetings. The young adults tend to value a spring campaign that emphasizes mission giving. As trust levels for institutional churches go down, they are more likely to designate giving than donate to a unified budget. They don't need to know details. They give to big visions and visible change. The parents are more interested in receiving a tax receipt that gives them credit for their pledging. The young adults are more interested in getting coaching to spend (or tithe) their tax refund.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

What options in giving methods and giving targets do we offer now?

How do we design our annual stewardship campaign(s) now?

How should we revise our financial strategy to be more relevant to this segment?

Communication

Resource: Mosaic E–Handbook by Experian

CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC COMMUNICATION				TRADITIONAL CHURCH COMMUNICATION						
Direct Mail Receptive		Mobile Telephone		Online Computer		Newspaper		Corded Telephone		Verbal Announcements
Email Receptive	x	Broadcast Cable TV	x	Internet Radio		Print		AM/FM Radio		Personal Visits

Boomers and Boomerangs use a variety of media as different generations live, play, work, and worship together in the same household. They are transitioning swiftly from AM/FM and cable TV to internet radio and streaming video. Similarly, they are transitioning from books to e-readers. They pay less and less attention to verbal announcements or printed church newsletters.

Younger generations are educating older generations in the use of social media, but parents may not use all the features of a Smart Phone. They respond to images more than words. Text the young adults; but phone the parents. Both generations may browse online newsfeeds, and the younger generation might follow blogs and podcasts. The most effective influencers today will offer both online coaching and publish a book, merging media so that both generations can share informed conversation on the same topic.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How do we communicate among church participants now?

How do we communicate beyond our church to the community now?

How should we adapt communication strategies to be more effective for this segment?

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

POTENTIAL INFLUENCE

Lifestyle Compatibility	Daily behavioral habits overlap with common activities and similar priorities
Family Group	Grouping by key demographic factors like age, income, culture, family status, etc.
Frequent Neighbors	Often live near each other with shared recreational, health, or emergency services

LEADERSHIP

Constant Leaders	Traditional clergy focused on sustaining ministries & increasing members
Organic Leaders	Innovative leaders focused on church growth, new starts & multiplying followers
Extreme Leaders	Non-Institutional leaders focused on spiritual disciplines, high accountability, and pursuing perfection
Caregiver	Focus on visitation, counseling, pastoral prayer
Enabler	Focus on facilitating meetings, lay empowerment, mediation, liturgy
CEO	Focus on staff development, administration, fund raising, expository preaching
Discipler	Focus on seeker sensitivity, adult faith formation, guidance for Christian living
Guru	Focus on religious insight, holistic personal growth, spirituality, enlightenment
Visionary	Focus on big picture, major social change, motivational speaking
Mentor	Focus on self-awareness, individual meaning and purpose, vocational clarity
Pilgrim	Focus on cross-cultural sensitivity, inter-religious dialogue, strict spiritual discipline

HOSPITALITY

The Basics	Friendly untrained greeters, basic coffee and creamer, packaged food or sugary snacks
Multiple Choices	Trained greeters, multiple serving stations, great coffee, varieties of food
Healthy Choices	Trained greeters mirroring lifestyle diversity, healthy food options, allergen alerts
Take-Out	Coffee-to-go, bagged food, exit door hospitality, text message and social media

EDUCATION

Curricular	Printed books or study guides. Passive, intellectual, classroom. Maturity measured by acquired knowledge
Experiential	Activities. More music, images, movement, interaction. Maturity measured by behavior patterns, attitudes.
Biblical	Focuses on the Old and New Testaments. Maturity means Biblical literacy
Topical	Focuses on contemporary issues. Maturity means ethical integrity and enlightened behavior
Generational	Gathers people by age or grade in separate classrooms with age-appropriate resources.
Peer Group	Gathers people sharing affinities or common interests regardless of age.

SMALL GROUPS

Rotated Leaders	Participants take turns hosting and leading the group. Requires limited expertise and training.
Designated Leaders	Single leader guides the group from start to finish. Requires significant maturity and training.
Curriculum	Focus on a book, workbook, or structured program to guide structured discussion
Affinity	Focus on shared interest, enthusiasm, or activity to inspire informal discussion.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS (cont.)

WORSHIP

Educational	Consistent liturgy, expository preaching, focus on doctrine, ethics, and history
Inspirational	Uplifting music, motivational speaking, focus on joy, optimism, and encouragement
Transformational	Spontaneous, expectant, personal transformations, Higher Power interventions
Coaching	Informal, dialogical, topical, practical coaching on how to live better & faithfully
Caregiving	Slow, meditative, family–feel with pastoral prayer, children’s time, senior celebrations
Healing	Quiet, prayerful, expectant of physical, mental, relational healing and hope
Mission–Connectional	Unity of action/reflection, all about outreach, volunteer empowerment

OUTREACH

Survival	Basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, jobs, basic health care
Recovery	Addiction intervention, 12 step support, and counseling services
Health	Mental and physical fitness, disease prevention, rehabilitation, therapy
Quality of Life	Social wellbeing, neighborhood safety, environment, immigration, peacemaking
Human Potential	Personal/vocational fulfillment, education, career help, human rights advocacy
Interpersonal	Intimacy, sexuality, family & marriage counseling, healthy friendships
Human Destiny	Repentance, conversion, witnessing, alignment with God’s purposes

FACILITIES

Ecclesiastical	Facility must “look like a church” with traditional architecture and furnishings
Utilitarian	Facility must be “user–friendly” and multi–purpose for public use
Christendom	Indoor/outdoor symbols associated with church history or denominational identity
Contemporary	Indoor/outdoor symbols from nature, indigenous cultures, alternative spiritualities
Modern	Technology primarily enhances print and oral communication
Postmodern	Technology primarily enhances multi–sensory interaction, internet, social media

FINANCES

Unified Budgets	Stability first. Give to a single general fund to pay staff and manage overhead costs
Designated Giving	Effectiveness first. Give to specific funds or causes by personal preference
Informed Philanthropy	Informed, independent, confidential financial commitments for a tax benefit
Lifestyle Coaching	Individual & household coaching for Christian family financial management

COMMUNICATION

Direct Mail Receptive	Pay attention to mass mailings to postal addresses.
Email Receptive	Pay attention to information delivered digitally to personal email addresses.
Mobile Telephone	Regularly rely on cell phones and smart phones for calling, texting, surfing, banking etc.
Broadcast Cable TV	Regularly rely on cable television for news, advertising, and entertainment.
Online Computer	Regularly go online by personal computer to surf websites, shop, bank, and use other services.
Internet Radio	Regularly subscribe to internet services for music, sports, and topical discussions.
Newspaper	Pay attention to printed newspapers for updates about church news or local, national, global events.
Print	Pay attention to printed church newsletters, bulletin inserts, brochures, and other handouts.
Corded Telephone	Regularly use ordinary telephones to communicate from home.
AM/FM Radio	Regularly use traditional radio to listen to music, commercials, and talk.
Verbal Announcements	Always rely on verbal announcements from the pulpit about church events or items of interest.
Personal Visits	Always expect personal visits at home by a representative of the church to share information.