

Segment **F22: Fast Track Couples**

Active, young upper middle-class couples and families living upwardly-mobile lifestyles

Resource: Mosaic by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious Perspective: *Looking for God through (or with?) the Eyes of a Child*

Common Spiritual Issues: *Feeling purposeless or overwhelmed, anxieties over emptiness and fate*

Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group F Promising Families	Frequent Neighbors
C14 Boomers and Boomerangs	F22 Fast Track Couples	B08 Babies and Bliss
G24 Status Seeking Singles	F23 Families Matter Most	C11 Aging of Aquarius
G25 Urban Edge		D15 Sports Utility Families
M45 Diapers and Debit Cards		M44 Red, White, and Bluegrass

General Comments

The mobility of *Fast Track Couples* is significant, and makes it difficult for the church to either attract or bless them as they pass by. These people are mobile in so many ways: frequent moves, career shifts, late night and weekend activities, and instant messaging. Households combine dual incomes in order to survive, and they may have to go into debt for continuing education in order to thrive. They struggle to balance free time and work time and may feel overwhelmed. Their home is more like a staging area than a residence.

Fast Track Couples often live in an ethical blur as well. There are few, if any, absolute principles in their lives, and they don't take much time to think about consistent moral behavior or spiritual habits. Their behavior is pragmatic and self-absorbed. They don't wrestle with issues beyond the front door, and are not particularly involved in their local communities. This often means, however, that people in this lifestyle segment are starved for authentic, deep, and lasting relationships. A sense of emptiness or meaninglessness can suddenly overtake them. Unexpected tragedy can significantly disrupt their lives, and they often look for help in times of crisis.

Their involvement in the church may be sporadic and driven by crisis. They may struggle with the absolutes of Christian faith and the expectations of Christian discipleship, but they are often very interested in spirituality in general. Many do not have a particularly strong church experience, and they do not readily understand worship traditions and the sacraments, or decision-making habits and organizational structure. Those that do have past church experience stick to traditional values and

General Comments

dogmas and may not be receptive to new ideas. However, they are open to career mentoring and lifestyle influencers (especially bloggers).

Some may be driven by relationships or day care needs toward new church developments. Everything about a church needs to be convenient. The building needs to be central, with easy parking, and accessible entrances. Offices, nurseries, and worship centers need to be clearly marked. All resources should be instantly accessible through the internet, including a podcast of the worship service that these people may well have missed because of busy weekend lives. Nothing should require too many turns, steps, pages, or clicks ... nor should it require too much work, thought, or perspiration.

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
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Leadership Preferences

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

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

Fast Track Couples tend to gravitate toward new church developments, or a multi-site of a mega-church. Appeal to their relational lifestyles and keep faith relatively simple. They like to connect with pastors who are mature Christians, but capable of mentoring them “on the go”. These pastors help them build a solid foundation in basic beliefs, key Biblical stories and concepts, and the essentials of Holy Communion and baptism. They model accountability to core Christian values, and embed simple and effective spiritual habits.

Pastors do not need to be great preachers or sophisticated worship designers, but are usually charismatic and encourage personal loyalty. This can make church leadership transitions difficult. They must be good communicators personally and digitally. Pastors regularly blog on an interactive website, text constantly, and participate in social media. Pastors concentrate on the basics of Christian life, and coach how to live faithfully amid transient residences, careers, and even relationships. These pastors participate in ecumenical and cross-sector networks of like-minded clergy, so that they can hand off mobile relationships to another mentor.

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	x	Take-Out
			Healthy Choices		

Church hospitality understands that *Fast Track Couples* live in a world of speed, flux, and blur. Couples without children are out late during the week, and attending entertainment venues for sports or music over the weekend. Those with children are likely to use economical day care during the week, and take family outings over the weekend. Fast convenience foods are normative.

Parking and access must be super easy. Greeters need to be effusively friendly, and able to communicate three things in just a few seconds: sincere welcome, the message of the day, and the importance of a spiritual life. Provide a Welcome Center and password for internet access. The worship center provides tables and chairs, and people will come and go during worship for more coffee and dessert. No paper. No seating instructions.

People show up at the last minute. Provide lots of food, even if it means storing or giving away leftovers. Put leftovers in take-away bags that they can carry off to sports events and family outings. Food can be basic, but splurge on excellent coffee and real cream. Provide multiple serving stations to cut down any waiting in lines.

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				

Fast Track Couples may not connect with a church through regular Sunday worship. They are more likely to connect through a small group or through a day care center sponsored by the church. Provide an *excellent* nursery and pre-school during and after worship. Make the worship service an adult experience without children's stories, and reduce the number of crying infants or hyperactive toddlers. They may sustain their church connection through a relationship with the pastor, social media, and podcasts of the worship service.

Coaching worship based on practical themes of Christian living is the best method to sustain worship involvement. They may attend two or three worship services in a row to follow a relevant theme (although watching a podcast or participating in a blog may work just as well). Worship is informal and interactive. Be sure to include ample time for Q & A, and organize text messaging direct to the pastor during worship so that he or she can instantly respond to questions. Keep their attention by including video clips or live drama. Assume they are multi-tasking during worship. They mean no disrespect when they are tracking internet links, posting comments on social media, and watching the news while the worship service is going on.

Music will be truly contemporary with the sounds currently playing on the radio. Do not expect them to sing. Most prefer to observe and appreciate either live music or music video. Keep the order of worship very simple. No need for bulletins that contain responsive readings. Limit scripture to the essential texts of the Old or New Testaments. Make the celebration of Holy Communion very personal, and help them connect with the real presence of Christ as a spiritual guide and constant companion.

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

Fast Track Couples may have young children, and often assume their children learn best through activities, sounds, and images. If they attend a large mega-church, they will expect a Bible-based program enhanced by lots of technology, crafts, and activities. If they attend a beta site or new church development, they may expect a more topical program that is inter-generational. Constantly reinforce the core values and beliefs critical to the consensus of the faith community.

It may be difficult to draw adults into Sunday school. They prefer Sunday school to be concurrent with worship, so that they spend less time at the church and more time on family outings. Alternatively, adults may linger in the refreshment center to watch TV, surf on wireless internet, or converse. They may will watch video of some expert on the theme for the day; or they will appreciate the Christian witness of a famous athlete or celebrity.

Fast Track Couples often resist new religious ideas, despite their progressive attitudes toward technology and change. They often make snap judgments about clergy, church people, programs, and policies. They may uncritically accept generalizations about age, race, culture, nationality, etc. They tend to expect that others should give them a break, but are less likely to give a break to others. Churches often need to explain the basics of accountability, and need to provide strong role models for compassion, generosity, and respect.

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

The mobility of *Fast Track Couples* often encourages shorter, shallower relationships. Their yearning for deeper relationships is a primary motivation to become involved in a midweek small group. Groups are usually short term, but may be very intense. Groups are very creative about where and when they meet. They always have a digital component, and participants will continue their conversations through email, text message, and social media.

Topics will vary, but tend to reflect the self-absorption of people in this segment. Therefore, affinities are not usually about global social or environmental issues, or about local community issues. They usually focus on parenting, marriage enrichment, relationships, and sexuality; or on technologies, music, and video; or especially on amateur or professional sports, personal fitness, and career development.

Designated leaders are preferred. If they make time for a small group, they want to spend that time with an expert or mentor. This is someone who not only speaks knowledgeably about the topic, but who demonstrates accountability and intentionally models Christian values. Christian faith often comes through a mentoring moment when “the penny drops” and individuals or couples in this segment suddenly “get it”. Once the habit of self-centeredness is broken, however, people in this segment can become strong Christian leaders and confident witnesses.

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		
Addiction Intervention		x
Interpersonal Relationships	x	
Human Potential	x	x
Salvation and Human Destiny		

Fast Track Couples may assume that the issues that are a high priority for them should be the same for everybody. They can take an interest in any outreach event or program that helps them explore spiritual gifts, personality type, vocational goals, and career plans. They are also interested in the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Singles often have trouble starting healthy relationships, and couples are often concerned about maintaining healthy intimacy. Their frenetic dual career lifestyles raise many issues about parenting young children. Many parents are already investing in college funds and micro-managing the futures of their toddlers and grade school children.

The same lifestyle segment that loves thrill rides at the theme park may combine incomes too sustain bad habits. They may have a priority to create recovery groups for others as a backwards way they can participate in such groups themselves. They may be less open to new ideas, but more open to the miraculous ... in the sense that authentic spirituality does not need to be rationally explained. Individuals may experience the transforming power of God through addiction recovery, renewed relationships, or unexpected and undeserved grace.

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		Modern	X	Classic Christendom
XX	Utilitarian	X	Postmodern	X	Contemporary Post–Christendom

Fast Track Couples find ecclesiastical structures rather forbidding and Christendom symbols are often incomprehensible. They may have visited traditional church facilities at a wedding or in their childhood, although that is increasingly rare. “Wired” or “fixed” environments that lack postmodern technologies seem anachronistic. They prefer a church with a multi-purpose design, wireless internet, ample video screens, and cell phone freedom.

Hospitality and nursery space is especially important. The former should provide comfortable conversation areas and refreshment centers; and the nursery space should equal the best day care organizations in the region (fresh air, natural light, high security, updated equipment, and clean, undamaged toys).

Landscaping is relatively unimportant, but parking and accessibility is crucial. The architecture often resembles any other public or educational building, but symbols embedded in murals, floor mosaics, pictures, and sculptures represent scenes of nature, starbursts, colored lights, and other broadly spiritual motifs. These people are very status conscious. They may dress conservatively and avoid ceremony, but they like to be in a quality environment with excellent furnishings and updated technologies.

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

Fast Track Couples combine dual incomes and acceptance of debt in order to afford whatever is new and popular. They are informed consumers, and do not consider it indulgent to set aside money for fitness and recreation. They do understand, however, that spirituality is an important part of overall health, and may welcome coaching to develop family budgets that balance essential and personal expenses with generosity toward the church. They prefer to meet a Christian financial adviser in a coffee shop with two or three other couples, and develop a faithful family financial plan; and they do not readily participate in traditional stewardship campaigns that include personal home visits and pledge cards. They are wary of financial waste through institutional overhead, and often do not appreciate the necessity of property costs.

They prefer to designate giving to specific programs, and may contribute to the operations of a church as what their grandparents might have called "second mile giving". Favorite priorities in giving often involve children's ministries, technology upgrades, and pastor support packages. However, it takes more persuasion for them to give to denominational mission funds, and other program and support staff. If the church is in a financial crisis, they are more likely to prioritize money to sustain personnel and sacrifice property. However, they often expect the pastor to have an alternative source of income from grants or work in another sector.

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	x	Mobile Telephone	Online Computer	Newspaper	Corded Telephone	Verbal Announcements	
Email Receptive	x	Broadcast Cable TV	x Internet Radio	Print	AM/FM Radio	Personal Visits	

The internet in all facets is the clear communication preference. People access the internet for communication, socializing, research, and financial transactions. They are frequent browsers. Anything in print must have many internet links to which they can turn. Even worship videos are more authentic if they are accessed directly from websites, rather than from DVD or hard drive memory. These people will multi-task during worship. They can listen, blog, text, explore related links, and watch an internet news feed all at the same time.

The best way to reach them quickly, and with reminders, is through texting and social networks. Greeters should be equipped with smart phones and text a message to a visitor within 30 minutes of their departure from the facility is. Staff routinely text encouragement or inspirational thoughts to members and post to blogs. It is better to send text with links to a document in cyberspace, than to attach a word document to an email. They may respond to cell phone calls, but often allow voice mail services to accumulate messages before responding. The nuances of a message are often lost in transmission. Be prepared for frequent misunderstandings and the occasional inappropriate comment that requires a measure of forgiveness and reconciliation.

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.