

Segment

J35 Rural Escape

Older, middle-class couples and singles living comfortable lives in rural towns

Resource: Mosaic by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious perspective: *God's mission, our community, my church*

Common Spiritual Issues: *Feeling one's age and lonely, anxieties over death and estrangement*

Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group J Autumn Years	Frequent Neighbors
E21 Unspoiled Splendor	J34 Aging in Place	D15 Sports Utility Families
I32 Steadfast Conventionalists	J35 Rural Escape	L43 Homemade Happiness
L42 Rooted Flower Power	J36 Settled and Sensible	I30 Stock Cars and State Parks
Q62 Reaping Rewards		Q64 Town Elders

General Comments

Rural Escape have an old fashioned agrarian sensitivity that enjoys simple pleasures and a simple life. They bring this attitude to the church. Spirituality and faith are important, and church attendance is both a duty and a pleasure. Church life is also simple and uncomplicated. These days, the church may be part of a larger rural circuit. The building is small and traditional in architecture and program. Worship follows a pattern of decades. They rely on strong lay leadership, and some seniors in this segment are quite capable of preaching, witnessing, and leading prayers. The church hall is often in use for fellowship dinners, family reunions, quilting and craft fairs, and other social occasions.

These white middle-class seniors (over 65) are conservative with strong traditional family values. Some have had military experience and have seen something of the world, but now they like to be detached from stressful events and untroubled by contemporary issues. However, they are becoming increasingly anxious about cultural diversity and immigration, and about the decline of traditional values for family and country. They expect the church to lobby in their behalf. Their church may be independent or denominational, but the church will stand up for the same traditional values and uncompromisingly hold the bedrock faith convictions of the founders.

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	
x	Caregiver		Discipler		Visionary
x	Enabler		Guru		Mentor
	CEO				Pilgrim

Rural Escape value experience, clarity of faith, and disciplined living. They welcome pastors who are near retirement (or officially retired), with a long pastoral career and strong professional skills. However, these days pastors on the circuit may be much younger (or starting their second career) and learning as they go. *Rural Escape* can be quite supportive and generous to these pastors, and are willing to mentor or support them. Pastors should not be too involved in denominational committees or ecumenical groups. Model a simple lifestyle, practice common sense more than parliamentary procedure, and don't be in a hurry.

Pastors need to uphold traditional family values and faith convictions. They can introduce new ideas and practices if they do so diplomatically, gently, and with a sense of humility. Pastors need to have good time management skills and stamina to manage the circuit. They don't need to be great orators, but should speak from scripture, communicate the strength of their personal faith, and make eye contact. Speaking without notes is a plus. Pastors are always available in emergencies, and are good visitors in homes and institutions. More and more people in this segment are relocating to small towns or medium-sized cities in order to more readily access health and other social services. They miss their church, and long for pastors or lay leaders to travel to visit them.

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	
X	The Basics		Multiple Choices		Take-Out
			Healthy Choices		

Rural Escape tend to arrive early to church, often driving a significance distance. Ordinarily informal, they step out in their best Sunday clothes to honor the day. Weekly church is an important occasion for them. They expect to be warmly greeted by first name. They may visit with friends on the front lawn or in the narthex, and often visit with each other in the pews waiting for worship to begin.

Think ahead and provide a team of helpers who can assist the elderly. Ushers may escort people with canes, walkers, or wheelchairs; store the equipment so it does not block the aisles; and then return them during the singing of the final hymn. There may be a printed order of service, but many people are so familiar with the service they don't need it. They sit where they have always sat. A one page sheet of announcements and prayer concerns may be all they take home. Organize a team of decision-makers who are authorized to cancel worship due to severe weather, and have a quick method of communication to inform all church members.

Refreshments are basic: cold or hot coffee and tea, or (in warm climates) lemonade on the front lawn. There are many fresh food alternatives, however, including juice and milk. Sugary treats are often homemade, and you may not know what's going to be served until the members arrive with their hampers. On special holidays the church kitchen will warm special meals, and there are often "sit down" dinners (barbecues and roasted chicken, and fish fries and crawfish broils).

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

Rural Escape prefers worship to be predictable and structured, but led with some informality. Lay readers and prayer leaders are often experienced and highly regarded for spiritual insight, sincerity, and energy. "Traditional" worship is whatever the particular local version of denominational heritage is, so fresh ideas out of seminary are not always welcome (even if they are endorsed by the denomination). People can be open to innovations in worship, provided that they are discussed ahead of time, introduced as time-limited experiments, and ultimately confirmed by a consensus of the members.

The worship often begins with singing classic hymns (partly because the pastor is sometimes late traveling the circuit). No one is disturbed by babies crying, or older folks stepping out of the sanctuary for a moment. Many churches recognize birthdays and anniversaries, and honor the passing of family members with flowers and prayers. Spend time with announcements and passing the peace. If Eucharist is important, it is often served as people kneel at the communion rail. Both infant and adult baptisms are big celebrations and central to worship.

Sermons may be shorter so the intercessory prayers can be longer. They may follow a lectionary, or certain themes, but should be Bible based. Pastors often refer to scripture, but may also quote legendary missionaries and saints (with few references to contemporary figures). Always make a single, memorable point. *Rural Escape* will remember and ponder during the week. Don't be surprised if someone asks a question about a sermon preached months previously.

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	
x	Curricular	x	Biblical		Generational
	Experiential		Topical	x	Peer Group

Rural Escape may only have completed High School, and have little opportunity for continuing education in their context, but they value education. Sunday morning is an educational event, and they are often strongly supportive of both children and adult Sunday school. Classes are usually held before worship, although the timing may depend on the coordination of worship in the circuit. Teachers may be trained regionally, and are often honored church veterans, Sunday school for children follows a Bible-based curriculum endorsed by the denomination, and may be used over several years and enhanced by the skills of individual leaders. The church may be too small to organize children by age, so there may be a class for “younger” and “older” children.

Adult Sunday school is usually a Bible study, although special topics may be introduced by the leader. The leader is often a highly respected senior member of the church. The class may stay together for a long time. Connect Sunday school with private devotions at home. Many couples in this lifestyle segment will have disciplines for prayer and Bible reading that they do at home. Take-home resources and devotional guides are welcome.

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	
	Trained Leaders	x	Curriculum Study
x	Rotated Leaders	x	Shared Affinity

Rural Escape may find small group participation difficult due to long distances for travel and uncertain weather conditions. The best option might be to plan small groups during the day, and organize monthly rather than weekly covenants. Groups are often Bible studies, and they are fortunate if the pastor is available to lead it. Otherwise, a well-respected church member will usually lead the group. Groups are often organized by gender (women or men), although more couples groups are emerging. Often there are already groups based on affinities for crafts or hobbies that could become intentional about prayer, Bible study, and mutual support. Larger groups based on age, gender, marital status are still important. Women's groups are common, but it is often difficult to sustain men's groups without strong leader.

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	X	X
Health and Wellness	X	X
Quality of Life	X	X
Addiction Intervention		
Interpersonal Relationships		
Human Potential		
Salvation and Human Destiny		X

Rural Escape pride themselves on self-sufficiency, but they are interested in any outreach ministry that improves quality of life. They are concerned about health care and emergency services, and will often raise money for fire departments, hospitals and clinics. They can become enthusiastic participants in school programs that partner seniors and youth in mentoring relationships. They are not crusaders for any particular cause, but they can become aroused by threats to their rural way of life and advancing urbanization. They will oppose the imposition of quarries that take away farmland and increase traffic, or the development of windmills that jar their sensibilities, make noise, and undermine wellbeing.

They are also supportive of AA and other addiction intervention programs. In regions that are economically depressed and vulnerable to illicit drug traffic, they are supportive of both rehabilitation programs, recovery worship services, and strong law enforcement. Parish Nurse and other healthcare support programs are often connected with the church. Wellness centers, rehabilitation centers, and basic physiotherapy are often under-funded by the state and welcomed in association with a church.

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	
x	Ecclesiastical	x	Modern	x	Classic Christendom
	Utilitarian		Postmodern		Contemporary Post–Christendom

Rural Escape often worship in classic frame or brick churches with a steeple and bell on top. They value sacred space and the church building is often unlocked, so that people can enter whenever they wish for prayer. The building has a traditional sanctuary with pews, pulpit, and table on the top floor; kitchen and hall (which can be divided by curtains for classroom space) on the lower floor. If there is an education wing, it is often a single floor of very utilitarian design. If the building is destroyed, they are likely to build a similar building on the same spot.

Symbols are classically Christian. Windows may be simple colored glass. Inside pictures and tapestries depict classic Biblical scenes, and occasionally scenes from the history of the denomination. Catholic churches will use simple icons or 19th century images for the Stations of the Cross. Antique Bibles, chalices, and communion ware may be stored in a special cupboard in the narthex. Memorials for military veterans are prominent.

Technology is minimal. The church is small, and there is no need for sound amplification. Video screens are unthinkable. They use changeable signs on either side of the chancel to identify hymns, prayers, and creeds for the day. There is usually an upright piano, and sometimes an electronic organ. The church usually has electricity and indoor plumbing for the kitchen. The church office is often located elsewhere or in the parsonage or manse.

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

Rural Escape are loyal to the church and trust their pastor and board to use money wisely. They prefer to donate to a single budget, but may provide a large discretionary fund for the pastor. Trust is high, and any financial malfeasance is a great scandal. Members do not usually require detailed financial statements, unless there is some unusual problem regarding property maintenance or the pastor's salary and benefits.

Stewardship campaigns are generally viewed as unnecessary. Costs are fixed and only require inflationary increases. Depending on their local faith tradition, they may practice tithing. They will address any financial shortfalls with generous giving at the end of the year. A single "town meeting" will generally fix the budget and plan the future. These people tend to be fiscal conservatives. They like to avoid debt and maintain high reserve funds. They don't like to risk investing in a new ministry or creative idea unless there is ample assurance that it will be successful and eventually become self-sustaining. They generally trust the finance committee, but they like to see a detailed annual financial statement and ensure that the books are audited regularly.

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

Rural Escape mainly ignore the internet and are unlikely to use digital communications. They may use cell phones in remote areas for emergencies. They probably won't care about a church website. They prefer traditional print and verbal communications, supplemented by telephone trees to the home that share prayer concerns. Verbal announcements in gatherings, and printed announcements in the bulletin, keep everyone informed. External advertising is often limited to the newspaper; a fixed and unlit sign on the front lawn; and posters in local stores, restaurants, and public buildings. They like printed newsletters that are either delivered to home or picked up at church. They also value printed devotional guides, and may read a denominational magazine.

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.