

Segment

Q64: Town Elders

Stable, minimalist seniors living in older residences and leading sedentary lives

Resource: Mosaic by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious Perspective: *Faith of Our Fathers (and Mothers) Living Still*

Common Spiritual Issues: *Feelings of loneliness, anxieties about displacement and abandonment*

Potential Influence

| Lifestyle Compatibility | Family Group Q Golden Year Guardians | Frequent Neighbors |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| J36 Settled and Sensible | Q62 Reaping Rewards | E21 Unspoiled Splendor |
| L41 Booming and Consuming | Q63 Footloose and Family Free | J34 Aging in Place |
| L42 Rooted Flower Power | Q64 Town Elders | L43 Homemade Happiness |
| N45 True Grit Americans | Q65 Senior Discounts | S68 Small Town Shallow Pockets |
| | | |

General Comments

Faith, family, and community are pillars of strength for *Town Elders* who are aging in homes and hometowns where they have lived for as much as 25 years. These tend to be self-consciously spiritual people who practice personal devotions and try to lead ethical lives. They gravitate to more established churches that preserve orthodoxy, respect elders, and protect traditional family values. About half prefer churches that are ideologically conservative, and half prefer churches that are ideologically liberal. The theology of any church, however, is fairly traditional and intentionally orthodox. They usually avoid extreme opinions, radical politics, risky ventures, and hasty decisions. They are more than willing to serve on a church board. They stay well informed about local and global events, and denominational policies and missions.

Experian suggests they are not particularly mobile, and like to stay close to home. They've been downsizing their possessions, and are content with less. They have lower incomes and fewer investments, but also have lower costs and expenses. They are happy with their standard of living and don't worry too much about themselves, but they are worried about the world, their local community, and the future of their church. They are generous toward the church, and concerned that the younger generations will pick up responsibility for its survival. They are often interested in developing human potential, and participate in opportunities for Christian education. Within their physical and financial limitations, they are glad to volunteer or donate for a good cause.

These people have deep roots in the community and church, and many of their friends are among church members. Harmony, continuity, and predictability are important values for a church. They

General Comments

believe in church renewal (not church transformation); evolutionary change (not radical change); consensus decision making (not clergy control). They prefer small to medium-size churches, wanting the church to grow but anxious that it might become *too big*. They automatically worry more about losing old members than gaining new members.

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 |

Town Elders assume the ordained pastor has graduated from a well-established school of theology and has also experienced the “school of hard knocks”. Pastors combine expertise with common sense, and Biblical knowledge with pragmatic realism. Pastors work closely with the church board. They resource and facilitate the decisions of the board, but do not dictate policy or presume to take on too much authority. Pastors listen carefully to all points of view, and often seek the advice of senior lay leaders. However, they respect pastors who are also self-confident and willing to take a stand on what they believe. Pastors are well connected with the denominational hierarchy and may serve on a variety of denominational and ecumenical committees.

Pastors have a deep appreciation for tradition and great compassion for the local community. They are frequent and excellent visitors in homes or institutions, sensitive to personal milestones, and supportive to individuals struggling with personal issues. They expect pastors to be on call 24/7, but are flexible to allow pastors to adjust their schedules to spend time with family or find personal spiritual renewal. Pastors are intelligent preachers and teachers. A church secretary may provide extra administrative leadership to manage the office so that pastors can be available for counseling and care giving. If the church calls a second minister, that minister is usually a generalist who picks up the extra load of caregiving, or concentrates on children and youth ministries.

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 |
| | | x | Healthy Choices | | |

The social lives of *Town Elders* revolves around the church, the veterans association, and perhaps a community group or non-profit agency. Hospitality in this church needs to be easy going and low pressure. Many of the members of this segment have known each other a long time, and don't need any introductions or promptings to start a conversation. Greeters need to be friendly, but don't require significant training. However, churches should rotate greeters and ushers regularly to give as many people as possible the option to serve. Greeters and ushers must avoid being sidetracked by their close friends, and should pay special attention to visitors or people they know only slightly.

They don't eat out very often, and when they do it will be modest restaurants. Refreshments are fairly simple, but should offer a several choices. Basic coffee and tea are welcome, but provide real or flavored cream and sugar substitutes. Provide a mix of sweet desserts, low-fat cookies, and fresh fruit and vegetable dips. People are apt to linger to talk with friends, so don't be hasty putting the food away. Pot luck suppers, chicken barbecues and beef dinners, strawberry socials, combined with special music or entertainment will be considered both good fellowship and genuine outreach.

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 |
| x | Educational Worship | | Transformational Worship | | Coaching Worship |
| | Healing Worship | | | | |

Town Elders attend church weekly and year round. Everything revolves around worship, and worship *style* is expected to conform to their aesthetic tastes and local traditions. Worship is “inspirational” in the sense that fills them with wonder and provides strength and hope for the coming week, but not in the sense that it is highly motivating to change personal lifestyles or make radical sacrifices for a cause. It is “educational” in the sense that preaching is expository and they expect to learn about scripture and moral living, but not abstractly theological or political.

The preacher often follows a preaching plan or lectionary, and churches tend follow the Christian Year. Regardless of congregational size, the pastors often wear a robe and vestments. The sermon uses scripture to help people make sense of life, and often connect history and current events. People leave worship with a strong sense of reassurance and belonging, and are apt to remember the three points of the sermon. *Town Elders* tend to be very patriotic, but prefer to keep preaching and politics separate. Both the national and Christian flags are important symbols in worship. They expect that worship services will recognize national holidays as well as Christian festivals.

Church growth is often stressful for *Town Elders*. Churches that are over 100 tend to combine inspiration and education; and churches fewer than 100 tend to combine inspiration with care giving. The inspiration comes from traditional choral anthems and instrumental or organ music, along with the drama of the Holy Communion or moments of silent meditation. Smaller congregations emphasize intercessory prayers, verbal announcements, and passing the peace, and there may be more emphasis on the offering and the small rituals that are unique to each church. The actions are more important than the words. Larger congregations emphasize the sermon, introductions to scripture readings, pastoral prayers, but there may be more emphasis on traditional hymns and creeds. The words are more important than the lyrics, and traditional affirmations are more important than contemporary speculations.

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 |

Town Elders want to understand scripture, tradition, and doctrine. They may tend to rationalize their experience of the Holy Spirit. Sunday school for children and adults is fairly traditional. Churches in which this segment dominates may have smaller Sunday schools, but they are important because the adults believe that the children are the future of Christendom. Classes tend to be organized by age, and study a curriculum approved by the denomination. Teachers are often veteran lay leaders who feel a strong calling toward education and ministry with children. If the church is large enough, the next paid staff person after the pastor is often a Christian Education Director. Since church attendance is relatively stable all year round, churches often sponsor a Vacation Bible School for several weeks in the summer as an important outreach to young families that might not regularly attend.

Adult education is also important. *Town Elders* tend to be early risers and regular in attendance, so Sunday school often precedes worship. Classes focus on scripture, doctrine, ethics, and emerging urgent issues. They use traditional media (books and printed workbooks), with occasional video supplements. Classes tend to stay together a long time and have a special name (e.g. the “Homebuilders Class”). Some are led by a very credible, long-time member of the church and others rotate leadership. It is usually easier to start a new class than assimilate new people into an ongoing class, unless the newcomer already shares ongoing friendships with numerous people. The pastor often leads a short term class during Advent or Lent.

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 |

Town Elders value both large and small groups. Large groups are often based on gender, age, or marital status. These are often organized and led by committees, and combine fellowship and internal service within the congregation. They can be very influential shaping church policies and programs

Midweek small groups are a valued part of the church program. Groups are primarily about friendships and mutual support, but people in this segment also like to do devotional disciplines together. They periodically undertake an external service project in the community. Small group leadership is often rotated among the participants. People often know each other well, so leadership responsibilities focus on hosting and some coordination. Conversation flows naturally, and groups cope with personality conflicts and disagreements in their own way. Groups often meet in afternoons rather than evenings.

Some groups will use a curriculum (Bible study, book studies, mission studies, etc.) Other groups will center on an affinity that is usually a hobby or craft, common passion for collectibles, or playing card games. Some small groups work on crafts specifically for mission purposes. Small groups often meet in private homes, but may also gather at the church. Groups may stay together a long time, and resist attempts to divide and multiply. Small groups are seen mainly as a means for members to socialize and go deeper into faith, but not as a means to attract new people into the church.

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

Town Elders have a genuine interest in people and helping others, and commonly volunteer in church and community. They tend to focus more on local than global mission (although they strongly support denominationally deployed missionaries). They consider fellowship events, community dinners, and ecumenical events a form of outreach. They may sponsor a booth at a local fair or community event. They often believe that actions speak louder than words, and do good things without necessarily sharing their faith motivation for doing them. They may be limited in their ability to actively volunteer to implement or subsidize missions, but they are willing to donate their time and expertise for strategic planning. They often sit on non-profit boards of health and social service agencies, and report on their activities to the church.

Local outreach often involves “depot” ministries: collecting food, clothing, furniture, or household items for general distribution. They may dedicate part of the building to storage. They also tend to rent or loan space to a variety of community organizations and social service agencies. They want to improve the quality of life of disadvantaged people in their community or region. This may include support for health clinics and vaccination centers. They want the church to work closely with hospitals and medical centers, and may host support groups for people coping with, or recovering from, disease.

Some churches are concerned with evangelism that leads to conversion. Their evangelism strategies may not emphasize personal witness, but they may actively share tracts and printed information about faith, and host tent meetings or rallies. Many in this segment have warm memories of formative moments in Christian camps. They often support denominational camps and retreat centers, and provide scholarships for youth.

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 |

Town Elders have lived in the same place, and attended the same church, for a long time. The architecture of the church building usually reflects the ecclesiastical designs of their denominational tradition from the first half of the 20th century (or earlier). That often means steeples or towers, pointed windows and doors, memorial courtyards, ornate exteriors; along with traditional sanctuaries with pews in rows or semi-circles, center aisles, and lots of hardwood. These churches may have little used balconies. The symbols are classically Christian, but also include more abstract images representing important doctrines, images of saints or events from the history of the denomination, etc. Symbols may be set in glass, stone, wood, or textiles and may be memorials.

These people have a deep sense of “sacred space”, and the building, symbols, and musical or sacramental accessories often have multiple layers of meaning. The facility often includes memorial artifacts accumulated over the years. They are often hesitant to renovate or change the building. If the building is damaged by fire or flood, they are apt to restore it to its original design. Technologies are modern, in the sense that the church often relies on older audio systems, print hymnals and pew Bibles, hymn boards, pipe organs and grand pianos. They are unlikely to install video screens, and the electrical system may not support amplified instruments. The office may still rely on hard copy, older duplicating machines, and filing cabinets for records. The computer may be recent, but the software may not be up to date. Property maintenance is a high priority, and this may occasionally cause stress when outside groups rent or use the building.

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 |

Town Elders are cautious money managers and avoid financial risk. They are comfortable, but do not have significant investments. Some carry burdens for credit card debt or car loans. Nevertheless, they try to be generous toward the church, and some may tithe. They will participate in a traditional church stewardship campaign. The stewardship campaign often includes every member visitations. People in this segment like to be consulted about strategic planning and well informed about cash flow. They trust the church with money for a unified budget, but they want to know the financial details. They prefer line budgets to narrative budgets, and in an annual meeting they might want to analyze the budget line by line. They make conservative pledges to the church, and increase them to follow inflation. They also like to keep significant financial reserves in case there is an emergency. If they must do a capital campaign, they may prefer to lead it themselves rather than pay a professional.

Town Elders are often reluctant to do online banking, but some might preauthorize withdrawals to guarantee income to the church throughout the year. Others prefer writing checks or giving cash using offering envelopes. If there is an annual deficit, people will readily participate in fund raising to quickly correct the problem. Confidentiality about giving is often important.

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 |

Town Elders are not very active users of the internet. They may search health websites, and some will use social media to talk with distant family members. If they carry a cell phone, it is usually used for emergencies and does not include many extra features. They probably will not pay much attention to a church website, and consider a website another form of static brochure to advertise the church.

Churches communicate best when they rely on print and word of mouth. Printed newsletters are either mailed, or distributed in personal mailboxes at the church reserved for each member. Announcements take several minutes in every worship service and fellowship gathering, and printed inserts provide additional information. Members participate in telephone trees to share prayer concerns, and telephone reminders prompt people about coming events.

Exterior signs are usually static. Fixed signs identify the denomination and name of the church, and provide times for Sunday school and worship. Sometimes the sign can be updated manually with a new sermon title. Be careful that exterior signs might inadvertently contradict core values (e.g. signs for “no parking” or “no loitering” can contradict values for hospitality and inclusiveness). The building may be illuminated at night, and the sanctuary may be the usual picture on the cover of the bulletin. They often produce a photo directory of church members.

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. |