

Segment **S68: Small Town Shallow Pockets**

Older, down-scale singles and empty-nesters living in modest exurban small towns

Resource: Mosaic by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious perspective: *Hoping that prayer works*

Common Spiritual Issues: *Feeling lonely and frustrated, anxieties about guilt and death*

Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group S Economic Challenges	Frequent Neighbors
J35 Aging in Place	S68 Small Town Shallow Pockets	J35 Rural Escape
N47 Countrified Pragmatics	S69 Urban Survivors	L43 Homemade Happiness
N48 Rural Southern Bliss	S70 Tight Money	N46 True Grit Americans
N49 Touch of Tradition	S71 Hard Times	Q64 Town Elders

General Comments

Small Towns Shallow Pockets are religious and patriotic, with conservative social values and parochial attitudes. The church can be a big part of their lives as a center for socializing and personal support; a bulwark against any further deterioration of their lifestyles; and as an advocate for economic and social justice. They are often as active in a veteran's organization as they are in the church, and they are often willing to volunteer in the community. They tend to be outspoken, but fair, and are willing to take a risk for what they believe is right.

Small Town Shallow Pockets live in quiet, deteriorating neighborhoods in former industrial boomtowns. Their church buildings tend to be older and in poor repair, but reflect the faded glory of past Christendom. Parts of the building may be rented to social service agencies or simply mothballed. Nevertheless, church attendance is pretty good. They are proud of the friendliness of their church, and of the worship and outreach ministries they can sustain. Lay leadership and office holding raises their self-esteem. Sometimes they can seem a bit officious, and occasionally they may quarrel, but they quickly band together in an emergency and can be remarkably generous with their time and talent.

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
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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

Small Towns Shallow Pockets are often loyal members of a church belonging to a traditional denomination (evangelical, mainstream Protestant, or Roman Catholic). The pastor or priest is seminary trained and ordained. These days the lack of availability of clergy challenges these churches, but *Small Towns Shallow Pockets* are generally open to a leader from another country provided English is spoken well and leaders are respectful of local traditions. They welcome clergy young or old, beginners or veterans, but leadership should provide strong pastoral care and preserve church harmony. They respect the clergy for what they are as well as who they are. They value Word and Sacrament equally, but it is really the relationships that matter. Pastors or priests are approachable and friendly, with strong “people” skills along with deep respect for traditions. Pastors don’t need to be particularly intellectual or innovative, but they should be reliable, persistent, orthodox, and courageous. Say what you mean, and mean what you say.

Younger pastors often focus their energy on social issues in the community: crime prevention, safety, economic growth, jobs, emergency support, and the basic necessities of life. Older pastors often focus on counseling, visitation, care giving, fellowship, and networks of personal support. Both streams of ministry are high priorities. Leaders should be good facilitators. They empower effective committees. Although they are expected to be assertive leaders, they also excel at building consensus. Leaders tend to focus on worship, crisis counseling, and outreach, and delegate responsibility for property, fellowship, and fund raising to committees.

Small Towns Shallow Pockets can provide gifted lay leaders who sometimes function as unpaid staff. They serve in any way they can, but often provide volunteer leadership for worship in nursing homes and correctional institutions, and for Sunday schools and small groups. They appreciate basic training, but especially value 24/7 coaching by the pastor or priest.

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		

Small Towns Shallow Pockets lead simple, frugal lives. They dress for convenience rather than style. They might splurge on accessories for their truck, fishing or hunting gear, and season tickets to their favorite sports team. Basic coffee and tea brewed in big steel urns, milk or cream straight from the cartons, along with fresh donuts or bulk food store desserts, in quantity, are all they really want. Anything fancier seems pretentious.

Greeters don't need special training, but they do need to be extroverted and friendly. They should accept people as they are, and communicate optimism and joy. Being a greeter can convey status in the church, so try to rotate people in teams to give the opportunity to as many as possible. The pastor or priest should greet people at the door as they enter; but don't linger too long at the door when they leave. They should mingle with people during the refreshment time.

Pot luck suppers, barbecues, and fellowship dinners help these older singles socialize with friends, assimilate newcomers, and supplement their diets. Churches often have regular monthly dinners as well as celebrations for special occasions. These dinners can be more intentional about nutrition, and provide fresh fruits and vegetables that may be hard to get in these often forgotten urban neighborhoods.

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
x	Healing Worship				

Small Town Shallow Pockets prefer “traditional” worship. This usually means worship that is an informal version of whatever is denominationally normative ... adapted to local customs. Many have been members of the same church for a long time, and value continuity and predictability over change and creativity.

They often want to blend worship so that there is something for everyone in each service or at some point in the year (a little bit of transformation, healing, inspiration, education, and mission). However, the constant tone and purpose of worship is usually caring and healing. The worship design prioritizes informal welcomes, passing the peace, personal announcements, and prayers of intercession and supplication. There are frequent moments of silent mediation, and the pace of worship is rather slow. Laity often share leadership on a rotating basis, and they are always thanked for their efforts. The music usually relies on traditional hymns (accompanied by piano or organ), but they are open to variety in special music (including bluegrass, gospel, and folk genres).

Worship tends to be structured and predictable. Routine is important. The sermon exposites the Bible or explains doctrine. These people are social conservatives and patriotic. The flags in the sanctuary express their gratitude to a country that preserves religious freedom, and there are memorials for family members lost to war. The major Christian holidays may be times of melancholy for those who are missing spouses, children, comrades from military service, and friends. A “Blue Christmas” service and other special observances are often appreciated. On the other hand, national or public holidays are often times of great celebration. Worship often includes guest musicians and praise music.

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	x	Generational
	Experiential		Topical		Peer Group

Small Towns Shallow Pockets are older empty-nesters and children have moved away. Nevertheless, they like to serve as Sunday school teachers or helpers. These people believe that the youth are the future of the church, and are prepared to volunteer their time to organize and facilitate traditional curricula. The workbooks and printed material may be recycled over the years, but upgraded with fresh ideas for crafts, games, and other activities. The curriculum is usually centered on Bible stories and bedrock beliefs from the Old and New Testaments, and is generally organized to follow the Christian Year.

Small Towns Shallow Pockets want to be family friendly and are eager to attract young families. However, this can lead to conflict over curricula or the timing of Sunday school. They may think experiential education strategies lack sufficient depth. *Small Towns Shallow Pockets* usually prefer to hold classes *before* worship so that the teachers can join the congregation and the children can learn the liturgy. The parents from different urban lifestyle segments may well prefer Sunday school *during* worship because children complain worship is too boring.

The adults in this segment may also attend Sunday school classes. Some may be led by a senior who is highly respected for spiritual depth and Christian lifestyle. Other classes may rotate leadership by following a book or curriculum with discussion questions and “fill-in-the-blank” answers.

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

Small Towns Shallow Pockets are very likely to participate in both traditional large gender and generational groups; and in midweek small groups. Large groups are a blend of fellowship and internal service; small groups are for friendship and mutual support rather than spiritual disciplines, but they may have an occasional external service project. Groups are primarily about friendships and mutual support. Some groups will focus on Bible study, often using a curriculum or study book recommended by the pastor. Other groups will gather around a shared activity. (i.e. crafts, collections, and hobbies, or hunting, fishing and sports).

Finding small group leadership can be a challenge. Individuals may not feel capable or qualified to lead, and basic training and ongoing coaching by the pastor may be necessary. Leadership responsibilities focus on hosting and some coordination. The small group can be an important means to attract new church members, since these people will feel comfortable to invite friends. Small Groups and Task Groups tend to blur together, often to the detriment of both ministries. Small Groups often accept responsibilities for fund raising and maintenance, but can then become more burden than joy. Conversely, Task Groups may become preoccupied with sharing and mutual support, and become less efficient and effective.

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	X	
Interpersonal Relationships	X	X
Human Potential		
Salvation and Human Destiny		X

Small Towns Shallow Pockets regard any kind of fellowship gathering as potential outreach because they are intentionally welcoming to visitors. These economically stressed singles are apt to feel lonely and isolated. They welcome large group activities with food, amateur entertainment, bingo, and card games. They can gather around a large screen TV to watch a football or baseball game. They may also gather in support groups for people with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and addictions. Twelve Step groups are common.

Small Towns Shallow Pockets often live in rather dilapidated single detached dwellings, or live in rundown apartment buildings. They sometimes struggle to make ends meet, especially in an emergency, and often worry about quality of life in their neighborhoods. They both support and benefit from social service ministries that provide food, used household items and appliances, winter clothes, coats, gloves, and boots, and financial assistance in emergencies. Churches often create large discretionary funds for the use of the pastor or priest, in addition to providing food banks, clothing depots, and other services. They are willing volunteers.

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

Small Town Shallow Pockets may change addresses occasionally, but generally remain loyal to the same church. In their personal lives, a good truck may be more valuable than a well-maintained house; and in church, a traditional sanctuary, kitchen, and multi-purpose space may be more important than the exterior and landscaping of the building. Their experience growing up in churches may dispose them toward churches with ecclesiastical architectures, but they probably don't have a deep emotional investment in the buildings. Church buildings often have various additions in diverse architectures, and the interior may seem like a maze. They often find comfort and strength in classic Christian images (cross, open Bible, praying hands, and Bible scenes), and in Christian talismans (rosaries, prayer beads, pocket crosses, and bookmarks).

These people place a higher priority on the relevant programming and useful services that can be provided in a church building. They are willing to make radical renovations if it will serve a good purpose. The building is more of a multi-purpose community center or “launching pad” for useful programs than a theological statement. These people are not technologically savvy, and cannot really afford computers, internet, and fancy video screens in the sanctuary. Basic audio systems and old-fashioned overhead projectors are more common. Offices, parlors, and classrooms are often an eclectic mix of old, recycled furniture and equipment.

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		Informed Philanthropy & Pledging
	Designated Programs & Mission Projects	x	Lifestyle Coaching & Family Financial Planning

Small Town Shallow Pockets have low and often intermittent incomes. They have some savings and insurance, but probably don't use credit cards and prefer to pay cash. They often want the church to keep enough reserve funds in the bank to pay the bills for a month or two in case of emergency, but often manage the church on a shoestring. They rely heavily on property rentals and denominational subsidies. Year-end deficits are common, and usually addressed by rummage sales or other strategy that combines fellowship and fund raising. If they can create a non-profit agency within the church, they will try to obtain grants that partially cover costs for maintenance, utilities, and even personnel. They are unlikely to launch a capital campaign unless absolutely necessary, although they will partner with denominations and government agencies to create low income housing, assisted living apartments, medical clinics, and continuing education space.

Small Town Shallow Pockets may be poor money managers, and they are financially cautious as a result. They will participate in a traditional church stewardship campaign, and want to be informed about financial shortfalls and legacies, debts and liabilities. However, they usually prefer a narrative budget that explains how money is used, rather than a line budget that explains how money is managed. They try to be generous toward the church, and some may tithe, but are often hesitant to pledge money in advance. Special fund raising projects are common, whether it is for emergency building repairs or outreach projects. They try to be extra generous with their time and talent, in order to make up for their inability to donate much money to the church.

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

Small Towns Shallow Pockets rely on old fashioned media. They read newspapers cover to cover, read and reread magazines, and pick up brochures and flyers. They like printed church newsletters that update prayer concerns, coming events, church finances, and mission projects ... plus extra information about service agencies and public policy advocacy. In order to save money for postage, the church often creates a mailbox in the narthex for every member. They like verbal announcements in church (and other fellowship gatherings), supplemented by inserts in the Sunday bulletin or handouts at the door. Oral repetition keeps them mindful of important dates and special concerns, and it also contributes to the atmosphere of personal support and care giving in worship and congregational life. Exterior signs and interior bulletin boards help people keep up with church news, prepare for coming events, and track the progress of missions. They watch TV and listen to radio, but *Experian* suggests that they are gradually learning to use the internet and participate in social media.

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.