

Segment J35:***Rural Escape***

Sophisticated, established couples and singles living comfortable lives in rural towns

Resource: Mosaic 2021 by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious Perspective:

God's mission, our community, my church

Spiritual Issues:

Feeling one's age and lonely, anxieties over death and estrangement

Common Church Presence

- Small churches with local traditions
- Church as community center

- Traditional family values
- Serve in lay ministries

- Strong religious commitments
- Faith merges with patriotism

**Potential Influence**

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group J <i>Autumn Years</i>	Frequent Neighbors
E20 No Place Like Home L42 Rooted Flower Power Q64 Established in Society Q65 Mature and Wise	J34 Suburban Sophisticates J35 Rural Escape J36 Settled and Sensible	E21 Unspoiled Splendor L43 Homemade Happiness I30 Potlucks and the Great Outdoors Q62 Enjoying Retirement

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 set over the 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.

They are theologically traditional and socially 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 urbanization, and about the decline of traditional values for family and country. They may be concerned about industrial impact on the environment. They expect the church to lobby in their behalf and to preserve social services and healthcare in small towns and rural areas. 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.

Color Key	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
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High Priorities also marked with "X" for churches photocopying in black and white.

Leadership Preferences

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

	Traditional		Progressive		Radical
x	Caregiver		Discipler		Visionary
x	Enabler		Guru		Mentor
	CEO				Pilgrim

Rural Escape value experience, clarity of faith, and disciplined living. They welcome clergy 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 new clergy and are willing to mentor or support them. Clergy 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. Clergy 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. They 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 and priests are always available in emergencies and are good visitors in homes and institutions. More people in this segment are relocating to larger towns or medium-sized cities to access health and other social services. They miss their church, and long for clergy to travel to visit them.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Clergy are expected to be excellent written and verbal communicators. Personal attention is important. Don't be too distracted by technology or virtual reality. Extend influence through interpersonal relationships rather than program excellence.

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. 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).

Lifestyle Connectivity

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.

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

Traditional		Modern		Postmodern	
x	Caregiving Worship		Inspirational Worship		Mission-Connection Worship
x	Educational Worship		Transformational Worship		Coaching Worship
	Healing Worship				

Rural Escape prefer 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 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, if 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 or priest 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 Holy Communion 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. Clergy often refer to scripture but may also quote legendary missionaries and saints (with few references to contemporary figures). Always make a single, memorable point.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Livestream or recorded worship is unimportant. Worship is personal and engages all five senses. *Rural Escape* will remember and ponder the message during the week. Don't be surprised if someone asks a question about a sermon preached months ago.

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 have little opportunity for continuing education in their context, but they do value education. Sunday morning is an educational event, and they strongly support 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 rather than locally. They are often honored church veterans. Sunday school for children follows a Bible-based curriculum and may be used over several years. 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.

Lifestyle Connectivity

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. They once relied on print resources endorsed by the denomination but search more widely today.

Small Group Preferences

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

Leadership		Focus	
	Trained Leader	x	Curriculum Study
x	Rotate 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 or priest 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). Groups for couples are increasingly common. Often there are already groups based on affinities for crafts or hobbies that could become more intentional about prayer, Bible Study, and mutual support.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Large groups based on age, gender, or marital status are still important and may meet monthly. However, it is difficult to sustain groups without strong lay leadership. Social media is rarely used. Conversations are remembered and can be renewed even after a significant period.

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	x
Addiction Intervention		x
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 healthcare 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 usually not crusaders for any specific 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.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Information about mission partners is usually shared in brochures, newsletters, or other printed media. Volunteers are coordinated via announcements in worship or telephone trees. They will make time to be personally involved in evangelistic efforts.

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. The church office may be in the home of the clergy or in the largest church in the circuit.

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. Pulpit Bibles, chalices, and communion ware may be stored in a special cupboard in the narthex. Memorials for military veterans are prominent.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Technology is minimal. Internet connections are unimportant. The church is small, and there is no need for sound amplification. Video screens are rare. 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 upgraded electricity and indoor plumbing for the kitchen.

Financial Preferences

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

Giving Target		Giving Method	
x	Unified Budgets & 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 or priest and board to use money wisely. They prefer to donate to a single budget but may provide a large discretionary fund for the clergy. 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 clergy salary and benefits. The books should be audited annually by an independent auditor.

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.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Financial information is not on a website. Financial statements are printed and may be distributed on Sunday. Donations are usually in cash, and care must be taken to keep offering secure and accurately counted.

Communication

Resource: *Mosaic E-Handbook* by Experian

Communication in Daily Living				Communication in Church Participation			
Broadcast/Streaming TV	x	Direct Mail	Radio	Live/Recorded Video	x	Print and Paper	x Announcements or Visits
Mobile SMS		Email	Social Media	Text Message		Email	Social Media

Rural Escape prefer printed newsletters. The church often provides mailboxes for every church member in the narthex to avoid postage costs. Verbal announcements in gatherings, and printed announcements in the bulletin, keep everyone informed. External advertising is often limited to the newspaper; a changeable, illuminated sign on the front lawn; and posters in local stores, restaurants, and public buildings. Telephone trees help remind members of emerging prayer concerns or important events. Communication is often assumed to be a form of consensus decision making. Any changes or new initiatives a vetted through various communication methods, to all members, over several weeks or months. This allows ample time to raise questions and concerns before any idea gets implemented. Complaints about poor communication often suggest lack of trust in leadership. Slow communication may mean missed opportunities for mission and outreach.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Rural Escape mainly ignore the internet and are unlikely to use digital communications. They may use cell phones in remote areas for emergencies. If there is a church website, it is mainly used to keep a calendar of events.