

Segment I30: *Potlucks and the Great Outdoors*

Comfortably established middle-income couples with children living in rural areas

Resource: Mosaic 2021 by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious perspective:

Religious practices cherish our past and can empower my future

Spiritual Issues:

Feeling flawed and neglected, anxieties over meaninglessness and estrangement

Common Church Presence

- Church tradition
- Smaller congregations
- Fellowship and friendship
- Family values
- Christian year celebrations
- Independent minded



Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group I <i>Family Union</i>	Frequent Neighbors
D15 Sports Utility Families H29 Destination Recreation M45 Growing and Expanding N48 Rural Southern Bliss	I30 Potlucks & the Great Outdoors I31 Hard Working Values I32 Steadfast Conventionalists I33 Balance and Harmony	E21 Unspoiled Splendor J35 Rural Escape M44 Creative Comfort N47 Countrified Pragmatics

General Comments:

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors often consider the church as their most important spiritual and personal support group. Their roots go deep in their rural communities, and so does their church allegiance. The church reinforces their values, provides them a sense of belonging, and is a center for social activities beyond the home. They may treat the church as an extended family. Church participation is often shaped around hunting and fishing seasons or recreational activities, but faith is always important to them. Their small church may be part of a circuit of preaching points. Multi-site ministry is common, but church mergers are resisted. The credibility of the pastor, quality personal relationships, and local tradition are more important than high-quality programming, updated technologies, and denominational polity.

These churches are often experiencing high stress as urbanization is overtaking small towns and industries are encroaching on farmland. New townhouse developments pop up near old farmhouses. Expectations with incoming young urbanites may conflict with traditions of long-time residents. Historically, many households connected with established denominations. More recently, they are increasingly anxious about changes to denominational policies that erode traditional family values and promote rapid social change. In part, this may be due to the increasing pressure of urbanization. They tend to be drifting from institutional church loyalty toward a more personalized religion, independent churches, or faith-based non-profit organizations.

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	x	Mentor
	CEO				Pilgrim

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors see the pastor or priest as a role model for Christian values, mentor for spiritual practices, and constant visitor, who provides moral and personal support in difficult times. They do not need to be great preachers but speak from scripture and communicate the strength of their personal faith. They tend to speak without notes and illustrate sermons from personal experiences and are strongly empathic with the feelings and concerns of their smaller congregations. Clergy are always available in emergencies and good visitors in homes and institutions. They have excellent relationships with local and regional social services, schools, and correctional centers. Clergy need to have good time management skills and physical stamina to travel over a wide area. Lay leaders often supplement, and occasionally replace, clergy if they are humble, compassionate, articulate about bedrock beliefs, and spiritually disciplined. These people often yearn for mature faith in a young body. If the pastor is young or starting out, and is relational and respectful, they will go the second mile to support and mentor them. If the pastor is retired or part time, and honors lifecycles and special occasions, they will be very tolerant of any personal limitations. They want to have a strong influence on denominational appointments. They will have strong views about any shift in policy, creative idea, or liturgical change. Diplomacy skills are an advantage!

Lifestyle Connectivity

Clergy must be mobile, and often work from home, counsel in multiple offices, and communicate while driving. They may rely on smartphones even if their constituents do not. They often carry print resources with them for worship and teaching, and a laptop computer loaded with congregational data.

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		

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors like radical hospitality. It is always informal and extremely friendly. The pastor or priest should move easily among all generations Sunday morning. Food and fun are always accompanied by scripture and prayer. Greeters, ushers, and servers should be enthusiastic and respectful. Hospitality leadership is often shared over time among the same families. It is a way for youth or newcomers to fit into the church, receive mentoring, and observe role models for Christian behavior. Attitude and piety are more important than training and expertise. Provide helpers for the elderly and disabled. Provide basic refreshments, with a mix of homemade treats and homegrown vegetables and fruits, along with basic hot or cold coffee and tea. Add lemonade in the summer. Serve refreshments outdoors whenever possible. People may take leftovers home. Special occasions deserve special refreshments, and that may be the time to encourage potluck and home cooking. Always thank people.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Hospitality becomes more lavish when celebrating lifecycle events or Christian festivals. Committees may meet during refreshment times following worship, so provide plenty of coffee and snacks. Reconnecting with former members or dropouts is more urgent than contacting visitors.

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

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

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors value continuity with the past. "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). Sunday worship is predictable in structure, and leaders must be authentic and sincere. Aside from regular worship, they celebrate special Christian festivals like Christmas and Easter. Occasional healing worship (meditative, health and wellness oriented) and transformational worship (revival, addiction intervention) can be important through the year. If Holy Communion is important, it is often served as people kneel at the communion rail and is mostly a personal experience of the Holy.

Worship may be structured, but it is somewhat informal. People will tend to wear their "Sunday Best" to worship, but they will still be laid back. No one is disturbed by babies crying, or older folks stepping out of the sanctuary for a moment. Self-esteem is often tied to opportunities for worship leadership. Many churches recognize birthdays and anniversaries. They honor the passing of family members with flowers and prayers. Both infant and adult Baptisms are big celebrations and central to worship. Spend time with announcements and passing the peace. Make the sermon shorter so the intercessory prayers can be longer. Classic hymns and camp songs are popular, and the hymnal is often an old version. People know many songs by heart, and the memorized words are part of their private devotions and sources of personal strength. They are inspired by favorite hymns, and usually enjoy singing. Introduce new music slowly.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Personal contact is very important. Temporary suspensions of in-person worship and reliance on livestreaming is very stressful. Technology in worship is usually considered intrusive, although projection of scripture readings and liturgy is more common.

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

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors love children and consider the youth to be the future of the church. They also admit that their home lives are often disorganized and undisciplined. They expect a children's Sunday school to not only provide a foundational knowledge of scripture, but also provide a model for disciplined living, teamwork, and respect for older generations. Lay leadership is important. Teachers often serve for a long time. They may be elderly and are loved and respected. Current teachers apprentice new teachers because time and distance limit training events. The curriculum may have been "recycled" over the years, and they may be cautious about introducing new material. Bible stories and moral maxims are most important. Small churches may not be able to group children by age, but they usually separate infants and toddlers, K-5th grade, and then preteens. There may or may not be a youth group, although there will likely be several "youth events" during the year that provide opportunities to teach and model Christian values. Adult classes may continue for many years.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Christian education and spiritual life merge seamlessly. Provide devotional resources for every class, and for home and family. Integrate knowledge (mind), empathy (heart), and spirituality (soul) in classes of any age group. Emphasize resources for stress management, mental health, and interpersonal relationships.

Small Group Preferences

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

Leadership		Focus	
x	Trained Leader	x	Curriculum Study
	Rotate Leaders	x	Shared Affinity

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors may struggle to fit small group participation into their seasonal participation and recreational interests. Some will participate in midweek Bible Study groups, especially if the pastor leads them. Many women have always participated in affinity groups related to crafts or domestic activities, and some men gather in workshops to do repairs on vehicles and outdoor gear. These might be converted into more intentional small groups that include prayer and deeper conversation. Larger groups based on gender and age are still important. The challenge will be to find and equip lay leadership. People prefer a designated leader whose age, experience, and spirituality deserve respect. However, the older generations that were held in such respect are passing on. Many adults do not feel they qualify and may consider it presumptuous to volunteer. They are unlikely to use video technology as a supplement. Clergy will need to be very intentional to select, train, and provide ongoing coaching for potential leaders.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Fellowship is important, and people often gather in gender- or age-based groups for women, men, and youth. Education, friendship, and service often combine as groups gather around tasks that benefit the community. There is a growing interest in groups related to the environment and challenges of global warming.

Outreach Preferences

Resource: *Strategic Thinking* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

	Personal Need	Readiness to Volunteer
Basic Survival	x	x
Health and Wellness		x
Quality of Life	x	x
Addiction Intervention		x
Interpersonal Relationships		
Human Potential		
Salvation and Human Destiny	x	x

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors are not particularly active in civic affairs. They rely on professionals to provide necessary social services but tend to be slow to volunteer. They will rally to protect traditional family values and endorse caregiving programs. Despite their outdoors lifestyles, they are not particularly worried about the environment ... unless the big city or industry tries to invade their territory to create a garbage dump, quarry, or industrial site. This segment tends to be very anxious about urbanization. In the past they have been unconcerned about crime, but increasingly worry about personal and home security. They especially appreciate outreach ministries that address basic needs for shelter, food, and clothing. They support programs that help military veterans and their families. As the rural economy struggles, there is increasing alcohol and drug abuse, and an increasing interest in recovery programs. Parish Nurse and other healthcare support programs are often connected with the church. Wellness centers, rehabilitation centers, and basic physiotherapy are under-funded by the state and welcomed in association with a church. These people are remarkably sacrificial in the event of any family crisis or natural disaster. They give with extraordinary generosity and volunteer their time and energy. Many will even risk their lives or the stability of their own homes for the sake of neighbors.

Lifestyle Connectivity

These people have big hearts, and a whole range of outreach opportunities may capture their imagination. They like to be personally involved in mission, and this is often an opportunity for cross-generational mentoring. Evangelism and social service are always two sides of the same coin.

Facility Preferences

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

Property		Technology		Symbolism	
x	Ecclesiastical		Modern	x	Classic Christendom
	Utilitarian		Postmodern		Contemporary Post-Christendom

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors may not have sophisticated sensibilities about church architecture, but they do have a strong sense of sacred space. Church buildings may be small, and are often older, but they are well maintained and readily identifiable as Christian. The doors are often left unlocked so that people in need of prayer can visit any time ... but parishioners and neighbors all keep an eye on the building to make sure it is safe. The symbols are classically Christian, and tend to repeat the motifs of cross, open Bible, and scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Catholic churches will also have symbols of the Eucharist. The Stations of the Cross may be rustic or even handmade but are refurbished and readily accessible. Pulpits, altars or communion tables, communion ware and baptismal fonts are traditionally designed, but not fancy. Pulpit Bibles and older versions of scripture are cherished. All memorials are important because the donor families are usually still active in the church. Many churches maintain nearby cemeteries.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Small buildings are often situated on large properties, opening possibilities for outdoor picnic and amateur sports areas. Churches can become central gathering places for all people in the community. Old church buildings may be replaced by multi-purpose community centers, provided that historic symbols are preserved.

Financial Preferences

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

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

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors are accustomed to trust clergy and board to use money wisely. They prefer to donate to a single budget but may provide a large discretionary fund for use by the pastor or priest. Since trust is high, 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. People tend to be sceptical of required contributions to the denomination because they think the denominational overhead costs unnecessary or question changing denominational policies. Clergy are often torn between the expectations of their superiors and the skepticism of their members.

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 address any financial shortfalls with generous giving at the end of the year. Accurate accounting for weekly offerings is important. A "town meeting" will set the budget and plan the future. Although committed to the church, they tend to be self-indulgent with their discretionary income. They spend a lot on cars and trucks, outdoors equipment, and occasional trips to NASCAR races and state fairs. They appreciate advice on Christian family financial management.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Books and workbooks related to simple lifestyles and Christian family financial management will be useful. Websites recommend links to other resources, although they probably won't follow blogs or search websites.

Communication

Resource: *Mosaic E-Handbook* by Experian

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

Potlucks and the Great Outdoors are often hard to reach. If the schedule changes for any event, anticipate that people will come early or late. The church best communicates through gatherings and verbal announcements. They read newsletters and carry away brochures, refrigerator magnets, key rings, and other objects that remind them of the church or provide them with devotional aids.

Lifestyle Connectivity

They increasingly rely on social media. Reinforce announcements and newsletters with Facebook posts. Identify key influencers that different households may follow. The church website is usually very simple, but it may provide links to websites related to mission and evangelism organizations, and para-church or non-profit partners.