SEGMENT N48: RURAL SOUTHERN BLISS

Mission Impact...Focusing your heartburst for the people around you

Lower middle-income multi-generational families living in small towns

Resource: Mosaic by Experian

General Spiritual Insight:

*Rural Southern Bliss* is part of the Lifestyle Group N (*Pastoral Pride*). Please refer to the description of Group N for the larger context of this segment's potential relationship with the church.

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<th>Religious Perspective:</th>
<th>&quot;The Lord Is My Shepherd&quot;</th>
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<td>Key Behaviors:</td>
<td>Solitude and Self-Reliance, Retrofitted Vehicles, Large Freezers</td>
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<td>Strong Impressions:</td>
<td>Inclination &amp; Attitudes: Traditional, Simplicity, Carefree</td>
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<td>Mood &amp; Values: High Importance of Religious Faith, Low Drive for Affluence</td>
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Comments:

These African-American families have lived in their small towns (mainly in the south) for decades. Life rotates around family, community, and church. Their towns once thrived on local manufacturing, but in the present economy they are scrambling to shift jobs, to low paying careers in public administration, health care, and retail. People work hard and are dedicated to getting ahead. They aren’t extravagant, but they like to appear successful in good clothes and nice cars.

Most people in this segment belong to a Baptist church (independent or denominational). They attend church regularly, participate in Sunday school, and enjoy socializing with friends and extended family in church programs. Churches tend to be conservative and old fashioned, but are often vocal advocates for equal rights, open to other cultures, and liberal on immigration. The church may develop outreach ministries for health care, community safety and crime prevention, and honor members for personal achievement, self-sacrifice, and adult continuing education. Despite being workaholics on a tight budget, people in this segment can be generous in volunteering their time for a good cause.
## Relevant Ministry Choices:

### Leadership

**Enabler, Care Giver**

The pastor has probably attended Bible College and has been ordained by a denomination or congregation. The pastor is very knowledgeable about scripture, and more interested in practical applications to daily living than doctrines and abstractions. The pastor is a motivational speaker, and speaks with passion using stories, personal experiences, and Biblical metaphors. The pastor is a strong role model for faith and values, and can hold members accountable for their spiritual lives with confidence and credibility. The pastor is a regular visitor in homes, hospitals, and other public institutions, and networks effectively among other social service and health care agencies.

This pastor may work part or full time in a secular job, and it is partly his or her credibility as a Christian in the workplace that gives authority to lead the church. The pastor has good diplomatic skills, but is an assertive leader who acquires or dismisses board members and lay leaders carefully. The pastor is the primary administrator for the church, and is trusted with both the spiritual and financial well being of the congregation.

### Hospitality

**The Basics, Take Out**

People in this segment try hard to honor the Sabbath day. They come early to church for Sunday school, stay for worship, and linger for refreshments, lunch, fellowship, or recreation with their brothers and sisters in Christ. They like to wear their best clothes, be on their best behavior, and exercise their primary spiritual gifts for singing, teaching, care giving, praying, and so on.

Greeters are important, not so much to welcome newcomers (which are few), but to honor members and their extended families and occasionally help the elderly or young mothers negotiate steps and hallways. Refreshments should be available throughout the day. Refreshments include basic brewed coffee and tea (hot and cold), and lemonade or water. Food may be donated, but it is usually inexpensive treats from the supermarket. Make sure there is plenty of it, and whatever is left over can be sent home for snacks or frozen for next Sunday.

### Leadership Compelling Issues:

The pastor’s family members are expected to model Christian attitudes and behavior patterns, and success as head of family reinforces the pastor’s authority within the church family.

### Hospitality Compelling Issues:

Fellowship dinners are often jumbo sized orders of fast food (chicken, fries, etc.) rather than prepared meals. Depending on the region, there may be broiled crawfish, catfish, or other local delicacies.
Worship

**Inspirational, Care Giving or Transformational**

Worship is uplifting, joyful, and thankful. Worship is very participatory. Music is both performed and sung, and either way people react spontaneously to the lyrics and rhythm. Prayers initiated by the pastor or lay leader are enlarged and supplemented by spontaneous prayers or affirmations by other people. Scripture is highlighted throughout the service. Personal achievements and family celebrations are noted.

The sermon is passionate, motivational, and Bible based. It is applicable to daily living, and may refer to ongoing Bible study or small group conversations. Elders, deacons, or other lay leaders may stand with the preacher to lend vocal and emotional support to the message, and people will respond with affirmation to key insights. Preacher and congregation tend to feed off one another’s energy, and help one another concentrate on the wisdom and power of the word. There may be one or two offerings, and perhaps the opportunity for an altar call or healing prayer.

Worship is often unsupported by any technology other than a piano or organ, although there may be a simple audio system. Video is very uncommon. People may sit in pews or chairs, but there is often plenty of space to move about, and a spacious enough stage for the pastor to move as he preaches or for choirs to sing.

**Compelling Issues:**

Time is generally forgotten in worship. Preaching may continue for awhile, and the pastor may be inspired to follow an unexpected train of thought. People may come and go as needed, but no one is in a hurry to leave.

Education

**Experiential or Curricular, Biblical, Generational**

People in this segment are apt to spend a good portion of their Sunday at church. Sunday School often precedes worship for children and adults. Increasingly, however, adult Sunday school consists of older adults in traditional Bible study classes led by mature and highly respected matriarchs or patriarchs of the church.

Younger adults (20-45) may gather for fellowship and broader, more topical conversation in the kitchen, refreshment center, or outside. This ambiguity about young adult Christian education may or may not be resolved by midweek small group opportunities. Many younger adults are already committed to various forms of continuing education related to job proficiency or career advancement.

The children’s Sunday school is fairly traditional, and mirrors the age-based K-8 classroom experience of public school. They study a curriculum based on scripture. The teachers are often matriarchs of the church and their apprentices, and this experiential mentoring is the training process for new teachers. The Sunday school and the women’s association together represent a significant influence in the life of the church.

The church usually supports a very strong teen youth program, and may pay a stipend to train and deploy a Youth Coordinator. The youth program is also fairly traditional, including key elements for recreation and fellowship, bible study and prayer, and local mission service.

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Relevant Ministry Choices:

**Small Group**

**Designated Leaders, Affinity**
Midweek small group experiences might seem the logical solution to provide advanced Christian education for young adults 20-45, but people in this lifestyle segment do not often embrace small group experiences. Sunday morning is the habit, and these workaholic adults are pretty busy through the week. Small groups that work tend to have designated leaders appointed and trained by the pastor. Groups that rely on rotating leadership do not tend to last very long. Unless there is a designated leader, accountability within the group for spiritual discipline and mutual support tends to break down.

Although group discussions emphasize scripture, the group is shaped around a shared affinity (i.e. enthusiasm, activity, or need). The affinity may be very practical (like automobile maintenance or sports), or it may be urgent (like parenting or job resume coaching). Support groups are becoming more common to address temporary unemployment, divorce recovery, or addiction intervention.

**Compelling Issues:**
The pastor’s involvement is a key to success. The pastor often mentors a small group of lay members to become more confident in spiritual leadership, and then deploys them to develop their own small groups. The pastor continues to meet with them for accountability and ongoing coaching.

**Education**

**Compelling Issues:**
The emerging challenge is to provide relevant Christian education opportunities for post-teen young adults age 20-45 ... and often this is tied to a second challenge to create mentoring relationships between patriarchs of the church and young men. Some young men fill this gap with task groups and mission teams of the church, in which advanced mentoring in Christian living may be continued.

**Outreach**

**For Themselves:** Survival, Quality of Life, Health
**For Others:** Survival, Quality of Life, Health, Human Destiny

People in this lifestyle segment have deep roots in the community, and can usually rely on extended family, friends, and neighbors to help them out in times of need. However, there are times when these networks do not have the resources or spiritual authority to help. Churches often provide opportunities for short term financial aid, legal aid, food, medical attention, and addiction intervention that is otherwise unavailable from personal networks. The church may create a “community center” where people can gather informally during the week, connect with advisors from the church, and find temporary help.
### Relevant Institutional Strategies:

#### Property and Technology

**Ecclesiastical or Utilitarian, Christendom, Modern**

*Rural Southern Bliss* have old fashioned ideas about what a church building looks like, but pragmatic attitudes that will shape church property and technology in any way that is necessary to accomplish mission. Older buildings may include a mix of architectures and materials, with accumulated additions and renovations over the years carried out by volunteers. People in this segment are not averse to relocating to another church building if membership growth, or the need for specialized outreach space, requires it (and some creative financial management makes it possible). They might also relocate and build a utilitarian brick or cinder block structure, especially if this provides additional outdoor space for team sports, fellowship, and evangelical outreach.

Worship space may also be a traditional sanctuary that has been retrofitted for inspirational or transformational worship. The hard wood is often removed from a chancel area to allow enlarged musical groups, and free the pastor from the pulpit and step forward to make eye contact. Pews may be replaced by chairs, center aisles widened and front rows removed to provide more space for interaction. Vestibules may be expanded for fellowship; kitchens may be upgraded for fellowship dinners.

#### Outreach

**Continued...**

These folks organize in the community for crime prevention and safe environments. They may develop task groups to clean up properties, escort children on Halloween night, coach parenting and household skills to young singles and couples, or offer family financial planning services. They often partner with other organizations to advocate human rights, immigration policy, and equal opportunity employment.

Anything that encourages upward mobility, job placements, and career advancement is interesting to people in this segment. Churches develop links with community colleges or university scholarship programs, and like to encourage young adults to discern spiritual gifts and sharpen creative talents. People are willing to sacrifice personal and family time to get ahead; and the church can support them emotionally and spiritually as they go and grow. Young adults who relocate for education or jobs often maintain strong, continuous contacts with their home town and home church.

Health, diet, and nutrition are increasingly important health issues for outreach. People in this segment tend to rely on high calorie fast foods or prepared take-out dishes from the supermarket. Complications from heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and other illnesses are often in the prayer concerns of the people.

### Compelling Issues:

Enabling, care giving pastors in growing churches often seek special training to organize and direct faith-based, non-profit organizations that are developed in association with the church.
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<th>Stewardship/Financial Management</th>
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<td><strong>Unified Budgets, Lifestyle Coaching</strong></td>
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<td>Audio and video systems may not be necessary, but audio will have priority over video. Music is important, and electrical supplies may be upgraded for amplifiers and electronic keyboards. Internet is probably not important. If there is an office in the church building itself, it may well have computer and internet access, but files and records still tend to be hard copy in filing cabinets. Symbols are classically, and unambiguously, Christian. Interior images often include scenes from the Old and New Testaments.</td>
<td>People in this segment live on tight budgets. They also have increasing financial insecurity as economic forces eliminate once steady employment in manufacturing, and the need to find new job opportunities in health care, administration, retail, construction, and other careers. They have few investments. The good news is that they may now have better health insurance options and many are close to paying off home mortgages. They may splurge for fashionable clothing and upscale automobiles, but people in this segment have a philanthropic streak and will be generous toward churches and selected charitable organizations. Some older adults will practice tithing, and most families will support the church as generously as they can. They often “walk a second mile” to give extra to a special mission project, overcome an operations deficit, or make an urgent repair to the building. Donations are usually in cash or in-kind (labor, materials, expertise and resources). People trust the church to spend money wisely, and members may not always demand an audited financial statement or even a detailed budget. They are motivated to give mainly by the spiritual credibility and vision of the pastor and core leaders. Leaders usually set a benchmark for financial giving, and declare their own financial commitment in advance of a fund raising campaign. The campaign is usually based on a number of rallies and prayer vigils through the year rather than home visits limited to one season of the year. These folks may find it hard to commit to an annual financial pledge, and financial projections may not be reliable beyond three months. People generally distrust banks, and probably won’t pre-authorize withdrawals or use credit cards.</td>
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<td>The kitchen may be the most up to date room in the building. People in this segment tend to eat fast or frozen food, so there is often a freezer and microwave available.</td>
<td>Many people in this segment appreciate coaching for Christian family financial planning, and may appreciate coaching for entrepreneurship and starting a business.</td>
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## Relevant Institutional Strategies:

### Communication

#### Gatherings, Telephone, Print

People in this segment are late adopters for postmodern technology, and are more likely spend money on a flat screen TV than the internet. They use the internet primarily for job hunting and medical information, and occasionally participate in chat rooms and forums. They are less likely to surf the internet, and a church website is more of a static advertisement than a resource or communication hub for members.

They will read hard copy print. They may read the pastor’s sermon or use daily devotional guides, and they will certainly read the Bible and occasional commentaries. The church newsletter needs to be relatively short, and emphasize prayer concerns among the members and coming events. In church, they may or may not use printed orders of worship... and perhaps only a simply sheet of announcements may be handed out. They will rely on static billboards and outdoor signs for marketing. For special events, they will rent a mobile sign for the side of the road or front lawn of the church.

People mainly rely on oral communication in large gatherings and small groups to communicate information or learn new things. This can be reinforced by telephone calls to the home. Posters may be used in local diners, community centers, hospitals, and sports arenas to advertise opportunities to the community. They may also sponsor a booth at a local fair, or hand out literature at a picnic.

#### Compelling Issues:

The one postmodern splurge for the pastor and core leaders of the church is often a cell phone with hands-free earpiece for rapid team communications.

### Resources:

- **Really Relevant (and) Always Faithful: How Churches and Ministries Target Mission in An Explosion of Diversity** by Thomas G. Bandy (Available through Amazon)
- Download the **MOSAIC Guide** from Experian
- Explore the **Interactive MOSAIC Guide** from Experian