

LEADING SAINTS

How I Lead as Branch President in Lithuania | An Interview with Denis Grinevicius

May 19, 2021

00:00:08 - 00:05:02

Hey everyone i wanna let you know about an upcoming virtual conference that you gotta check out in an effort to bring more thoughtful dialog to the topic of mental health in the latter day. Saint context the leading saints team has put together the mentally healthy saints virtual summit we have interviewed twenty plus individuals with expertise or real life experience related to so many mental health topics including anxiety depression eating disorders. Adhd and even screw philosophy. We will discuss all these topics as they relate to the latter day saint faith experience at how we can all come together to better minister. Those who struggle with mental health. It's free to attend. Virtually any kind of join us for more details on the topics that we will cover during the summit and to register for free text the word lead to four seven four seven four seven or visit leading saints dot org slash mental health again. Text the word lead to four seven. Four seven four seven or visit leading saints dot org slash mental health. Has this curtis three. Utah is going to give a shout out to kurt leading saints that profound impact on a lot of people enjoy what they're what you guys are doing. Appreciate all the content library saints. We're all trying to find our way in this world. And i think the more than we can collaborate on those things that matter more than we can see how the gospel can penetrate our lives into our worlds and make things better. There's always more to be in more to do. And i appreciate with kurt groups together appreciate the time and effort behind all of this very valuable. Encourage anybody out there. Who's a first time listener to the leading saints. Get yourself invest in the library. Be some things. Vincent gems that you'll find police. It's another how i lead segment on the leading saints podcast. My name is kurt. Franken will come back now if you're new to leading saints. We are a nonprofit organization. Dedicated to helping latter-day saints be better prepared to lead and we do that through various forms of content creation. one of those being this podcast. which helped to subscribe. And while you're adult might as well leave a review to be found by other people looking for fantastic latter-day saints podcasts. And we also have a website leading saints dot org with thousands of articles related to leadership topics and ritual summits. We have a weekly newsletter and on and on it goes we hope you jump into the leading saints world and find value

in this content. Now in this how. I lead segment as those of you. That are familiar with the how i lead segment. We talk with leaders across the world. Who aren't necessarily famous or world renowned but their leaders in. They're doing their best. Just like we all are in our leadership roles and we just simply ask them the question. How is it that you lied. They usually chair two to three principles. That may be in be sponsored by your apply in your own leadership and today we are headed on the other side of the globe to lithuania. Where we interview denise green apple juice denise that's actually a male name so i don't wanna get confused a female that i'm talking to. He is a branch president on a second. Go at being a branch. President also been a district president and so many other callings that are available in lithuania. He's at opportunity to serve in. And so i asked him about the church. Lithuanian the beginning. What it's like and how it's being impacted by the covid pandemic and we jump in decision leadership principles. So here's my interview with the niece green apple juice and here with denise gravel juice. Did i say right close enough very deals and actually do have much practice it just but the green juice denise screen avid use. Now you are in lithuania and you'll have to new to abolish. I'm such an ignorant america. And there's probably things. I should know about lithuania. You know the culture the language. Whatever it is and i'm going to be the real and say i don't know much but that's why you're here to help us out. So just maybe give us a rundown of of you and your experience in the church from the callings. You've held Maybe gives a summary of what the church is like in lithuania cliff. area and the it's used to be a part of russia longtime ago someone's the ussr countries but it became independent in nineteen ninety three. And that's when the iron curtain fell down that's when religion starts to fall to the country and people were starting to get interested. And that's exactly the time when i got interested in the church. Was that time bali. Fourteen years of age. I was very young but our skin sale was interested in religion. But i was interested to meet americans real americans and to practice my english.

00:05:02 - 00:10:06

And you to understand with. Didn't see any americans really the anybody else except people from you know. Use our country's yes although israeli exotic for us to conceive missionaries for the first time. Yeah but like. I said it was more for me interesting to see how well they taught me in my school because before i met missionaries. I'm sure was russian accent that was speaking with and the when meeting with a missionaries love. People saying i'm getting this little bit of american accent now. Is there anything more you dad like being you said you were fourteen in the iron curtain fell. I mean was there that feeling of liberation the world. Your world has totally changed. What how would you describe. Some of those feelings felt from from that young age. The funny part when the when though as this revolution going on that night i fell asleep on. I didn't hear anything. By the next morning i wake up. It's a free country but talking from the perspective of kit. I must tell other amiss. Maybe which exists will very happy. It was a happy place to live. It was amazing. Place safe interesting in well for the kids and we had everything with yeats. Everything was available for us but we didn't have a religious freedom of religion was not there and when the time came a lot of missionaries from different churches. Were coming to the country and preaching the gospel night desolate The hand of god that he led me even straight to the church of jesus. Christ latter-day saints at that. From the first time i met i was in. I

was all in the church mostly over the my friends missionaries. But when i was baptized even i i couldn't say the testimony but with time bednarz Must more like a rising of the sun for me. When i look back. I see that. I had a lot of good spiritual experiences which led to the point where i am now. Have a strong testimony of jesus christ on the church. Speaking of the church the first few years were very good. The that's where we saw a lot of growth of the church so if we stay today we have how. It's very still small very small. We have evolved eight hundred people total in the church in. Lithuania would have five branches to in the city of illness. Among the city of columnist cliveden showed is the biggest cities where we have a small branches of the church at the moment Answering a question about the Would be to say the coincided not serve so i have never been to a young woman and relief society everything else absolutely. They're nice and so. I think it is mentioned. We've got to give a shout out to landed who originally connected us. But is it You've served as a district. President narrow which is similar to a stake president to is still a district. Are there any stakes. in lithuania. There is no stakes. Unfortunately lithuania but yes i served as district president By even had chance to serve as a concert to domitian president that because in lithuania when we speak about mission president. He's not only presiding over the michigan's but he's more like acting like a stake president for us but now we have a local district presidency in the branches. Run by the members and in that district princi-reports to the state or the mission. President of right. Yes yes yes. Ucsf admission president again. Another interesting thing. might be for people to learn about our mission. Our mission has four countries. And we speak five languages so lithuanian baltic mission has lithuania latvia. Estonia and belorussia saas part of their mission. And as you know belorussia still kind of close to the missionary efforts in serving their but we speak. there's lithuanian speaking mission is latvian. Speaking missionaries estonian belorussian and russian speaking missionaries in the mission. Bios start imagine. Is lithuanian languages. russia yes. There is a lithuanian language. Even though there is about three million of us we have our own language. Honus yes you speak. Lithuanian and russian ending lithuanian. Russian english and focus on thrill that one in for good measure. Imagine you see a lot of the same missionaries since they're not rotating through the entire mission. There they're all staying within lithuania Yes this is the interesting part. If you call those russian speaking you might serve in any of the four countries but if you sir if you call to speak a certain language which is Lithuanian for example than you are probably will be serving lithuania. This for four different cities mentioned before nice and in what temple district argument another hard question to answer because in villainous branches illness.

00:10:06 - 00:15:00

I build a second. I don't like to divide us by the language but villains second dominant language is russian. And because of that. We chose to belong to kiev ukraine temple when the muscles the district's go to finland Temple interesting so the word in its branch that you're part of the bride's she has so the ranch that you're part of they speak russian in their services in mostly with speak russian. We have some american english speaking people and our branches who have a lot of people from ukraine which due to the situation ukraine have decided to be great. Listen to way and are very strong members. And i don't know what i would do without my hence members of the churches be very hard for us. Wow that's great. that's awesome so you've been

assume you've been the branch president to may be sister. It's it's the second time in prison. That did something wrong. That i use all things. I did wrong when i was first time. Serving the lord gave me a second chance. That's great in It's been two years now. great awesome. Is everything tells me. Just the the coronavirus situation. There is still doing any in person meetings at this time of allah. Very hard topic for us because we haven't been together for a year now march sixteen two thousand twenty. That's when the church stopped and we haven't been the we never been released to go to the church meeting all our meetings held via zoom so it's only zoom meetings at the moment catching and how is just in general in lithuania. The dacoven cases in things seem to be on a positive end in a positive direction. Or we're having a second wave. What the goal We have six percent positive Response to all the tests. They do so for for small country like us. We have about five hundred cases a day so we have already seeing some easy. On how for example we were supposed to mascola time on the street now At least you go without the street only go to the shelf or anything like that led church. Unfortunately steel closed meetings interesting while hopefully things head towards the positive direction here for all of us that we can be back as insane snow physically later but as we do these how i lead interviews i typically ask you to put together a list of leadership principles do you serve By and so this leads to grade two anecdotes stories that That we can learn from so the first one he put. Here's care more about the lord with the lord will think versus what people will think. How's that been made manifest in your service branch prison. Wanna serve people of course in you wanna do. What's the best for them. But i learned that you cannot be. It's not my goal to be favorite. You know it's not my goal to be a but people would say all she been so good to president to me or anything else. I learned that the the most important Laura things of me rather than what people think of me and interestingly enough i would say that you know the heart thing and the back side of the moon or dark of the calling. Is that when you have to have a disciplinary. Councils are the things which are not pleasant than some things you have to go through and the but those things those meetings i always come out with a headache and totally exhausted. But i think this is also shows that this always been a good experiences for me and then those meetings When we gather together as leaders we sometimes really need to wrestle with the lord to find out the decisions because you know we come a screen. Digital's we come with a certain opinion. We come with certain possible outcome of the meeting to this though when we win winter and when we learn from each other we see that have three different approaches. And that's the time when we have to totally put aside what we say and tried to find out what the lord thinks and how he wants to proceed and I i learned this principle very well. Once i remember very clearly was so overwhelmed. There were so many emails annual reports so many things to do that. I just basically switched off the phone. I demand for any single email. And i was just like solar weld. I just i just let it flow. I learned that the church didn't fall apart. Nothing nothing happened. You know i learned. This is his church. And i'm just. I'm blessed to surf him. I'm blessed to lead the people. He trusted me. But it doesn't mean that i do it.

00:15:00 - 00:20:04

He does it all the time. So if i can follow his will if i can at the end of the day what the day was if it can go knowing that i have done the best i knew how to do than the best. According to what i

felt. This is where. I found my comfort in the tough decision. The moments of being a branch president. I appreciate that just real sense of the overwhelming and it can just pile on some days where you think you can. You can barely breathe. You know there's so much coming at you and so just to step back. They cut off a correspondence for a time. Just to catch your breath right. The assess the knicks principally is never complain commodity. Gotta complain a little bit right off. This is this is. this is my first time. I've been called to the branch Been complaining a lot but this is a really a new principal for me and something learned very recently in also which helped me. When i was studying the book of mormon i found this principle. And i learned this principle to honestly absolutely honest with you from Great mission of great leader. We had from ukraine president bush's goal imagine mission president. I think this is the even harder calling the brench prison because he has to deal with a mysterious and we know how missionaries are hall. I was missionary. But you're but he also acting as a stake president so after three years serving as mission president due to the covid to continue serving that cali and he had another calling topo there a presidency. And i call him analysis sympathizing with immense saying. I truly understand how hard it is. And he showed an example in the scriptures. Were were speak about three fights or john. The beloved only others had a very good Desire they wanted to serve and then come to the law but those were different because when their time was ended they continued to serve so for me. This was you know. I will never complain about that. I have to serve for another year or two or three because previously after certain amount of time you start to meet with district presence like hey do you have anybody you know you a replacement way authority have any ideas and you start to put that seed into his thought. But i thought of this time. I will not. I will not become complaint and i looked Learn to Of deadpool unity to grow for me. Of course. I complain if us my wife and she will issue. That's the person you can complain. It's the lord than the new life and then when you but the people. I mean the people should feel the end should know how to rejoice in the gospel. I think it's been very a topic for us to to rejoice in our calling. In if we are not rejoicing than We need to reevaluate them to see we do wrong. And when you sign joy in service when you find joy no being tired at the end of the day and when you wanna complain anymore you just again you understand that this is the this is the biggest mistake when you start the thing. I have done something right now. I've never done anything. This is the lord and this is his work we just merely held seeing what he's doing with us and through us to other people that's great. I love that refocusing on on the true purpose in the glory at truly resides in this work. And also recognizing that you know like you never ever complain but complaining in the rights. People in the right context rather than is openly. So that's awesome. Knicks put is training youth or training your replacement. I would imagine in a place like your our the churches maybe much younger compared to other places in the world and from your year history in leadership. I'm sure a great leader in and do these things but there's not many people to go around the pass these calling soon. So how have you found effective in in training upcoming leaders or even the youth so the in the future in lithuania. They have some some great leaders. Ready and willing. I think this is golden kimball who says inspiration relation relations. You know in there is sometimes you you notice that the small churches said like this. You have certain families who can allow always they're always changing changing callings. But for me. I've been given an opportunity to serve at the very young age. I don. I was sixteen when i was called to the district presidency as a counselor to the district president and he was a very wise Senior couple missionaries who was serving and He trusted me. She trusted me. So that i

remember very clearly led to one day Prison hiring was visiting lithuania. And he says you cannot translate for hiring and looking back.

00:20:04 - 00:25:09

I know that he could beat up any other person or so. Many people who are speaking english so much better than i am who could have done the same things will do better but he wanted this experience from especially for me and this was one of my great spiritual experiences because i was able to translate for presidential and i remember sending their translating and i think this is amazing. I all english so well and immediately. I couldn't translate award if you say you know just like i open my mouth and nothing comes out at after sometime. We know it came back and that was one of the great lessons lillard. Well it's not you. If you wanna try your you had your chance to try a new. You've failed so let rely on the lord he'll help you and the president s belsen. The also recently has been speaking a lot. We trust the youth. And i. I keep saying that i want to trust. The youth has much as present melts. Trust and it's hard because you see them you know everyday life but at the moment we have to eighteen year olds who just received as We immediately called them onto the branch presidency and allow that to the elder squirm presidency to raise them to give them this opportunity to serve to give them opportunity to See how things are done in the church. And i believe that if we don't do that if we don't raise our you if we don't help them then we're gonna always stuck in the skull. Gino you'll call me in ten years and will be third or fourth time branch president. This is not the goal we want. This used to build illiteracy than they were prepared for the special time. And we know this. We just need to help them find that testimony and build it on and have the spiritual experiences in this way. This is the easiest way to get replaced just to train somebody and the you know when the time comes when some of the district president mission president asks who could be replacement one might i my counselors and then the use to be in that list to say that they know how to run the church and they already so. I think placing trust in youth in helping us. To grow is very important than that. Especially in the small churches like this held salsa youth to stay close to the may be a little bit older brothers but also between themselves it gives them some responsibilities on things to drill down on that lewis for me as far as like eating trusting youth in maybe trusting leaders. How does that look like specifically. I would imagine it tough to do that at times when you can see. Maybe this the mistakes are making. It's obvious or you know you wanna step in incorrect. That so any thoughts are examples. Come to mind as far as like what trusting youth or trusting leaders actually looks like. Yeah i examples very easy. you know. it's always easier fast to yourself. It's always easier faster but you have to patient than you have to. You know say that will think about the lauren. How patient he is with me now. I know myself how hard it can be so just giving them the opportunity to to to do those mistakes on its. I don't see anything bad in them doing steaks. There's nothing we could correct or anything we can do now but for them to be the presidency meetings to see no to study from hannibal instruction to see how we how call things about how we prey how we decide on the calling. Hawaii rifle the corner booth search for this thinks we from the revelation and for them to be part of this. It's a great experience. I was involved. I want to share that with them as well. Yeah i love that thought this just even the simple act of exposing them to the natural workings of an organization or award or church. You know

really prepares them for maybe five ten years down the road when they're in a similar situation they think bagwell. I remember know. Have that leader handled it. And i'll try that and see if it works and so just that does a lot for. Yeah they also you know. They're much better than we are with the technology so giving them tax tasks with technology maybe reports silly. You know something you most branch presidents don't like to do but we had this as far as work we have to our Entering donations and things like that is it's a. It's a some responsibilities. You know. Sometimes i could not give to my counselor because they The computer literacy is not there yet but My youth is there to help and support. Now there's one more than i to touch on Typically push people on this because it's sort of a natural that all leaders want want to go to net is loving people you are called to serve which is great and i've loved vy expand on that but i was say we'll give me one more 'cause a lot of people say that in an means think different things different people but but what does that mean like how it is loving the people you serve like.

00:25:09 - 00:30:02

How do you actually go about that. The i put that there. The the reason why i served my mission in scotland and i built some attornal friendships there and the people i trust much. The there's a one specific Lady who had a deputy back on me when i was cold as brench prison torture. That's like. Do you have any suggestions. And she just said. I'll just love your people and for me for me. It's a it's a game changer Being a man is sometimes easier to love then to be loved. And you know. It's i see for some people. It's easier to love others to accept me maybe themselves and to show this appreciation Receive this love from others and In this h where we read in the scriptures of the hearts of the people will fail them. I think and the so. I i see that the hearts of becoming more cold. The zik actually the thing which helps the meltdown. The heart of the Every biller person you can find you know. And i had another costa situation where you know i was talking to another branch presidents who is a good friend of mine. I was asking. How are you dealing with this. Very hard person by branch you know. He's he's complaining. he's doing certain things and hasha. Should i go ball. He just come around him. Ryan around that like you're a hog telecommu love them and she was calling out and then just safe. You'll have to something to correct. I remember doing that. I i didn't i didn't feel like i wanted to correct him anymore. You know. I felt like this suggests about anais. Showing love of the people is is very great and just today. I was listening to One another podcasts and the thought which game they reverted that came from other fouls so out in double check it so please don't quote me on that but he says sometimes the the action of correction we are the way correct. People is even putting more harm than actually try to correct. So i think you know things like to avoid ten. The if you do a mistake lesbian mistake on the sidelines immerse so loving is something i still learn and instill a new to do better how to lost people in them because when we have this pure off we have a better understanding on how to help them and held to see them as the lord season if we do this and we help them to see his than there is no need for us to correct anything they will. They'll do it themselves love it. That's awesome. I was going to ask you just from do these highly interviews just interesting to hear some of the more superficial approaches to leadership like any apps that you use or do you have a google doc. That really is helping you through your leadership or a ways that you tax or communicate anything come to mind as far as a technology

that user or unique approaches to how you organize your leadership is hard - one so I don't think there's any unique one again. My branch at the moment has a lot of elderly people who is maybe not so familiar with technology so it took us quite a while to setup up even to have zoom meetings online. But we are we are there now and we are doing this but personally. I don't think I will do a new different. I just use all the tools. I find everything I need there. And of course. There's google sheets. We have to fill in for a district presidency for area presidency. But don't think I have but maybe with your to use zoom for your your church meetings right now yes we zoom meetings for the church meetings goal and is that just simply setting up a camera in in your chapel urge or d. Do it from home or does that were. Yeah we everybody's connecting from home because unfortunately we are not allowed to go to the chapel. Even if it's a few people with snow we we don't do it so it. Just then we had two before we we had to visit ditch member and help them to set up zoom so they would be accessible and To join the meeting so it's working very well now and we will be to the direction than our zubeidi is exactly the same as you would see all the send the church so starts the him with a prayer and than we do the sacrament. Turn off the cameras and we'll come back in has some people who will share a spiritual thought that then we have our lessons war with separate during the different classes so we have a breakout rooms where we go for you for a primary were dustbowl principles cross har-.

00:30:02 - 00:33:30

Yeah that's great awesome. Well I hope. I get a chance to to visit you in lithuania sometime. It'd be a country. I'd love to visit and learn more about experienced the gospel there. Right will Denise the last question I have for you as you reflect on your time as a leader in various capacities how his being a leader helped to become a better follower of Jesus Christ again being litter for me. It's just become more recently becomes more have to serve more and when you serve others literal understood in the world as the prestige or something. You are aspiring and something. You know you'd have to go in front and drug everybody behind you but litter ship in the georgia Different leadership in the churches fulltime service and realizing that Every time I keep saying that. I'm not serving to Broadway. Oh sister be. I'm serving to. Jesus Christ. And I'm do what I will do for him. I would I do solve for him. And this is the whole purpose of service you know and this is more like a this helped me to understand the way the lord serve to know because he didn't receive any rewards in she was even smitten Drove away so. Every time I served and I see that the nobody's told stones at me know what he persecutes me at least for now but I am able to serve the surf people. It's a great way to serve the mark. Definitely that concludes my interview with Denise green apple juice. Hope you appreciate it. I love connecting with latter day saints and other parts of the world gets me out of my Utah bubble and even my united states bubble right and it's inspiring to see the churchman forward in these other parts where the church is still quite young and still growing and developing in in the stashing. Strong leadership practices and tradition so blessed Denise heart for allowing me to interview him and learn about the church in in lithuania. If there's anybody else especially those international leaders I could reach out to connect with and invite them on how I lead segment. I'd love to be put in touch with them. So go to leading saints dot org slash contact and send us their information. We're building a long list of potential leaders may not be able to get to all of them

but we're always willing to entertain a suggestion and see if it becomes a phenomenal how i lead interview. And don't forget to register for free for the mentally healthy saints virtual summit by texting the word lead to four seven four seven four seven or visiting leading saints dot org slash mental health. A it came as a result of the position of leadership which was imposed upon us by god of heaven who brought forth a restoration of the gospel of jesus christ and when the declaration was made concerning the own only true and living church on face of the earth we were immediate lead put in a position of loneliness the loneliness of leadership from which we cannot shrink nor runaway and which we must face up with boldness and courage and ability.