



Leading Saints in 2022

December 17, 2021

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Hello leading saints audience. This is going to be one of several simple podcast episodes that you will see come across your feed in the month of December. Each year we like to highlight the past year and reflect on what we have learned. I'll also be sharing with you some behind the scenes content, ways you can help leading saints and what to look forward to in 2022. Before we get into this reflective episode, I want to make sure I do two things. First, I want to thank you for your support. It means so much to me that you would hit that play button and offer your attention to the content that we've created at leading saints. This would have ended long ago without your incredible support. Second, I want to ask that you become part of our core leader community. What is a core leader? Well, everyone who believes in our mission to help Latter day Saints be better prepared to lead and gives a recurring monthly or annual donation becomes part of our core leader community. Not only do core leaders help us maintain funding to continue our good work, but they also get additional access to a hundred plus hours of leadership content through the core leader library, which is available through a very convenient app. Would you please go to [leading saint dot org slash donate](https://leading-saints.org/donate) and consider helping us fund our mission in 2022 by becoming a recurring donor? And if you are already a recurring donor, maybe it is a good time of year to consider increasing your recurring donation. Your donation will change lives and improve the leadership capacity in our faith community. Again, go to [leading saints dot org slash donate](https://leading-saints.org/donate) and see all the benefits of becoming a core leader today. And now, here is an end of the year episode that we hope you enjoy. Welcome back to another episode of the leading saints podcast. This is Kurt Franken. Your host, I know many of you have tuned in and heard that time and time again. And this is going to be more casual episode. I'm just going to maybe explore some future ideas and points and directions that leading saints is headed specifically in 2022. I have Instagram Live on and I have Facebook Live on and we're gonna try that out, see if people chime in and ask questions or give feedback or, you know, call me

names, something like that. We'll try to sort of experiment here. And that's really what we do at leading saints. We try different things and that's what's led to so much awesome content and unique ways of communicating content is we just experiment with different things. So throughout December, this is something I've been trying to do more and more each year. Last year didn't work out too much because I got distracted. And I can't tell you what I got distracted about. But someday I'm going to write a book about leading saints and the history of leading saints and stuff we've gone through and I don't think the typical audience understands some of the opposition we faced at leading saints. I don't want to be too cryptic in my speaking here, but we experience some of that last year around this time. And so I didn't do this as much. But what I want to do and you're going to see throughout December, you're going to see a bunch of podcasts pop up. So we're going to be generally shorter podcasts. And we're just going to talk about different things, random things. We're going to talk about the top. Episodes of 2021, top articles, top pieces of content. We're gonna share my book list. That's something I hear a lot about people just saying like, hey, give us a good solid list or a place where we can go to know of your favorite books or the books that you would recommend to leaders or the main books that get talked about on leading saints over and over and over and again, be great to have one spot where people can look and learn and jump in and read. Also, one piece of content I've been asked again and again and again to do is content around how to create a ward podcast. This is something I've done in a password. I'm in the process of doing it in my current ward, where you create a ward podcast. And let me tell you, like as far as a effort in unifying award, that is absolutely so effective in bonding people because here's the thing. We don't want to launch in this episode right now, but just summary. We go to church every week and we have these short experiences within two hours. And yeah, we sort of Bond. We sort of connect, but you really can't connect with people until you've heard their story. Or you've given them space to talk about their story. And that means all the happy times, all the sad times, the depressing times, and not they have to get into every little thing, but you need to understand how that person has found Jesus in their life.

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And why they come to church and why they are who they are and then once there's this broad mutual understanding in a ward about who each other are, then connection starts to happen. It's easier to reach out to others. When you know somebody. So anyways, I'm gonna create a whole episode about how to create a word podcast and we'll get to the nitty Gritty, the tools and resources and how to do it so it doesn't cost your ward and anything. All that stuff. Anyways, so yeah, so throughout the December, you're gonna hear various episodes pop up. So it's gonna be more unusual and I don't know. It's just gonna be a random times. I'll keep them short. You can just listen to it as you're out to Christmas shopping or doing this and that getting ready for the holidays or the end of the year. And I'd just like to share different things that we've learned in this past year and be fun to do. So let's talk about leading saints in 2022. But before I do that, I want to do this every year. It's like I'm the grandfather that brings the kids around and say, all right, kids, this is the one time of the year I tell the story. And I'm going to tell the story of how leading saints came to be. Because I do get that question when I meet people in person. I have opportunity to do firesides or I have the opportunity to meet different people from around the country or world. And we're just casually at dinner or whatever they often ask. So how was it

that you got started with leading saints? Now, if some of you have heard this story already, go ahead and skip this part of the episode and come back to it if you want. So leading saints, as I started, as I tell people, leading saints started in 2010 specifically. And it started as a hobby blog. Because here's what happened. I was in a YSA ward. The world where I met my wife, and I was called as the elder corn president. This was my first experience with church leadership to any degree. I mean, I guess I've been the deacon scorn president or whatnot. But like a good heavy administrative, heavy calling, I've been a district leader on my mission, but, you know, I think there's two companionships that I had to preside over. And so it wasn't necessarily anything to dynamic or intense. But now I was the elder scorn president in this ward of a hundred plus elders and I thought, you know, I want to do a good job, right? And I always laugh about this because I made the assumption that the reason why other leaders hadn't succeeded. In the past, well, they just weren't trying. And that's crazy. That's crazy. Of course they were trying. I mean, maybe some to different degrees or whatnot. And so I thought, okay, I'm gonna do this. I've been called as yellowish corn president. I am going to work my heart out and I'm going to move the needle and they'll probably forge a statue for me out in front of this church building when I'm all done here because I will be breaking records. I will take this elders corp to a whole new level. So I got to work. And then I proceeded to make every typical cliché mistake that any leader ever makes, right? I did the guilt trip lesson with home teaching, which was the focus of the time, right? I remember at one point I went up to the board and I wrote on the board the 39%. Like that was the home teaching percentage of the previous month and I was just like, look at that. That's horrible. This is our corn and we got 39% home teaching ligo ashamed of yourself. Now that I said it that way, but nonetheless, that was sort of the approach of my leadership, right? Like focused on that number of getting it down. Numbers represent people. And you know, I did the guilt trip lesson of home teaching. I had no clue how to delegate. And so I spent a lot of time in the clerk's office, just burning the candle at both ends, rearranging the home teaching routes because I figure if I could just get the right combination and the right formula of people assigned to what people assigned to what families and whatnot households, then home teaching would work. Well, as many of you who've had opportunity to do home teaching or visiting teaching or ministering whatnot, know that that's way more complicated than that. And I worked so hard during that time and the next month came around and looked at the numbers and we went from 39% to 38%. Like, I was like defeated that man. Here I am trying so hard to make a difference in this quorum. I put in so much many hours and this is sort of like I mean the home teaching at the time. That was like what defined elders court and presidents, right? Like and relief society presidents like if you didn't get those numbers up like you have value as a leader. And so I was like, really defeated, frustrated. And I did my best throughout that calling for fewer months.

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Got engaged my wife and obviously we moved out of that ward. Well, moved into a basement shoebox for a year, and then we moved into we moved into a condo. And shortly thereafter I was called in the bishopric, serving that bishopric for two years and then that bishop got released and I was called as the high priest group leader. And I thought, here we go again. You know, I tried to be a phenomenal elders corn president before. And now I'm the high price group leader and I'm going to try really hard, right? I'm going to spend so much time and for what,

exactly. I don't know. And so I was really discouraged and as I pondered over this, I thought, you know, this is weird. Why isn't anybody talking about these issues? This is something that we spent a lot of focus on in the church of these leadership dynamics, how to motivate people, how to get them to serve how to get them to be impacted by their gospel experience or ward experience, but nobody's really talking about the best practice of leadership. And I could walk into a Barnes and noble, any bookstore and see bookshelves full of life leadership business leadership family leadership like so many leadership books, so much research out there, but nobody was taking those concepts and talking about them in the context of the church. And I thought, well, I'm no leadership expert. But maybe I could create a platform where I could bring the experts and we could begin to discuss. These leadership principles and see what we could learn. And so from there, it just started, I think this was the birth date of leading saints is May 26th 2010. I went online and I bought the domain name leading LDS dot com. And turned it into just a hobby blog. A simple vlog where I could start writing about leadership and exploring concepts and questions as they relate to leadership in the context of the church. And so I would read a book like 7 habits of highly effective people. And as I read it, I think, okay, what principles in here really makes sense or really helpful in the context of church leadership? And then I'd write up a blog about it. And I read books like drive by Daniel pink and do the same thing. This book's about motivating people. What can we learn about motivating people from this book and apply it in the church saying? And it was kind of touch and go hit and miss writing content here and there. Sometimes I'd go months without writing, but it was just sort of a fun hobby blog. And from 2010 to 2014, I sort of did that. And then in 2014, I heard about podcasts. And I felt like at that point, I was sort of late to the game, but nonetheless, I looked into it, reached out to a few people who had already started podcasting. And I began to figure out how to do it. And that's really where the traction came with leading saints is when I started putting audio content out there in the podcast form. I think is the close to perfect type of content for what we're doing. Interviewing people, hearing how people are doing things and that's when it started getting some traction. That was 2014. And then by 2000 16, we became a 501c3 nonprofit and at that time it was such a demand on my time that I actually went full time with leading saints. And that's one thing that a lot of people don't realize sometimes when they meet me, I often get people who've listened to leading saints for years, and they'll say, so what is it you do for work? And I'll say, leading scenes. It's my full-time job. And it's been awesome. I mean, I couldn't even have thought up or dreamt of this type of job. But man, what are remarkable opportunity and career path that's been. I don't know how long it'll last, I don't know if this is a long term, I will do this forever. I mean, I don't think of anything else I want to do. This point in my life, so we'll see how long it goes. But yeah, since 2016, leading saints as the executive director of leading saints has been my full time job. And there is a lot to consider a lot to do and believe me each day is definitely full of plenty of work and plenty to consider. So from 2016, we've been growing months by month and there's just more downloads and more subscriptions and just awesome growth to hear and continue to get feedback from people from around the world. I always appreciate a simple email that says, hey, I appreciate what you're doing. And leading saints, here's how it's impacted us and thanks again. If you ever need a moment of gratitude that type of email would be so helpful for us. All right. And so since that time, since just growing, you know, now we're in the end of 2021. We have had phenomenal growth. We've had as many as 280,000 downloads a month to the podcast.

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I mean, that is remarkable. Now, that is to put it in perspective. The content we create at leading saints is very evergreen. You can listen to an episode from two years ago and gain a lot from it and still find application as if you listened to last week's episode. So it's very evergreen so that allows us to continue to. Have a lot of downloads in a month, even though maybe the most recent downloads typically what happens are the most recent episodes. Typically what happens is we all interview somebody we'll post it on a Saturday and probably about a week or two after that. It hits about ten to 15,000 downloads. The average episode, which is awesome. And then from there it just grows and grows. And that's another probably your view. As I do the top ten podcast episodes of 2021, I'll also review that the ten most downloaded episodes. That's always interesting to hear. And Rob Farrell is a spoiled alert spoiler here. Rob Farrell is the number one most downloaded episode still. He's the reigning champion for several years and he's got a wide margin between him and number two. I think that one's been downloaded like 55,000 times, which is really cool. Dear his influence, Rob's actually down in Peru, serving as a mission president there and boy, what a bunch of lucky missionaries to have president and sister Farrell as their mission leaders. And then also the newsletter has become more and more of a popular thing in our what we offer through leading saints and the newsletter. It comes out about every Tuesday and of course we review the recent content that's been released with leading saints. But then component I just randomly added a few years ago that's grown more and more in popularity is the I had one person described as the now this piece of the newsletter where I just simply quickly write up leadership thought, principle, something related to leadership. It's not always directly related to leadership that sometimes just our gospel experience. And I've gotten a lot of good feedback that way. All right. Oh, here it is. Do you ever feel pressure from a pedestal people might place you on? Great question, Jamie. Oh, I've got a lot of thoughts on pedestals in our religious community. And it's interesting we live in this era of like church and like just influencers, like the age of the influencer, right? Like you got a lot of followers online, you're an influencer. And yeah, it's interesting to think that, you know, it's sort of blows my mind sometimes when I hear of bishop or a snake president from Europe or from Australia, emails me and says, because of this episode, we have put in place this this effort that is really working well. I'm like, wow, that's crazy. Like, here I am. In tool account of Utah. And my voice and the voice of my guess are reaching across the world to influence the church. So do I feel pressure? I guess not really. I mean, I'm not sure maybe what kind of pressure you're talking about, but Jake, this is from Instagram Live. Have you ever had discussion with general church leadership about leading saints? I've always been curious what general authorities are apostles think about what you do. I have also been curious about what they think when I do. So this is a question that comes up a lot and every year I think I answer it in some form. And I mean I don't there's very serious answer this question and I don't want to answer it in a way that things like I'm having lunch with elder Bennard and elder Holland every other week and I would guess. If you were to ask me honestly, I would guess that the vast majority of the corn of the 12 a first presidency have never heard of leading saints. Maybe one here or there offhand or it's been brought up in a meeting or whatever. But I would guess most of the unfamiliar. I actually just interviewed elder Cornish, whose episode will come out sometime in January. And I was with Dan Duckworth member of our board and he just simply asked elder Cornish. Were you familiar

with leading saints at all before we reached out to you for an interview? And he said, no, never heard of it. And I went online and read more about it and then agreed to the interview. So I would say the vast majority of general authorities are just not familiar with leading saints. That may not be true, but they haven't told me one way or the other. I do have what I would call a very positive relationship with the priesthood department. Various individuals who work with or involved with the priest department are aware of me.

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I emailed them several several times a year. I keep them in the loop as we do different virtual conferences and whatnot. And for instance, Brad Wilcox, second counsel in general, young men's pregnancy when he heard about the young saints virtual conference coming up. He reached out and said, hey, you know, we could probably provide some speakers there. And from our board of advisers, and I thought, great. Appreciate the help. And so we're in the works of organizing that. I hope that answers your question. There's just not there's not a lot of communication there, but so I think less communication is probably a good news rather than not good news. I think if there is more communication from general authorities, it would be not positive communication. So I think that is how I interpret it anyways. So let's go back to the strategic outlook of leading saints. This is we actually put together as a board of directors a document about leading saints in looking in 2022 as far as what we want to create of leaving saints. And what the purpose is, make sure we're all on the same page as we as we move forward. So I'm going to review some points here and maybe we'll give you an idea of leading saints. That's another purpose for this episode is I hope that individuals who maybe aren't as familiar with leading saints could listen to this episode and walk away thinking, oh, I get it. I have a general idea of what they're trying to accomplish. So who are we, who is leading saints or what are we? Leading saints is an independent nonprofit organization that supports the mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints by empowering Latter day Saints to fulfill their God given potential to build and lead Zion like communities at church, home, work, and in society. So this is definitely a direction that we want to go as an organization and it is a direction we have been going. But we aren't just some blog online that talks about callings. Though we cover a lot of topics and principles and concepts that would help an individual in a specific calling. But our hope and the most simple way to communicate to somebody our mission is leading saints, we help ladder day saints be better prepared to lead. Now that may be and I hear this all the time where people listen to our content and they say, you know, I run a CPA office, Kurt, and your content or the content leading saints crates helps me be a better boss at my CPA office. Great. That is our hope, right? We're not just trying to influence positive leadership in the context of our religious tradition, but everywhere. Every latter day saint should see themselves as a leader. And be inspired to be a better leader, even if they don't have a formal formal leadership calling. And so that's really our general broad hope of leading saints that we're creating content that isn't just making you better church leader, but it's making you better leader who happens to be a latter day saint. What we do to empower leaders or Latter day Saints who see themselves as leaders. We invite Latter day Saints into an energizing community of like minded leaders and we engage them in expansive conversations about leadership practiced by and among laterally saints through these activities. We do this by producing original leadership content for the latter day saint audience. We adapt secular and

other faith based leadership content to the latter day saint audience. We spotlight thought provoking research ideas and role models for Latter day Saints to consider. We host or sponsor leadership development opportunities, tailored to Latter day Saints, and we enable peer to peer conversations and experiences among laterally saint leaders. Some guiding principles we have. We celebrate divine guidance received through prophets priesthood keys and inspiration. This is so crucial to our effort as an organization is we never want to propose a leadership style thought theory and say that this Trump's all priest authority and your approach. Obviously, we hope leading saints what regardless of the content that we create here at leading saints that every leader out there, especially those endowed with priesthood keys to govern, right? We hope that they are turning to primarily to their inspiration and revelation as a priest or leader. And there are example after example, of individuals, leaders saying, you know, the research shows I should probably do a but everything inside of me, the inspiration I'm feeling says I should do be. And by all means, you should do be. Right? You should definitely default to these priesthood authorities and keys. And that's a tricky line that we try and walk. With leading saints is we want to put forth good leadership research and thought, but not because it's better than what those inspired authorities can provide for you.

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We support the mission of the church and do not distract from it. Very important. We do not speak for the church or train ladder a saint to perform specific church assignments. This is another line we walk. We are not. I repeat we are not a training organization. We don't have certificates. We don't have we don't have curriculum that we're organizing together. The ten sessions or the ten certifications in order to be in a perfect awesome bishop or really study present. That's just not what we do nor would it be appropriate for us to do as an organization. We are simply a content creating organization. Now, some people may listen to that content and feel like, wow, I feel better trained, but that's not because we gave you training. It's up to you to apply this how you may. But we don't. And that. Leads to the next principle, which is we do not advocate one particular leadership model over others. Now, me, myself, as Kurt frankcom, I have certain leadership models and approaches that I favor that I probably approach any leadership role through. But as leading saints, we don't necessarily, at least we really try not to promote one leadership model over another. Some of our strategic initiatives, I'll just share some of these for 2022. We want to develop the infrastructure to enable future growth initiatives. So this includes really continue to grow our board of directors. We want to create. An advisory board, a leadership council, and a strong fundraising campaign. Obviously, any work that leading saints does does not move forward without money behind it, fundraising that propels us forward. It allows us to do so many initiatives. We want to professionalize our production of virtual summits to make them more engaging impactful and enduring as many of you know, we've done, I believe there's 8. I think leading youth will be our 8th virtual conference. And we just wanted to really develop those shine those up a little bit to really make them more valuable to those that engage with those. A lot of times taking all my time and effort to simply put those together, make sure they're displayed in a way that at least be informative and then we move on and sometimes we can go back to that and develop those little bit better. I want to talk about how you can help leading saints. And I'm actually going to do another little more fun episode that you'll see pop up this month hopefully I remember to do it. Just like some quick things that

you can do to help leading saints because there's a ton of quick things like go to Apple podcasts or whatever podcasting service you use and leave a review. Like that actually helps leading saints a lot and it's very simple to do. It doesn't cost you anything and you can go do it and make that happen. So that would come later. But here's some big ideas. Like if you really love leading saints and want to see us succeed, here are 6 things that you can do. Number one, make a substantial donation. Now, of course, we want everybody to be a donor on some level. If you can only afford a dollar a month and by all means, donate a dollar a month like we want this to be an organization for leaders by leaders. And so and we really believe that anybody out there. I mean, maybe there's some outlier circumstances, but any leader out there can contribute at least a dollar to leading saints. And you go to [leading saint dot org slash donate](https://leading-saints.org/donate) in order to contribute there. But we also need in order to accomplish the goals that we have in the future. We need some just like any nonprofit organization, typically need some deeper pockets behind the scenes that are helping us fund a lot of our efforts. So if there's somebody out there with the means to write a four figure 5 figure 6 figure check to leading saints like that would really help us be able to execute some of our efforts. Join the board of directors. Now obviously this isn't just an open invitation. There's a lot that we consider as we vet people to be on a board of directors. You can actually see who is on our board directors by going to our about page, a big shout out to Dan Duckworth, Bill turtle, Jessica Johnson. Mike Ramsey and Ross Richie. They are a stellar team and myself, I'm on the board. But we're a stellar team that I feel so blessed to have them and Dan Duckworth is actually the president of our board and does a phenomenal job organizing and moving the effort forward there. So making substantial donation, obviously is nonprofit.

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We're always seeking those and we live and die on those substantial donations. Oh, yeah, join the board of directors. So we meet monthly and quarterly to make plans, review progress and consider decisions related to governance and strategy. Members of the board serve two year renewable terms. We hope to add members experience in fundraising, nonprofit management and finance and executive leadership. We're expanding the board of directors from 6 to 9 members in 2022. The third thing you do is join our advisory board. The advisory board meets annually to consider leading saints mission, performance and strategic outlook and to advise its officers and directors on strategic changes. Members serve two renewable terms, their influence in the latter day saint community and strong supporters of leading saints. Between an annual meeting, they advise the officers and directors informally on decisions related to governance and strategy. They also support leading saints financially where possible and advocate for leading saints with potential donors and key stakeholders. We are newly formed the advisory board in 2022. Now this is just to paint the picture a little more clearly for you. If you really would like to see the success of leading saints and you have something to offer in that realm, we would love to hear from you. And see if we could include you as an member of the advisory board. This is a great effort and position. For instance, maybe somebody who's newly retired, but has years and experience in the church and church leadership. Still wants to give back, but they're sort of not a place a lot of demand for their time and efforts in their local ward, but they just don't want to give that back. They still want to see good things happen in our religious community. And so you could reach out to leading saints and say, hey, I would love to contribute

what would it take to be on the advisory board? Obviously there's a process we'd go through. The board of directors approval and whatnot. But we would want to include more and more people there. And especially those that can give a substantial donation. Obviously, we would hope that you'd be on our advisory board if you can contribute to leading saints. The next thing you can do is join our leadership council. The leadership council meets annually to consider the efficacy and audience fit of leading saints content and offerings. Members serve two year renewable terms. Members serve two years renewable terms. They are members or friends of the church and leadership experts like authors, professors, coaches, consultants, bloggers, podcasters, et cetera. Between annual meetings, they advise the officers and directors formally on decisions related to content and offerings. They also support leading saints financially where possible, and advocate for the leading saints with potential donors and key stakeholders. We are newly forming the leadership council in 2022. The 5th way that you can contribute or that you can help leading saints is contribute content or other offerings. You can write an article, be interviewed for the podcast or speak at a virtual conference or other gathering. We may also be interested in publishing your original work, such as a book or a video and examine leadership in the latter day context. And the 6th way is simply join our team as a volunteer, help us produce our website blog, newsletter, podcast, social media, or virtual summits, help us plan and host leadership retreats and other gatherings or help us fundraise. So those are some simple ideas and ways that you can help and then before that the direction we're headed with leading saints. Every year, at least last year, I got in here on the similar episode and said, we want to do leading saints in espanola. Right? Like that is definitely an effort, but it seems simple. Oh yeah, just do more podcasts episodes but in Spanish. Now, I do sort of speak Spanish for my mission, but not to the level where I'd be able to host a podcast. And I would prefer to have a native speaker involved in that. We've considered various people for that and but it's not as simple as just making a podcast. There's actually a lot of fundraising that we'll be doing in 2022 for that effort because it's gonna take tens of thousands of dollars to pull that off and have a really solid leading Spanish leading state Spanish organization. So stay tuned for more content this month in December of 2021, but that concludes sort of the general direction of leading saints in 2022. I'm excited to be a part of it to see this grow to discover new content, interview new guests and, man, I am so lucky. I have the opportunity to interview such incredible minds and bring that knowledge to all of you in who consider yourself a leader as a latter day saint.

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So thank you again for just your support. As I look back at 2021, I could have never years ago. I would have never thought we would have the audience that we do. The type of audience the size of audience and the geography of that audience is just stunning. And I'm so grateful that you listen that you share, you don't want to hear people say, oh, I was in more counsel and I raised my hand and I said, you gotta listen to this episode of the leading saint podcast and other started listening. That means so much that you would that you'd give and by sharing. And it is having an impact. I promise you, it is having an impact. And I hope in the history books, the name Kurt Franken fades to the background and is not highlighted, but I guarantee you leading saints as an organization will be highlighted in the histories of the church. As an organization had a positive impact on growing and moving the mission of The Church of Jesus Christ's hilarity saints forward. And we intended for that to be extremely positive effort, and one that

supportive, one that sustaining of church leaders and it's so remarkable to be part of it. So never hesitate to reach out and leading saints that org slash contact, give us your feedback, what you think of leading saints any ideas, contributions, guest ideas, that's where a lot of the gold nuggets that you find here at leading saints. That's where it begins. That's where the seed is planted. So thank you for allowing me into your ears in 2021. And I look forward to 2022.