The Journey Ahead

Changing Context, Emerging Opportunities, Shifting Focus to Restoring Christ's Mission

Changing Context

Changing Context
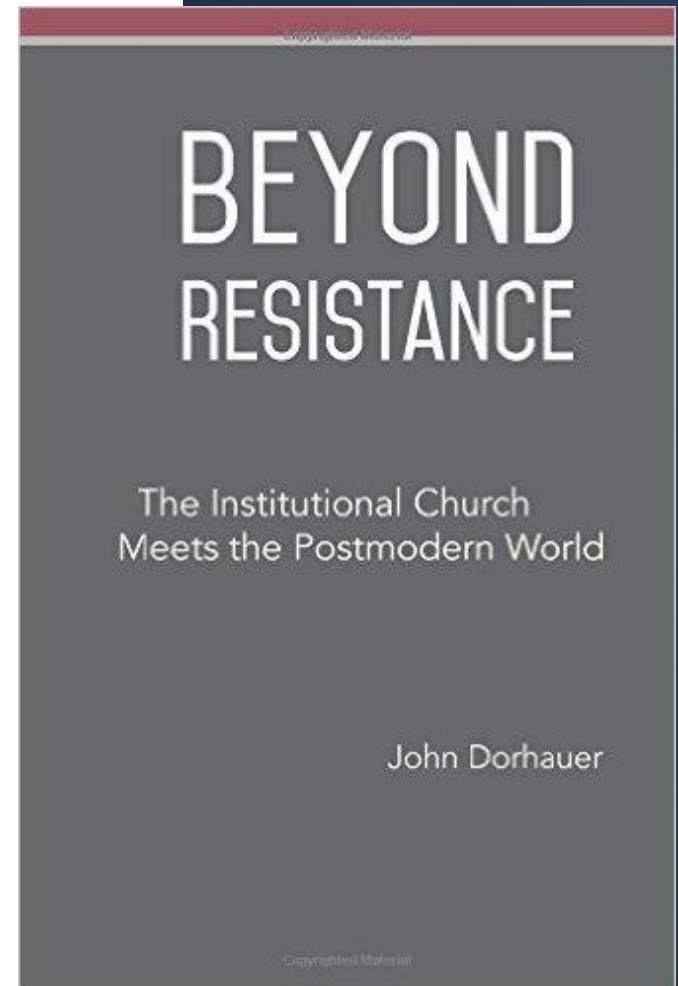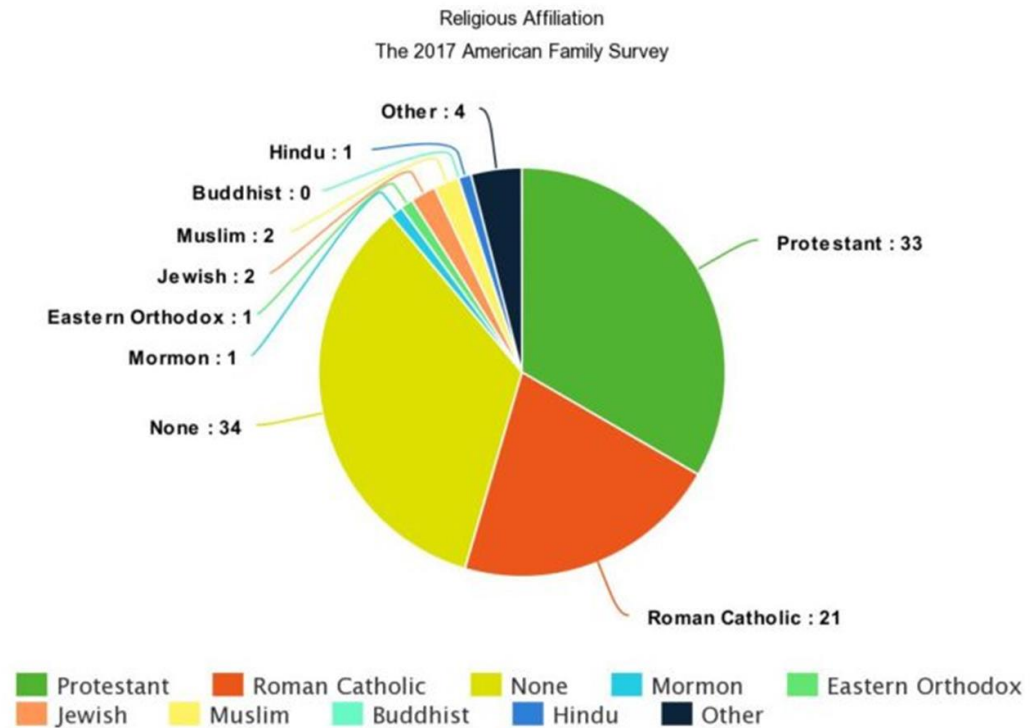
"Let's be honest…
churches are dying."

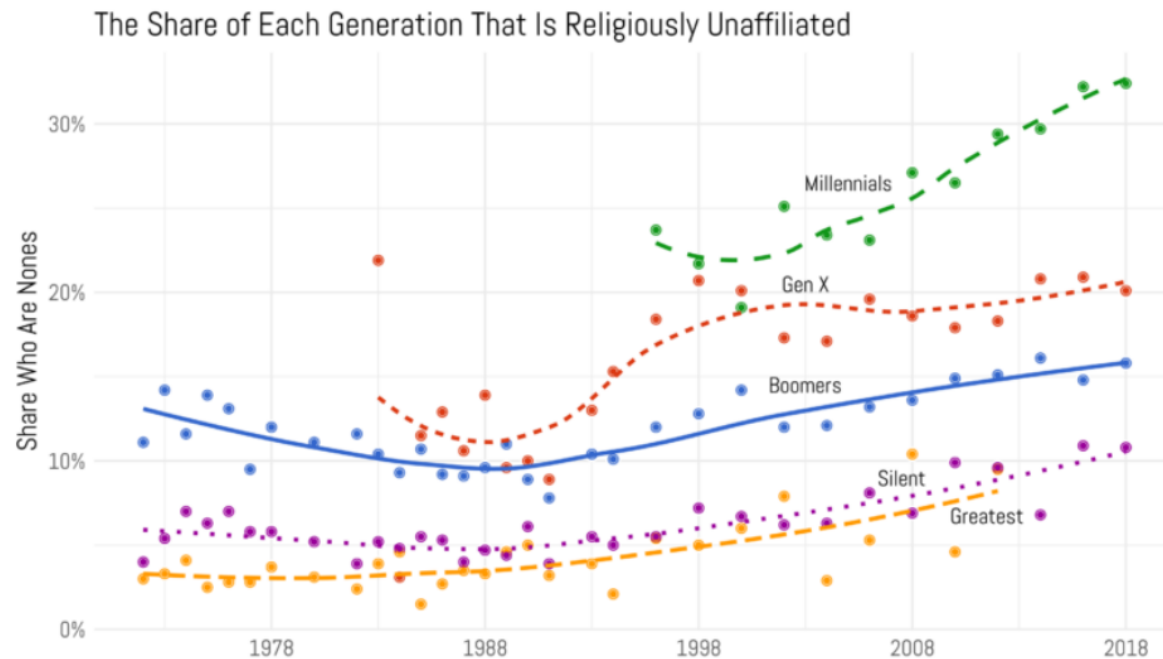John Dorhauer, *Beyond Resistance: The Institutional Church Meets the Postmodern World*

Changing Context

Religious Affiliation
The 2017 American Family Survey

Other : 4
Hindu : 1
Buddhist : 0
Muslim : 2
Jewish : 2
Eastern Orthodox : 1
Mormon : 1
None : 34
Protestant : 33
Roman Catholic : 21

Protestant   Roman Catholic   None   Mormon   Eastern Orthodox
Jewish   Muslim   Buddhist   Hindu   Other

meta-chart.com

Changing Context

The Share of Each Generation That Is Religiously Unaffiliated

Millennials

Gen X

Boomers

Silent

Greatest

Share Who Are Nones

30%

20%

10%

0%

1978   1988   1998   2008   2018

Religious disaffiliation has risen in every generation, including even older Americans, though the sharpest spike in nones is occurring with the millennials.
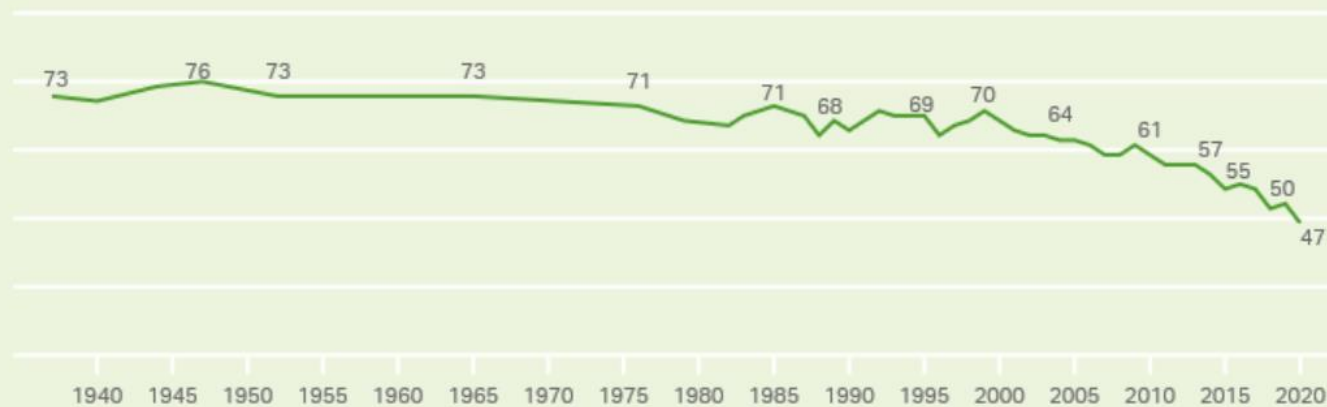
Courtesy Religion News Service

Changing Context

Church Membership Among U.S. Adults Now Below 50%

Do you happen to be a member of a church, synagogue or mosque?

— % Yes, member

Based on annual aggregated data, usually based on two surveys

GALLUP

Changing Context

The rise of the "nones"

Changes in Church Membership by Generation, Over Time

	1998-2000	2008-2010	2018-2020	Change since 1998-2000
	%	%	%	pct. pts.
Traditionalists (born before 1946)	77	73	66	-11
Baby boomers (born 1946-1964)	67	63	58	-9
Generation X (born 1965-1980)	62	57	50	-12
Millennials (born 1981-1996)	n/a	51	36	n/a

Note: Given that Gallup's polls are based on the 18+ U.S. adult population, the 1980-2000 period would have included only a small proportion of the millennial generation, and the 2018-2020 period includes only a small proportion of Generation Z (born after 1996).

GALLUP

Changing Context

Changes in Church Membership, by Demographic Subgroup

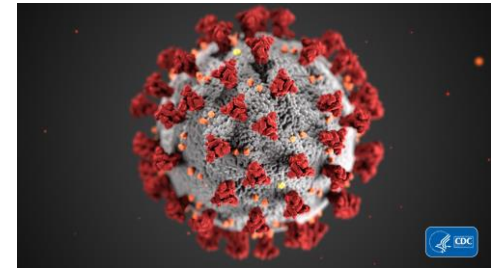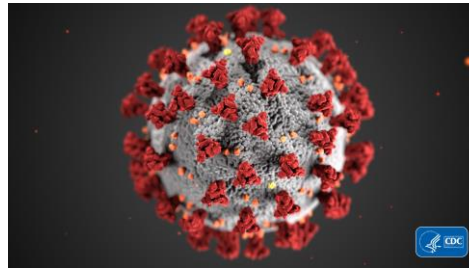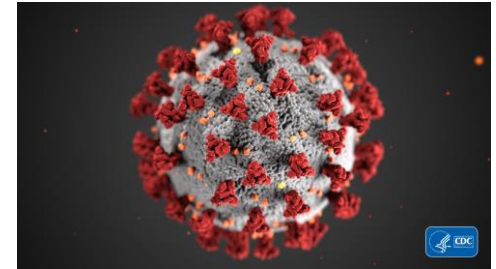|	1998-2000	2008-2010	2018-2020	Change, 1998-2000 to 2018-2020
	%	%	%	pct. pts.
Men	64	58	46	-18
Women	73	65	53	-20
Non-Hispanic White adults	68	62	52	-16
Non-Hispanic Black adults	78	70	59	-19
College graduate	68	65	54	-14
Not college graduate	69	60	47	-22
Married	71	68	58	-13
Not married	64	55	42	-22
Republican	77	75	65	-12
Independent	59	51	41	-18
Democrat	71	60	46	-25
Conservative	78	73	64	-14
Moderate	66	59	45	-21
Liberal	56	46	35	-21
East	69	58	44	-25
Midwest	72	66	54	-18
South	74	70	58	-16
West	57	51	38	-19
Protestant	73	72	64	-9
Catholic	76	73	58	-18

GALLUP

Changing Context
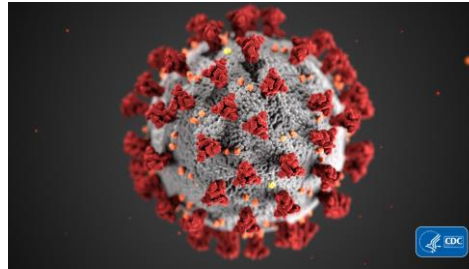
- Buildings

Changing Context

- Birthrate at a record low

Changing Context

- Post-Pandemic Birthrate
    - Perhaps 300,000 fewer 2021 births in the US as a result of the outbreak
    - US birth rate dropped 4% in 2020
            » Pew Research Center

Changing Context

- Mobility
    - Families are more mobile meaning congregations can no longer count on internal growth from the children they do have
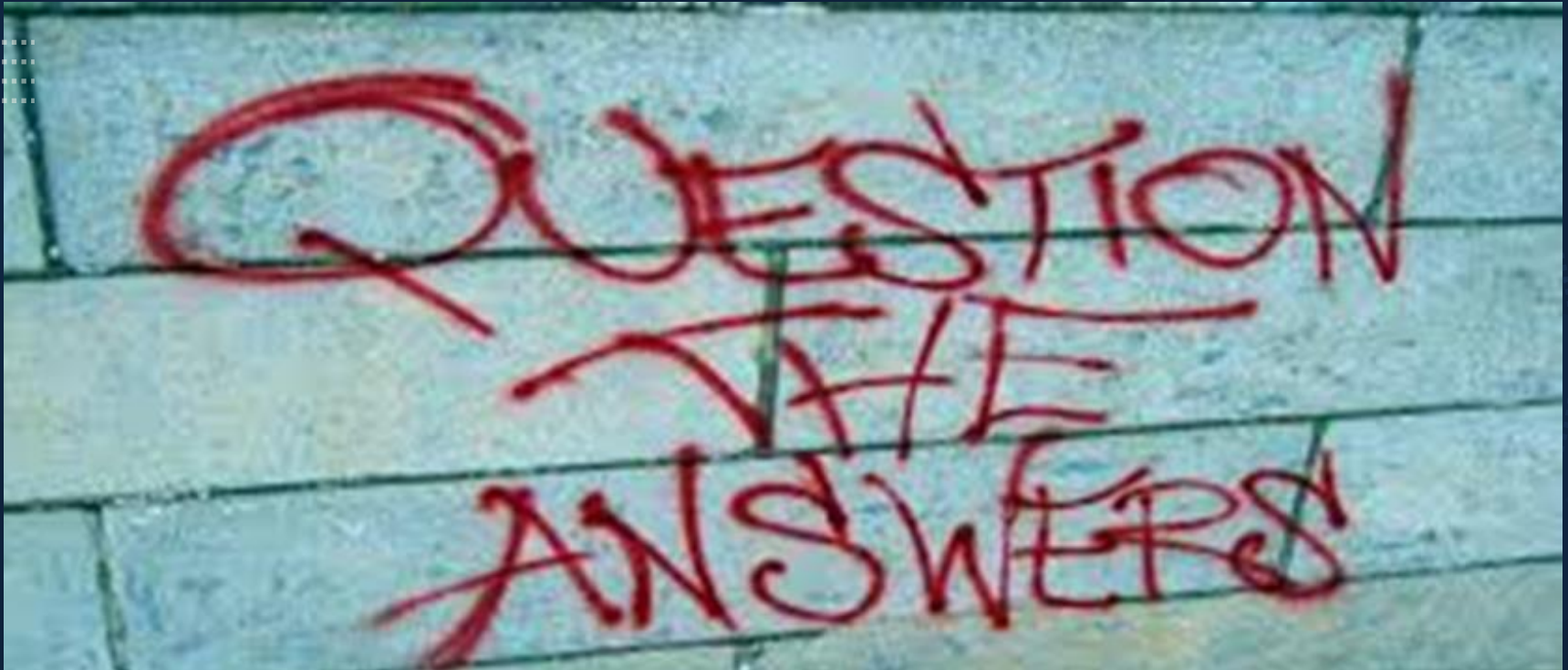
Changing Context

- Postmodernity

Changing Context

- Postmodern Religion
  - A philosophical approach to religion that critically considers orthodox assumptions that may reflect power differences in society rather than universal truths.
  - Postmodern religious systems of thought view realities as plural and subjective and dependent on the individual's worldview.
  - Postmodern interpretations of religion acknowledge and value a multiplicity of diverse interpretations of truth, being and ways of seeing.
  - There is a rejection of . . . global or dominant metanarratives in postmodern religion.
  - A postmodern interpretation of religion emphasizes the key point that religious truth is highly individualistic, subjective and resides within the individual.

Changing Context

- Postmodernity
  - Postmoderns do not believe there is such a thing as universal truth; in other words, what is true for you may or may not be true for me

Changing Context

- Postmodernity
  - Postmoderns learn differently

Changing Context

- Postmodernity
  - Postmoderns do not trust institutional authority

Changing Context

- Church 1.0

Changing Context

- Church 2.0

Changing Context

- Church 3.0 – emerging
  - Fluidity - "open source" - wisdom is not owned by organizations or hierarchies, constant mobility, creative disruption, less boundaries, membership not important
  - Diversity - greater exposures to different religions, cultures, world views, ways of being
  - Relationships - authenticity = authority, power of dialogue and exchange of ideas, self-disclosure expected and valued

Changing Context

- Church 3.0 – emerging
  - Exploration - space for questions and exploration, ==faith as lived experience==, spiritual seekers seeking friends for the journey
  - Participative - seeking real change, ==desire for tangible expressions of faith==, ==shared leadership==, ==high value on participation==
  - Temporary - lack of institutional structure, sometimes lack of organization, ==communities emerge and dissipate==

Changing Context

- The ==challenges and opportunities== are momentous. Will you remain hesitant in the shadows of your fears, insecurities, and competing loyalties? Or will you move forward in the light of your divinely instilled call and vision?
  - Doctrine and Covenants 164:9e

Emerging Opportunity

Community of Christ

Emerging Opportunity

- Moved Beyond Exclusive Truth Claims Beginning in the mid-20th Century

Roy Cheville

Duane Couey

Clifford Cole

Emerging Opportunity

- Bi-Vocational Ministry

Emerging Opportunity

- Non-Creedal

Emerging Opportunity

- Doctrine and Covenants Section 76 and our Universalist Roots
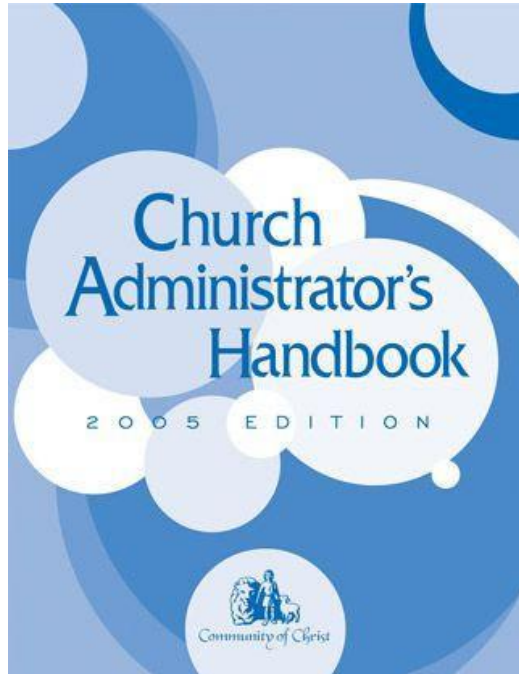 - God's love and grace are all encompassing

Emerging Opportunity

- Polity (Hierarchal vs. Congregational)

Emerging Opportunity

- Bylaws and Policies (Flexibility)

Emerging Opportunity

- Principle Based vs. Rule Based

Emerging Opportunity

- ## Diversity Among Leadership

- 1 Female in FP

- PB is Female

- C12
  - 5 of 12 are Female
  - 2 Africans
  - 1 French Polynesian
  - 1 Honduran
  - 1 Welshman
  - 1 Canadian
  - 1 Australian

Emerging Opportunity

- Denominational Agility
  - We have to do better. Working towards simplicity, agility, and flexibility

Emerging Opportunity

- Faith as Journey

Emerging Opportunity

Emphasis on Spiritual Formation

Emerging Opportunity

- Inclusive
  - 1865
  - 1984
  - 2013 (USA)

Emerging Opportunity

- Retreat and Family Camp Experience

Emerging Opportunity

- 2011 Pivot
  - A paradigm shift between Christianity as a belief and Christianity as a way of life

Emerging Opportunity

- 2011 Pivot – helps us focus our energy and resources on building Zion, the peaceable community of God on earth

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    – "The Latter Day Saints are looking forward to a renewed earth, from which all evil and wrong will be banished, and upon which a reign of righteousness and peace will be established. That is the heaven the Bible teaches, and toward which our church members are hopefully pressing."

        – Joseph Smith III

Emerging Opportunity

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Emerging Opportunity

- Mobility
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A Time to Act!

- "The future church is being formed by a basic concept: Our chief purpose is to birth, nurture, and multiply communities of disciples and seekers engaged in spiritual formation and compassionate ministry and action. This basic blueprint—**spiritual formation**, **community**, **compassionate ministry and action—is** true to the vision of Christ. Everything else, like organizational structure, resources, funding methods, congregational forms, etc., should support this primary purpose."

Emerging Opportunity

- By the grace of God, you are poised to fulfill God's ultimate vision for the church.
  - Doctrine and Covenants 164:9a

From Restoring Christ's Church to Restoring Christ's Mission

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- The book of Acts as our template
  - Gathered Community
  - Concern for the Plight of the Poor
  - Tried to Live "All Things Common"
  - Christians with Temples

From Restoring Christ's Church to Restoring Christ's Mission

- 2011 and the Mission Initiatives
  - Luke 4:18-19
    - [18] "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
      because he has anointed me
      to bring good news to the poor.
      He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
      and recovery of sight to the blind,
      to let the oppressed go free,
      [19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

From Restoring Christ's Church to Restoring Christ's Mission

- 2011 and the Mission Initiatives
  - Christ's Mission is our Mission
  - We are His Hands and Feet

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- Christ's Mission is our Mission

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- Exploring New Ways to be the Church Going Forward
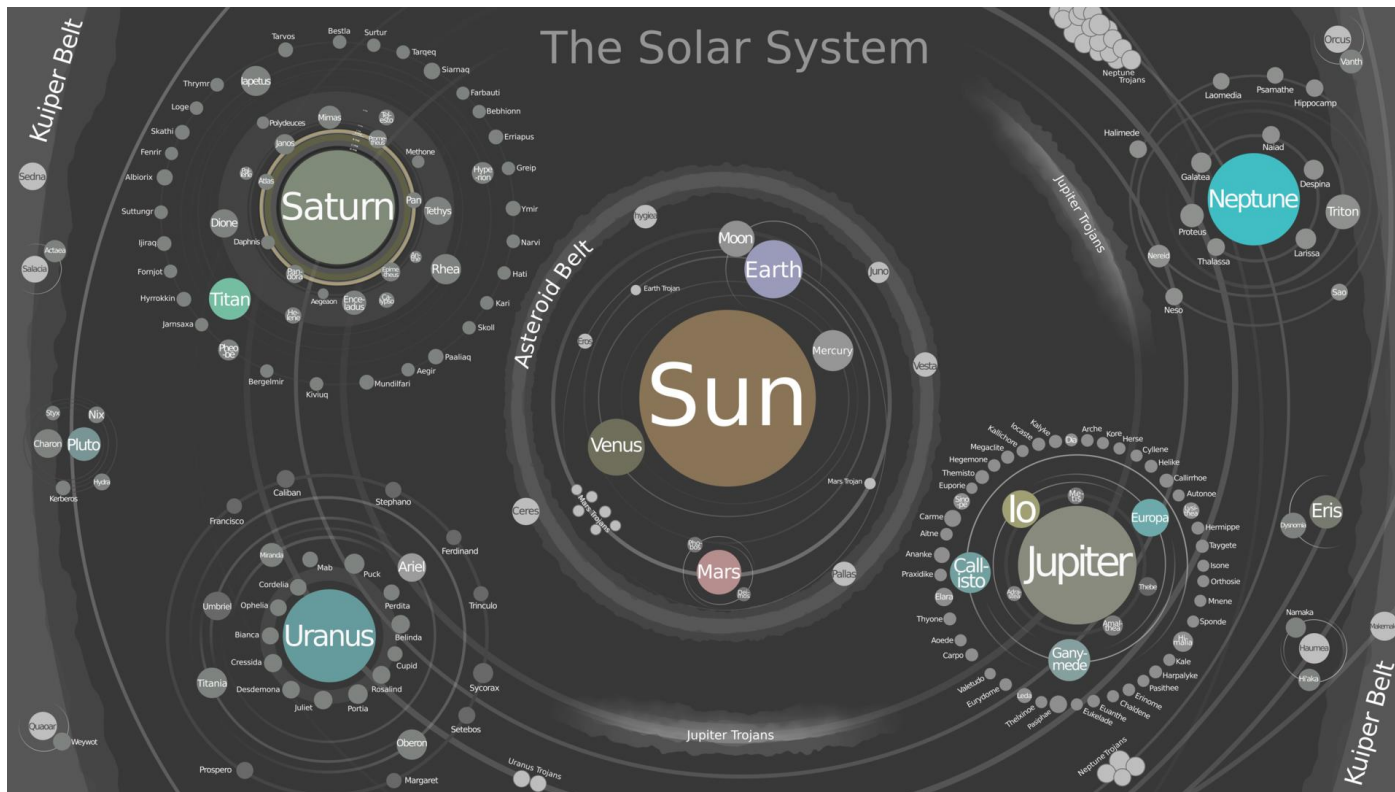 - Resource Congregations

From Restoring Christ's Church to Restoring Christ's Mission

- Exploring New Ways to be the Church Going Forward
  - Resource Congregations
  - Enduring Principle or Mission Initiative Based "Missional Expressions"

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  - No expectation of becoming a congregation

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  - Details to be worked out
    - Role of priesthood?

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    - Role of priesthood?
    - Best practices
      - Shared leadership
      - Financial transparency
      - Bylaws changes
        » MC and World Conference representation

From Restoring Christ's Church to Restoring Christ's Mission

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  - Initial thoughts?

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  - Initial thoughts?
  - Ideas for groups?

From Restoring Christ's Church to Restoring Christ's Mission

Christ's Mission **is** Our Mission!

d. If you truly would be Community of Christ, then embody and live the concerns and passion of Christ.

- Doctrine and Covenants 164:9d