

Principled Christian Leaders

What are principled Christian leaders?

Principled Christian leaders are those who are willing to show the love and grace of Jesus Christ to others in the church and in the world. These leaders use their spiritual gifts to live into God's calling while maintaining a spiritually disciplined life aimed at becoming a servant of Christ. They show ethical and moral leadership in school, at home, and in group and social settings. A principled Christian leader also exemplifies Jesus in their life choices and pursues their faith with deep intent, asking questions and seeking answers. Another characteristic of a principled Christian leader is his or her ability offer renewed perspectives to the ministry of the church. This renewed perspective forces the church to adapt changing social climate of the world it is called to serve. The church must adapt to the changing world to solidify the church's place in a world that is pushing it out. The principled Christian leader does so by being able articulate the foundation of the Christian faith, Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the joy found in a living, loving relationship with Christ.

Developing Principled Christian Leaders

Today's young people have fearless hearts, vibrant ideas and a passion for ministry. Their talents should be nurtured to shape the church's path into the future. The church must recruit young people, including women and people of color, for ministry, equip them to be effective leaders and be open to where they want to lead us. We also must strengthen lay members, who are ministering at every level of the church

Conclusion

The Annual Conference develops Principled Christian Leaders via numerous programs and conferences throughout the year specifically designed to help identify, nurture, and fulfill God's call upon the lives of lay members. Programs, such as Called & Sent and Unstoppable, help our youth and young adults explore more about a vocation in ministry and where God may be calling. Called & Sent is a year-long career discernment program for youth in 11th and 12th grade and college students, and is open to men and women. Unstoppable is a summer retreat to bring women from ninth grade to age 25 together to worship, serve the community, and learn about important issues in our world. SPARK is Western Pa UMC's annual youth rally. It is for youth in 6-12th grade and their leaders. It is an entire weekend of worship, messages, and fun. What makes SPARK unique is the planning behind this event. The planning for SPARK is overseen by the Youth Ministry Team (YMT) from beginning to end. This year, our youth took a more active role in SPARK by leading three breakout sessions: Racism, Body Image, and a session about the Youth Ministry Team. Our Annual Conference is doing great things when it comes to developing principled Christian leaders, but this all begins at the local church level.

The local church must take on the task of placing our youth, young adults, and our laity in positions to discover and use their gifts. Give them ownership of events happening at the church, give more leadership roles with worship and the committees of the church, encourage participation in district and conference events. In short, encourage our laity, young and old, to discover their gifts and to use them to enhance the life of the church. And leaders, let go of your positions for fear nobody can do it like you. The development of principled Christian leaders will lead us into the future of God's church. That cannot be done if we are afraid to let go of the past.

How to use this report

We invite you or your church to follow these Christian leaders throughout their journeys in WPAUMC by watching these videos and pausing in between each one to talk or reflect on how WPAUMC events and programs have impacted their walks with Jesus Christ. Throughout the journey of these young people, we invite you to pay special attention to their words and responsibilities in order to see how WPAUMC programs for young people develop.

This report begins with Kendra Shoffstall, a high schooler in charge of YMT, then moves to Vivian Somes, a student entering college after attending and leading conference and NEJ events, then to Kyle Eisenhuth, a first-year seminarian who has been mentored through a Conference Internship, and finally to Caleb Fugate, a young clergyman who is now making other young disciples of Jesus Christ by doing ministry on a college campus after spending years of involvement in WPAUMC programs.

Video Write-ups

Kendra Shoffstall

SPARK is a weekend retreat in January, in which youth from across Western Pennsylvania are encouraged to come and experience the church at a more personal and relatable level. The retreat features a band, speaker, DJ, breakout sessions, and fun rooms. All of these things come together, to help youth see a different side to church and to fellowship with peers in their area who have the same fire for Christ.

ZimCamp is an educational trip in which youth are encouraged to meet other youth in Zimbabwe. The purpose is to break across economic boundaries to see how truly similar we all are in the eyes of the Lord.

The mission of Peace is a cultural immersion trip in which youth are placed in a culture and are there to learn more about how Christians live their daily lives across the world and to learn about the religious and economic influences in India.

Vivian Somes

Vivian Somes is a graduating high school senior. Over the course of her time in WPAUMC, she has had the opportunity to grow in her relationship with Jesus Christ through WPAUMC and NEJ programs, eventually helping to organize events like SPARK for other youth. As she goes into college, she will be going with a strong Christian foundation, ready to lead other Christians in her new social context.

Kyle Eisenhuth

My name is Kyle Eisenhuth and last summer I participated in the summer internship program through the Conference. I went to Saegertown UMC and learned a lot there. I did a little bit of everything; I got a great look into the life of the local church. These internships are paid, 10 weeks long, and a great opportunity for someone to discern their calling into ministry while they are in college or seminary.

Caleb Fugate

Here at Indiana University of Pennsylvania we are working to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Grace United Methodist church in partnership with Cru has started to make an impact on the campus. We have weekly worship and fellowship, bible studies and one on one conversations and discipleship with students over coffee and lunch. We are connecting students to the ministries of Grace UMC. We have Education majors working with our kids and teens, Communication majors working with our broadcasting and social media, and we are always looking for ways to expand these opportunities. We have outreach events during homecoming and St. Patty's day, and we have partnered with 10 other churches and college ministries to create a joint worship event where all of our students can come and worship and bring a friend. God is up to something big at IUP and I am looking forward to the ways in which lives are transformed here on this campus.