



Aiken's First Baptist Church

growing together

Growing together is a simple statement that holds a great deal of meaning, for it holds in summary form our understanding of who God is calling us to be and how God is calling us to be in relationship with one another and the world around us. We truly believe that individuals, communities, and all of creation become more whole and more fully alive when we live the way of Jesus. And we know that we cannot faithfully live the way of Jesus without first rooting our lives in God's love—allowing God's grace to save us and change us. We also know we cannot faithfully live the way of Jesus without committing ourselves to walking this way together. This is why we are committed to growing together—not simply for our own sakes, but for the sake of the well-being of God's good world.

Here is a fuller explanation of some of the main pieces that contribute to our understanding of what it means to be growing together.

Rooted—We have been a part of Aiken from the very beginning, for over 200 years now. We belong here, and we belong to the people of this place. As a whole church and as individual followers of Jesus, we invest in Aiken and in its people by partnering with local non-profits, sister churches, businesses, and community groups to seek the welfare and thriving of our whole community. We are also rooted in the scriptures, especially the story of Jesus. In a world where there are a million ways to seek meaning in life as our stories unfold, we have come to discover that the best pathway toward thriving is to begin with Jesus, to root our lives in him, and to allow his way of life to shape our way of life. We also try to root and ground ourselves in God's love, because we recognize that if we try to do any of this out of any other source, it won't become the truly incredible thing that God wants it to become.

Growing—While we recognize that healthy things grow in all kinds of ways, including in numerical kinds of ways, that is not our first thought when we think about growing. For us it is a multifaceted term. First and foremost, we are growing in our formation as disciples of Jesus. This means we are growing in our knowledge of Jesus and in our obedience to the ways he would have us live. We are seeking to grow in wonder and awe through our worship of God. We are seeking to grow in faith as we allow the Spirit to guide us through uncharted realms that stretch us and make us stronger. We are also trying our best to grow in love—for God, for one another, and for our neighbors . . . all of our neighbors, no exceptions.

Branching Out—All of this rooting and growing isn't about us or for us. It's for God's glory, for the good of our neighbors, and for the sake of the well-being of God's good world. Jesus tells this incredible parable where he describes the kingdom of God as a tiny mustard seed that grows into the greatest of all trees where the birds of the air might find shelter in the shade of its branches. We are branching out in our active love and care for our community, in our mission and outreach efforts, because we want to be a piece of providing that shelter, that safe haven, that sanctuary for anyone who has need in our community. We are also branching out to embrace the diversity of our city. We recognize that we are in the center of one of the most diverse areas in our city, and we want to branch out to be a good neighbor to the breadth of that diversity. And we also know that we are being called to branch out in our faith so that we might thoughtfully engage the pressing questions of our day, in our worship so that we might honor our heritage and embrace multifaceted forms of worship, and in our use of our buildings so that they exist not primarily for us but for our community.

Together—Since we are all created in the image of God, then we are all created for community, made to belong to one another. We cannot do any of this alone but can only become more fully who God is creating us to be by doing it together. And by doing these things together, we will grow ever closer and stronger together. We understand this individually—each of us in our church needs the others in our church—and collectively—our church needs our community and its beautiful people and gracious organizations. In our age of great division, it is our sincere hope that we might help foster unity amidst diversity so that, no matter our many differences, internally we may unite together around Jesus and externally we may unite with our community around the common good for all.

As you can see, this theme of growing together is highlighted by our main logo at the top of the previous page. The cross exemplifying the life of Jesus and the love of God are central to the logo and growing out from there you have the tree imagery. The lines branching out from the center of the cross remind us we are rooted there and yet called to branch out in faith and in love. There is the bright green of the growth that we trust God will provide and yet it is shown in an almost stained-glass style that gives a nod to our long-lasting heritage. That is our main logo that we hope will become a clear identifier of our congregation and who we are in the community, and its styling will be used throughout all of our communications. Below you will find just few examples of how it will be integrated into logos and communications for our various ministries.

ROOTED & GROUNDED
PODCAST

