



## From the Pastor

Friends,

There is an incredible spirit moving through our congregation. I sense your excitement as we share our weekly worship experience together, as we unveil a new website, as we begin new initiatives for Bible study and spiritual growth, and as we dedicate the newest children of our church. It is truly an exciting time to be part of the life and ministries of Augusta Road Baptist Church.

We have kicked off our fall Wednesday night gatherings with a series of interviews we are calling "Getting to Know ARBC." During this series we are getting to know our own congregation, as well as those organizations with which we partner for ministry. So far we have heard from some of the newest members of our congregation, as well as some of our youngest. I have enjoyed the opportunity to get to know them better, as well as come to understand what it is about our church that they have felt connected with. Though they express it differently, each interviewee has in one way or another said the same thing made them want to be part of this church...the people. It is the people of Augusta Road Baptist Church that have welcomed, accepted, and shown them immediate love and care that has made it clear that this is the community of faith of which they feel led to be a part. Couldn't we all say the same thing?

I constantly hear from visitors and our newest members say that this is the most welcoming church they have ever seen. In a sense, welcoming Christian hospitality is right at the center of our congregational identity. Through our mission statement that proclaims us to be a "loving, inclusive Christian community," we make it clear that this is a place where you can be loved and belong, and my instinct is to believe that so many people wish they could gain the same sense of belonging that we have all found at ARBC.

As our country and our world seems to spiral more and more out of control, or into further confusion and chaos, we need a place in which to center ourselves on what is constant. We need a place that provides us space and time to center ourselves on God. We need fellow travelers on the journey that will walk beside us as we wrestle with the most difficult realities we face each day. Sometimes we just need with whom we can sit, and with whom it is okay to say nothing at all because we are that comfortable.

It won't always be easy to maintain this sense of hospitality. Even if it comes natural, as we grow in different ways with different people we will have to work to ensure that this remains a loving, inclusive community built upon the love of Christ. We will be able to maintain our sense of welcome if we remain humble.

In 2 Chronicles 7, God tells Solomon that "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." We often focus on praying, seeking after God, and even turning away from wickedness. I wonder, however, if we place appropriate emphasis on humility.

In a world where everyone claims to have the right answer, may we be humble enough to recognize what we do not know. When the influence and power rests on the extreme ends of the spectrums, may we be humble enough to recognize that we can still learn a great deal from those with whom we disagree. When someone else is outraged at an injustice we have not personally experienced ourselves, may we be humble enough and loving enough to listen, even if we are challenged by what we hear. When we feel we have a point worth arguing, may we be humble enough to make it in such a way that shows respect for the person sitting across from us.

This is how we maintain the hospitable nature of our communion. It isn't by ignoring those things over which we disagree, it is by showing that our humility enables us to recognize that the love we share for each other is more important than winning the argument. And that may also be one of the greatest witnesses to the power of Christ we can offer to the outside world.

In the days ahead, as we learn more about our community of faith and our ministry partners, may we be reminded of the beautiful spirit that resides within our community of faith. May we find renewed commitment for showing hospitality to all people who might seek us out as a place to belong and encounter Christ. May we be inspired to carry that same sense of hospitality out into the world where it is so desperately needed.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Mattison King". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rev. W. Mattison King  
Senior Pastor