

When a month has a fifth Sunday, Ardmore Baptist Church has been trying a little experiment called “Fun on the Fifth.” During that Sunday, we hold a large intergenerational Sunday school class in the fellowship hall, encourage people to dress more casually, and do something more creative in worship (in September our worship was led by a bluegrass band). We also all gather together for one service rather than holding our usual two.

About a week before the service, the pastoral staff received an angry email from an elderly church member. She was adamantly opposed to us doing Fun on the Fifth. She thought it was disrespectful to our traditional form of worship, that it would fail, and that it did not fit who we are as a congregation. An email response was sent thanking her for sharing her perspective and encouraging her to come and see what happens at Fun on the Fifth.

Fun on the Fifth is just one of the ways Ardmore Baptist Church is experimenting with “growing young.” We’ve had a *Growing Young Team* who surveyed the congregation to determine our areas of strength and our areas of potential growth. Based on those surveys and on our reading of the book *Growing Young*, it has been made clear to us that we struggle with truly knowing one another, with providing varied ways to serve in our community, and with directly addressing issues of injustice in our community.

For next few months, Ardmore is taking specific steps to address those areas where we need to “grow together” as a church body.

First, we want Ardmore to develop more of a **storytelling** culture. We are providing opportunities for people to share their stories with one another, hosting a *CBF Reimagining Evangelism* workshop, and starting a podcast of stories from various people at Ardmore.

Second, we plan to provide the congregation with clearer communication about their own **giftedness** and ways to use those gifts in the community. We are working with a local nonprofit to develop a gifts assessment tool to help us

identify ways for people to serve both at Ardmore Baptist in our life together and be involved with Gospel work in our neighborhood.

Third, we want Ardmore to be a people unafraid to tackle **relevant and missional issues**. As we begin to enter into another likely contentious election season, we want to equip the people of Ardmore Baptist to dialogue in healthy ways with those with whom they may disagree. We also want to provide space for us to learn about justice issues in our community surrounding race, immigration, and other topics that tend to be avoided in churches. Our goal is not



to be a partisan platform for a perspective but to help our people have a kingdom-of-God-mind-set in how they view the world.

We are so grateful to have been on this *Growing Young* journey. At this stage in the process, we are not seeking to start new programs; that is the old model of thinking. Instead, we seek to grow young by growing together as a community and to instill cultural shifts in who we are.

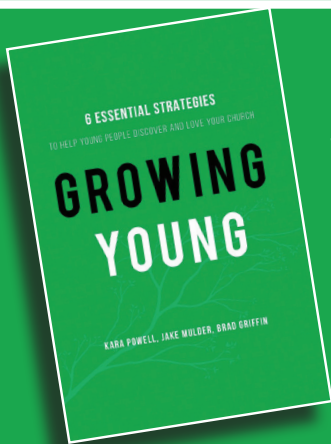
The day arrived for Fun on the Fifth. Coffee, donuts, and pastries were served in the lobby and picnic tables were set up. Varied generations ate breakfast together and the church was alive with the sounds of laughter, conversation, and excitement. We

then moved into the fellowship hall where over 400 people participated in an intergenerational Bible study around the idea of sharing our stories with one another. In worship, some of our church members led us in beautiful bluegrass music, and we enjoyed our comfortable attire!

At the end of the worship service, the woman who had sent the email to the staff approached our pastor with big tears in her eyes. She embraced him and said, “This was the best worship service I think I’ve been to in ages. I needed this morning. Thank you so much.” 🌈

Growing YOUNG by Growing TOGETHER

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CBF Growing Young Cohort 2020

Through the Regional Growing Young Cohort, we want to help you sort through the numerous strategies you could try and focus instead on what’s most essential in helping young people discover and love your church. Join us for this cohort and be among the first church leaders within CBF to implement new strategies to grow young.

It’s not too late to join this year’s cohort!

Visit cbfnc.org to learn more!