



*Grow
together*



Devotional

I AM THE VINE

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” — John 15:5

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” — John 13:35



The life of the branch does not come from its own effort, innovation, or force. It comes from remaining connected. What flows from the vine into the branch is not something it earns, but something it receives. This is a truth learned over time, for branches do not exist in isolation.

Their life source and vitality come from the vine, which allows new growth to emerge. Jesus names this way of living as abiding.

In a season like *Grow Together*, early gifts and commitments are an expression of an abiding faith shaped by witnessing God’s faithfulness and lives transformed through this grafted connection to Christ.

Because of this, abiding is never passive. Branches continue to grow, to stretch, to reach, to bear fruit, and yet are never apart from the vine.

Alamo Heights United Methodist Church has abided and been sustained by people who have remained connected to Christ and to one another. When Jesus says, “Apart from me you can do nothing,” we are reminded that we are not asked to carry the future of the church on our own strength. We are asked to remain connected and steadfast to the One who already holds it.

As we grow and move forward together, may we do so grounded in this truth. The life of the church grows not from what we accomplish in our own strength, but from the One who sustains us. When connected to Christ, we grow together, enabled to bear life-giving fruit.

PRAYER

Blessed are you, the Eternal, the sustaining vine of all creation. We abide in you. As our church enters this season of growth, help us to remember that we have always been and will always be connected to you. With your help, may we come together and join the chorus of our ancestors who bore fruit—serving others, sharing your love, and blessing the generations to follow. **Amen.**



YOU ARE THE BRANCHES

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
— Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39, and Galatians 5:14

Jesus names loving our neighbor as ourselves as the heart of faithful living (Matthew 22:39). The apostle Paul goes even further, saying that this single command fulfills the whole law (Galatians 5:14). Love, in other words, is not an add-on to the life of faith—it is the fruit.

As branches connected to Christ, the living vine, we are called to bear that fruit in real and practical ways. Branches do not exist for themselves. They draw life from the vine so that life can flow outward—to others who are hungry for grace, healing, and hope.

One powerful expression of this at AHUMC is our Recovery Ministry. This ministry welcomes and equips people seeking healing through programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Adult Children of Alcoholics and Dysfunctional Families, Sexaholics Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Co-Dependents Anonymous, and our own Pioneer Group. Week after week, our campus becomes a place where people show up carrying stories of pain, courage, relapse, resilience, surrender, and new beginnings. They come not to be fixed, but to be welcomed and equipped.

Loving our neighbors in recovery as ourselves means offering more than words of encouragement. It means providing safe, dignified, and well-cared-for spaces where honesty is possible, and community can form. It means stewarding our campus so that it quietly communicates: You belong here. You are not alone. There is room for your story.

Faithful stewardship, then, is an act of love. When we invest in our facilities and resources, we are not simply maintaining buildings—we are strengthening a ministry of welcome. In so doing, lives are restored, relationships are healed, shame is loosened, and hope is rediscovered one day at a time.

PRAYER

Loving God, keep us connected to you and to one another. Bless the ministries that offer healing and hope, especially those serving people in recovery. May we continue to Grow Together, so that all who come to AHUMC—especially those seeking healing—know that they are welcome and loved. Guide us as we steward our campus and resources, that we may love our neighbors as we love ourselves. **Amen.**

TOGETHER, WE PLANT SEEDS



My grandparents planted a huge garden every summer in a field near their home in the country. As a teenager, I helped prepare the soil with a tractor, lay irrigation pipe, and prepare the rows for watering.

When the soil was ready, I would walk the long rows with my grandpa, planting seeds intentionally in freshly dug holes. I can still hear my grandpa's voice saying this rhyme as we planted: *"One for the bug, and one for the crow, two to rot and one to grow."*

We planted seeds with intention—seeds meant to flourish and multiply—so that we could provide food not only for our family, but also for our neighbors. There is great joy in sharing the fruits of your labor with others.

Vegetable gardens grow quickly, producing food in weeks rather than years. Yet we also understand that some growth takes much longer. Today, we worship in a sanctuary planted by people we have never met—faithful members of our community whose love of God and intentional gifts brought a small church to Broadway in 1910. As worshipers continued to seek God and give faithfully, AHUMC grew and flourished.

Do you ever wonder if those early believers knew that even their smallest gifts would grow into the largest United Methodist congregation in San Antonio, Texas? As Scripture reminds us, the smallest of seeds can grow to provide comfort and shelter—offering shade where creation can rest.

There is a Greek proverb that says, "Blessed are the people who plant trees knowing they will never sit in the shade of their foliage." Today, we are sitting in the shade of a church we did not build. God knew we would be here—and that we, too, would be called to offer shade to others. This church is a place where hearts, souls, minds, and bodies can be restored, just as we have experienced.

If you imagine the blooms of a mustard plant, they are bright yellow—much like the Esperanza plant found in our area. Esperanza means "hope." God gives us hope that, together, we will continue offering shade to future generations.

PRAYER

Gracious God, we want to join you in offering love, life, and much-needed shade to those who need it. Take our offerings—small and large—and bring abundance for the future. We rest in the reminder from your story that while one plants seeds, and another waters, only You can make things grow.

Amen.

"He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'" — Mark 4:30–32



AND HONOR ROOTS THAT RUN DEEP

“They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.”

— Jeremiah 17:8

When I think of roots that run deep, the first picture in my mind is the root system of a plant. Years ago, my dad planted a lemon tree from a small cutting. He nurtured and watered it faithfully, and the tree grew to produce blossoms and bear fruit. Following his death, my mom kept up its care for the next 15 years. Every November, my husband and I would help harvest the huge number of large Meyer Lemons from that tree. The year before Mom died, we harvested 650 lemons! Because it was nurtured with love and care, it yielded amazing fruit.

Secondly, the word root can also refer to family, ethnic, or cultural origins. I enjoy the PBS show, Finding Your Roots, in which fascinating information is revealed concerning someone’s ancestors. Invariably, the person on the show is impacted or even transformed in some way as they learn about their heritage. My own family has traced our family lines back at least 7 generations on both sides. The many stories that have been passed down about the lives of those who died before I was born have blessed and enriched my life.

The third image of a root relates to our AHUMC family. Our life together as a church began in 1910 in a Sunday School tent on the corner of Broadway and Poco Street. As the church grew, we trusted in God to show us the way to nourish and accommodate that growth, whether in our faith, discipleship, service, or mission. When physical needs arose, the congregation responded generously through the years to provide what was required, especially when we moved our location from Broadway to Basse Road. Rooted in the love of Jesus Christ and trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, AHUMC has grown into the church it is today.

We can honor the roots that run deep in both our lives and this church by following in the footsteps of the faithful who have gone before us. Whenever a challenge came our way, the people of this church have risen to the invitation to meet that challenge. Our Grow Together campaign now offers each of us an opportunity to intertwine our roots with those who have gone before. The gifts that we make will ensure the ministries of AHUMC continue long into the future, offering a warm and welcoming place that radiates the love of God for all.

By the way, did you know that before Broadway became a street, it was an old creek bed? This church was planted where a stream of water once flowed! We put down roots and have been nourished in the good soil of those who have gone before us and trusted in God. And like the tree planted by streams of water, we can continue to Grow Together into the future God holds for AHUMC.

PRAYER

Gracious God, thank you for the nourishing soil of those who have gone before us to make who we are as your church. Deepen our trust in you, O God, that we may be like the tree planted by streams of water, putting down deep roots that we may Grow Together and bear good fruit in the future God holds for AHUMC.

Amen.

