Creating a WordPress Child Theme with CSS

A Guide for Macintosh Users

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GC Digital Initiatives

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Contents:

1. Theme Selection

For the purpose of this guide, we'll be using the 'twentyeleven' theme provided by Wordpress. You can find the 'twentyeleven' theme by heading to the 'Appearance' menu button in your dashboard and clicking 'Themes'.
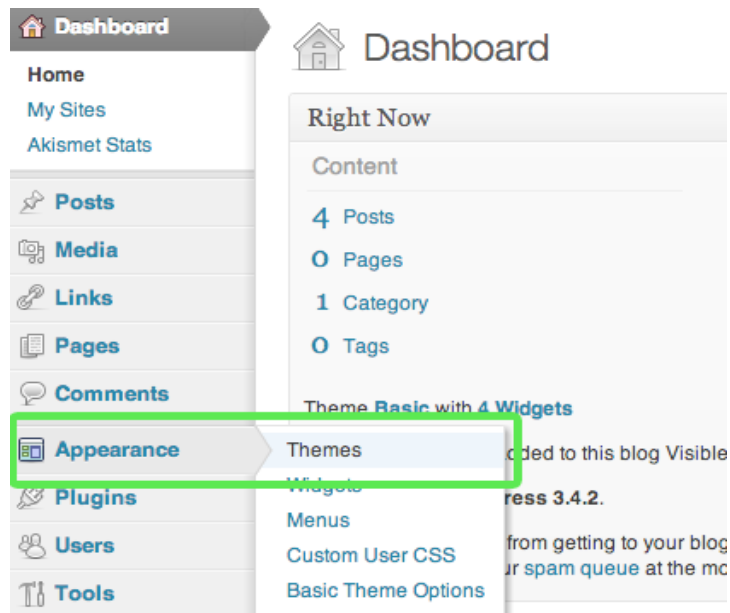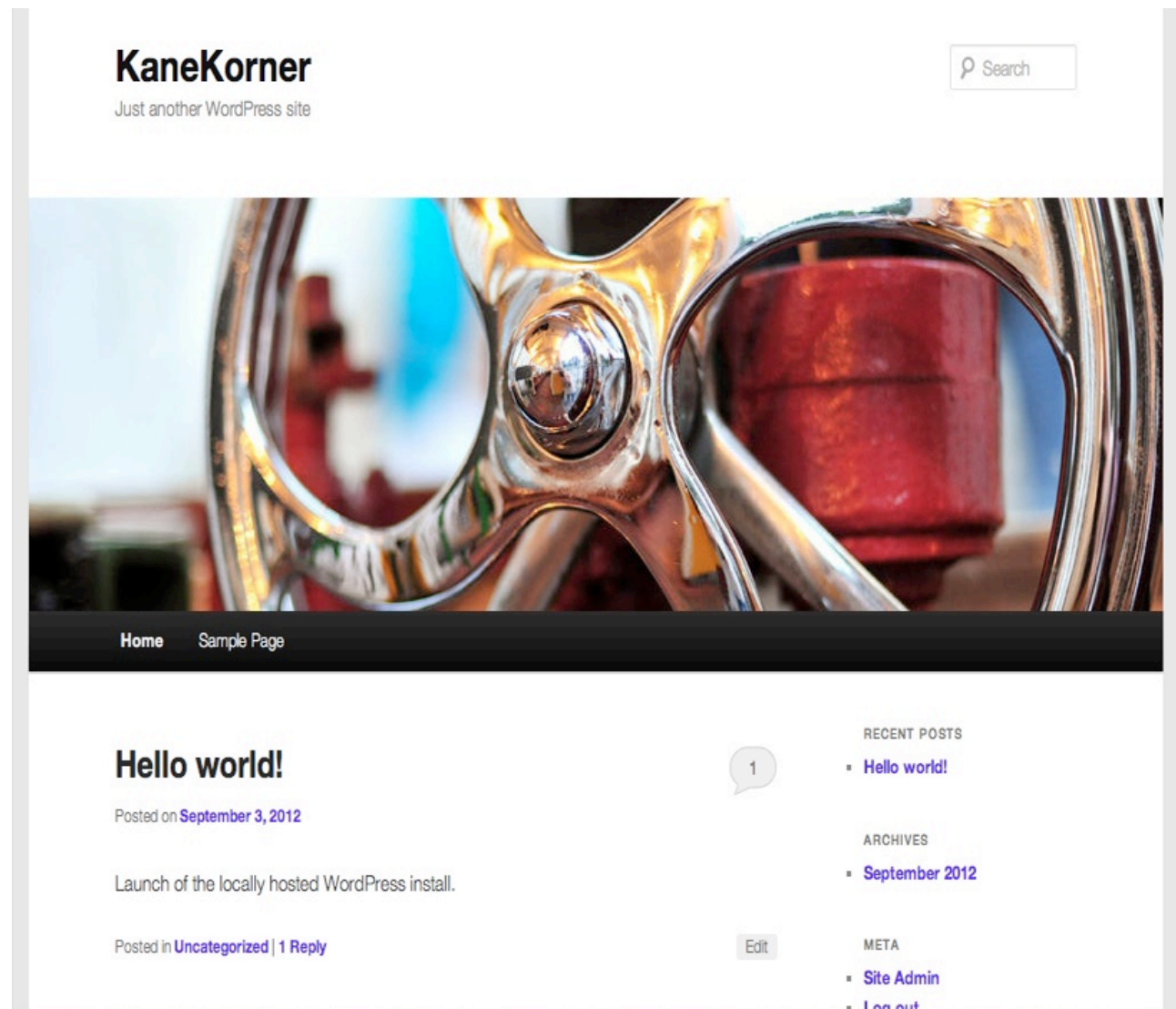

To install the theme, simply hit 'Activate'.
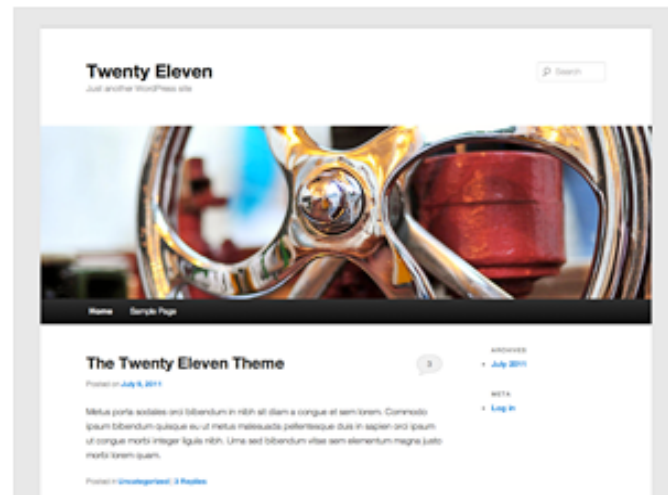
The 'twentyeleven' theme, unmodified:

2. Why a Child Theme?

A child theme is desirable if your wish to customize your theme settings (i.e. color palates, fonts, layout, functionality) and don't want an eventual update to change the modifications you have made. The CSS (Cascading Style Sheet) code within a child theme will override the code of the parent theme (in our case, 'twentyeleven'), preserving your changes throughout updates.

3. Creating a Child Theme Folder

Open Wordpress file directory and navigate to 'wp-content'. Within this folder will be the 'themes' folder (your parent theme folder should already be inside of the 'themes' folder). Inside the 'themes' folder, create a new folder with the name you've chosen for your child (myfirstchild).
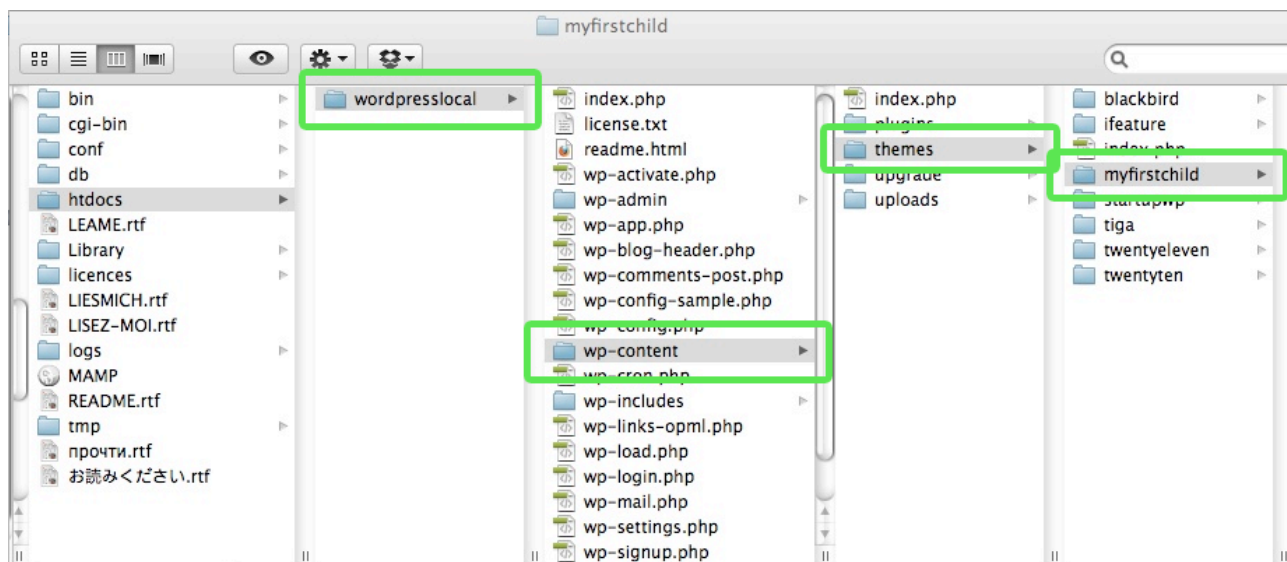
4. Installing a Text Editor: TextWrangler

Before creating the child them CSS document for 'twentyeleven', it is necessary to download a text editor. You will use a text editor to create and edit the CSS document for your child theme folder. The recommended text editor is Text Wrangler, however, any text editor will work (TextEdit, an application that comes with Macintosh OSX, works perfectly well). For the purpose of this guide we will use Text Wrangler.

Head to the Bare Bones site and download Text Wrangler (downloading the User Manual is optional): http://www.barebones.com/products/textwrangler/download.html
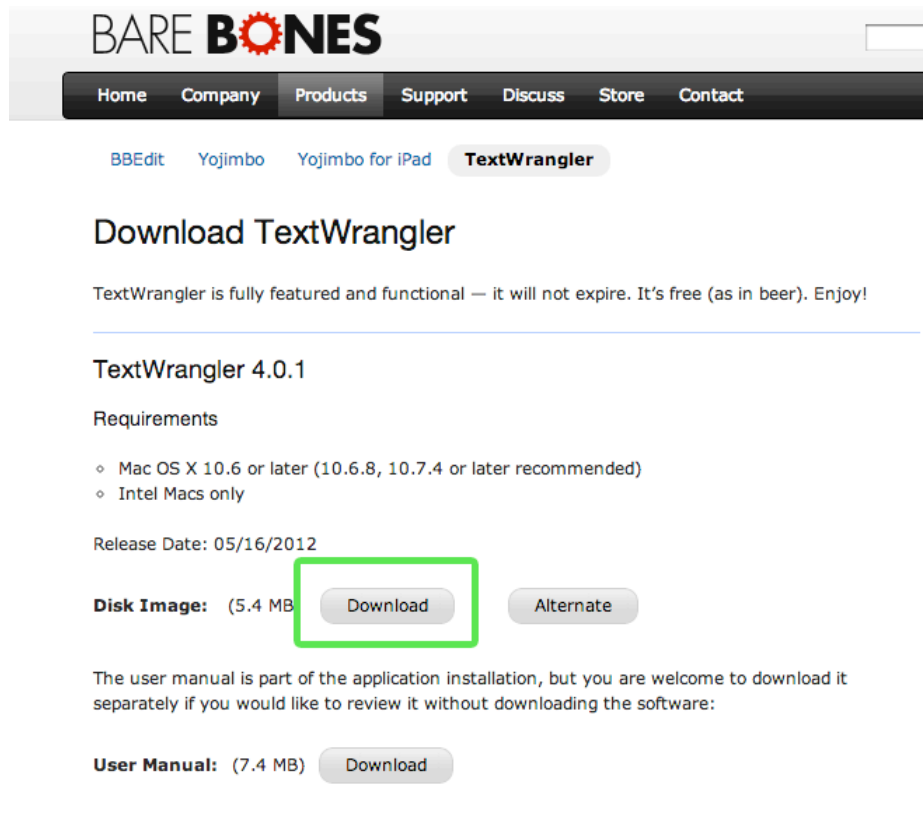

Make sure that the application installs to your applications folder. Once installation is complete, open Text Wrangler. If a new document window does not immediately appear, navigate to 'File', then select 'New' and 'Text Document'.

5. Creating a 'style.css' Document

After you create a new text document, enter the following information (using your name for Author) to the document:

```
/*
Theme Name: myfirstchild
Description: Child theme for the Twenty Eleven theme
Author: Laura Kane
Template: twentyeleven
*/

@import url("../twentyeleven/style.css");
Save this as style.css
```
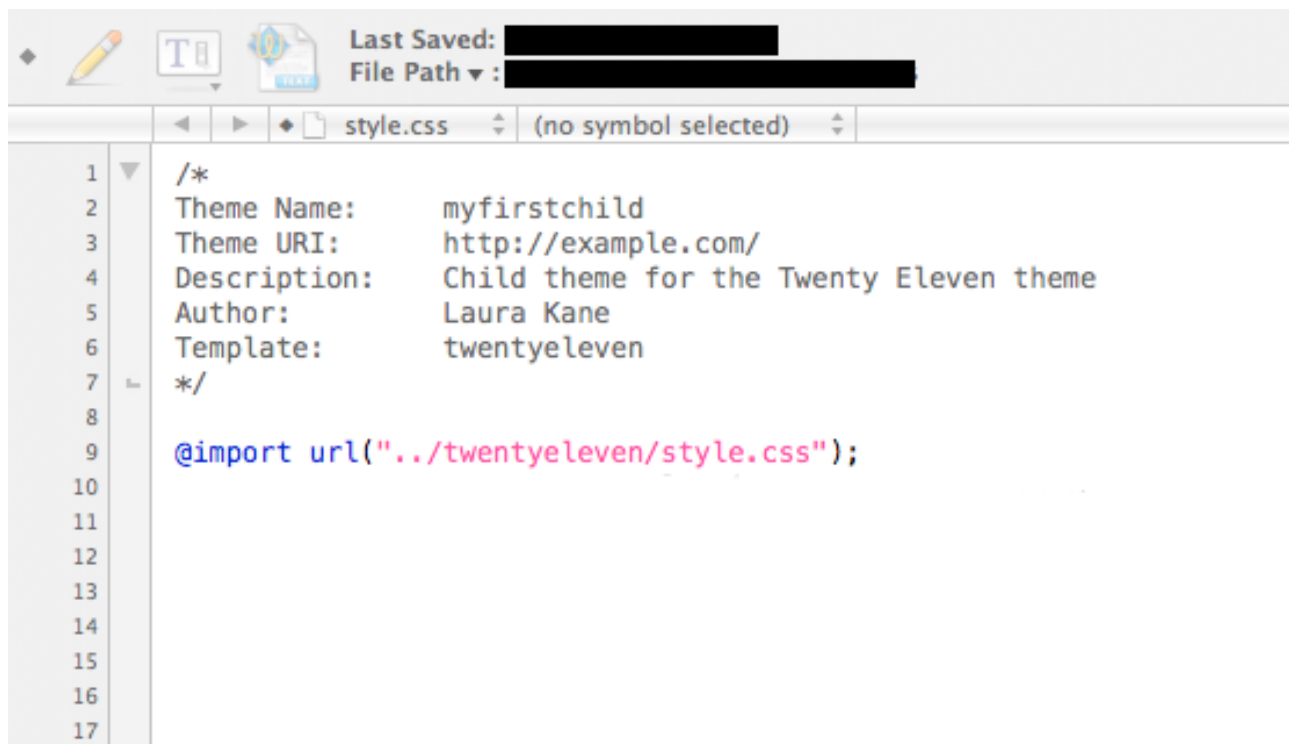

The /* */ brackets indicate text that is not meant to be read as code. You can put internal notes to yourself within these brackets. Hence, the text that appears between the brackets above is meant to name the style sheet, and communicate what the parent theme is and who the author is.

The '@import url' tag is a command line to pull all of the relevant information from the parent theme ('twentyeleven') into the child theme, unless otherwise noted by code entered directly to the child theme CSS style sheet.

When you have finished entering the above information to the document, save the document as style.css and choose the 'Save As' location to be your child theme folder, 'myfirstchild'.
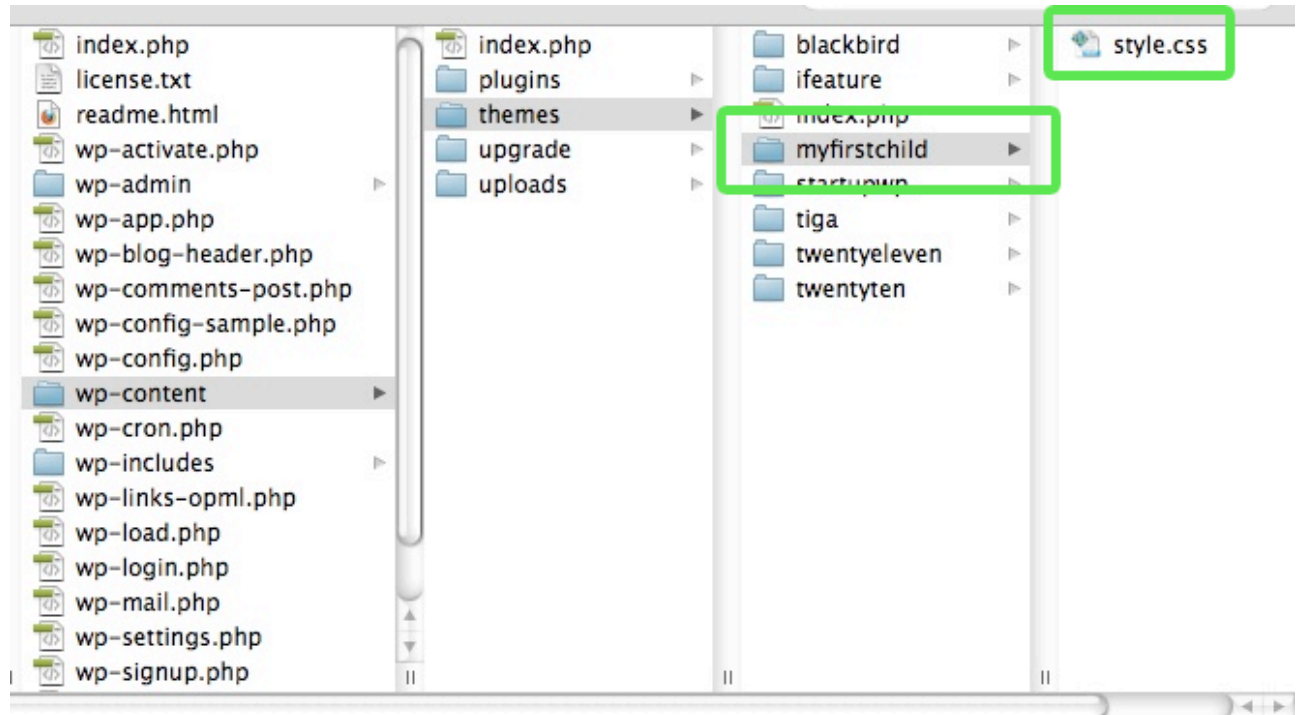
6. Activating your New Child Theme

In your Wordpress Dashboard, navigate to 'Appearance', and then to the sub-menu option 'Themes'. You should see both the parent theme (in our case, twenty eleven) and your new child theme. Activate your new child theme the same way you activated the parent theme earlier.
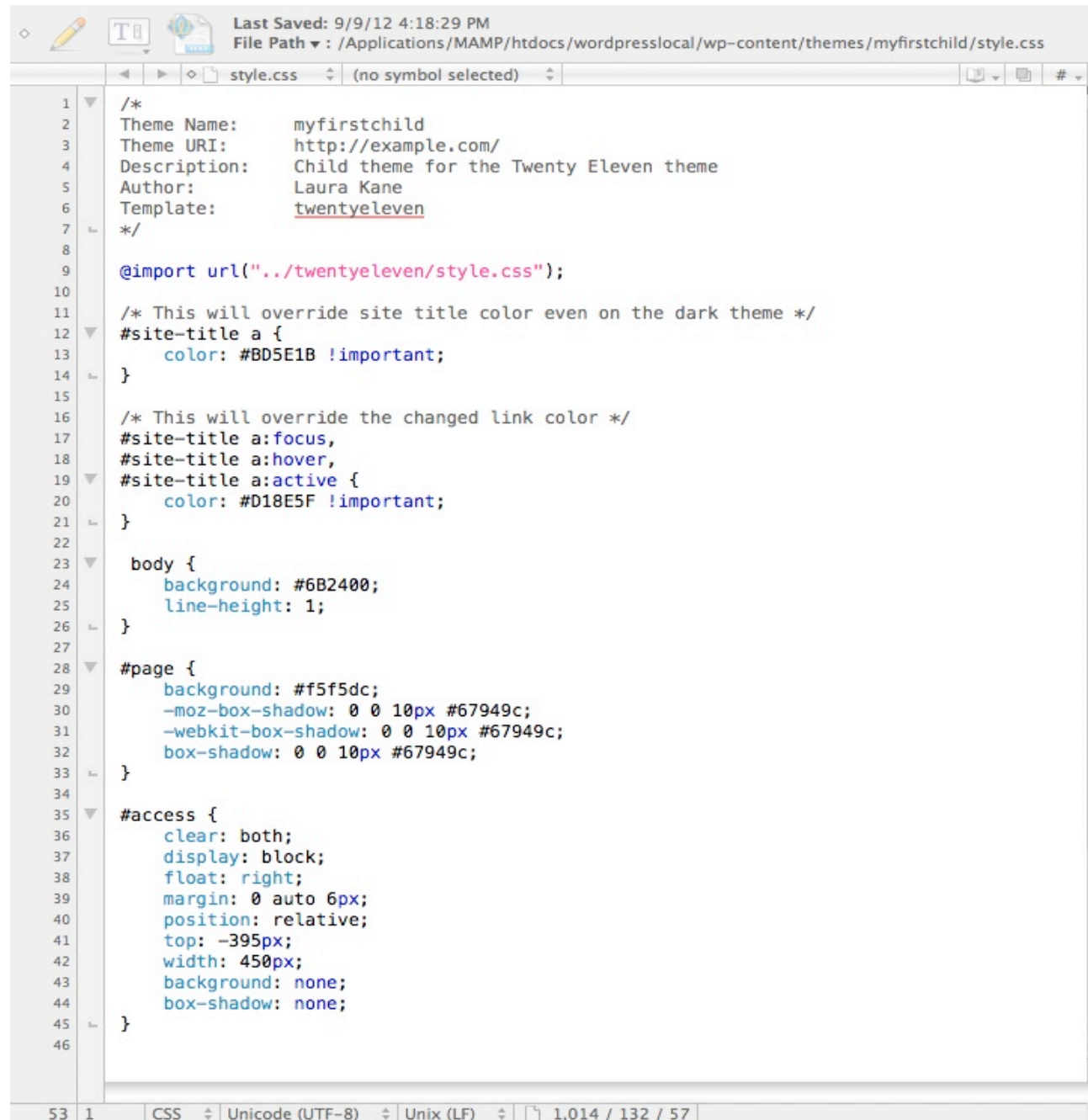
When your child theme is active, your Dashboard *Themes* menu should look like this:
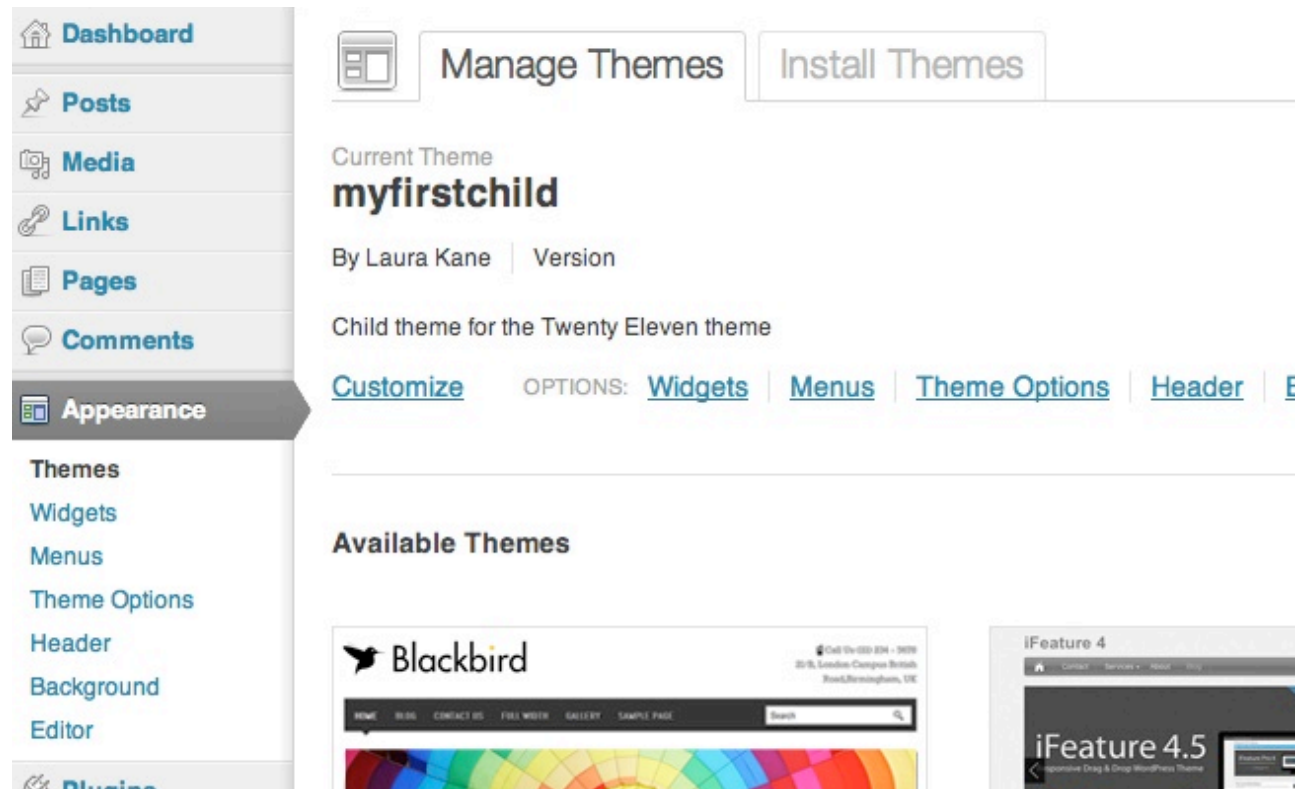
7. Editing and Beyond

Now you can begin to edit your new child theme using css that you enter into your style sheet. *Note that all of your modifications must be entered BELOW the @import that you initially entered into your style sheet.*

Below is a sampling of some modifications to the twentyeleven theme (no coding details will be provided in this guide — this image is for reference only).

```
Last Saved: 9/9/12 4:18:29 PM
File Path ▾ : /Applications/MAMP/htdocs/wordpresslocal/wp-content/themes/myfirstchild/style.css

         style.css          (no symbol selected)

 1   /*
 2   Theme Name:      myfirstchild
 3   Theme URI:       http://example.com/
 4   Description:     Child theme for the Twenty Eleven theme
 5   Author:          Laura Kane
 6   Template:        twentyeleven
 7   */
 8
 9   @import url("../twentyeleven/style.css");
10
11   /* This will override site title color even on the dark theme */
12   #site-title a {
13       color: #BD5E1B !important;
14   }
15
16   /* This will override the changed link color */
17   #site-title a:focus,
18   #site-title a:hover,
19   #site-title a:active {
20       color: #D18E5F !important;
21   }
22
23   body {
24       background: #6B2400;
25       line-height: 1;
26   }
27
28   #page {
29       background: #f5f5dc;
30       -moz-box-shadow: 0 0 10px #67949c;
31       -webkit-box-shadow: 0 0 10px #67949c;
32       box-shadow: 0 0 10px #67949c;
33   }
34
35   #access {
36       clear: both;
37       display: block;
38       float: right;
39       margin: 0 auto 6px;
40       position: relative;
41       top: -395px;
42       width: 450px;
43       background: none;
44       box-shadow: none;
45   }
46

53  1        CSS    ‡  Unicode (UTF-8)   ‡  Unix (LF)   ‡    1,014 / 132 / 57
```

These modifications transform the appearance of the twentyeleven theme:
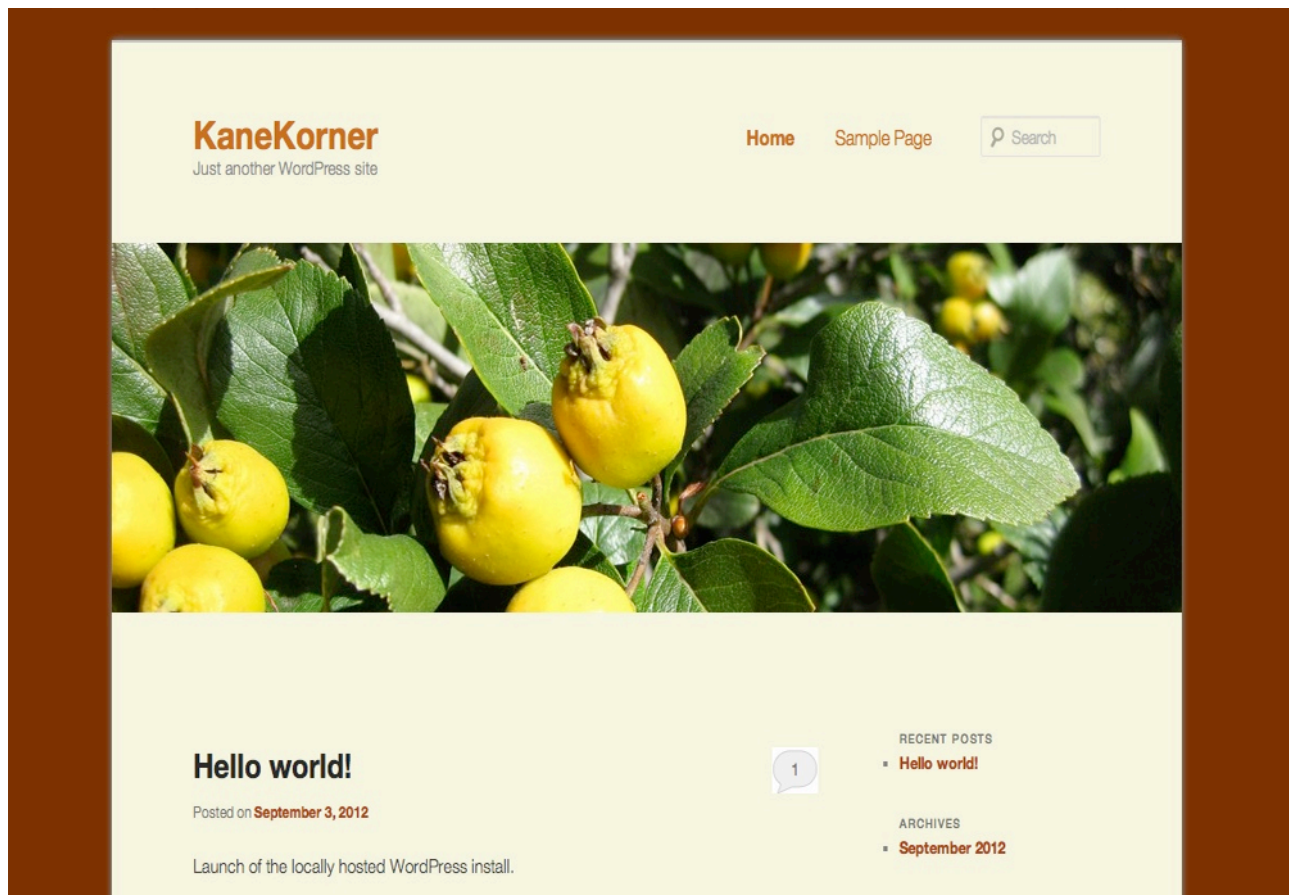
8. Useful Links

The Wordpress Codex: http://codex.wordpress.org

CSS Coding Standards: http://codex.wordpress.org/CSS_Coding_Standards

Child Themes: http://codex.wordpress.org/Child_Themes

HTML Color Guide: http://www.w3schools.com/tags/ref_colorpicker.asp?