



Philosophy of Movement

Introduction

THE AUSTIN STONE COMMUNITY CHURCH is a New Testament church that exists for the supremacy of the name and purpose of Jesus Christ. Our ultimate desire is for the name of Jesus to be lifted high and for His purposes to be accomplished throughout the world. We believe the best way to pursue this vision is by unifying around this clear mission: **love God, love the church, love the city, and love the nations.**

Several ministries make up the movement of The Austin Stone, all working toward this same mission. These unique, specialized expressions of ministry are not campuses or congregations; rather, these ministries are part of our larger approach to pursuing movement as The Austin Stone, and they are integrated with everything else that we do as a church.

Core Values of Movement

WITH RESPECT TO THE ENTIRE CHURCH, what makes us a single local church can be summarized by four major commonalities: common theology, common culture, common budget, and common polity. While we have many different organizations that we partner with to foster ministry and mission, to be The Austin Stone is to have common theology, culture, budget, and polity. This allows for clarity in what our local church is and also clarity on what our local church is not. The degree to which this philosophy is shared will be helpful in pursuing partnerships with other organizations and people who will help advance our mission and vision in the city of Austin and the nations.

Common Theology

The common theology of The Austin Stone is explicitly developed in our full [Affirmation of Faith](#). Our common theology can be briefly summarized by the following statements:

- The Bible is the Word of God.
- There is one true and living God who exists in three persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
- God created all things for His glory.
- Men and women were created in the image of God.
- God alone is the architect and finisher of our salvation.

- The Holy Spirit gives gifts to His children.
- The church consists of all who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation.
- Heaven and hell are real places.
- Jesus Christ will one day return to establish His kingdom.

Common Culture

The Austin Stone is a movement of congregations and ministries that is united not only in theological conviction, but also common distinctive culture. The culture of The Austin Stone is expressed and codified in our Culture Map. The cultural distinctives of The Austin Stone will be shared across the different congregations and ministries, but the expressions of that culture may be distinct in some activities and language as is contextually appropriate for both the leaders and people of the ministry. The shared culture is largely found in the contextualized approaches to the same values, philosophies, and strategies.

Common Budget

As a movement, The Austin Stone still shares all financial resources in common with one another. While different congregations and ministries may bring in more or less revenue, every ministry of our church is aligned with our mission. We believe that together we are capable of far more than we would be independently, and our shared resources allow us to be more effective in ministry and mission and efficient in our use of resources. We are also committed to a shared philosophy of resources, which can be found [here](#).

Common Polity

When it comes to how the church is organized, The Austin Stone believes deeply that the Scriptures teach two offices in the local church (elders and deacons) and covenantal church membership. We summarize our polity as elder-led, deacon-served, and congregationally affirmed.

Examples of Movement

Positive Examples

Functionally, each congregation is an example of the movement philosophy being played out. Additionally, we see excellent examples of the movement played out in the ministries like Austin Stone Worship and The Austin Stone Institute, each with distinction.

Austin Stone Worship (ASW)

Austin Stone Worship is a fine example of the core values of a movement being applied in ministry to uniquely bless The Austin Stone and the global church. Austin Stone Worship has a deep love for sound doctrine and clings tightly to the theological distinctives of our church while applying them uniquely into worship songs, worship environments,

worship leaders, stories, and storytellers. Austin Stone Worship shares the same cultural convictions of The Austin Stone at large, while also uniquely applying the culture to a particular aspect of the movement in worship.

With respect to finances, Austin Stone Worship presents a compelling way for the church and the artist to share both the burden of compensation and the opportunity for outside revenue in a way that both blesses the artist and the church. Through creativity and clarity, finances can be utilized to extend the creative capacities of the Austin Stone Worship team, as well as foster greater provision for artists within the ministry. With respect to polity, the ministry adheres strongly to being elder-led, deacon-served, and congregationally-affirmed by actively pursuing elder oversight of the ministry itself, and by having worship pastors and leaders dedicated to the task of shepherding a particular people in a congregation.

Austin Stone Institute

The Austin Stone Institute (ASI) is another ministry that blesses both The Austin Stone and the global church through a deep love for solid doctrine and theology and a passion for the core values of movement. ASI strives to provide clear pathways for the spiritual development of leaders specifically through resources, residencies, seminars, workshops, development programs, classes, and curriculum. Many of these opportunities, like workshops and seminars, are offered to Stone partners and attenders as well as the general public. ASI is supplemental—not substitutionary—to each congregation's identity and function. ASI and congregation teams work in varied avenues towards a shared goal of spiritual formation of all partners and attenders.

Negative Examples

The following are some negative examples that contradict our philosophy of movement.

Too Narrowly Focusing on an Aspect of Culture

One common problem in a large, complex church like The Austin Stone is when ministries focus solely on an aspect of the culture or convictions that reflects their particular passions to the exclusion of the rest. When a ministry team champions their own passions without humility and a regard for others, we cease to be a church unified around theology and culture.

Some hypothetical examples of this would be worship ministry believing that Sunday worship is the most important value we have, to the exclusion of engaging in mission outside of Sundays. Another would be a person saying that our counseling center is not a good use of money, because it is not directly impacting the nations.

Turning a Methodology into a Philosophy

While methodologies are a reflection of a philosophy of ministry, they are not themselves a philosophy. When we hold particular methodologies (not prescribed by Scripture) of teaching, discipleship, formation, or leadership as close-handed, we can quickly succumb to mere pragmatic debates over effectiveness. The Austin Stone will not divide itself over pragmatic distinctions, but we will hold high the explicit culture we have and extend charity in methodological distinctions.

One example of this would be Missional Community groups. While we think the particular practices we teach for missional community life

are helpful and effective, they are not the only way a community can build rhythms together for effective mission. The forms of missional

community are negotiable, but the function of being a community on mission together over time is not.

Movement Programs

Primary Programs

The primary expressions of the movement are in congregations or in movement ministries. The congregations are an expression of the movement of The Austin Stone in a particular region of the city of Austin. A movement ministry would be an integrated ministry that does not directly reside within the congregation framework, like Austin Stone Worship, The Austin Stone Institute, For the Nations, For the City, The Austin Stone Counseling Center, or other collaborative ministries that are fully integrated into The Austin Stone. To be fully integrated as a part of the movement means The Austin Stone elders have direct leadership and capacity for wide-ranging influence of the subsidiary ministry.

Secondary Programs

There are also many programs that The Austin Stone has had a hand in starting or shaping that are pursuing redemption and restoration in our city. A program like Total City Sports is still under the leadership of The Austin Stone, and it is a secondary program because the function of the ministry or program does not holistically represent a biblically mandated function of the church. Although it is consistent with biblical teaching and helpful, it represents one of the many ways the church could be involved in the mission of God, not necessarily a mandated one.

Partnering Programs

The movement of The Austin Stone also has significant overlap with several organizations in partnership, although they are indeed separate from the movement itself. These would include organizations like Launch Global and other ministries. These ministries would have oversight from eldership and commitment to culture at The Austin Stone, but relative to their engagement in other fields of ministry, they remain distinct as is helpful for mission and appropriate for other contexts.