

# Austin Stone Worship

## Philosophy of Ministry

### Defining Worship

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Biblical Worship is the full life response - head, heart, and hands - to who God is and what He has done.

Worship is communal.

Worship is collective.

Worship is eternal.

We exist to exalt the name of Jesus Christ here and now, always and forever.

### Who We Are

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Austin Stone Worship is a collection of worship leaders, musicians, songwriters, storytellers, and artists serving and equipping the Church with content rich in **theology**, **mission**, and **expression**.

As a ministry of The Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, TX, we are dedicated to proclaiming the beautiful gospel of Christ in our city and to the world, while challenging believers to live a fully devoted life to Jesus. We value training worship leaders and artists, developing them in strong theology as well as practical skills.

### Worship Culture

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The foundation of our worship culture is Christ alone. He is the bedrock and cornerstone upon which everything in the local church is established. Styles, methods, and cultures change, but the foundation of Jesus Christ will never alter.

There are five distinct cultural foundations that we uphold as we stand upon the Cornerstone of our church. These are the most important values that define our worship culture at The Austin Stone. They are the crucial pieces that make us who we are as this local representation of the body of Christ.

#### Foundation 1 | A Culture of The Word

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We believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God and must be central in everything that we do. This means that our way of leading, serving, counseling, and pastoring our people stems from what God has revealed to us and commanded us through His Word.

The purpose and aim of Sunday liturgies, from beginning to end, is to saturate our flock in the Word of God. The first set of songs and the call to worship should be

centered on Scripture, and ultimately point to the specific message preached on that Sunday. The response songs after the sermon are a direct response to the Word of God that was preached. Every song should not only be theologically and scripturally accurate, but should also be selected to point to and respond to the Word of God proclaimed that Sunday.

Here are the building blocks that make up the Culture of The Word:

**Call to Worship** — When we gather together on Sundays as the corporate body of Christ, we do so with intentional objectives. We want to preach the gospel of Christ Jesus, we want to lift our voices in song, we want to fellowship with the family of God, we want to give tithes and offerings back to God, we want to devote ourselves to prayer. All of these things can be categorized by one word - worship. Hence the name “Worship Service” or “Worship Gathering.” That is our aim and our goal — to worship God together as His children. That is why towards the beginning of each of our gatherings, we have a “Call to Worship.”

The call to worship isn’t a mini sermon, nor is it an off-the-cuff one-liner to get people excited. It’s a concise, well thought-out, intentional exhortation directly pulled from or rooted in Scripture that centers hearers on Christ and the praise of His name. This is a charge to the people of God to direct their gaze upward and see Jesus as worthy.

The only reason that we can offer a call to worship to our congregations is because we have first been called to worship by God Himself. The word church (*ekklesia*) literally means “called out ones.” On the day that Christ saved us, He called us to worship. When we deliver a call to worship in our gatherings, we are simply reminding the church of who they are, and what they were made to do.

**Theological Checking of Songs** — In John 4, Christ tells the woman at the well that the Father is seeking worshippers who will worship Him “in Spirit and in truth.” As worship pastors, our most important task is to diligently and faithfully present gospel truth to our congregation.

More than simply a way to stir our congregations’ hearts and emotions, musical worship exists for God. It is primarily a way in which the church blesses our Creator — to bring Him pleasure and show Him honor. If our worship is for God, it is of paramount importance that we worship in ways that please him — “in Spirit and truth.” God delights in our joy in worship, as well as in hearing the gospel of Christ proclaimed explicitly and faithfully. It is the gospel that changes lives, not the music. Therefore we must be diligent

to “teach what accords with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1), even in our worship music.

**Worship Leaders Are Theologians** — The beating heart of all Christian worship is rooted in our understanding of God. If worship is our “...full-life response- head, heart, and hands, to who God is and what he has done”, then we are responsible as overseers of our flock to lead our people not only to worship the Lord in Spirit, but also in truth (John 4). Thus it is of paramount importance that worship leaders be committed and thoughtful students of God’s word and theological study in general.

Due to the artistic and creative nature of the worship leader’s calling, it is sometimes assumed that theological grounding does, or should, take a backseat to compelling artistic expression in worship. However, the worship pastor is not absolved of responsibility to thoughtfully and clearly communicate the truth of the gospel from the word of God, as it is the bedrock upon which worship rests. Our theology fuels our doxology, and our doxology leads us to a greater emphasis on theology. Adding music to words does not necessitate subtracting gospel truth from them.

This study and emphasis also overflow into the liturgy of our Sunday morning services, as songs are sung that glorify Christ in truth, as our call to worship points us to the scriptures, and as we seek to stir hearts with truth rather than merely manipulate emotions with music. This all serves to ground our worship in the truth of the gospel and the sure foundation of His Word.

## Foundation 2 | A Culture of Engagement

The worship culture at The Austin Stone is one of engagement. We want our people to be fully engaged in corporate worship every single week. Consistency in leadership, accessible melodies and arrangements, contextualized music style, and approachable personalities from stage all help foster an atmosphere of engagement. We would rather err on-fewer, familiar songs in our rotation than to have too many new, unfamiliar songs in any given semester.

Greenrooms are reserved only for preparation and study before services. During every single service, all worship leaders and musicians must be present on the front row, fully engaged in the entire service. We only have our people together for an hour and a half each week, and as leadership we must be fully engaged every week in serving, praying, and shepherding our flock.

There should be a deep sense of engagement from our staff in the hallways, in the worship environments, and in the life our city and church.

Here are the building blocks that make up the Culture of Engagement:

**Constantly Teaching the “Why” of Corporate Worship** — At The Austin Stone Community Church, we typically have around 7,000 people attend our weekend gatherings. Recent studies have shown that 7% of those people are there for the first time. That’s nearly 500 people who have never attended a service at The Austin Stone that walk into our doors every week. That’s nearly 500 people who probably have no idea why in the world we are singing together. If we want those congregants to understand what we are doing and to join in, we need to constantly be teaching the basic “why” of corporate worship.

Teaching the why serves as an introduction to a new person, and also serves as a reminder to the regular attendees and partners. It’s far too often that we as believers do things just because that’s what Christians do and then grow complacent, apathetic, and robotic. We must fight against monotonous, stale routine and fight for passionate, knowledgeable, engaged worshippers who understand why we do the things that we do.

**Missional Artists** — We believe that creating excellent and compelling art opens doors to be light in dark places in our city. As Jesus intentionally crafted parables and didactic language to communicate deep truths to the masses, we too encourage our team to create gospel-centered stories and poetry in song, film, or photograph that communicate to believers and “not-yet believers” alike our common humanity and the greater hope found in Jesus. Many worship leaders, musicians, and artists on our team are involved with creative projects outside the walls of the church. In doing so we have the opportunity to engage and be the aroma of Christ to artists in our city, who don’t yet know their Creator, and to listeners in our city who are searching for deeper meaning and a message of hope in the music they hear and art they see. We, as sons and daughters of the living God, image-bearers of the Creator, and the very handiwork (*poema*) of God, created in Christ Jesus, have the most compelling reason to create beautiful and excellent artistic expression, inside and outside the Church: that all the world might be pointed to the excellencies of Jesus.

**Strategic Hospitality** — Hospitality is first a state of the heart, before any physical demonstration. We as a community of worship leaders, musicians, songwriters, storytellers, and artists strive to be a people constantly meditating on God’s pursuing love for us when we were strangers, far off from Him. In the New Testament, the Greek word translated “hospitality” literally means “love of strangers.” Hospitality is an act of worship, a response, to a hospitable God who cared for and sought out a people who

did not care for Him. We, as beneficiaries of His hospitality, want to be a people constantly going out of our way to engage those who walk into our services on Sunday, those we encounter in our city, and those who live right next door to us. This may look like putting to death our comfort idol by talking to the person standing by themselves on a Sunday, sitting with the person eating by themselves at an event, or sacrificially using our home as gathering place to make many feel welcomed and loved. The highest end of all hospitality is this: that as we demonstrate the character and nature of our God, doors would open to point others to the gospel through both our word and deed.

**Venue Decibel Levels**— We want to create a distraction-free environment where people would cry out to God without inhibition. That doesn't always have to mean *loud*, but it does need to *envelop* the listener. Sound pressure levels are never simply loud for loudness' sake, but are carefully calculated, predicted and monitored to ensure that operating levels are well within OSHA guidelines for hearing safety.

Though the terms "volume" and "distraction-free" might seem to be at odds with one another, they really go hand in hand. The purpose of higher sound pressure levels and fuller-sounding mixes is two-fold: to help the listener hear all frequencies more evenly, and to focus the attention of the worshiper solely on the musical content by minimizing distraction.

When enough of a margin occurs between the ambient noise of the crowd and the mix being projected, our brains eventually perceive that what's coming out of the PA is the only thing happening in the room. In the same manner, when the volume levels are responsibly and safely used to drown out the potential distraction of your own voice or the person next to you, your focus is drawn to the music. Upon hearing your own voice fade into the background of the sonic environment, you will feel more freedom to sing as loud as you want without fear of standing out among your neighbors.

**No Music Stands On Stage** — Our worship is an overflow of the heart. Therefore, our songs are not meant to be simply an excellent recitation of words and music, but a genuine outpouring of prayer, joy, sorrow and praise to our God.

The presence of music stands onstage, while at times may be helpful to musicians, can subtly communicate a lack of preparation and intentionality while drastically impairing our ability to lead with our countenance. Learning the song should always precede leading the song. A face looking at a piece of paper is not a face engaging with the congregation, nor is it a face gazing at Christ.

## Foundation 3 | A Culture of Excellence

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There is a difference between worldly and godly excellence. Perfectionism in ministry is unhealthy and dangerous to the heart, leading it towards performance and away from honesty. Achievement-driven ministry leads to a greediness and pursuit of applause and approval. Competitive ministry is tiresome, and driven by simply wanting to be the best. Godly excellence in ministry is all-together different, valuable and good! In the scriptures, the call to excellence is much richer than awards or achievements. The godly view of excellence is much different than the worldly view of excellence. We see this in the book of Philippians:

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. - Philippians 4:8 (ESV)*

It's no irony that these words describing excellence — true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and commendable — are the essence of God Himself. He is the very definition of excellence. Therefore, our pursuit of excellence is not one of selfish gain or perfection but one that points to Jesus. We seek to be obedient to Christ when he calls us in Matthew 5 to, “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Here are the building blocks that make up the Culture of Excellence:

**Weekly Rehearsals** — The city of Austin is considered by many to have some of the nations best restaurants. These are restaurants with award winning chefs that create award-winning plates. These chefs and cooks don't stumble into excellence but rather spend countless hours cooking, tasting, experimenting, throwing out, starting over, studying, reading, practicing, and preparing. All of this is done to deliver a dish that will be consumed in a matter of minutes. If they are willing to put this much time into food that will perish, how much more should we be willing to spend time diligently preparing to lead the people of God to worship Him? That is why weekly rehearsals are vitally important. We cannot be good stewards of our calling and gifting and show up unprepared to lead the people of God.

Rehearsals provide a consistent avenue for bands to prepare for Sunday morning, to grow together as a cohesive group, and also to help hone our skills as individual band members. With the goal of providing a distraction free environment of worship Sunday to Sunday, it is essential to be spending time as a group working through the minute details of transitions, parts, arrangements, keys, lyrics, and teaching moments.

At each rehearsal, we spend time not only rehearsing, but we also spend time praying. We pray for one another, for our church's leadership, and for the people who will walk through the doors on Sunday. Praying at rehearsal is not simply the spiritual thing to do but it is a monumental foundation for pursuing excellence because without Christ, we are wasting our time.

**Superb Audio** — Music is one of the few forms of communication that has the ability to invoke a deep heartfelt response, and the effect it can have on a listener is both a unique and profound one. Songs are painstakingly crafted and refined so that they communicate truth that the worshipper both cognitively understands and feels. Audio is simply the medium by which music is conveyed. In light of this, for a song to have its intended effect, every aspect of its transmission from source to listener must be intentional.

This sets an extremely high bar in terms of quality—both in personnel as well as equipment. Audio Engineers must be trained to the level of a seasoned industry professional, able to produce outstanding mixes in some of the less-than-ideal acoustical environments our campuses meet in. It also means that the equipment we invest in must be of high enough quality that it is never a limiting factor in conveying a song or message the way it is intended to be heard.

The sonic environments we create are meant to be more than simply distraction-free; they need to be *excellent* and *inspiring*. Even in the highest-energy worship anthems, elements of beauty exist—whether in the subtleties of a turn, or the emotion-fueled shouts of a refrain that brings the worshipper to tears as they sing it. As we shape and sculpt the medium between worship leader and listener, our goal is to create something beautiful that inspires our people to worship. The beauty we experience in art points us to the Author of creative beauty. As we prepare, plan, create, and strive for excellence, we are worshiping the God who plans, creates, and does all things perfectly.

**Paying Musicians** — Our worship musicians are expected to bring to Sundays a high level of musical excellence, thorough preparation, and spiritual readiness to enter the battle of leading our people in worship. This is a task that requires a great deal of practice, energy, and focus. Paying our musicians both honors that preparation, and allows them to take the time during the week they need to prepare for Sundays. It is also a tangible way of caring for and showing value to the men and women who serve our body in worship every week.

Being a worship musician is neither an invitation for shoddy artistry, nor an opportunity for a gun-for-hire to make an easy paycheck. Rather, it calls our

people to the highest level of artistry and the highest commitment to the local church. Our earnest desire is that our worship teams would be the best bands in our city, while also being committed partners and spiritual leaders at their campus. We pay our musicians because they are highly valued members of our team of whom much is expected.

**Songwriting** — We were created in the image of the Creator. Created in the image of the same One that designed stars and oceans and valleys and babies and centipedes. That sort of imagery calls us to a life of LEADING by CREATING. We have the weighty responsibility of writing songs that are Christ-centered, gospel-focused, and honest regarding the human struggle versus the sureness of God’s character.

In Romans 15, Paul describes ministry/leading that is unpolluted:

*I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed. - Romans 15:14-18 (ESV)*

We are to be "filled with knowledge"

We are to be "able to instruct one another"

We are to be members of the "priestly service of the Gospel of God."

Why?

"So that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

Therefore, our aim as songwriters is this: By following the Spirit’s leading, to place words on the lips of worshipers that they may use to ascribe worth and value to our King, Jesus.

Songwriting is a skill that constantly has to be shaped and refined. As ambassadors for the Gospel we are always compelled to grow in and steward well the talents God has given us. Because of time and repetition needed to hone the craft, all of our worship leaders are encouraged, expected, and held accountable to consistently carve out space in their busyness for creativity and songwriting.



Every new song goes through a process musical and lyrical filtration and refinement. Feedback is given and received regularly to pursue the absolute best version of a song before putting it on the lips of our flock. Just as the expression of the songs is communal, the process is communal in nature.

Songwriting is not the fullness of the role of a worship pastor but we believe it is a crucial piece. We pursue excellence in songwriting with diligence so that we might arrange words, phrases, and theology in a way that can be placed on the lips of worshipers.

**Dedicated Volunteers** — At Austin Stone Worship, we have an incredibly dedicated volunteer team who use their creative and technical gifts to lead and serve the church through worship leading, storytelling, songwriting, and visual art. These men and women are a vital part of our team! They show up early and stay late so that others can come hear the gospel week to week.

Our volunteers love Jesus and want to see Him worshipped rightly. It is for that reason that they work hard to create our worship environments, lead our kids and students in worship, write powerful stories about what God is doing in people's lives, and create visual and developmental tools to help people see and seek Jesus! They are devoted to serving the body of Christ through excellence with their artistic and technical skill.

We get to celebrate what God is doing through this volunteer team monthly at our Worship Collective. Here we share a meal, worship and commune together, cast vision, and show our appreciation to all of those who sacrificially volunteer on this team.

**Production** — Our use of audio, video, lighting and environmental elements help to foster an atmosphere that strives to eliminate distraction and enable people to worship God freely. John Piper says it like this:

*"We will try to sing and play and pray and preach in such a way that people's attention will not be diverted from the substance by shoddy ministry nor by excessive finesse, elegance, or refinement. Natural, undistracting excellence will let the truth and beauty of God shine through. We will invest in equipment good enough to be undistracting in transmitting heartfelt truth. Sound system, music playing, lighting, heat, ushering, welcoming, parking, facilities – all undistracting from the aim of thinking about God." – Dr. John Piper ([www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org))*

Our goal is not that people would walk away from a gathering thinking about how great (or poor) the production was. We would much rather they leave with a greater understanding of truth because we did our very best to not cloud the message of the gospel, but to magnify it.

## Foundation 4 | A Culture of Togetherness

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Austin Stone Worship is made up of imperfect people with different talents, gifts, stories, and callings that are unified together in the mission of exalting the person of Jesus Christ in our lives, in our church, in our city, and around the world. When God saves us, he does not do so with the intention that we would go through life alone, but rather in community with the saints. We need each other. This is what drives togetherness in our ministry.

We view ourselves much like a chandelier. A chandelier is made up of many seemingly insignificant lights but when connected to the source of power and when working together in unison, it creates a beautiful, ornate piece of art that uses light to drive out darkness. In Matthew 5, Jesus says, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” Jesus didn’t say, you are the light of the world and *that light* set on a hill cannot be hidden, no, he said “*a city*.” A collection of lights that can be seen from afar, illuminating the hill and the valleys below. This is a high calling. We want to walk in humility, love, obedience to the Father, and submission to each other, with the aim of together being that light that drives out the darkness.

Here are the building blocks that make up the Culture of Togetherness:

**Worship Huddle** — The Worship Huddle is a weekly vision-casting meeting for the Austin Stone Worship staff that meets Wednesdays from 9-11am and includes all campus worship leaders, worship directors, and residents. Through eating breakfast together, worshipping, reading God’s Word, and praying, our team will be more unified and bought into the overall vision and mission of The Austin Stone.

In our Worship Huddles, we are constantly speaking to the “why” of what we do, keeping that on the forefront of our minds. We also entrust our residents with the responsibility to lead worship and set up and tear down each week, which gives them a space to serve, develop, and receive feedback from worship leaders. Finally, we will pray for three things every week: Austin Stone Worship leadership, our Church body, and our city.

Here’s our typical schedule:

9am	Breakfast.
9:30am	Worship. (3 songs led by resident)
	Word & Vision. (led by Aaron)
	Communal Prayer. (led by Aaron)
10:30am	Logistics & ASW communication. (led by Collins)

Once a month, we have an open huddle for area worship leaders to be refreshed and renewed. These are great times of building community and friendships with other leaders who are in the fight together. The open huddles are usually taught by outside voices.

**Worship Collective** — The Worship Collective is a monthly gathering for anyone that helps facilitate corporate worship at the five campuses of The Austin Stone. We have a vibrant and collaborative team of worship leaders, musicians, production teams, visual artists, songwriters, and storytellers that are leading our church every single week in adult worship, kids worship, and students worship. Most of them are volunteers! The Worship Collective is the time where we get to serve and pour back into our team.

We eat amazing food from a local Austin food truck, and then worship through singing, praying, and receiving communion together. Either Aaron or one of the other pastors will facilitate prayer or teaching, with each month always having a unique purpose and feel.

We do this because we *must* and because we love our team! In the Fall of 2014, we realized we were neglecting one of the most important things in our team of over 200 worship & arts volunteers: being together. We were convicted and inspired to serve our team well, nurture the culture of creativity, and gather together for worship and prayer.

**Work Hard - Play Hard** — We make it clear that we are not God's employees, we are his beloved children. That comes first. We work hard because of the finished work of Jesus on the cross — not to earn God's favor, but because of God's favor. That said, we encourage and expect our team to put in the time and to work diligently for the sake of Christ and his bride. He deserves our very best.

As important as it is to get work done as a team, it is often just as important to put our work down in order to celebrate what God has done in and through our team, and participate in activities that rejuvenate and rebuild our hearts for ministry. That's what we like to call "playing hard." The activities vary anywhere from fishing to bowling to concerts to karaoke but always include lots of laughter and hugs, delicious meals and all around fun. When it's time to play, we do it right.

**Me Too Communion** — Early monastic followers of God received communion in a unique way. When they gathered around the communion table, they were given a glass of wine and a chunk of bread, then one at a time, they each spoke 2 sentences. First, they testified to the faithfulness of God in their life. Second, they confessed their sin and need for God. Then,

when one person was done, in unison they all spoke aloud “me too.” As they said it, they were reminding each other that they were TOGETHER experiencing communion with God and man. Then they took a bite of bread and remembered the body of the God of “me too” that was crushed for them, and they drank the wine and remembered the blood of Jesus, the God of “me too,” that was poured out for them.

When we receive communion together as a team, we do so in this way. We are sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. When we speak the words, “me too,” we are remembering Christ, while encouraging the community of brothers and sisters in this incredible team.

**Team Retreats** — A couple times each year, our staff takes a few days to get away together. These team retreats are often made up of strategically planned times of fun, rest, bible study, worship, meals, and creativity. Sometimes these retreats serve a specific purpose such as songwriting, but every time we have one, we grow closer together as a team and a family. When on a retreat, we get to know each other better, which helps us love each other better, which inevitably helps us work and serve the Church together better.

**Co-Writing** — Just as God is a triune God, we were also created in community, and believe there is a great benefit with engaging the creation of art together. The church, the body of Christ, is made up of many members with different talents, strengths, and gifts. When we as a community come together and create art as a community, the result is always better art. Not only is more excellent art produced, but also the church working together in community displays the glory of the head of the body, Jesus.

We also co-write for theological precision. We are held to a higher standard of honesty and precision when other artists are involved. There is accountability in collaboration. Every song goes through multiple theological filters to ensure that the words we are putting on the tongues of our people are true about God.

Co-writing also fosters humility. When we are writing songs together, the temptation of pride and entitlement are quieted. It’s much easier to be puffed up by “my” song rather than “our” song.

**Collaborative Culture of the Priesthood** — Building on the foundational set of desires to have a culture of togetherness, we know that collaboration is better, and we want to lead our church in worship through a collaborative culture of priests.

While our worship leaders have a wide-range of perspectives and experiences, they have the same Spirit of God, the same doctrine from His Word, and the same love for His church. His design and desire for His church is that several men feed the sheep with the Word of God. We believe the worship leader has significant responsibility to help the congregation respond to the Word in corporate worship gatherings. Since this is the case, it is plain to see that a diversity of experiences and perspectives will be helpful to the diverse members that make up the Austin Stone in worshipping the God of the scriptures. This model is used by our church fathers and continues today. So often in the text, we can see Paul referring to leading the church as the task of a unified “we.” (1 Corinthians 1:23, 2 Corinthians 1:19)

This unified “we” is how worship leaders at The Austin Stone can present the truth of God in the Bible in a clear and compelling way to God’s sheep, while fostering an environment of corporate response. We want to see God’s Word transform lives by His Spirit. And, like so many other forms of ministry, God is determined to use a diversity of people to accomplish His will. To finish the mission God has given to the Church, it is going to be a cooperative and collaborative effort by a diversity of worship leaders. We are each only a part of the body of Christ. In our unity we can more fully express the beauty of Christ. It is our hope that this beauty is displayed through a plurality of worship leaders, under the authority of the worship pastor, church leadership, and elders.

**Band-Centric** — Our method of musical leadership at The Austin Stone is through a band-centric model. This model enables each worship leader to use the same consistent band of musicians every time he leads. This intentional consistency allows for our worship leaders to take on the role of shepherd with each band member. The worship leader is charged with leading, pastoring, counseling, and befriending his bandmates and can do so regularly within the band-centric model.

As the bands spend extensive time together every week in rehearsals and playing on Sundays, it results in a richer community and fellowship with one another. When you establish consistent togetherness through a rhythm of rehearsal, service and community, the result is a band that is: challenging each other as musicians, living the most difficult and joyful seasons of life together, advocating for one another in prayer, and growing together in their vision for serving the Church.

## Foundation 5 | A Culture of Development

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Development is a driving value in the worship ministry at The Austin Stone. We believe that God calls us as Worship Leaders to shepherd people toward Him. Because of that calling, our desire is to sharpen Worship Leaders in shepherding on stage through the songs they lead with theological precision, as well as off stage in pastoring and discipling their people.

An overall adage for development at The Austin Stone has been said in this way, "use tasks to get people done, not people to get tasks done." With that in mind, we want to utilize the entire worship ministry at The Austin Stone as a platform to develop individuals. We set the bar high and work in a team atmosphere, so that there is always an element of encouragement, collaboration, and excellence.

One essential aspect of development is feedback. We give grace when mistakes are made and realize that moments of failure are where growth is found. However, we also want to always think about how we can do anything we put our hand to with more precision or more impact than before. We want Worship Leaders to understand and be equipped in their role as a pastor and we want the Church as a whole to gain from their leadership.

Here are the building blocks that make up the Culture of Development:

**Residencies** — Austin Stone Worship has built a two-year residency program designed to grow a man or woman in their love and knowledge of Jesus as well as in the skill of leading God's people in worship.

We believe that the best place to equip and nurture a growing worship leader is in the local church. Our staff of Worship Leaders prayerfully recruit, interview, and invite a resident who commits to raise financial support and join our staff for two years to learn about biblical worship and worship leading. Residents are called to invest their lives in the body at The Austin Stone, the city of Austin, and develop other men and women to do the same. These residents spend their time studying the Word, teaching the Word, leading worship, and owning the leadership of various projects and worship rhythms at our church. The resident spends copious amounts of one-on-one time with their Worship Leader pursuing character development, pastoral mentorship, and learning practical skills to lead worship with excellence.

At the end of their time with us we launch our residents out (developed in their affection for Christ, theology, and skill) to another church body to serve, invest in, and develop believers in another context.

**Worship Leader Development Program** — The Worship Leader Development Program is a digital video based curriculum that we have created for men, women, and worship teams who want to grow in and develop their gifting as leaders of worship within their context. The online program offers teachings on topics such as songwriting, leading on and off the stage, spiritual disciplines, countenance, women in worship, shepherding your band, history of worship, and much more.

The scripture is clear that we have been entrusted with the task of "equipping and building up the saints" within the church (Ephesians 4:12). It is our desire that worship leaders be first, children of God; second, lovers of God; and third, equipped leaders who serve God and the Church well. We hope that students will walk through this course and come to know Jesus better, grow in their knowledge of His Word, and become better at leading people with their skills as pastors, artists, and lead worshippers.

**Musician Development** — God has graciously blessed us all within His body with gifts. He calls us to be good stewards of those gifts and to serve one another with them (1 Peter 4:10). We at Austin Stone Worship strive to help musicians develop and become better stewards of their gifts.

Part of how we do this is by hosting Musician Development Jams once a month. At these jams we set up instruments (guitars, bass, drums) and a few microphones and invite musicians from our church and around the city to come and spend time with other musicians as we all rotate in and out and jam together. We enjoy delicious pizza from a local pizza spot and for 3 hours or so, we play music, eat, and hang out with each other. We've found this to be a really great and practical way for musicians to have community with other musicians while developing their talents in a band context.

In addition to the jams, we offer the Austin Stone Music School. This is organized and managed by some of our very own musicians. We offer private lessons as well as clinic-style classes focused on helping musicians gain a better understanding of their instrument and role as part of worship leadership in their church. The classes include a study of worship theology, music theory, and practical application of various techniques. The Austin Stone Music School exists to foster an environment that equips musicians in the spiritual and practical application of their service to the Church and their city through worship and musical development.

**Audio Engineer Development** — In alignment with our Culture of Development, our desire is to invest in the people we shepherd. From a live audio perspective, part of that looks like providing a training program to help volunteers who have a desire to learn gain the skills, understanding, and

experience in order for them to excel in their craft. Our vision is to equip audio engineers to rise to the level of industry professionals — whether they serve in a church or on a concert tour. Through practical, hands-on training with some of the most cutting-edge technology in the industry, our goal is to provide a comprehensive knowledge base ranging from theory to advanced mixing techniques.

Some of our graduates continue to mix at the Austin Stone, while others go on to be tech directors at other churches. Still others go on to pursue careers in the concert tour industry. Our goal is that we raise up not just great engineers, but worshippers — and wherever they go, our graduates would take what they've learned and disciple others.

**Digital Resources** — Leading worship is a humbling calling and a worthwhile challenge, and we feel a burden to share the things that God has taught us with the world. We exist to exalt the name of Jesus Christ through serving and equipping the Church with content rich in theology, mission and expression. The online content available on [AustinStoneWorship.com](http://AustinStoneWorship.com) is a means of discussing and presenting worship leaders with a wider range of resources as they strive to follow hard after Jesus. These resources include: theology of all aspects of worship leading and worship, skills training for musicians and bands, help for band members in serving your worship leader well, chord charts, teaching videos, song theology, and much more. We also provide updates on current Austin Stone Worship projects and ways others can be involved.

We do this not because we think we have it all figured out or think we have all the answers, but rather the opposite. We know that we don't have it all figured out and we know we don't have all the answers, but we also know that there are others out there that are in that same boat. Therefore, we want to offer up whatever knowledge, gifts and ideas that God gives us to love on and serve the Church and her leaders.