

Friends!

When we set out to start Austin Bible, our dreams were not to build a mega-church or have the slickest Sundays. Our dreams were to gather families, singles, and students whose lives had been changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and set them free in their neighborhoods, workspaces, city, and around the globe to shine forth the light of Christ. So, we get much more excited about releasing 100 missionaries than gathering 1000 consumers. Quality over quantity seems to be a biblical theme. Jesus did pretty good with 12, don't you think?!

Since you have enough curiosity to download or pick up a Commitment Packet, you probably want to know what it means to lock arms with Austin Bible. That is the purpose of this packet, to help you know what to expect from us and what we expect from our Teammates. Hopefully, you will get most of your questions answered. For those questions that do not get answered, come to an Explore Austin Bible lunch or shoot us an email.

We are confident that the more you are around this community, the more you will see we are a messy people serving a holy God. So read through this packet, pray for God's leadership, and jump in and get your hands dirty with us!

For the sake of the gospel-

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# IDENTITY

The biblical mandate for every church is the same: To make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples, who make disciples. Yet, every church is unique in how it fulfills its mission. Context, leaders, gifts of the people, passions, personalities, within the leading of the Holy Spirit, shape the unique identity of each local church. Below you will find our mission statement, our Pillars, and our Soil. When we say Life Change, we are talking about conversion as well as the process of the gospel invading every area of our lives. Pillars describe the marks of a follower of Jesus Christ, and our Soil is the environment created for Life Change.

*So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 1 Cor. 3:7*

## MISSION

Calling every person to the life change found in Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20)

## PILLARS

### **Rooted in Grace:**

*For by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:8,9*

### **Strengthened in Truth:**

*...that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:17*

### **Connected to People:**

*And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:46,47*

### **Released to Action:**

*...proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9*

## SOIL

**Humility** (gospel-dependence) becoming nothing so God can be all

**Authenticity** (gospel-honesty) walking honestly before God and alongside others

**Team** (gospel-action) walking in unity, playing our part to build up and build out the Body of Christ

**Celebration** (gospel-response) The Life Changer is worthy of our loudest cheers of worship, to celebrate what God celebrates

**Risk** (gospel-obedience) choosing God's glory and fame over our comfort and dreams

To read more about our Identity, go to [austinbible.org](http://austinbible.org).

## OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

### **Elder Leadership (Transition Team)**

Austin Bible is led by a plurality of spiritually-mature, biblically-qualified men to give biblical direction and spiritual leadership as under-shepherds of the Chief Shepherd. Our current leadership structure is called the Transition Team, named for its temporary function, a pre-Elder team, and its goal to candidate and recognize the first team of Elders.

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. Acts 20:28*

### **Releasing Leaders**

We want this church to be a place where leaders can run...not selfishly with their own agendas...but that Austin Bible would be a training ground and sending agency of humble, equipped, godly, risk it all leaders to demonstrate and proclaim the life change found in Jesus Christ to their neighbors, city, and world.

### **Team Teaching**

We believe the load of ministry in a church is too great for any one man to bear, thus the Sunday morning teaching responsibility will be shared among Elders and staff who are competent to teach.

### **Intergenerational**

We believe intergenerational community greatly enhances Life Change. For example, our Villages are mixed-stage-of-life. One Sunday a month is *Roots Growing Deeper*, where students 3rd grade and older worship with their parents. College students are called up to serve. Singles are not isolated to their stage-of-life silo. We're a family. And it takes an entire church to grow healthy Christ-followers.

## **HOW TO FIND LIFE AT AUSTIN BIBLE**

### **Life Changed by Jesus Christ**

The greatest day of a person's life is when they say Yes to Jesus. When we talk about Life Change, we are talking about the supernatural change where the Holy Spirit of God takes residence in one's heart, freeing one from the penalty of sin, and begins changing one's thoughts, motives, passions, speech, and behavior. Life in Jesus Christ brings about joy often too great for words. Salvation in Jesus Christ means you are part of Christ's Church, which is also a prerequisite for local church membership.

### **All Hands On Deck Sundays**

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Each of us have those memories of serving other people, only to figure out that the greater joy comes to those who are on the giving end. One of the ways the church robs people of joy is by letting members sit, receive, and consume while allowing the paid staff to do all the work. Each Sunday, volunteers transform O. Henry Middle School into a place of worship for children and adults. Each Sunday, babies are rocked, children are taught, teenagers and adults sing and hear the gospel. Life Change happens. Sundays cannot happen without the commitment of Teammates. Though we desire to place people in their gifting, the need of the moment may just be a servant's heart. We ask every Teammate to plug into an area of Sunday morning service.

### **Financially Support Austin Bible**

Every good gift comes from God. The fact that you have shoes on and have food to eat is a tangible reminder that God is your provider. Each of us have a choice of where we invest our money: Do we invest it solely on things that will rust and fade away, or do we invest it on stuff that will yield returns into eternity. Where your treasure is, that is where your heart will be also. Your money always follows your heart. If your heart is on the eternal, and you are called to jump in with Austin Bible, we expect you to find joy as you invest in the ministry of this local church. We don't strong arm people to give, we don't send a bill in the mail, pastors have no clue who gives or how much, but we call you to what God calls us to: To give to God out of your firstfruits as an act of worship, gratitude, and celebration because He is the giver of all good things. The ministry of Austin Bible is funded by its Teammates.

### **Commit to a Village**

Life is enriched when we are part of a group of people who know, care, and need one another. God made us relational

beings, to need Him and to need other people. If you have ever experienced that kind of biblical community, you know it is essential. Villages are communities of people gathered around the gospel. They may be as small as 8 or as big as 30. They are facilitated by a Village Leader. They meet in homes throughout the city, usually around a meal. They are organized by geography rather than stage of life and meet as often as the group decides in order for relationships to form, care to take place, and prayer to be administered. Villages are the launch point to dive into a Life Change Group: a same-gender group of 3-5 meeting for Life Change. And Villages provide a great front door for friends who may not be ready for a worship service. You can find a map and info of Villages across the city on our website or email us if you need us to help you find one.

### **Pursuit of Jesus**

We are going somewhere. Life is never found standing still and we want you to join us. Paul says in Philippians 3, *I count all things a loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, and later, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* At Austin Bible, we view membership on an annual basis. Come January, Teammates will take time to ask God where He is calling them to grow in the upcoming year (think New Year's Resolutions and God) We have an assessment tool that asks questions based on our four Pillars (marks of a follower): Rooted in Grace, Strengthened in Truth, Connected to People, and Released to Action. Completing that assessment, and putting a growth plan together with your Life Change Group, is an indication to us that you want to grow and remain a Teammate the upcoming year. Maybe your growth plan is to take the initiative to get to know every one of your neighbors, or go on a Service Trip to Mexico, or seek biblical financial counseling, or begin the discipline of reading the Bible using our Pursuit bible reading plan, or read a book with your spouse. Please hear our heart: Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. We are not placing added criteria for salvation. We are, however, committed to encouraging one another toward the Life Change found in Jesus Christ. We expect every Teammate to pursue Jesus and the life He modeled.

### **Unity**

Unity should be a distinct marker of the church of Jesus Christ, yet how many of us have been deeply wounded by people who also claim to follow Jesus? Church is messy because people are messy. Conflict is a part of living life together. Expect to have conflict with people at Austin Bible. Expect to have your feelings hurt. But know this: The leadership of Austin Bible, along with our Teammates, have made a commitment to walk in unity. There will be no ignored disunity in this church. Period. So when conflict arises, our motto is: Do whatever it takes, as long as it takes, to walk in unity. Unity both reflects the relationship within the Trinity and speaks loudly to a watching world of the beauty of the gospel. Jesus' prayer for the church is that they all *be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. Jn 17:21*

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. Write your Story of Grace
2. Fill out the SHAPE inventory, so we can learn your experiences, giftings, and passions
3. Read through our beliefs, our practice of communion and baptism, and how we view money
4. Read and Sign the Membership Covenant
5. Turn in Packet and participate in the next Stack Your Stone Membership Ceremony

# WRITING YOUR STORY OF GRACE

\*Membership at Austin Bible, or any church for that matter, is a privilege given to those who have trusted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. If this life change is not clear through the reading of your story, or by personal experience with you, an elder or staff may invite you to coffee to better understand where you stand with Jesus.

Your testimony is the story of how you came into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Each person's story is special and, like a snowflake, no two are the exact same.

While you have the freedom to write your testimony in any form that you deem appropriate, many have found it easier to write their story of grace by breaking down their testimony into the following three stages:

1. **Before you accepted Christ:** Describe your value system, motivations and life-style prior to your conversion. Identify the events and circumstances that caused you to consider Jesus Christ as the solution to your spiritual need and ultimately led to your decision to accept Him as Savior. In some cases this process may have taken place over a long period of time.
2. **Circumstances surrounding your inviting Christ into your life:** Please include the specific steps that you took to become a Christian and why you believe that you have eternal life. As much as possible, try to avoid religious terminology or church clichés ("born again", "asked Jesus into my heart", "washed in the blood", etc.), as this will prepare you to communicate your story more clearly and authentically to your friends.
3. **How your life has changed as a result of being a new creature in Christ:** Describe the difference that Christ has made in your thinking, motivation, values, and actions. For some this may be a dramatic change from the "before" description. For others who accepted Christ at an early age, this step will allow you to think through and describe how your life is different than what it could have been, and also to describe the transformation that is continuing to take place in your life. In either case, please state what assurances that you have of forgiveness and eternal life.

We look forward to reading your story and also hope that you will take the time to share it with someone else who may not know the truth of the Gospel.

# S.H.A.P.E. SUMMARY FORM

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS:** (if you have discovered these)

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**HEART:** (Please check all that are appropriate and then rank your top 3 in both sections.)

People Groups		Areas of Service	
<input type="checkbox"/> 0—1 yr. olds	<input type="checkbox"/> Inner city	<input type="checkbox"/> Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Grilling
<input type="checkbox"/> 2—3 yr. olds	<input type="checkbox"/> Internationals	<input type="checkbox"/> Audio/Visual	<input type="checkbox"/> Helping the needy
<input type="checkbox"/> 4—5 yr. olds	<input type="checkbox"/> Junior High	<input type="checkbox"/> Camping/Outdoors	<input type="checkbox"/> Missions
<input type="checkbox"/> 1st –5th grade	<input type="checkbox"/> Married Couples	<input type="checkbox"/> Childcare	<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting
<input type="checkbox"/> College	<input type="checkbox"/> Men	<input type="checkbox"/> Cleaning	<input type="checkbox"/> Parking
<input type="checkbox"/> Dating Couples	<input type="checkbox"/> Moms	<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Prayer
<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/> New Christians	<input type="checkbox"/> Crafts	<input type="checkbox"/> Service Projects
<input type="checkbox"/> Engaged Couples	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-believers	<input type="checkbox"/> Discipleship	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharing the gospel
<input type="checkbox"/> Grieving a Loss	<input type="checkbox"/> Other faiths	<input type="checkbox"/> Event planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Singing
<input type="checkbox"/> Handicap	<input type="checkbox"/> Senior citizens	<input type="checkbox"/> Event set-up	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports
<input type="checkbox"/> Homeless	<input type="checkbox"/> Single parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Family issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (adults)
<input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual	<input type="checkbox"/> Singles	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (children)
<input type="checkbox"/> Incarcerated adults	<input type="checkbox"/> Visitors	<input type="checkbox"/> Food preparation	<input type="checkbox"/> Ushering
<input type="checkbox"/> Incarcerated teens	<input type="checkbox"/> Women	<input type="checkbox"/> Food service	<input type="checkbox"/> Visiting the sick
<input type="checkbox"/> Infertile	<input type="checkbox"/> Young married couples	<input type="checkbox"/> Greeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

**ABILITIES:** (Please check all that are appropriate and note any specifics/details in the margins. Then rank your top 3)

Abilities			
<input type="checkbox"/> Acting	<input type="checkbox"/> Editing	<input type="checkbox"/> Organize	<input type="checkbox"/> Sign language
<input type="checkbox"/> Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate	<input type="checkbox"/> Painting	<input type="checkbox"/> Singing
<input type="checkbox"/> Artistic	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphics	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone calling	<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching
<input type="checkbox"/> Audio/Visual	<input type="checkbox"/> Grilling	<input type="checkbox"/> Photography	<input type="checkbox"/> Video production
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality	<input type="checkbox"/> Pioneer	<input type="checkbox"/> Vision/Goal setting
<input type="checkbox"/> Programming	<input type="checkbox"/> Hosting in my home	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Web design
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer networking	<input type="checkbox"/> House repairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Play instrument	<input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming
<input type="checkbox"/> Composing	<input type="checkbox"/> Interviewing	<input type="checkbox"/> Promoting	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing
<input type="checkbox"/> Construction	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscaping	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Others _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum dev.	<input type="checkbox"/> Manage	<input type="checkbox"/> Research	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanics	<input type="checkbox"/> Serve/help	

**PASSIONS:**

If you could snap your fingers and have the assurance that you would not fail, where or how would you like to make a difference for the kingdom of God?

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**SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES:**

This is where I would place myself spiritually at this point in my life:

- I have recently trusted in Jesus as my Lord and Savior and I want to grow.
- Lack of motivation, struggling in prayer and time in the Word.
- Spiritual roller coaster of ups and downs with the Lord.
- Growing steadily, stable in my relationship with the Lord.
- Consistent walk with the Lord over an extended period of time; desire to guide others in a deeper understanding of what it means to walk personally with Jesus Christ.

**PAINFUL EXPERIENCES:**

These are painful times of trials and problems that the Lord has brought me through which I would be willing to share with a fellow Christian who is currently going through a similar situation (optional):

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# WHAT WE BELIEVE

## God

We believe that there is only one living and true God, who exists in three distinct persons- God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three, the Trinity, are equal in person and distinct in function (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19).

## The Father

The first person of the Trinity orders and directs all things according to his purpose and pleasure. He has created humanity to bring him glory and honor, through his grace. While he is transcendent, he is also actively involved in His creation- offering an eternal relationship with us through his Son Jesus Christ (Matthew 6:9; John 5:19-24; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2:1-10).

## The Son

Jesus Christ is both the eternal Son of God and virgin-born Son of man. Fully God, fully man, He surrendered nothing of His deity during His earthly life. His sinless, sacrificial offering on the cross satisfied the Father's justice, offering atonement for all of humanity's sins, for all time. We believe in his bodily resurrection, His physical ascension, and His visible return back to earth to establish His earthly kingdom (John 1:14-18; I Corinthians 15; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 2:9; Revelation 20:11-15).

## The Holy Spirit

The third person of the Trinity executes the will of God in this world through humanity, by leading, guiding, filling, teaching and convicting. The Holy Spirit is not merely an impersonal force, but is a person, displaying the qualities of personhood (intellect, emotions and will). He equips believers upon conversion by giving them gifts to be used for the building up of the church, and by bearing fruit through their yielded lives (John 16:5-16; I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 2:10; John 3:1-8; Ephesians 1:1; Galatians 5:16-25).

## Humanity

We were created in the image of God, destined to enjoy an intimate relationship with God, fulfilling his will here on earth. But because of Adam and Eve's willful sin in the garden sin entered into the world, and has infected all of humanity. Therefore, because of our inherent sinful nature received from our father Adam, we are all separated from God, spiritually dead, and destined for physical death and an eternity removed from God (Genesis 1-3; Romans 1:18-32; Romans 3; Romans 5; Ephesians 2:1-3).

## Salvation

We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins as the only sufficient sacrifice, offering the atonement of sins for all mankind through his death, burial and resurrection. While salvation is available to all, it is only experienced by those who respond to his gracious gift by faith apart from works. For those who do respond are regenerated and baptized by the Holy Spirit, becoming children of God, given a new nature and placed into the universal body of Christ, making us eternally secure in Him. As a result of our new relationship with God through His Son Jesus, we are now called to a life of submission to the Holy Spirit, manifesting spiritual fruit, and walking in good works that God has prepared beforehand for us to do (John 14:6; Titus 3:4-7; Acts 4:12; John 1:12; Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-9; Hebrews 10:10-12; I John 5:11-13; Galatians 3:26; John 3:16).

## The Scriptures

We believe that every word in the original writings is inspired by God and is without error. The Word of God reveals God's nature and will for all of humanity, and because of this it is to be the foundation of faith and practice. We believe that faith comes from hearing the word of God, the gospel of Christ. We affirm that while the Scriptures are accurate in all matters it was never given to be an end in and of itself, but rather a means to a relationship with God. Because of this the authority and teaching of Scriptures will have a preeminent place in our church (Romans 10:14-17; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21; Hebrews 4:12; John 17:17).

## **The Church**

For all who have placed their faith in God through His Son Jesus Christ, they are a part of the universal body of believers known as the church. This placement of the believer into the universal church requires an association of the believer with other followers of Christ in a local assembly. The purpose of the local church is to lead people to Christ and to bring them to maturity in Christ. The members of the local church are to live their lives in humble submission to other Spirit led believers, and to the God appointed leaders of the church. Austin Bible is an autonomous local assembly, led by Jesus Christ, who gives direction as the head of this body through a body of appointed elders (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12-14; Matthew 28-18-20; Ephesians 2:19-22).

## **The Future**

We believe that the next great event in human history will be the return of Jesus Christ for his children. This is the blessed hope for all followers of Jesus Christ. While this event is a prophetic truth of Scripture, we acknowledge that the point of Christ's return is not for the believer to passively await this event, but to labor with all of our might in the power of the Spirit to fulfill his will in our lives through righteous living, evangelism and discipleship. After the return of Christ those who accepted God's gracious gift of salvation will worship God forever in heaven. Those who do not will spend an eternity separated from Him in hell. (Matthew 24:36; I Thessalonians 4:15-17; John 14:1-3; Matthew 24-25; Titus 2:11-14; II Thess. 1:5-9).

## **Non-essentials**

We affirm that the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection, the atoning work of Christ on the cross, and salvation by grace through faith make up the essential, distinctive nature of Christianity. In regards to these essential doctrines there can be no conflicting opinions of those who call themselves true followers of Christ. However, we do acknowledge that there are peripheral or non-essential doctrines that are important, but not critical to the follower of Christ as it relates to our salvation. Some of these doctrines include the specific functions of women in ministry, the exact timing and nature of the rapture, extent and use of certain spiritual gifts, the relationship between election and free-will in salvation, etc. While our church will be diligent to establish positions as it relates to these non-essentials, we will make it our aim to not allow these peripheral doctrines to cause division within the church. We will accept into our body those who have differing views on the non-essential doctrines, but will not allow those of a different opinion to fracture the church. While we celebrate diversity along all lines (racial and theological), we will ultimately pursue the unity of the church and the grace and truth of Jesus Christ. It will be the role of the elders and leaders within the church to discern and protect the flock from false teachers both from within and from without (Acts 20:28; I Cor 3:1-9; Titus 1,2) Three non-essential areas that significantly impact the practice of the church are Baptism, Communion, and Money. The following paragraphs represent how Austin Bible handles these three.

## **Baptism**

Baptism is the going public of a Christian's new life in Christ. It is the identification of a believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism is an act of obedience, not a criteria for salvation. We practice believer's baptism. We baptize by immersion. And once a year, we find ourselves at an outdoor venue on a Sunday morning with noise makers, celebrating life change, as believers are baptized. If you have never been baptized as a believer, upon membership, we strongly encourage you to obey Christ and go public with your salvation! Matthew 28:19,20; Colossians 2:12; Ephesians 2:8,9; Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:38,39;

## **Communion**

Communion is the remembrance of the death of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The taking of the bread represents His body broken on the cross, and the juice represents the blood He shed for the once-and-for-all forgiveness of sins. It is not a means of grace to earn any blessing from God, it is an act of worship to be received by believers who have confessed their sin to God and have been reconciled with others. Currently, we practice Communion on the first Sunday of each month, in coordination with Roots Growing Deeper, so families have the opportunity to take communion together. Matthew 26:26-29; I Cor 11:17-34

## Money

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Giving cheerfully and sacrificially of our finances is part of our worship and it also provides a great opportunity to proclaim to our neighbors and community His sufficiency and provision. A believer labors not to accrue personal wealth or possessions, but to steward God's resources well and model Jesus to those around us. Our work is an effort to serve our Father in all things, and one of the primary ways we serve God is by cheerfully giving God our "firstfruits". The ministry of Austin Bible is funded by our teammates. We expect our teammates to give to this church, not by meeting some obligatory percentage, but gladly sacrificing for the sake of the gospel because Jesus sacrificed for us, and all we have is His. Matthew 6:19-24; II Cor. 9:7; I Timothy 6:17-19

We do not pass an 'offering plate' during our Sunday morning service. You can give by placing your check or cash in the white mailbox at O. Henry, by giving online, or by mailing a check to the church office.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

from Peacemakers Ministries

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict.<sup>1</sup> We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on His grace, we commit ourselves to respond to conflict according to the following principles:

**Glorify God** — Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love, as we seek to faithfully obey His commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude.<sup>3</sup>

**Get the Log out of Your Eye** — Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused.<sup>4</sup>

**Gently Restore** — Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner.<sup>5</sup>

**Go and be reconciled** — Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences.<sup>6</sup>

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an assignment, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know His infinite love.<sup>7</sup>

*1 Matt. 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26. 2 Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4. 3 Ps. 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12. 4 Prov. 28:13; Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Col. 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9. 5 Prov. 19:11; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; James 5:9. 6 Matt. 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph. 4:1-3, 32; Phil. 2:3-4. 7 Matt. 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 4:19.*

# MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Having experienced the life changed found in Jesus Christ, and being in agreement with the Mission, Pillars, Soil, and Beliefs of Austin Bible, I am now called to unite with the Austin Bible community. In doing so, I commit myself to the Lord and to the other members of this church to protect our unity and continue pursuing Jesus Christ by:

## **Being Rooted in Grace...**

- by interpreting the events of my life through the lens of God's grace towards me
- by intentionally developing relationships with those without Christ and those without a church
- by understanding that all sin grieves God equally, and every believer is a trophy of God's grace
- by sharing my story of grace with others
- by praying for the salvation of those without Christ who are in my life
- by displaying His grace in believer's baptism and remembering the sacrifice of Christ in communion
- by a life of humility and dependence

## **Being Strengthened in Truth...**

- by submitting to the authority of the Scriptures as the final word on all issues (II Tim. 3:16,17)
- by committing myself to read, understand, and apply God's word (Psalms 119:9,11,105)
- by availing myself to tools and resources offered by Austin Bible to deepen my understanding and commitment to God's word (Ephesians 4:12)

## **Being Connected to People...**

- by committing to a Village, and attending regularly (Hebrews 10:24,25)
- by having a few people (ideally within Village) who I meet with regularly for encouragement and accountability (Hebrews 10:24,25)
- by regularly participating in our weekly worship gatherings (Hebrews 10:24,25)
- by my commitment to do whatever it takes, as long as it takes to resolve conflict with other people within this church (Ephesians 4:1-3)
- by submitting to the authority of Elders (currently Transition Team), though imperfect, who have been called to keep watch over the spiritual health and direction of Austin Bible, and who will have to one day give an account of their stewardship (I Peter 5:1-5, Hebrews 13:17).
- by submitting to the principles of church restoration (Matthew 18:15-20)

## **Being Released to Action...**

- by growing in my understanding of my spiritual gifts and how God wants to use them (Romans 12:3-6)
- by stewarding my resources, including my time, talents, spiritual gifts, and money for the building up of the church. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in community that is cheerful, sacrificial, and voluntary (I Tim 6:18, Gal 5:13)
- by embracing and participating in all three circles of mission: Personal, City, Global (Acts 1:8, Luke 10:27)

As an indicator of my desire to pursue Christ in this community, I commit to annually filling out my Growth Assessment. My failure to complete the Growth Assessment will indicate my desire not to re-up my commitment to the community and mission of Austin Bible.

I also declare that I have had appropriate conversations with the leadership of my previous church (if applicable) and have been released from their care and my commitments, doing everything I can to preserve the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace among Christians in Austin.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_