

# Aaron Ivey accused of indecent texts with men

February 13, 2024

AUSTIN (RNS)—The Austin Stone Church, a multicampus church in Austin, announced Feb. 11 it had dismissed its head worship pastor after discovering he had engaged in “inappropriate and explicit ongoing text messages with an adult male,” according to a statement from the church’s elders.

Aaron Ivey, the pastor of worship and creativity and an elder at the megachurch, was fired Feb. 5 for what the statement called a “disqualifying situation,” which the elders said they became aware of the previous day.

“Several elders were made aware of this situation on the evening of Sunday, February 4th and after reviewing the explicit nature of these messages, it was clear that termination of Aaron’s eldership and employment was necessary in accordance with the clear biblical standards outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20,” according to the statement.

The first passage, from the Apostle Paul’s Letter to Timothy, urges church leaders to be faithful in marriage; the second says church elders “who are sinning” should be reprovved before everyone.

## ‘Pattern of predatory manipulation’

After firing Ivey, the elders said, they then discovered Ivey—the husband of bestselling author and popular podcaster Jamie Ivey—had a history of texting with men, including one who had been underage at the time of the explicit texts, according to the statement.

“Since then, we have uncovered multiple similar instances with different individuals dating back to 2011 that show a very clear pattern of predatory manipulation, sexual exploitation, and abuse of influence,” the statement said.

The elders detailed a timeline of texts they had discovered, alleging they began in 2011 with the exchanges with a minor, which they said they had reported to the “appropriate authorities.”

“The first known instance, which took place with a teenage male victim and continued over time, involved inappropriate and explicit communications, indecent exposure, and the use of alcohol and illegal substances,” read the statement.

A spokesperson for the church, which has been affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, declined to offer additional comment on the allegations and Ivey’s termination.

The elder statement said MinistrySafe, which trains the church’s staff to prevent child abuse, has been alerted about the situation.

“As elders, we are heartbroken for the victims and their families. Knowing the Lord’s sheep are worth our protection and our love, we are committed to loving this body and rooting out evil. We know this may affect your trust because we know it certainly has rattled ours,” read the statement.

## **‘Devastating news’**

Jamie Ivey, host of the popular podcast “The Happy Hour,” appeared on “Good Morning America” on Friday to promote her new book, *Why Can’t I Get It Together?* Afterward, she posted on her Instagram that she was “off to China Town with my man for some epic Chinese food for lunch!” It’s unclear whether she knew at the time of her husband’s firing.

Late Sunday, a post on her Instagram said that in the wake of receiving “devastating news while on book tour,” Jamie Ivey was pausing all public appearances. The post, signed by her team, requested prayer and support “for everyone involved who are hurting.”

In 2021, the Iveys wrote *Complement*, a book and accompanying Bible study about marriage. The couple subscribed to a complementarian theology of marriage, which emphasizes male leadership, and spoke on it often.

Aaron Ivey appeared on a 2019 panel hosted by the SBC’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, titled “Faithful Husband, Strong Father: Embracing God’s Design for Manhood in Marriage,” that focused on the role of biblical manhood in marriage.

The couple, who have four children, including three adopted Black children, have also publicly talked about the challenges of living as a multiracial family in a majority white community and church.

Aaron Ivey did not respond to requests for comment.