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# MEMBERSHIP ESSENTIALS

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*at Houston's First*

THE LOOP CAMPUS

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# Welcome!

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Dear friends,

One of the great transitions in life is becoming a member of a local church. You may be considering church membership at Houston's First because you're a new believer in Jesus Christ, you've recently moved to our community, or you're simply looking for a new home to grow in your faith. No matter what brought you to this point or where you are in your faith, we want to help you as you make this important decision!

The following pages provide a summary of our mission and vision, our theology and beliefs, our membership process, and more. There is so much to know about Houston's First, we could never fit it all in one booklet. With four campuses, dozens of ministries, and countless opportunities to get connected, these pages merely provide a starting point for you to discover what Houston's First has to offer and all that God is doing through our church.

If you are sensing God leading you to become a member of Houston's First, I encourage you to take the first step by starting the conversation. Three common ways of doing that are to speak to staff members or volunteers at the end of a worship service, visit the Connection Center at your campus, or attend a Make It Your Church Orientation session. You can also give your campus a call any time and let them know you want to know more about membership.

The greater Houston area is blessed to have so many Bible-believing, Bible-teaching churches. It is my prayer that you would seek the Lord's will as you look for a church home. If He leads you to join Houston's First, we're ready to welcome you as you make it your church!

In Him,

*Pastor Gregg*

Pastor Gregg Matte

## STAY CONNECTED

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# Our Signature Statements

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**Houston's First Baptist Church is a relevant biblical community where we Gather our hearts, Grow our souls, and Give our lives as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission.**

That's our church in a nutshell. That single sentence captures what Houston's First is all about. Now, let's take a deeper look at what the different parts mean and how we live them out:

## **MISSION = Why do we exist?**

**To fulfill the Great Commission**

*"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:19-20 (CSB)*

## **VISION = Who are we?**

**A relevant biblical community**

- **Relevant**

Having the passion, desire and ability to build the necessary bridges to move people from culture to Christ

- **Biblical**

Fully embracing the beliefs and values revealed in the Bible as true, eternal and life-changing

- **Community**

Providing a place to be authentic, involved, impacted and impactful

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## STRATEGY = What do we do?



### GATHER OUR HEARTS

Weekend worship and special events are the primary ways the church family gathers our hearts. Coming together like this reveals the beauty and diversity of God's children. No two people are exactly the same. There is room for everybody!



### GROW OUR SOULS

Each person should have a regular place of spiritual growth. Life Bible Studies and Milestones (discipleship classes) are our church's primary methods for growing our souls. You can go deeper into God's Word, relate in a way that builds community, and experience the Bible as relevant to your life. Look for retreats, workshops, and other small group opportunities throughout the year.



### GIVE OUR LIVES

A soul growing closer to God simply cannot contain itself. Eventually, it will need to find a release—something to do with the abundant love, gifts, and blessings it's received from God. At Houston's First, the primary methods for giving our lives are through prayer, missions, evangelism, and serving opportunities.



# Our Beliefs

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## Baptist Faith & Message

The doctrinal statement of Houston's First is called the "Baptist Faith & Message" and is shared by thousands of Southern Baptist Churches around the nation. The topics presented here provide only a sampling of topics addressed in that statement. The full text is available at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) and in the Connection Center at each campus.

## The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.

## God

There is one and only one living and true God. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

## God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to

the purposes of His grace. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

## God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His death on the cross, He made provision for the redemption of men from sin.

## God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

## Man

Man was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and is the crowning work of His creation. By his free choice, man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

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## Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, sanctification, and glorification.

## The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel and seek to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. This church is an autonomous body. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ, which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages.

## Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. Marriage is the unity of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord.

## The Nashville Statement

Southern Baptist churches are autonomous, with each church free to adopt additional statements that express their held beliefs. In 2017, Houston's First adopted the Nashville Statement authored by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW). The statement addresses our beliefs about marriage, human sexuality, gender identity, homosexuality, transgenderism, and related matters. The full text of the Nashville Statement can be found at [CBMW.org](http://CBMW.org).

## Church Bylaws

The bylaws of Houston's First do not contain any doctrinal statements or core beliefs not already addressed above. However, our church's values are reflected in the policies and procedures that guide how we operate. The bylaws can be found online at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) or by contacting the church directly.

# Our Structure

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Houston's First is a large church with hundreds of employees in several dozen ministries and departments across multiple locations. To effectively pursue our vision, mission, and strategy, our governance model is:

- Pastor-Led
- Staff-Run
- Deacon-Served
- Committee-Reviewed
- Congregation-Approved

## Joining Houston's First

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### Reasons for Membership

You can attend Houston's First worship services, Life Bible Studies, events, and more without joining the church. So, why should you consider becoming an actual member?

#### **1 In joining a church you make visible your commitment to Christ and his people.**

Membership is one way to raise the flag of faith. You state before God and others that you are part of this local body of believers. The New Testament knows no Christians floating around in "just me and Jesus" land. Believers belong to churches.

#### **2 Making a commitment makes a powerful statement in a low-commitment culture.**

Joining a church in such an environment makes a counter-cultural statement. It says "I am committed to this group of people and they are committed to me. I am here to give, more than get."

#### **3 We can be overly independent.**

In our culture, it's one of the best and worst things about us. We are free spirits and critical thinkers. We get an idea and run with it. But who's running with us? And are any of us



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running in the same direction? Membership states in a formal way, “I am part of something bigger than myself. I am not just one of hundreds of individuals. I am part of a body.”

**4 Church membership keeps us accountable.**

When we join a church we are offering ourselves to one another to be encouraged, rebuked, corrected, and served. We are saying, “I am here to stay. I want to help you grow in godliness. Will you help me to do the same?”

**5 Joining the church will help staff members and leaders be more faithful shepherds.**

If you never become a member, we can't tell if you are really gone because we might not be sure if you were ever here! It's nearly impossible for the church to shepherd the flock when they don't know who really considers them their shepherds.

**6 Joining the church gives you an opportunity to make public commitments.**

If you don't join the church, you miss an opportunity to publicly make commitments to pray, give, serve, and attend – and to invite church leaders and the rest of the body to hold you to them. You would miss out on great spiritual benefit, for you, your leaders, and the whole church.

Based on *6 Reasons Why Membership Matters* by Kevin DeYoung, TheGospelCoalition.org (May 14, 2015)

In addition to those general reasons for joining a local church, there are two specific reasons for joining Houston's First:

**1 Serving in a leadership capacity role.**

Many of our volunteer roles at Houston's First require you to be a member of the church. This is especially true for leadership roles such as Life Bible Study directors or teachers.

**2 Voting in the Church Conference.**

When matters are put forth at a Church Conference, only members of the church may cast a vote.

# Process for Membership

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Whether you decide to join Houston's First or have questions about what it means to be a member, the process begins with a conversation.

## 1 Talk with a staff member or volunteer

At the end of a worship service or a Make It Your Church Orientation session, you'll be invited to come forward to get the conversation started about joining Houston's First. Either in that moment or at a later time, a staff member or volunteer will meet with you to hear your story.

## 2 Meet the requirements for membership

In that conversation with a staff member or volunteer, they will confirm if you meet the requirements for membership at Houston's First:

- **Placed your faith in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins**

This is called a "saving faith." Making this decision is the beginning, not the end, of what it means to follow Christ.

- **Been baptized by immersion**

We view baptism as being an outward, visible demonstration of an inward spiritual transformation which comes about when one trusts in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins.

- **Agreed with the church's statements of faith and bylaws**

Our statements of faith and bylaws are summarized on pages 6-7.

You officially become a member of Houston's First once a list of members meeting the above requirements is voted upon and approved by current members at the monthly Church Conference.

## 3 Be baptized by immersion

- If you have not been baptized, a staff member at your campus can schedule a time for you to make this public profession of your faith.
- If you were baptized by immersion at another church or body of believers, our team will confirm it is of like faith and practice and that you were in good standing.

## BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

Our position on baptism by immersion is based on the following:

- The word baptize (baptizo) in Greek means to “dip” or “immerse.”
- Immersion best illustrates the believer’s identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Romans 6:1–11 and Colossians 2:12)
- The descriptions of baptism in the New Testament suggest that people were immersed. (Matthew 3:6, John 3:23, Acts 8:38)



## Children’s Process for Membership

While membership essentials do not differ between age groups, children are asked to meet with a member of the Children’s Ministry team prior to baptism and church membership. Upon request, the First Kids team will schedule a time with families to uniquely encourage and discern each child’s journey, and to walk alongside families as they lead their child to understanding of salvation, baptism, and church membership.

## Students’ Process for Membership

The membership process for students (6th–12th grades) is very similar to that of an adult. We encourage students to meet with a HUB Student Ministry minister to discuss their salvation experience and/or time of baptism by immersion. If a student hasn’t been baptized, this is the process to follow:

1. Express interest to a HUB staff member
2. Walk through and complete a “Telling Your Story” booklet
3. Return the booklet to a HUB minister
4. Meet with HUB staff and parents to discuss salvation and baptism process

# Getting Connected

There are many ways to truly connect with the people and the mission of Houston's First:



## CONNECTION CENTER

The Connection Center at your campus is often one of the first places you'll go when seeking to learn more not just about Houston's First, but also about the Christian faith. The Connection Center seeks to help you process what God has been speaking into your life, whether it is:

- To receive Christ for the forgiveness of sins
- To be baptized
- To become a member of Houston's First
- To find a Life Bible Study
- To find a place to serve
- To receive prayer
- To discuss any other spiritual matter

In addition to stopping by the Connection Center, there are several other "first steps" on your journey to becoming an active and growing member of Houston's First—a relevant biblical community:

## Make It Your Church Orientation

These sessions offer new and prospective members an opportunity to learn more about Houston's First and to meet staff members at their campus—with lunch or dinner on us! Dates for upcoming orientations are available at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) or by contacting a staff member at your campus. Attendance at a session is not required to join the church.

## Gather for Weekend Worship

Worship services are where we "gather our hearts" on Sundays at each of our campuses. On most Sundays, Pastor Gregg speaks live at The Loop Campus with his message linked live by video to our other campuses. Several times a year, Campus Pastors and other campus staff members speak live in the worship services at their campuses.



## Grow with Life Bible Study

As one of the primary ways we “grow our souls” at Houston’s First, Life Bible Studies are available for all ages and life stages at each campus and offer an opportunity to learn principles from God’s Word that you can apply to your life—all in a smaller community. Ask staff members or volunteers at your campus or visit [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) to find a Life Bible Study that’s right for you.



## Give with Missions

The desire of our church is for every member to own a passport and to be involved in missions on the local, national, or international level. Each year, Houston’s First sponsors trips around the globe—and even in our own backyard. Where would God have you “give your life” this year? Visit [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) to explore upcoming opportunities!

## Volunteering

Every member of Houston’s First is encouraged to “give their lives” as a volunteer. Immediately, you can join one of several dozen opportunities to serve in and through our church. Regardless of your age, background, or schedule, there is a place for you to serve!

Talk to staff members and current volunteers at your campus or visit [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) to discover current opportunities.

## Volunteering with Minors

From serving on site during a Life Bible Study to missions trips to our city, nation, or world, there are lots of opportunities to impact the life of a child. We desire for children and minors to have safe spaces where they can learn and grow in their relationship with Jesus, so at Houston’s First we take protection policies very seriously. Potential volunteers interested in serving with minors (under age 18) or adults with special needs through Houston’s First must go through our ten-step screening process and the required training as defined in our CYSNA Protection Policy. (CYSNA stands for Children, Youth, and Special Needs Adults.)

## Giving

The extensive ministries of Houston’s First are made possible by the faithful generosity of our church family. Whether you give online at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org), on mobile via our app, in person at your campus, or by mail, we invite you to be a part of what God is doing through Houston’s First by giving back to Him a portion of what He has provided you.

# Where You'll Find Us

Houston's First Baptist Church has numerous locations around town. But with members from all across the greater Houston area living out their faith and making a difference in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools, the church's ministry extends far beyond the addresses listed below!

## THE LOOP CAMPUS



Gregg Matte, Pastor

**Worship** 9:15a • 11a • 5p

en Español 11a

**Life Bible Studies**

8a • 9:15a • 10:45a • 6:15p

en Español 9:15a

## DOWNTOWN CAMPUS



Leon Brooks III, Campus Pastor

**Worship** 9:30a • 11a

**Life Bible Studies** 9:30a • 11a

## SIENNA CAMPUS



Malcolm Marshall, Campus Pastor

**Worship** 8:30a • 9:45a • 11:15a

**Life Bible Studies** 8:30a • 9:45a • 11:15a

## CYPRESS CAMPUS



Jason Swiggart, Campus Pastor

**Worship** 9:30a • 11a

**Life Bible Studies** 8a • 9:30a • 11a

**For more information about Houston's First,  
call 713.681.8000 or visit [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org).**



**FAITH CENTER  
SPRING BRANCH**  
8009 Long Point

**HOUSTON'S FIRST  
THE LOOP CAMPUS**  
7401 Katy Fwy

**FOOD PANTRY &  
CLOTHES CLOSET**  
8244 Long Point

**HOUSTON'S FIRST  
EN ESPAÑOL**

**HOUSTON'S FIRST  
CYPRESS CAMPUS**  
11011 Mason Rd.

**FAITH CENTER  
TIMBERGROVE-HEIGHTS**  
946 W. 17th Street

**HOUSTON'S FIRST  
DEAF CHURCH**

**FAITH CENTER  
HARWIN**  
5860 Ranchester Dr. #833

**HOUSTON'S FIRST  
DOWNTOWN CAMPUS**  
1730 Jefferson

**HOUSTON'S FIRST  
SIENNA CAMPUS**  
4309 Sienna Pkwy



# HOUSTON'S FIRST

BAPTIST CHURCH

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