



# Looking After Widows

LIVING OUT JAMES 1:27 WITHIN OUR CHURCH AND BEYOND



## Phase 2 Ministry

When a woman's husband passes away, Phase 2 at Houston's First comes alongside her to provide compassion, prayer support, and friendship in this new phase of life. A service of our Pastoral Care Ministry, Phase 2 offers a monthly meal and special events for widows of all ages.

"Widows are members of a club they never wanted to join," says Sherry Oradat in the Pastoral Care Ministry. "Phase 2 wants to ensure that these ladies not only survive but thrive!" One way of doing that is by having a lot of fun! Among the events on their calendar each year are a pajama party, a celebration of their wedding anniversaries each June (complete with veils), and a Valentine's Day outing with Rick Jones, Minister of Pastoral Care, serving as their collective "date."

Phase 2 gathers on the second Thursday of each month at 5:30p in the Reception Room at The Loop Campus. The monthly gathering will not take place in December, but will return on January 8. Contact Sherry at [Sherry.Oradat@HoustonFirst.org](mailto:Sherry.Oradat@HoustonFirst.org) or 713.957.6764 to learn more.



## Deacon Support

The word *deacon* finds its origin in *diakonos*, the Greek word for *servant*. At Houston's First, our deacons serve our church in many ways — including caring for our widows. Deacons are assigned to one or more widows, contacting them regularly and developing a caring relationship. Each spring, the Deacons and Pastoral Care host a luncheon in honor of both our widows and widowers. In addition to the Deacons and their wives serving as hosts, high school students from The HUB Student Ministry serve as wait staff at the luncheon.

## A New Journey

Widows ages 40+ seeking a weekly gathering of peers are invited to A New Journey — a Life Bible Study just for them at The Loop Campus. Taught by Karen Meyer and Carole Pierce and directed by Janice Whalen, the ladies gather each Sunday at 8a in Rm 251.

## Mission: Dignity

Houston's First's ministry to widows extends beyond our church family. Thanks to your contributions to MISSION 1:8, Houston's First presented a financial gift to Mission:Dignity. A ministry of GuideStone Financial Resources, Mission:Dignity currently provides more than 2,000 retired Southern Baptist ministers, workers, or their widows with extra money needed for housing, food and vital medications. This assistance has ensured a well-deserved dignity, independence and, often, the ability to continue serving. Learn more at [MissionDignitySBC.org](http://MissionDignitySBC.org).

# NEWS + UPDATES

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.

TWEET OF THE WEEK: "The message of redemption is & has always been good news" Read more in the @HoustonFirst Advent Devotional Guide - [houstonfirst.org/advent](http://houstonfirst.org/advent) — Derek Nease, @dnease87

## ALL CAMPUSES

**HighPoint Bible Study**  
Every Wed @ 11:30a — 1010 Lamar (tunnel level)  
HighPoint is temporarily suspended while our Downtown Campus at 1010 Lamar undergoes some repairs. Visit [HoustonFirst.org/HighPoint](http://HoustonFirst.org/HighPoint) for updates on the progress and to find previous messages!  
CONTACT Diane.Bagby@HoustonFirst.org

**Tour of the Holy Land — Info Meeting**  
Today @ 2p — The Loop (Connection Ctr)  
Learn about a tour of the Holy Land next Apr 20-30, 2015. The trip includes stops in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Galilee, and more. An optional excursion to the Greek Islands includes a stop at Ephesus. Tour leaders are Wanda Jean Hickey and William & Nancy Taylor.  
CONTACT Wanda Jean Hickey, [wjhey3@comcast.net](mailto:wjhey3@comcast.net)

**CanHope**  
Mon, Dec 15 @ 6:45-9p — The Loop (Reception Rm)  
Bro. John Bisagno, our Pastor Emeritus, will share about his journey with cancer at this free gathering for those who have been impacted by the disease. Bring a side dish, salad, or dessert, and we'll provide the entree! RSVP to Sherry by email or at 713.957.6764.  
CONTACT Sherry.Oradat@HoustonFirst.org

**STUDENTS**  
**Christmaspalooza**  
Sun, Dec 14 @ 11:30a-7p  
At this "not-so average Christmas party" students (Grades 6-12) from The Loop, Cypress, and Sienna will have a party throughout the city of Houston then meet up at the same location to hang, play games, relax, and celebrate as a Student Ministry. Register at [HoustonFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonFirst.org/Events).  
CONTACT Tony.Bianco@HoustonFirst.org

**YOUNG SINGLES**  
**Summit New Year's Eve Party**  
Wed, Dec 31 @ 9p-1a — Ideson Library Building  
What does the next year hold in store? Spend an enjoyable evening on the case, bringing in this mysterious new year with dancing, karaoke, and much more! If you don't have New Year's Plans, you might have just solved them! Early bird tickets just \$39 through Dec 14 at [HoustonFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonFirst.org/Events).  
CONTACT Joshua.Bagby@HoustonFirst.org

**Summit Snow Jam**  
Apr 9-13, 2015 — Winter Park, CO  
Hit the slopes with Pastor Gregg and friends from Summit! Early bird cost of \$749 (thru Dec 31) includes airfare, lodging at Zephyr Lodge (ski-in, ski-out), lift tickets, and more. Details and registration at [HoustonFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonFirst.org/Events).  
CONTACT Jody.Rogers@HoustonFirst.org

### Christmas Eve

CANDLELIGHT SERVICES

— WED, DEC 24 —

**THE LOOP CAMPUS**  
4P & 6P

**CYPRESS CAMPUS**  
AT HISTORIC TIN HALL  
4P & 6P

**SIENNA CAMPUS**  
4P & 6P

**SUNDAYS AT HOUSTON'S FIRST**  
**The Loop Campus**  
7401 Katy Fwy • Houston, TX 77024  
Worship 9:15a-11a-5p  
Life Bible Studies 8a-9:15a-10:45a-6:30p

**Cypress Campus**  
10300 Warner Smith Blvd • Cypress, TX 77433  
Worship 11a  
Life Bible Studies 9:30a

**Downtown Campus**  
1010 Lamar St • Houston, TX 77002  
Worship 11a  
Life Bible Studies 9:30a

**Sienna Campus**  
4309 Sienna Pkwy • Missouri City, TX 77459  
Worship 9:30a-11a  
Life Bible Studies 9:30a-11a

## MEN

**Warrior's Heart**  
Every Thu @ 6:30-7:30a — The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)  
This weekly Bible study and breakfast wraps up the semester on Dec 11 and will resume on Jan 8. Dr. Bruce Fong brings a wealth of wisdom, humor, and application from the Bible. Men are encouraged to come weekly, but you can come whenever you can! Details at [HoustonFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonFirst.org/Events).  
CONTACT Emily.Brown@HoustonFirst.org

## THE LOOP

**SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES**  
**Merry & Bright**  
Sun, Dec 14 @ 12:15p — Oasis Room  
Bring in the Christmas season as a family by celebrating our Savior! Find out why the angels said there is "good news of great joy that will be for all people." (Luke 2:10) Enjoy lunch, laughter, and a gift for each family. Merry & Bright is for all single parent families — and it's free!  
RSVP at [HoustonFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonFirst.org/Events).  
CONTACT Holly.Crain@HoustonFirst.org

## CYPRESS

**Mission Trip Reveal Lunch**  
Today @ 12:30p — Adult Life Bible Study Area  
Discover the "how" and "why" behind mission trips at Houston's First, learn how to apply for a trip, and hear a brief overview of the more than thirty opportunities you will have to join in God's work around the world through one of our 2015 mission trips! Walk-ins are welcome!  
CONTACT Ian.Brou@HoustonFirst.org

## DOWNTOWN

**Christmas Party**  
Tonight @ 5:30p — The Mosaic  
Don't miss our 3rd annual Downtown Christmas Party with great food, live music, and more! (We've heard rumors that Santa might make an appearance, as well!) Bring a friend and your favorite Christmas dessert to this festive gathering at The Mosaic (5925 Alameda Road).  
CONTACT Tiffany.Butterfrass@HoustonFirst.org

## SIENNA

**Empty Nesters' Brunch**  
Sat, Dec 13 @ 9:30-11a — Worship Center  
The Sienna Campus is launching a new Life Bible Study just for Empty Nesters in January 2015. Come hear the vision and plans for the new group — and enjoy brunch, too!  
CONTACT Jeff.Rees@HoustonFirst.org

## 2015 DEVOTIONAL

Our churchwide devotional for 2015 is Daily Light. A bound leather edition is available in CornerBooks for \$15. Make Daily Light a part of each day in 2015!



## ONE SACRED EFFORT

### WORLD MISSION OFFERING

The World Mission Offering is an opportunity to further support the advancement of the Gospel. Collected Nov-Jan, the offering goes to mission work in Texas, North America, and around the world. Give using designated envelopes or online at [HoustonFirst.org/WorldMissionOffering](http://HoustonFirst.org/WorldMissionOffering).

## THERE'S MORE TO CHURCH THAN SUNDAY MORNINGS

There's more to church than Sunday mornings. The Loop has a worship service at 5p and Life Bible Studies at 6:30p. Same message as the morning — with room to park on campus, too! So, go on a weekend getaway, tailgate at a Texans game, or just sleep in — then go to church on Sunday night!

## LIFE BIBLE STUDIES

Life Bible Studies are the primary method for connecting with others and growing together at Houston's First. Visit [HoustonFirst.org](http://HoustonFirst.org) to find one that's right for you, or ask the Welcome Team at your campus for assistance.

## YEAR-END GIVING

As 2014 draws to a close, prayerfully consider how God may lead you to give to Houston's First Baptist Church. To qualify as a 2014 contribution for IRS purposes, gifts must be received in person by 4:30p on Wed, Dec 31, be made online at [HoustonFirst.org](http://HoustonFirst.org) by midnight on Wed, Dec 31, or be mailed with a postmark of Dec 31 or earlier. Contact Sara Johnson at 713.957.5806 or [Sara.Johnson@HoustonFirst.org](mailto:Sara.Johnson@HoustonFirst.org) for additional information.



# MISSION 1:8

Dec 7, 2014

## Looking After Widows

Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this:  
to look after orphans and widows in their distress...

James 1:27



# men: SERVE

## SERVING THE WIDOWS OF OUR CHURCH FAMILY

No matter who you ask, Men: Serve is a “God thing” in terms of how it started and its impact on those involved. You could say its roots go back to the early ‘90s when Bill Neighbors heard Bro. John Bisagno read a Bible verse one Sunday about taking care of the widows. “The sermon wasn’t about widows, but that verse was all I heard,” says Bill. “I knew this was something I had to do.”

Since then, Bill has used his skills as a contractor to meet the needs of widows in our church. That explains Bill’s answer when Minister to Men Eric Reed asked Bill in late 2011 what he would like to see the Men’s Ministry do. Bill quickly replied, “Serve the widows.”

His answer struck a chord with Eric. Eric’s maternal grandmother was widowed twice, and he recalls as a young boy seeing her struggle with basic things. “Her church really didn’t do much at all,” Eric recalls. “My father would often vent that the local church should do more in an organized way to meet the needs of widows like my grandmother.”



So, Eric had witnessed the need and Bill had the experience. All that was missing was an organizer. That person came in January 2012 when Eric met with Jairo Henao, a single dad who had been involved with a service ministry at his former church near Washington, DC. He was the first volunteer to help organize Men: Serve when it started in April 2012 with 34 men and boys serving 12 widows.

Jairo’s schedule as a military reservist limited his involvement after the first Men: Serve. However, God provided another man to help. Over breakfast following the second Men: Serve in June 2012, Greg Bowden asked Eric if there were any help he needed. “Do you like spreadsheets?” Eric asked. As a director of finance, Greg knew his way around a spreadsheet and stepped in to help organize the Men: Serve effort in September of that year. Greg led Men: Serve beginning in November 2012 and continues to serve as the coordinator to this day.

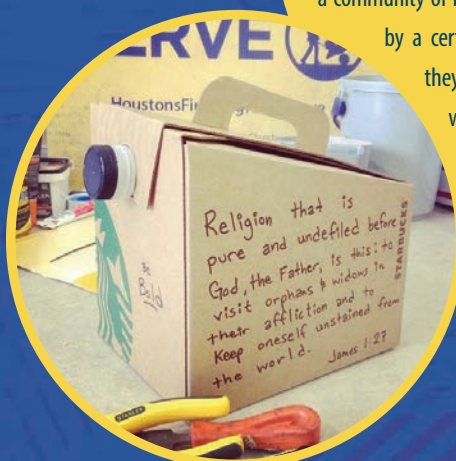
**“We came out to work on her house. Instead, she worked on our hearts.”**

— Zach Freeman



## COMMUNITY IMPACT

Men: Serve’s impact extends far beyond the volunteers and the widows. Yard signs placed in front of the widows’ homes have inspired countless conversations with neighbors and passersby. “Your church does that for you?” is a common question widows are asked, giving them an opportunity to share about their faith and what it means to be a part of a community of believers. On service days, Men: Serve organizers stop by a certain Starbucks to get coffee for the volunteers as they assemble at the church. One Saturday, a barista wrote James 1:27 on the carton along with a message to “Be Bold.”



“No words can describe how much I appreciate the wonderful men who came to my house. I felt like I was being completely taken care of. They truly blessed my heart and I am forever grateful for the work they did. I enjoyed the hugs and fun conversation!”

Anna Walker

## KIDS SERVE, TOO

Many men involved with Men: Serve see it as an opportunity to teach their children a valuable lesson. “Witt and Charlie love coming to Men: Serve,” says Rob Grooms, an accountant, about his two sons. “A lot of what we do as Christians today can seem complicated to 11 and 7 year olds — but that is not the case with Men: Serve. We meet at church and go serve the widows. Hard to get much more simple than that.”

Even in a large church, Rob says he and his sons have been able to help a familiar face — a woman who had taken care of Witt and Charlie when they were infants. “Our first time to serve, we were assigned to Mae Bell — a woman who has served in the church nursery for over 50 years,” Rob recalls. “She had held in her arms and changed the diapers of the same two boys who were now serving her. I can’t think of anyone more fitting to help her than two of the thousands of children she had cared for.”



“Some of us are called to swing a hammer, but others are called to sit and talk with the widow, to learn more about her story, and to build a relationship. Anyone is qualified to minister through Men: Serve.”

Zach Freeman

“I remember praying with a widow after completing a project in her home. She was so happy for our help she cried. I’ve never felt more connected with God’s purpose for me than in that moment.”

Lyndle Jackson

“We find God in the little deeds of love that others bestow on us. I have been a widow for several years now and Men: Serve was the first time I have ever had anyone come and do things for me.”

Lynn Mayers

“The volunteers worked side-by-side in joyful harmony. As hour after hour passed, God blessed the depths of my soul. I didn’t realize how dry my heart was. I continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of time and talent each man brought, but most of all by the presence of the Lord which each man brought into my home.”

Norma Williams



“One widow’s bathroom lights hadn’t worked since her husband passed away about a year earlier. The lightbulb simply needed to be screwed in tighter, but she didn’t have the strength. It wasn’t a major repair job, but it made a huge difference.”

Vernon Tyger



## MINISTRY COLLABORATION

Before men arrive at a widows’ home, work has already taken place. Our Pastoral Care Ministry maintains relationships with the widows, tracks their needs, and purchases necessary supplies. A week before the service day, Peggy Jones and Sherry Oradat from Pastoral Care sit down with Men: Serve leaders to form teams based on the widows’ needs and the skills and experience of the registered volunteers.

The Faith Center is providing room at their Timbergrove location to create a teaching workshop for skilled men to teach other men how to make common repairs. Not only will it increase the capacity of our Men: Serve volunteers, but it will also provide opportunities for men of all ages to disciple one another.

“One of my greatest joys in this whole journey is the awesome partnership between ministries of the church and the Men’s Ministry,” says Eric Reed, Minister to Men. “It really is an example of how all of us can accomplish more than any one of us can alone.”

## MEN: SERVE IN 2014

- 99 widows served
- Over 680 men mobilized
- Over 100 men on “on call” list

## MEN: SERVE IN 2015

Registration opens at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) about two months before each day of service. You can sign up now for Jan 17!

- Sat, Jan 17
- Sat, Feb 28
- Sat, Apr 25
- Sat, Jun 27
- Sat, Sep 19
- Sat, Nov 7

## MISSION 1:8

MISSION 1:8 is a two-year initiative from Mar 2013-Feb 2015 that will expand our financial generosity to support our current ministry and multiply our missional endeavors to the poor, widows, orphans, and prisoners, and to our city, our nation, and our world. Learn more at [HoustonsFirst.org/MISSION18](http://HoustonsFirst.org/MISSION18).



“One of our dear ladies wanted me to sit outside with her and hear her heart about big decisions she had coming her way. I called the men over with me and we prayed for her. Tissues were served shortly thereafter.”

Steve Newby