

# HE WILL PROVIDE

Russ and Imogen Gantos, members of the In The Beginning Life Bible Study at The Loop Campus, share their journey through MISSION 1:8 — including the loss of a job and the faith-building challenges it presented.

Russ and Imogen Gantos decided to step up their giving in response to Pastor Gregg's request to support MISSION 1:8, even though Russ's company had been continually reducing its workforce over the course of his seven-year tenure. How would they prepare for retirement, they wondered.

Just prior to MISSION 1:8, Russ's job was eliminated, but the company provided him another position in another division. In spite of this blessing, employment at the company was always tenuous.

About halfway through the first year of the MISSION 1:8 campaign, Russ's new position was eliminated and he left the organization with a six-month severance package paid in a lump sum. Russ and Imogen discussed their options: Do they stop giving since there was no prospect of employment on the horizon or do they trust God to provide and keep their commitment to the church?

Trusting in God's provision, they wrote a check from the lump sum payment for the amount they had committed to MISSION 1:8 despite his lack of a job. They also decided to fulfill the goal through the end of the campaign and see what God would do.

On the last day covered by the six-month severance, Russ was offered a consulting position at a company that is seven miles from their home. After that ended, he was offered a full-time position there.

"The people, timing and other factors involved in our story are too numerous and interconnected not to believe my new position is anything other than God's intervention on our behalf," said Russ.

Not only did their finances not take a hit over the previous year, the couple has been able to save more in their retirement fund than they did in Russ's previous position.

"If you trust in the Lord," said Russ, "He will provide."



EXTRAVAGANT

TITHING

INTENTIONAL

OCCASIONAL

FIRST TIME

SHARE  
your MISSION 1:8 story at  
HoustonsFirst.org/MyStory

Ladder source: *Maximize* by Nelson Searcy

## 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: "Such a blessing @HoustonsFirst to not only witness baptisms but to hear testimonies as well of people being baptized!" — @JoniHannigan

### ALL CAMPUSES

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

**Together for Them Conference**  
Feb 27-28 — **The Loop (Worship Center)**  
Anybody involved in adoption or foster care — parents, families, professionals, teachers, etc. — is invited to find resources, hear from experts, connect with others, and get equipped for your role. Special workshop begins on Friday with breakout sessions on Saturday. Get details and register at [HoustonsFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonsFirst.org/Events).  
**CONTACT** [Toni.Steere@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Toni.Steere@HoustonsFirst.org)

**The Mingling of Souls**  
Fri, Apr 17 @ 7p — **The Loop (Worship Center)**  
At this live event, author and pastor Matt Chandler will explore God's design for love, marriage, sex, and redemption. Chandler offers an eternal, counter-intuitive perspective from the biblical book, Song of Solomon. The event is for single and married adults, regardless of age or stage of life. \$20 per person thru Mar 26. Register at [HoustonsFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonsFirst.org/Events).  
**CONTACT** [Kristin.Hawkinson@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Kristin.Hawkinson@HoustonsFirst.org)

### SENIOR ADULTS

**Senior Adult Revival**  
Mar 16-18 @ 10:30-11:45a — **The Loop (Chapel)**  
Senior Adults (60+) will gather to hear the Word preached by Dr. Jimmy Draper, former President of LifeWay, with worship led by our own John Bolin and the Revival Choir.  
**CONTACT** [Trade.Bowman@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Trade.Bowman@HoustonsFirst.org)

### WOMEN

**From Good to Grace**  
Tue, Mar 3 @ 6:30-8p — **The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)**  
What if there were another way to live where the responsibility for our spiritual growth rested on someone else? Christine Hoover, author of *From Good to Grace: Letting Go of the Goodness Gospel*, will illustrate how we confuse being good and trying hard — the "goodness gospel" — with the true gospel. Register at [HoustonsFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonsFirst.org/Events).  
**CONTACT** [Haylee.Nelson@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Haylee.Nelson@HoustonsFirst.org)

### MEN

**Men: Serve**  
Sat, Feb 28 @ 8a-1p — **The Loop (Oasis Rm)**  
Men will go out in teams to serve the widows of our church family through yard work, home repairs, and other projects. Advance registration is required, so sign up to serve by Feb 20 at [HoustonsFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonsFirst.org/Events).  
**CONTACT** [Emily.Brown@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Emily.Brown@HoustonsFirst.org)

### THE LOOP

**MARRIED YOUNG ADULTS**  
**Re|Create Date Night**  
Fri, Feb 27 @ 6-10p  
Enjoy a night out alone with your spouse or with other couples! We'll provide "Date Kits" for download from [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) to help you be intentional about the time you spend together. Learn more at [HoustonsFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonsFirst.org/Events).  
**CONTACT** [Melanie.Russell@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Melanie.Russell@HoustonsFirst.org)

### CYPRESS

**Smith Teacher Appreciation**  
Thu, Feb 12 @ 11:30a-1:30p — **Smith Middle School**  
Show some love for the Faculty and Staff of Smith Middle School! We'll provide them with an Italian lunch with all the fixin's — and servers are needed! Sign up today at the Opportunities Table.  
**CONTACT** [Nicole.Alvarez,txagnicole@yahoo.com](mailto:Nicole.Alvarez,txagnicole@yahoo.com)

### DOWNTOWN

**Downtown Members' Meeting**  
Today @ 2-3:30p — **Four Seasons Ballroom**  
Calling all members at Houston's First's Downtown Campus! Don't miss our Members' Meeting today! We'll gather for fellowship and share updates on what the Lord is already doing, as well as what to look forward to in the near future.  
**CONTACT** [Peter.Lee@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Peter.Lee@HoustonsFirst.org)

**Welcome Team & Service Logistics Team**  
Give your life away as a volunteer while the Downtown Campus gathers in a temporary space! To serve on the Welcome Team, contact Joanna Poor ([jpoor2@comcast.net](mailto:jpoor2@comcast.net)). To serve on the Service Logistics Team, contact Christeen Milmo ([cmilmo24@yahoo.com](mailto:cmilmo24@yahoo.com)).

### SIENNA

**SANMA — Celebrate MISSION 1:8**  
Today @ 6-8p — **Worship Center**  
Executive Director James George will share about SANMA, a non-profit organization that builds sustainable communities through Christian missions. A dessert social will follow, and childcare for ages 4 and under is provided by online reservation. \$5 admission fee with all proceeds benefitting SANMA. Register at [HoustonsFirst.org/Sienna](http://HoustonsFirst.org/Sienna).  
**CONTACT** [Jeff.Rees@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Jeff.Rees@HoustonsFirst.org)

**Parent Commitment**  
Sun, Feb 22 @ 9:15a & 11a — **Worship Center**  
Parents who are members of Houston's First will publicly express their desire to raise their child in a Christian home, bring their child to church, and teach their child about Jesus. Parents can contact Cara to sign up for this special time to take place during our Sunday worship services.  
**CONTACT** [Cara.Buis@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Cara.Buis@HoustonsFirst.org)

### MAKE IT YOUR CHURCH ORIENTATION

Sun, Feb 22 — **The Loop, Downtown, Sienna**  
Discover what it means to be a member of Houston's First! Over lunch, pastors and staff members from your campus will share the vision, mission, and strategy — and you can learn how to find your place to gather, grow, and give. The class is not required to join the church, but we encourage you to attend! RSVP for your campus at [HoustonsFirst.org/Events](http://HoustonsFirst.org/Events). (Cypress session coming in April!)



### MISSION TRIP INTEREST MEETINGS

Sun, Feb 15 @ 12:30p  
Learn about two upcoming trips and how you can give your life away as a team member. Lunch is provided, so RSVP to [Ameer.Omar@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Ameer.Omar@HoustonsFirst.org).  
• East Asia (Apr 23-May 3) — The Loop (Rm 252)  
• Lebanon - Medical (Jun 23-30) — The Loop (Rm 145)

### LIFE BIBLE STUDIES

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



### Wednesday evenings — The Loop

There's more to Houston's First than Sundays! Gather at The Loop on Wednesday evenings for MidLink featuring MidLink Cafe, Milestones classes, worship rehearsals, NextGen programs, and more. Visit [HoustonsFirst.org/MidLink](http://HoustonsFirst.org/MidLink) for the full schedule.

### 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, go out for brunch, or just sleep in — then go to church on Sunday night!

# MISSION 1:8

Feb 8, 2015

## OUR CITY

Extending The Ministry  
Of Houston's First



CYPRESS



DOWNTOWN



SIENNA



### 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**  
1300 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



# HERE IS THE CHURCH. HERE IS THE STEEPLE. OPEN THE DOORS AND HERE ARE THE PEOPLE!

When Houston's First established our Multisite Signature stating our vision for opening campuses around Houston, "extending the ministry" was placed at the top of the list. We knew there were people whom The Loop Campus would not reach due to its location, their desire for a smaller church, or other factors.

MISSION 1:8 has enabled us to reach these people by bringing our ministry to them. The Cypress and Sienna Campuses launched in March 2013, joining the Downtown Campus that launched in October 2011. When MISSION 1:8 began, our goal was to invest \$9,000,000 in multisite campuses to support the vision for reaching our city.

## BUT GOD DID MORE THAN WE COULD ASK OR IMAGINE!

Thanks to the unprecedented generosity of the Houston's First family, we are able to invest \$18,000,000 in our city — double the original goal. With these funds, we were able to purchase the two-story commercial building that the Sienna Campus calls home (along with undeveloped

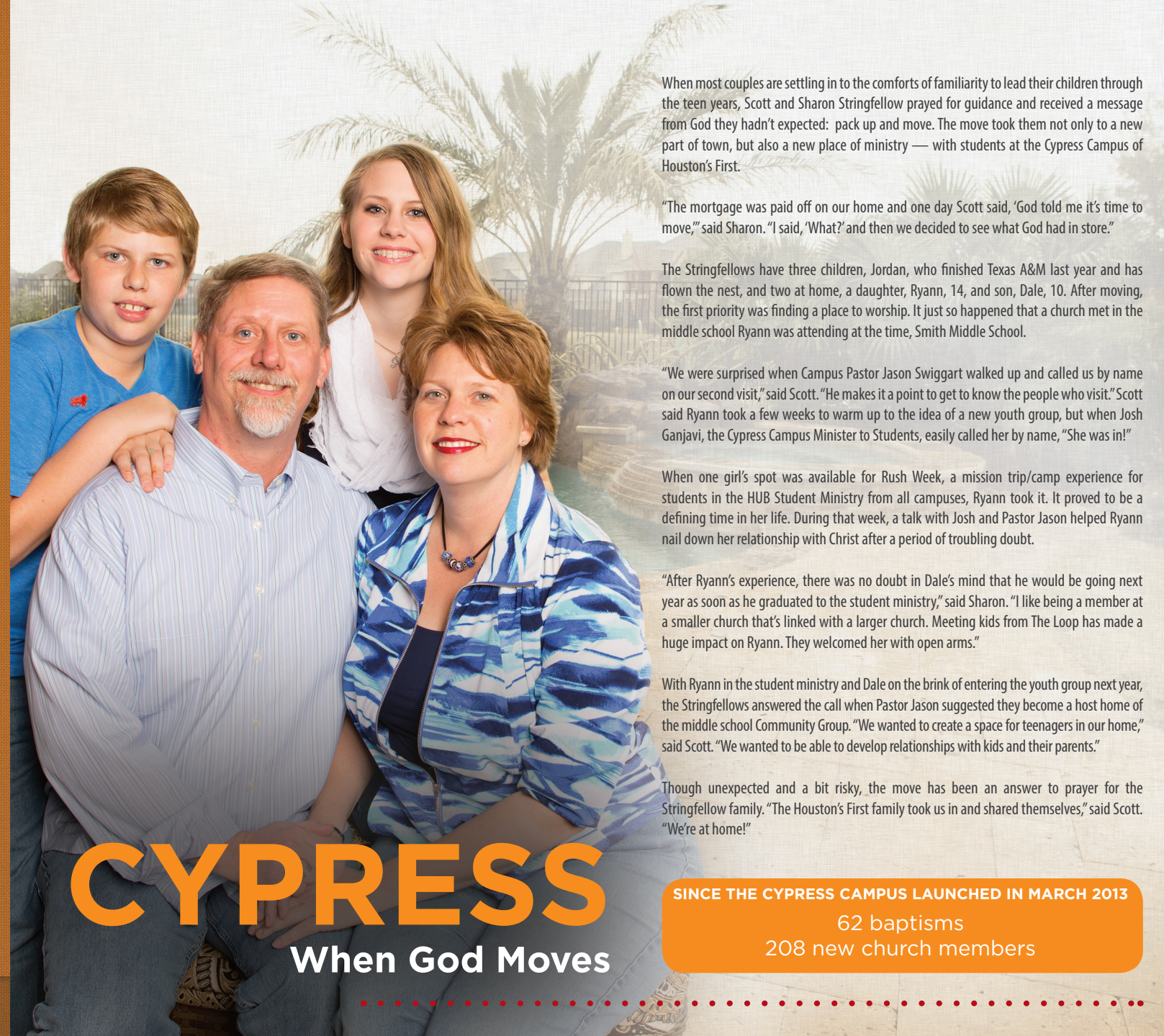
land adjacent to it) and put aside a sizable amount for the Cypress Campus to go toward the purchase of 35 acres and the construction of a new building in Bridgeland along the Grand Parkway.

Although none of our campuses actually have a steeple, we still opened the doors and looked at the people who have been encouraged by the ministry of Houston's First in Cypress, Downtown, and Sienna. As you read their stories, know that it was made possible because of your generosity to MISSION 1:8!

## \$9,107,098

Total investment in Our City  
(Mar 2013-Jan 2015)

An additional \$9,000,000 will be invested,  
bringing the total to more than \$18,000,000



When most couples are settling in to the comforts of familiarity to lead their children through the teen years, Scott and Sharon Stringfellow prayed for guidance and received a message from God they hadn't expected: pack up and move. The move took them not only to a new part of town, but also a new place of ministry — with students at the Cypress Campus of Houston's First.

"The mortgage was paid off on our home and one day Scott said, 'God told me it's time to move,'" said Sharon. "I said, 'What?' and then we decided to see what God had in store."

The Stringfellows have three children, Jordan, who finished Texas A&M last year and has flown the nest, and two at home, a daughter, Ryann, 14, and son, Dale, 10. After moving, the first priority was finding a place to worship. It just so happened that a church met in the middle school Ryann was attending at the time, Smith Middle School.

"We were surprised when Campus Pastor Jason Swiggart walked up and called us by name on our second visit," said Scott. "He makes it a point to get to know the people who visit." Scott said Ryann took a few weeks to warm up to the idea of a new youth group, but when Josh Ganjavi, the Cypress Campus Minister to Students, easily called her by name, "She was in!"

When one girl's spot was available for Rush Week, a mission trip/camp experience for students in the HUB Student Ministry from all campuses, Ryann took it. It proved to be a defining time in her life. During that week, a talk with Josh and Pastor Jason helped Ryann nail down her relationship with Christ after a period of troubling doubt.

"After Ryann's experience, there was no doubt in Dale's mind that he would be going next year as soon as he graduated to the student ministry," said Sharon. "I like being a member at a smaller church that's linked with a larger church. Meeting kids from The Loop has made a huge impact on Ryann. They welcomed her with open arms."

With Ryann in the student ministry and Dale on the brink of entering the youth group next year, the Stringfellows answered the call when Pastor Jason suggested they become a host home of the middle school Community Group. "We wanted to create a space for teenagers in our home," said Scott. "We wanted to be able to develop relationships with kids and their parents."

Though unexpected and a bit risky, the move has been an answer to prayer for the Stringfellow family. "The Houston's First family took us in and shared themselves," said Scott. "We're at home!"

## CYPRESS

When God Moves

SINCE THE CYPRESS CAMPUS LAUNCHED IN MARCH 2013

62 baptisms  
208 new church members



Anouchka Manga Calligrew grew up and spent much of her life in Gabon on Africa's west coast. While Gabon is nearly 12,000 miles from Anouchka and her husband Greg's Sienna Plantation residence, she has never felt more at home thanks to her "family" at the Sienna Campus of Houston's First. Being so far from home, family was just what they needed when, just a few months after she began attending, their lives took an unexpected turn.

Anouchka was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor.

The tumor was so big, she said, that radiation was her only option. She and Greg were also juggling the demands of life with a toddler. Their son Andrew was less than two years old when treatment began.

"The support we received from our church family was always just what we needed," she said. "When I was in the hospital, several members visited me, prayed with me and encouraged me."

After being released from the hospital, church member Courtney Griffin organized meal delivery to the family. "We received so much food, I had to tell her to stop the delivery," Anouchka recalls. Susan Barrett organized transportation to the Texas Medical Center for additional treatment and doctor visits after Greg had to go back to work. "I never missed one appointment last year," said Anouchka. Even the Children's Ministry wrote words of encouragement, which she kept and framed.

"I don't think I'd be where I am today without the church body," said Anouchka. "I've never seen anything like the outpouring of love we received."

Now on her feet again, Anouchka is giving back. She has participated in missions projects sponsored by the church and has worked with youth and children in Vacation Bible School. She's also attending a Life Bible Study and is part of a women's Bible study.

Doctors have given Anouchka the all clear. Her tumor has shrunk away and now she is walking, running, and "doing fantastic," she says. "The Lord has been so great and my church 'has my back.'"

## SIENNA

Outpouring of Love

SINCE THE SIENNA CAMPUS LAUNCHED IN MARCH 2013

12 baptisms  
210 new church members



## SPANISH

The Spanish Campus at Houston's First is gearing up for an April 12 launch and Pastor Juan Alaniz and ministry administrator Cynthia Carranza are excited about reaching the Spanish and bilingual community in Houston.

"Though the official launch of our campus is not until the week after Easter, we are already reaching close to 50 people in the Spanish community through Life Bible Studies," said Pastor Juan. "We have amazing Bible teachers who love the Lord and are ministering to individuals and families."

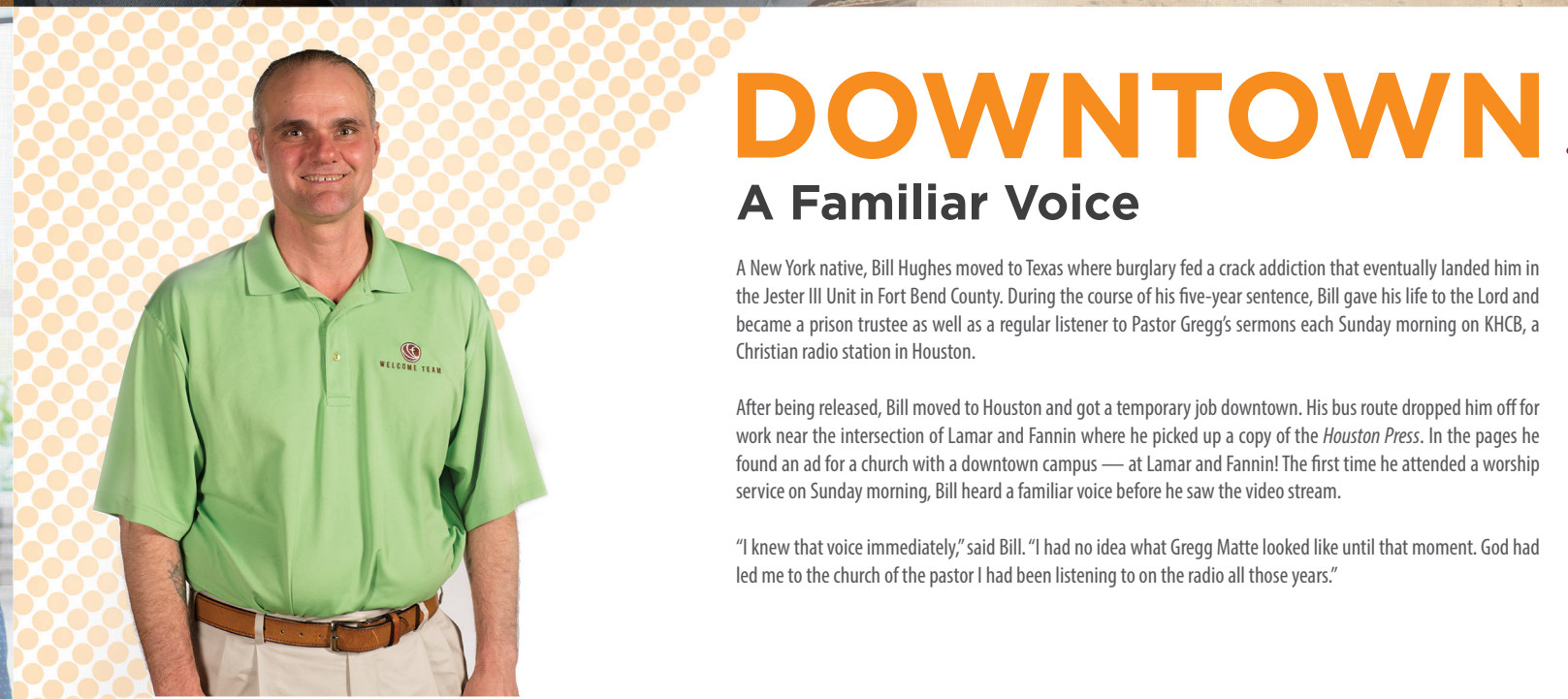
### ABOUT THE SPANISH CAMPUS

**LAUNCH TEAM MEETINGS**  
Open to anybody!  
Sun, Feb 15 @ 12:30p — The Loop  
Sun, Mar 8 @ 12:30p — The Loop

**LAUNCH DATE**  
Sun, Apr 12 @ 5p — The Loop  
Bilingual worship service  
Message by Pastor Gregg Matte  
Translation service available

**CONNECT**  
Campus Pastor Juan Alaniz  
Juan.Alaniz@HoustonsFirst.org  
713.957.6771  
HoustonsFirst.org/Espanol  
HoustonsFirstEspanol  
HFBCEspanol

**Photo (left to right):**  
Life Bible Study teachers Jorge and Pati Alvarez,  
Ministry Admin Cynthia Carranza & Pastor Juan Alaniz



## DOWNTOWN

### A Familiar Voice

A New York native, Bill Hughes moved to Texas where burglary fed a crack addiction that eventually landed him in the Jester III Unit in Fort Bend County. During the course of his five-year sentence, Bill gave his life to the Lord and became a prison trustee as well as a regular listener to Pastor Gregg's sermons each Sunday morning on KHCB, a Christian radio station in Houston.

After being released, Bill moved to Houston and got a temporary job downtown. His bus route dropped him off for work near the intersection of Lamar and Fannin where he picked up a copy of the *Houston Press*. In the pages he found an ad for a church with a downtown campus — at Lamar and Fannin! The first time he attended a worship service on Sunday morning, Bill heard a familiar voice before he saw the video stream.

"I knew that voice immediately," said Bill. "I had no idea what Gregg Matte looked like until that moment. God had led me to the church of the pastor I had been listening to on the radio all those years."

Since connecting with our Downtown Campus and joining Houston's First, Bill and Campus Pastor Lee Hsia have become friends. "I've been one of Bill's accountability partners and have seen God at work in his life, both in having authentic Christian community and giving him favor at work," said Pastor Lee. "Bill has been hired full-time after receiving a promotion for his hard work. He is also giving his life away by serving on the Welcome Team and as an active member of the Day-by-Day Life Bible Study."

Bill was touched by the number of ministries Houston's First supports to bless so many communities and he was drawn in by the message Pastor Gregg preached each Sunday. "He probably doesn't realize the great contribution he makes to the prison community," said Bill. "I'm proof."

SINCE THE DOWNTOWN CAMPUS LAUNCHED IN OCTOBER 2011

38 baptisms  
130 new church members