

Generosity

AT HOUSTON'S FIRST

BLESSINGS MULTIPLIED

By little more than faith, young newlyweds began a practice of giving, which set a pattern of generosity. Forty-two years later, the fruit of obedience continues to bless them — and others.

Robbie and Connie Schilhab married early during their college days at Texas A&M. Connie was working full time “so they could eat,” she says, while Robbie attended school. Though they made only \$200 a month, having grown up in the faith, Connie suggested to Robbie that if they tithed on her “puny” salary they would see provision and blessing from the Lord. “He said, ‘OK, we’ll try it,’” recalls Connie. And they have never looked back.

The Lord provided in interesting ways during those lean college years. He provided extra scholarships, money here and there, and upon graduation, a wonderful, stable job and career.

They have never stopped tithing. “God has always blessed us and we have never been unemployed or gone through financial hard times,” said Connie. “Sometimes, those things are hard to understand — why some and not others — but God’s ways are higher.”

Robbie retired a couple of years ago after 36 years with the same company and the couple joined Houston’s First a year ago in January. When they learned about MISSION 1:8, the generosity initiative, they prayed about what God would have them give. They decided to give above their tithe.



Last summer, the Schilhabs went on a Houston’s First mission trip to New York City. The experience made a huge impact on their lives, and they continue to find ways to assist others when God calls.

“We’ve decided it’s really not our money anyway, so when we see a need inside or outside the church — like maybe a kid going to camp — God has given money to us to give to others,” said Connie.

Connie says that Luke 6:38 seems to sum up their lives:

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

“The more we give,” she said, “it seems like the more our blessings multiply for us to continue sharing with others.”

WHAT IS YOUR GENEROSITY STORY?

Share it at HoustonFirst.org/MyStory.

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: “It’s fun to see your pastor is secure enough to freestyle rap at new member orientation. @GreggMatte @HoustonFirst” — @ashleykiker

ALL CAMPUSES

HighPoint Bible Study

Wednesdays @ 11:30a
This weekly downtown Bible study will not meet on May 6, but will return on May 13 in the Wells Fargo Plaza auditorium (1000 Louisiana) with Dr. David Self speaking. Bring your lunch and be ready for the lesson at 12:10p. Visit HoustonFirst.org/HighPoint to learn more.
CONTACT Diane.Bagby@HoustonFirst.org

National Day of Prayer

Thu, May 7
Watch for a special message from Pastor Gregg on May 7 via social media and HoustonFirst.org as he provides guidance on the National Day of Prayer. Also, the Chapel at The Loop Campus will be available throughout the day as a place for you to pray on your own, with your family, or with others.

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

Camp Intersect

Jun 15-19 — Trinity Pines Conf Center
Two camps, one location! This amazing camp full of worship and teaching, outdoor activities, and crazy fun is for kids and their friends entering 4th-7th grades this fall. Sign up at HoustonFirst.org/Events.
CONTACT Derek.Nease@HoustonFirst.org

Rush Week

Jul 19-25 — Panama City Beach, FL
This unique missions experience has elements of a mission trip but with a “camp” feel. Students currently in 6th-12th grades can choose different types of service to help a local church/community. Visit HoustonFirst.org/Events for details and to register.
CONTACT Susan.Newman@HoustonFirst.org

YOUNG SINGLE ADULTS

Summit Softball

Sat, May 16 @ 10-4 — Herman Brown Park (400 Mercury Dr, Houston)
When is the last time you joined an intramural sports league? Come get moving, meet new friends and find a place to plug in with Summit Softball. Teams are formed by Life Bible Studies. Cost is \$30 per person. Register online by May 15 at HoustonFirst.org/Events.
CONTACT George.Watson@HoustonFirst.org

THE LOOP

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

Summer Kick-Off Parties

Fri, May 29 @ 6-10p
Come kick-off the summer with the NextGen Ministries!
1st-5th grades — FirstKids Children’s Ministry is headed to Warrior Field (6711 Long Point Rd) for food, water games, inflatables, and more — for free! Drop off and pick up your child at the field. Students staying for 5th Grade Launch don’t need picked up.
CONTACT Kelly.Leffingwell@HoustonFirst.org

6th-12th grades — The HUB Students are kicking off summer with a giant game of Kiddie Pool Kickball! Meet in The HUB area and transporting to The Faith Center Field. Cost is \$10 for food and fun.
CONTACT Susan.Newman@HoustonFirst.org

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

Mother’s Day Luncheon

Sun, May 10 @ 12:15p — Fellowship Center
Join us on Mother’s Day to celebrate all single moms! This will be a special day that you will want to share with your children. All moms will receive a Mother’s Day gift and free lunch. Registration at HoustonFirst.org/Events is not required, but requested.
CONTACT Holly.Crain@HoustonFirst.org

MEN

Generation to Generation Training

Sat, May 16 @ 8a-12p — Rm 143
Generation-to-generation mentoring encourages men to walk alongside other men and assist in their spiritual growth. Learn the fundamentals of mentoring, including listening skills, scriptural guidance and biblical friendship. This training time is required for all men seeking to be a mentor at Houston’s First. Register at HoustonFirst.org/Events.
CONTACT Jim.Jones@HoustonFirst.org

CYPRESS

National Day of Prayer

Thu, May 7 @ 12-1p — Copperfield Church (8350 Highway 6 North)
Join Pastor Jason and surrounding area pastors for a day to pause and pray together for the Cypress community.
CONTACT Dana.Haddad@HoustonFirst.org

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

Children’s Ministry Launch Lunch

Sun, May 17 @ 12:30-1:30p — Smith Middle School
Some exciting changes are in store for the Children’s Ministry at the Cypress Campus! Families are invited to stay after the worship service for lunch and to hear what God is doing as staff members share the latest updates.
CONTACT Erin.Ruddle@HoustonFirst.org

DOWNTOWN

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

First Friends: Hang Out with Dad

Sat, May 9 @ 9:30a-12p
Houston Zoo (6200 Hermann Park Dr)
Dads and their preschool kids (ages four and under) will enjoy some quality time together while getting to know other dads from the Downtown family of Houston’s First. Register online by Wed, May 6, at HoustonFirst.org/Downtown.
CONTACT Kristin.Fowles@HoustonFirst.org

SIENNA

WOMEN

Women’s Summer Nights

Tuesdays, May 26, Jun 16, Jul 21, Aug 18 @ 6:30-8:30p
Worship Center
Ladies are invited to four summer evenings of Bible study at the Sienna Campus. We’ll gather together to worship God and create community through authentic relationships. Childcare is not available. Register at HoustonFirst.org/Sienna.
CONTACT amy.rowzee@me.com

SPANISH

Make It Your Church Orientation

Today @ 6:30p — Harbor Room
Discover what it means to be a member of Houston’s First at the Spanish Campus! Hear from Pastor Juan and others about the mission, vision, and ministries of the church, learn more about the Spanish Campus, and enjoy dinner, too. Walk-ins are welcome!
CONTACT Juan.Alaniz@HoustonFirst.org

MILESTONES BONUS SEMESTER

Here are additional opportunities to grow your soul before the summer break! Classes are at The Loop from 6:30-8p. Details at HoustonFirst.org/Events.
• Questioning Evangelism (May 6 & 13)
• Matthew Bible Study: The Great Commission (May 6 & 13)
• Understanding Gender Confusion In Males (May 6)
• Understanding Gender Confusion In Females (May 13)



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Jun 29-Jul 2 @ 9a-12:30p — The Loop
For kids entering K-6th grade (plus kids born Sep-Dec 2010)
New in 2015:
• Bible Study for moms each day
• Family Night on Wed, Jul 1
Details, volunteer, and registration at HoustonFirst.org/Events



NIGHT OF PRAYER

Tue, May 12 @ 7-9p — The Loop (Worship Ctr)
Come and see how the Lord moves in powerful ways when the Houston’s First family gathers for an evening dedicated to prayer and worship.

MISSION TRIP OPPORTUNITIES

Learn more about these upcoming trips by completing the interest form at HoustonFirst.org/Missions.
• New York City (Jun 3-7) — 3 spots open
• Ukraine (Jun 16-24) — 4 spots open
• Madrid, Spain (Jun 26-Jul 4) — 4 spots open
• Boston (Jul 22-26) — 8 spots open
• Germany (Jul 25-Aug 1) — 2 spots open
• Brazil (Aug 5-10) — 2 spots open

MINISTRY IMPACT YEAR-TO-DATE TOTALS FROM JAN 1 TO APR 26, 2015

DECISIONS

429 New Church Members
55 Joined By Baptisms



ATTENDANCE

77,692 in Life Bible Studies
(4,856 weekly average)

98,039 in Worship Services
(5,767 weekly average)

9,779 on Webcast
(575 weekly average)

MISSIONS

10 Mission Trips with
127 Team Members



GENEROSITY

3,698 Givers to Great Commission Giving
863 were First-Time Givers



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

1200 Louisiana 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

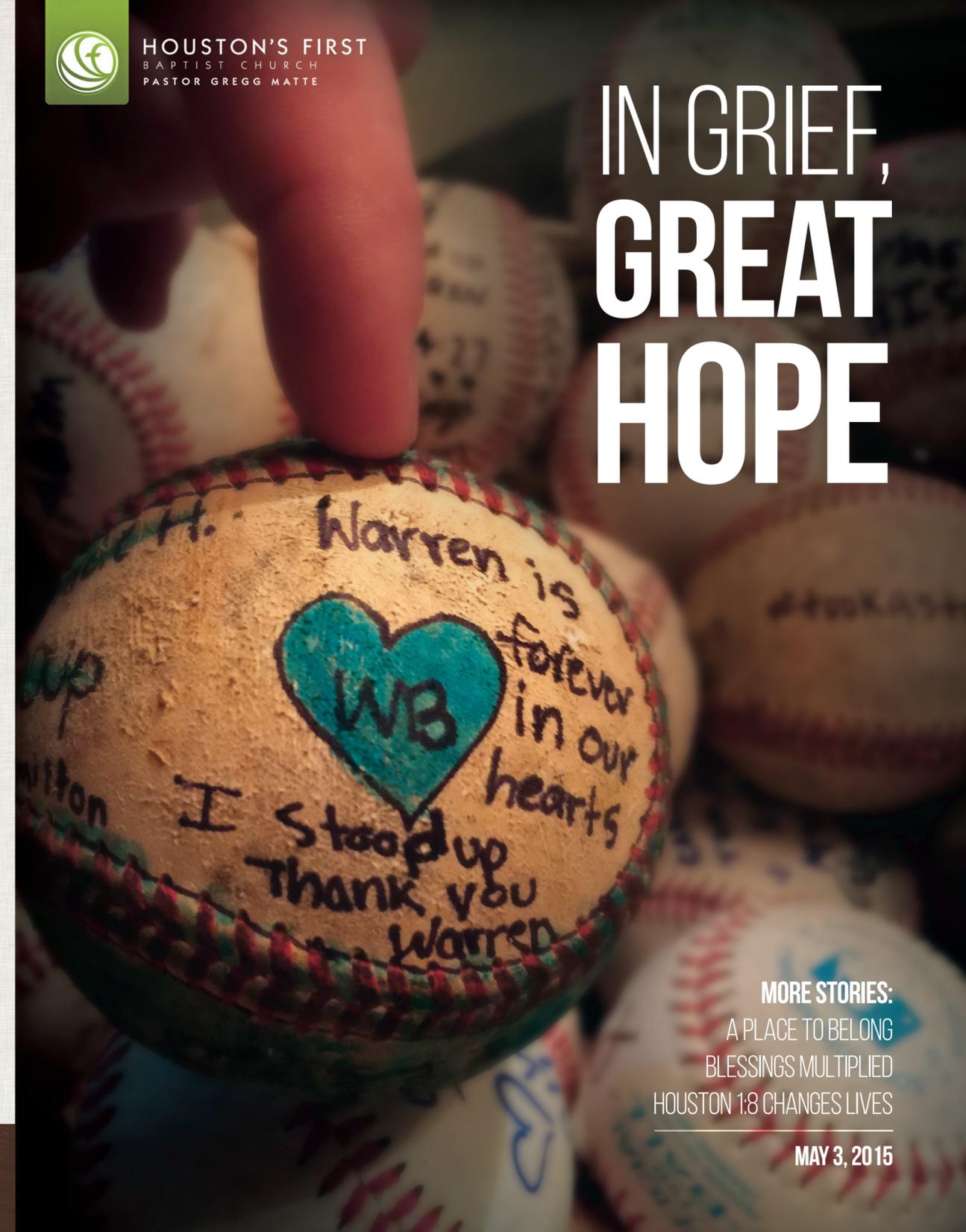
Spanish Campus

7401 Katy Fwy • Houston, TX 77024
Worship 5p
Life Bible Studies 6:30p



HOUSTON'S FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH
PASTOR GREGG MATTE

IN GRIEF, GREAT HOPE



MORE STORIES:

A PLACE TO BELONG
BLESSINGS MULTIPLIED
HOUSTON 1:8 CHANGES LIVES

MAY 3, 2015

TELLING HIS STORY BY SHARING YOURS

More than facts and figures, stories bring to life the truths of God's Word — love, forgiveness, hope, and so on. The following stories do just that while also revealing how God is moving among the Houston's First family. As you read them, ask God to open your eyes to how He has made Himself known in your life. What story do you have to share?



PASS IT ON!

Stories are meant to be told. Visit HoustonsFirst.org/MyStory to share these stories via social media or email.

IN GRIEF, GREAT HOPE

Even in tragedy, God brings hope and draws people to a deeper walk with Christ. Warren Barfield's short life — and his death — are testimonies to this eternal truth.

While most families were making plans to gather for Thanksgiving last year, the Barfield family gathered to grieve the death of their firstborn, 13-year-old Warren. But in incomprehensible grief, hope stood up. God used Warren's words to touch countless lives for Jesus. And He comforted the family through the kindnesses of friends, Life Bible Study classmates and virtual strangers in a season of loss.

Life had been busy, full of tournament baseball on weekends and other activities that kept a young family's schedule packed, including on several Sunday mornings throughout the year. In spite of the schedule, Julie and Bill Barfield, Warren and Grace, the youngest, found Life Bible Studies they enjoyed when Warren's tournament schedule allowed.

"On November 23 [the date of Warren's ATV accident], I remember thinking how thankful we were to be involved in Life Bible Studies," said Julie. Two classes they had been involved in over several years ministered to them in ways they could not have imagined. Good friends had told them about Jerrell Altic's passionate teaching style, so they began attending As One at The Loop Campus co-taught by Chad Chambers.

Candice Corley, co-director of As One with her husband, Kenny, recalls wondering if she really knew Julie and Bill well enough to insert herself in the middle of their grief. "I got a phone call from a friend of Julie's who told me what had happened to Warren," said Candice. "Jerrell was out of town, as was everyone who would've gone to the hospital to pray. The Holy Spirit kept urging me to be there for them."



Initially, Candice began sending Scripture to Julie via text message, not wanting to intrude. Soon, the Spirit encouraged her to step up and get involved when she heard that Warren had succumbed to his injuries. After getting her children off to school, Candice began making calls to other women whom she thought might help — and pray. She contacted the Pastoral Care office at Houston's First to lay the groundwork for reaching out to the family.

"I knew Bill and Julie would be coming back from the hospital," said Candice, "so I called a friend and we just sat on the sidewalk at their house for about 45 minutes reading the Bible and praying."

When Bill and Julie pulled up in their driveway, there were the women, waiting in the Barfields' driveway. "Candice, a woman I didn't know well — we were just acquaintances, really — embraced me and began praying over me," said Julie. "They circled around us and prayed."

The women were invited into the house. "I went into Warren's bedroom and Candice followed me," said Julie. "I laid on his bed and Candice cuddled me and began reciting Scripture. I don't remember how long before I had the strength to get up, but when I got back into the living room I saw her take her heels off and toss them against the fireplace. I remember thinking, 'I guess she's going to stay.' It was a great comfort."

Students gathered to pray in the Barfields' yard the night Warren died. "Bill, normally a quiet, reserved guy, got his Bible and preached to a group of middle schoolers in the front yard," said Candice. "The man who had just lost his son was telling the story of God, who gave His only son." A mom texted Julie that her son had asked Jesus into his heart. It was Warren's best friend.

Candice's heart was so touched during the week she stayed at the Barfields' after Warren's death. "I watched Julie's sweet dad pray over her, and heard the hymns they sang. Worship music played around the clock," she said. Candice and others began organizing as a way of ministering to the family. They arranged for a home where the Barfields' extended, out-of-town family could stay, lined up babysitting, clothing and high chairs for the young children in the family, and scheduled meals.

Star and Stephen Smith, worship leaders at Houston's First and As One members, received a call from Candice, who asked them to arrange the music for Warren's Celebration of Life service. The Smiths gathered the praise team and led worship at the service.

Having a grandfather, dad and uncle as pastors, the Christian legacy had made a lasting impact on Warren, who had spent countless hours writing — and then preaching — sermons to his family. He had scribbled notes in the margin of his Bible as he listened to Pastor Gregg preach on Sundays. It was from that Bible and the notes Warren left behind that Pastor Gregg preached the message at his service.



"We didn't imagine there would be so many people at the service," said Julie. "Warren's own words spoke about how Jesus had changed his life." Warren's baseball team and coaches were at the celebration, and so many others.

After Pastor Gregg had finished the message, Jerrell took the podium and made an unorthodox move — he led an altar call. "Those who made a decision to follow Christ in that moment," Jerrell asked, "will you stand up?"



Candice said more than a hundred people stood. "It was like a wave," she said, "the Holy Spirit blew through the Worship Center." One woman stood, then some from the baseball team, old people, young people, people of different faiths. All over the room they stood — in the front, the back, and in the balcony."

Jerrell prayed for those who were standing. "Warren just had his greatest runs-batted-in — ever — by the Holy Spirit," said Jerrell. "If you stood up, tell somebody... come tell me, come tell the family, tell somebody: blow up your youth minister's phone, and if you don't go to church anywhere, get to the Barfields' front yard..." (Visit HoustonsFirst.org/MyStory to view Warren's entire Celebration of Life service.)

Two months passed and Candice wondered how she could encourage the Barfields. On the day of the funeral, Julie had wished out loud to know the names of the people who stood up. Candice remembered her comment and decided to send out an email asking people to contact anyone they knew who stood up at the service. She asked that they write their name and #IStoodUp on a baseball, and then toss it in the Barfields' yard.

"Julie and Bill picked up three baskets full of baseballs," said Candice. "And they prayed over each one." Julie keeps the balls in a place where they can see them often. She's grateful that God had them plugged in to a Life Bible Study filled with people who had been prepared to use their God-given gifts.

"On the saddest days when I can hardly breathe, the balls remind me why we're here," said Julie. "We want Warren's life to be a motivator for students, and others, to think about the things of eternity. With grief we have great hope."

A PLACE TO BELONG

Unimaginable heartbreak and a loss of faith led to years of poor choices and painful outcomes, but God's plan of redemption is giving Richie Cook a place to heal and to begin again.



In his eighteenth year, Richie Cook's life took a radical turn from the days growing up at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas. During his freshman year at Texas Tech, he received word that his uncle — his mother's twin — had died. Richie's mom, dad and family dog took to the road the following day to be with out-of-town family members. While on the way, all three died in a car wreck — and so did Richie's faith in God.

"God took my entire family," said Richie. Angry at God, he traded the life he had known for a party lifestyle. "I never grieved. Instead, I held it in," he said. "Drugs numbed my pain."

Richie finished college as a functioning addict, but his life was spiraling quickly out of control. "If it felt good, I did it," he said. Buying and selling drugs became part of a cycle of using and getting clean. Even after a five-and-a-half-year break from drugs, he relapsed.

"I became suicidal," said Richie. "I made a plan to kill myself on Christmas Eve 2011, but a childhood friend invited me to attend Celebration at Houston's First. After attending that night, I changed my mind about dying."

Richie went back to Dallas and was arrested on drug charges. Spending time in a jail cell was a turning point. Confined, and with no place to run, he was forced to

face his demons — and to grieve his losses. In the cell, he spewed venom that eventually turned into repentance and confession. He was sentenced to three years and sent to the Carol Vance Unit in Fort Bend County where he found God waiting to comfort him.

At the Vance Unit, Richie met David and Kaye Trickett, Houston's First members and founders of C.H.A.R.M. Prison Ministry. Richie knew enough about God to know that prison was right where he was supposed to be. "C.H.A.R.M. pours into the lives of men in prison who are hungry for something different in their lives," said Richie. "With their encouragement, the person God created us to be emerges. We found that our pain has a purpose."

The Holy Spirit began to "clean house" in Richie's life and soon truth began replacing lies that he had believed. Music had always been important to Richie, and just prior to being released the Houston's First choir visited the Vance Unit to minister to the prisoners. After hearing them, Richie knew he had to be part of a group like that.

Richie was released on the Monday before Easter this year. That week, he visited the Rehearsal Hall at The Loop Campus on Wednesday evening during choir rehearsal and joined Houston's First on Easter Sunday. "This is where I'm supposed to be," said Richie. "I need to be with people who will walk this Christian life with me. I've found a new family and a place to belong."

HOUSTON 1:8 CHANGES LIVES

Prompted by Houston 1:8, Joe and Linda Caponigro are pouring into the lives of three residents of Houston's Third Ward.



'Giving back' had always been a regular practice for Joe and Linda Caponigro, but not until the couple moved from Atlanta and paid a visit to Houston's First did they realize God was calling them to a deeper level of giving.

"A little here, a little there had been our approach," said Joe. "In the middle of Pastor Gregg's message on living out the Great Commission, Linda and I looked at each other — and the light went on." They joined the church and followed up by making a commitment to MISSION 1:8, the two-year generosity initiative that began in 2013. God encouraged them to give in an even deeper way.

The Caponigros' involvement with the Houston's First missions showcase, the Giving Life Away Expo, and Houston 1:8, an annual weeklong local missions effort, was the launching pad for ministry to their new community.

The couple got involved in Generation One, a ministry focused on rebuilding, both physically and spiritually, Houston's Third Ward, an impoverished area populated by

gangs, drugs and many homeless people. They found themselves being stretched as never before as they sought to cultivate relationships in the community.

Linda and Joe met Tony, Brenda and William, all residents of the Third Ward. "Each of them had homes with no hot water, no electricity and no heat," said Joe. "After Houston 1:8 was over, Linda and I decided we couldn't just tell them, 'See you next year.' We were in for the long haul."

The couple began meeting with Tony, Brenda and William on a regular basis, spending time with them on the weekends, helping them with necessary chores like washing clothes and grocery shopping, and connecting with them over meals together. They also invited them to church and their Life Bible Study.

Soon, Linda and Joe began to see God at work in their new friends' lives. William got a new job, as did Tony, who was able to move out of the Third Ward into a new community that allows him to keep his dog, Scooby. Tony, Brenda and William made decisions to trust Christ, and Tony is planning to be baptized at Houston's First.

"We see growth, what God has done — and is doing — in their lives," said Brenda, "and how he has enriched ours in knowing them."



Visit the Welcome Center at your campus or HoustonsFirst.org to find a Life Bible Study where you can grow in community with others.

FIRST | WORSHIP

Visit HoustonsFirst.org/Worship to learn how you can be part of the Choir & Orchestra, Bands & Singers, Elevate Student Worship, or High 5 Kids' Choir.



Visit HoustonsFirst.org/Houston18 to learn about changes to this annual mission trip to our city taking place the week of July 5.