

Generosity

AT HOUSTON'S FIRST

WHERE HE LEADS

Members at the Sienna Campus learned early in their marriage that when you say 'Yes' to God, He provides for the journey. And what a journey it will be!

In the early years of Gene and Susan Barnett's 35-year marriage, they were "intermittent" givers. In a short time, however, they reached a point where they longed to get in step with God. They committed to pray about everything together and before long the practice began to affect their pocketbook.

"My wife, Susan, is a great woman of faith," said Gene. "She was raised in a Christian home and I came to faith because of her. I accepted Christ when we went through premarital counseling. She has always reminded me that 'we can't outgive God.'"

When expecting their first child, Gene and Susan both felt the Lord leading her to be a stay-at-home mom. Susan quit her job and said 'Yes' to motherhood and ministry. The week their son was born, Gene got a promotion to management. "The salary difference was the same amount I made at work," said Susan.

Trusting God to provide was a lesson learned early in their marriage. "I'm just a farmboy from Kansas," said Gene. "God has done in my life and for our extended family more than I ever thought possible. Because God has been faithful, we have significant confidence in His ability to provide. We don't worry anymore about that."

Gene's career included traveling around the world and making their home in California, Asia and the Middle East. Wherever the job took them, he and Susan became rooted in the local church. In Dubai, Gene and Susan found their church home in a 100-member "home church." While there, God moved on the hearts of the pastor and members to grow the church, which included constructing a new building in the desert.

Gene transferred back to the United States from Dubai while Susan stayed behind for a few months so that their daughter could finish her sophomore year. Gene made his



first visit to The Loop Campus of Houston's First on Easter 2004, the day Gregg Matte was voted in as pastor. When Susan returned, the family attended The Loop for several years before moving to Asia. They rejoined The Loop when they moved back to Houston.

The Barnetts began attending the Sienna Campus the day it opened in 2013, where Susan and Gene partner in Life Bible Study, Susan as teacher and Gene as director; Gene is also on the Welcome Team; and

Susan organizes and leads the Sunday morning prayer ministry. "Though Gene has been involved in several ministries over the years," says Susan, "he sees his primary ministry as providing for our family so I can be involved in ministry, and so we can give to support other ministries."

Gene clearly felt God urging him to wrap up his 35-year career at a large oil service company and "everything fell into place like dominoes," he said. Full retirement was short-lived, however. Gene began consulting and then, this September, joined a smaller company as VP of Operations. Less international travel and fewer late nights at the office give Gene more time to devote to ministry.

"The Lord led us to be a team in ministry," said Susan. "When God asked us to do something, we said 'Yes.' When you do, exciting things start happening. Never know where you'll end up or what you'll be doing. It'll be good, though, wherever He leads you."

WHAT IS YOUR GENEROSITY STORY?

Share it at HoustonsFirst.org/MyStory.

MINISTRY IMPACT YEAR-TO-DATE TOTALS FROM JAN 1 TO SEP 27, 2015

DECISIONS

862 New Church Members
158 Joined By Baptism



ATTENDANCE

181,540 in Life Bible Studies
(4,777 weekly average)

216,558 in Worship Services
(5,553 weekly average)

22,233 on Webcast
(570 weekly average)

MISSIONS

31 Mission Trips with
2,149 Team Members



GENEROSITY

6,398 Givers to Great Commission Giving
1,656 were First-Time Givers



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: "High Point Bible study is back at 1010 Lamar after a nomadic 12 months thanks to @HoustonsFirst Production. #diffmakers" — David Self, @davidself

ALL CAMPUSES

Deacons' Meetings & Church Conference Today

The Deacon Administrative Committee meets today at 2:30p in Rm 501/502. All Deacons will meet at 3:30p in Rm 504/505, followed by the monthly Church Conference at 4:30p. Anyone may attend the Church Conference, but only church members may vote.

CONTACT Diane.Bagby@HoustonsFirst.org

HighPoint Bible Study Wednesdays @ 11:30a — 1010 Lamar (Tunnel Level)

This weekly downtown Bible study is open to everybody! This week, Dr. David Self talks about how prayer measures faith. Bring your lunch or purchase one there for \$5. The lesson begins at 12:10p. Visit HoustonsFirst.org/HighPoint to learn more.

CONTACT Diane.Bagby@HoustonsFirst.org

CanHope

Mon, Oct 12 @ 6:45p — The Loop (Rm 143)

CanHope ministers to families touched by cancer and those who love and care about them. We will share a meal together; an entree is provided, so please bring a salad, vegetable or dessert. Come enjoy this time of testimony, prayer and fellowship! RSVP to 713.957.6764.

CONTACT Sherry.Oradat@HoustonsFirst.org

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

As We Go

Fri, Nov 13 @ 5:30p-Sat, Nov 14 @ 7p — The Loop

As We Go is short for "AS Christians WE help people GO to Heaven." The HUB Student Ministry from all campuses will join Unstoppable Gospel: The Conference in training up students to reach this world for Christ. We'll do missions projects, games, worship and much more all weekend long! Register and learn more at HoustonsFirst.org/Events.

CONTACT Susan.Newman@HoustonsFirst.org

MEN

Warrior's Heart

Every Thu thru Dec 10 @ 6:30-7:30a

The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)

In our Great Men of Faith series, we're looking at men who show faith in all types of situations. Different men teach each week, with Dr. Bruce Fong teaching on Solomon this Thursday. Breakfast is available for \$5. Registration at HoustonsFirst.org/Men is encouraged, but not required.

CONTACT Emily.Brown@HoustonsFirst.org

THE LOOP

YOUNG SINGLE ADULTS

Summit Flag Football

Every Sat thru Oct 31 — Warrior Field

It's football time again! Have fun with other young singles and get some exercise, too. The four weekend double-header schedule will conclude with a single-day playoff tournament on Oct 31. Register for \$40 for the season or \$15 per game at HoustonsFirst.org/Events.

CONTACT Joshua.Bagby@HoustonsFirst.org

ADULTS 60+

Bus Trip to the Flight Museum

Fri, Oct 9 @ 9a-4p — Galveston

"By air, land and sea — the strength to persist, the courage to endure and the power to defend." Relive and learn about our history so you can teach the younger generation what was done in Texas and the nation when the "Greatest Generation" was forged. \$10 for museum plus lunch on your own. Register and learn more by calling 713.957.7661.

CONTACT Tracie.Bowman@HoustonsFirst.org

WOMEN

Called

Every Mon thru Oct 19 @ 6:30-8p

The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)

To be called by God doesn't mean being sent to a remote village to do hard work. The call of God is "know Me," not "show Me." Gather with other women of all ages as Gari Meacham teaches a six-week study on how to better understand your calling. Learn more at HoustonsFirst.org/Women.

CONTACT Haylee.Nelson@HoustonsFirst.org

CYPRESS

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

RE:Focus

Sun, Oct 11 @ 3p-Mon, Oct 12 @ 3p

Students grades 6-12 — get away from life as you know it and RE:Focus on who God has called you to be and how you can walk out that calling. Guys will camp out at Pace Bend Park in Spicewood, TX, and girls will lodge in host homes in Cypress and enjoy hearing from author Chandra Peele. Discover more about what's in store for each and register at HoustonsFirst.org/Cypress.

CONTACT Kaylyn.Sindclair@HoustonsFirst.org

DOWNTOWN

40 Questions About Interpreting The Bible

Every Mon, Oct 12-Nov 23 @ 7-8:30p

Vine Street Studios (1113 Vine St., Ste 117)

For some, attempting to understand the Bible can be a daunting experience. This seven-week class designed to answer major questions about the Bible will equip you with practical skills for reading, understanding and applying the Bible to your everyday life. Facilitated by Ramsey Rabie. Register at HoustonsFirst.org/Downtown.

CONTACT Peter.Lee@HoustonsFirst.org

SIENNA

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

Worst-Case Scenario Survival Weekend

Fri, Oct 9 @ 5p-Sat, Oct 10 @ 8:30p

Pfaff Ranch (3539 Burke Rd, Flatonia, TX)

How do you survive in a culture that is against you? HUB Students (6th-12th grades) are invited to spend a weekend away from the every day to refocus your personal walk Jesus, learn new survival skills, and have a great time! Register and learn more at HoustonsFirst.org/Sienna.

CONTACT Jordan.Floro@HoustonsFirst.org

SPANISH

Worship & Life Bible Studies

Sundays @ 5p & 6:30p — The Loop (Oasis Room)

We are excited to see what the Lord is doing at the Spanish Campus! We invite you to come worship in Spanish and hear Pastor Gregg's message in Spanish or English! After the service, join others in a Life Bible Study — Seguridad en Cristo, Creciendo en la Vida Cristiana and Las Verdades De La Salvación.

CONTACT Karina.Bazaldua@HoustonsFirst.org

UNSTOPPABLE GOSPEL THE CONFERENCE

Nov 13-14 — The Loop

At this first-of-its-kind event at Houston's First, discover how you can be part of spreading the unstoppable Gospel at home and around the world. Learn from keynote speakers, explore topics in breakout sessions, and find out where our mission trips are headed in 2016. Register at HoustonsFirst.org/Unstoppable.



XEE

Every Sun, Oct 11-Nov 22 @ 3:30-5p

The Loop (Rm 249)

XEE equips Jesus-followers to share the Gospel effectively in everyday encounters. You will learn and put into practice relevant, biblical, and relational evangelism skills for our postmodern times.

CONTACT Jonathan.Huegel@HoustonsFirst.org



Tickets available Sat, Oct 17

Celebration returns this December 9-13 with eight presentations of this spectacular Christmas musical experience! The Ticket Sales Launch Event takes place at The Loop Campus on Sat, Oct 17, with in-person sales available from 8a-11a and online sales beginning at 1p. Visit TheFirstChristmas.org for ticket information and more about the return of Celebration!

LIFE BIBLE STUDIES

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

WAITING IN HOPE



MORE STORIES:

MAN UP AND JUMP IN!
NEIGHBORS ON MISSION
WHERE HE LEADS

OCT 4, 2015

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 9:30a-11a

Life Bible Studies 9:30a-11a

Downtown Campus

1010 Lamar • 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

INSPIRED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

For everything there is a season, and at Houston's First, fall is a season of discovery. Find a place to be salt and light, and meet others who will sharpen and challenge you along the way. These are a few of the people, ministries and events that will inspire you to be a difference maker.



PASS IT ON!

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

WAITING IN HOPE

Couples walking the painful journey of infertility are finding purpose and hope in the pain and, at Houston's First, they don't have to walk alone.

"...the further along we got, the more our hope began to slowly fade away. After more than a year on this empty road, through months of fertility treatments and even a miscarriage, our disappointment had turned into frustration, which eventually led to anger. We struggled with bitterness towards each other and jealousy towards our friends who were getting pregnant easily, often during their first month of trying and some who were not even trying at all."—Justin Ramsey

When Kelley and Justin Ramsey failed to have a child after more than a year into their "baby-making journey," they were surprised to find that Houston, the fourth largest city in the nation, offered precious few resources of emotional support for infertile couples. The rollercoaster of fertility treatments and miscarriage threatened to make them lose hope in ever having a child. But instead of bitterness they chose faith, and God is using their journey in Waiting in Hope, a ministry at Houston's First whose aim is to comfort and encourage women and their husbands walking through the dark valley of infertility.

The group was formed in early 2012 by Kelley and a kindred spirit who was also experiencing infertility. Several months after the class began, the co-leader relocated to another state.

Justin and Kelley continued seeking God and allowed Him to cover them during each setback, including a scare with breast cancer. The day Kelley went in for biopsies on both breasts she ovulated.

The two-week wait for biopsy results had her "dinging to the Lord," she says. Years earlier, Kelley's mother had been diagnosed with hormone-receptive breast cancer. "I prayed for the ability not to be fearful," said Kelley. "God gave me the verses Psalm 33:20-23, and as we focused on 'faith' and 'trust', He drew Justin and me even closer. God gave me everything I needed."

The results came back all clear. And before long, she was placing a call to the fertility doctor to announce the news that she was pregnant. After nearly four years of trying, Kelley and Justin welcomed Carter Banks Ramsey at the end of January 2013.

Waiting in Hope was renewed in strength and purpose after Kelley experienced a secondary miscarriage in January this year. The Lord had been waking her in the middle of the night about the group, creating a sense of excitement and urgency about its future. The same month, Kate and Kyle Lawrence became

members of Houston's First. Infertility played prominently in their testimony they allowed minister Malcolm Marshall to share their story publicly just before he baptized them.

After the service, Pastor Gregg called the Lawrences up on the platform to pray over them. Two weeks later, Kate joined Waiting in Hope.

"Infertility is so lonely," said Kate. "I wanted godly support. I tried to find a support group — one with a biblical perspective. Kyle and I wanted to be bold about telling our story, that infertility doesn't have to take you away from God."

The Lawrences began trying to have a baby in 2011, with no success. While Kate was being operated on for a suspected uterine abnormality, Kate's mother, Sandi, and Kyle kept watch in the waiting room. The subject of Kyle's relationship with the Lord came up and the conversation culminated with Sandi leading him in a prayer to accept Christ there in the waiting room.

That day, not only did Kyle nail down his relationship with Jesus, but they learned that Kate was perfectly healthy. And in spite of their history of two rounds of IVF and a miscarriage (Luke), Kate sees God's hand at work in their heartache. She sees how He is allowing them the opportunity to share their hearts with others who are walking a similar path.

"If I ever wondered if God's hand is in our infertility, the question was answered when He led us to this ministry," says Kate. "I feel so blessed to be part of it. I feel inspired and encouraged — and not alone. Infertility has the potential for destruction, but I see the ministry as a light and a beacon for healing."

Kelley and Justin are expecting their second child on November 22 this year, five years after their first miscarriage during the Thanksgiving season.



Justin & Kelley Ramsey (left) and Kyle & Kate Lawrence

MAN UP AND JUMP IN!

Are men and women so very different when it comes to getting plugged in at church? This month, a special men's retreat in the great outdoors may be the jumping in point for guys wanting to make a difference.

Ryan McPhetridge remembers what it felt like to be an outsider when at age 28 he began testing the waters of church involvement. A free Astros ticket handed out at a local congregation landed him in the same row with two guys who invited him to their singles Bible Study class. The invitation set the foundation for his participation in lay- and vocational ministry in the following years. Now a family man in his early 40s and an eight-year member of Houston's First, Ryan has been both an attendee *and* has helped to plan events that connect men in the church. He points to the Houston's First 'guys only' getaway, Man Up!, as a non-threatening entry point for men as well as an event for someone who has experience to share.

"There's something magical about getting out of the normal day-to-day setting," said Ryan. "At work, many of us go to offsite planning meetings to get away from distractions. And guys generally do 'shoulder-to-shoulder' before they get 'face-to-face.' Sometimes, we just need a reason to talk to someone."

Man Up! is being held at Trinity Pines Conference Center in the Piney Woods about an hour-and-a-half drive north of Houston. In addition to sports activities — football, soccer, disc golf, fishing, clay shooting, paintball, archery and more — the keynote speaker is Ben Stuart, director of Breakaway Ministries at Texas A&M. Pastor Gregg, and various ministers at Houston's First will lead breakout sessions throughout the weekend.

Taking advantage of activities, like the men's retreat, to get connected with others in the church not only has a satisfying social component, but also acts as a bridge that leads to spiritual growth and the development of leadership skills. "There are a lot of guys who have served a long time in church who make themselves available to share what they know," said Kevin Ha, who attends the Cypress Campus. "I still do lunch with a guy I met at a retreat 10 years ago. He's become a lifelong friend."

Kevin and Ryan view the needs of men and women as being somewhat different when it comes to being drawn to the church. "Women are typically more relational than men," says Kevin. "While some women might naturally be drawn to worship or studies, many men like to *do* things like digging up roots at a widow's house or being active in some way."

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Thu, Oct 15 @ 6-8:30p — The Loop Campus (Fellowship Center)

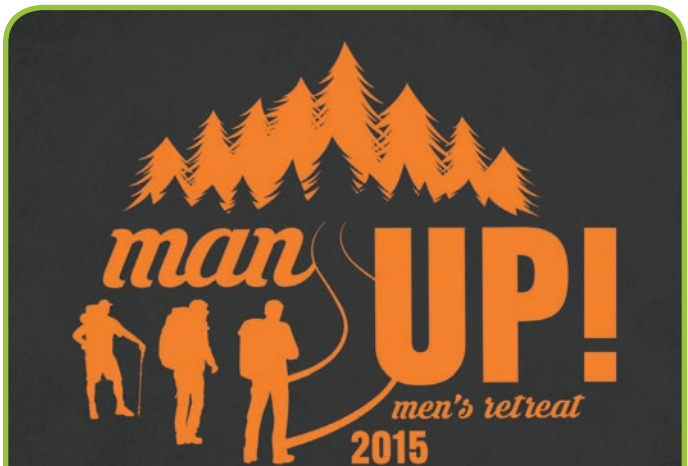
Hosted by the Waiting in Hope ministry, You Are Not Alone is an evening of support and encouragement for couples facing infertility. The event is free with dinner at 6p and the program beginning at 6:30p with topical discussions, personal heartfelt stories filled with hope, and tools to leave you renewed during a difficult season. Couples are encouraged to attend together, but husbands and wives are welcome to attend on their own. Register at HoustonFirst.org/Events or contact waitinginhopehfb@gmail.com or 713.957.7641 for more information about the event or Waiting In Hope.



The Houston's First Men's Retreat in 2013

One case in point is member Lyndle Jackson, who began coming to church as a young married guy with no children. "He didn't say a whole lot," Kevin recalled. "He builds houses. He went from not being plugged in to leading Men: Serve at the Cypress Campus this year. He is coordinating the group that serves widows, fixing things around their homes and encouraging them."

A group of men committed to the Lord and to his Church changes the direction of their families as well as the local church. "Jesus knew a truth we've forgotten," said David Murrow, author of *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, "if you transform men, you transform the family, the community and the society. Draw a man to church, and you often get the family in the bargain."



Oct 23-24 — Trinity Pines Conference Center

Wherever you are in your journey, the God of the universe is excited to help you take the next step. Gather with men from every campus for an action-packed time of adventure, inspiration, and connection with keynote speaker Ben Stuart, worship leader Ryan Langford, and numerous breakout leaders. Details and registration at HoustonFirst.org/Men.

NEIGHBORS ON MISSION

Sprinkle a little salt and light into the night on October 31, and you will find Christ-like flavor permeating neighborhoods throughout the Houston metro area on your block or at The Loop.

The first truly cool air of fall signals that it's time to play outdoors, and we have a couple of great ideas for family fun! FirstFest at The Loop offers games, food, music and more, or you may opt to Light the Night in your own neighborhood by hosting a block party, cookout, or giving away special treats and engaging neighbors in conversation.

Melanie and Chris Russell, their two boys and two friends camped out in their Northwest Houston driveway last year to host Light the Night in their neighborhood. Glow sticks, bottled water, free Bibles and top-notch candy brought out residents in droves in a traditionally "keep to yourself" kind



Light The Night gathering in 2014

of neighborhood. "Our neighbors don't even do National Night Out," said Melanie. "Halloween is the one night a year where they will come to your house, look in your eyes, smile, and even teach their children to talk to you."

Bibles, compliments of Houston's First, were popular giveaways at the Russell family's Light the Night celebration. "They squealed, 'Look, Mom! Free Bibles... can I have one?'" Melanie recalled. "One mom said, 'I signed up for a Bible study that starts next week, and now I have a Bible!'" Melanie and crew are up for a repeat this year. "All we had to do was be obedient to the Lord and tell the people it was free," she said. "God did the rest."

Jason and Kendra Boehning and their two sons offered candy and games at their first Light the Night party hosted in Sienna Planation. They became acquainted with a couple of families that night and invited a 20-something young man to church. He has since begun attending a Life Bible Study at the Sienna Campus. "We feel called to be at Sienna," said Jason. "It's not just our neighborhood; it's our mission field."

Michelle and Clark Reynolds, their sons and daughter have been making an epic splash on October 31 in the Bellaire neighborhood for years, giving neighbors living blocks away reason to ask, "What's the theme this year?" Last year, the Reynolds family hosted a *Frozen*-themed party, giving out popsicles and projecting the movie, *Frozen*, on the side of their home for all the neighbors to watch. They gave out 450 meticulously packed goodie bags complete with decorative Scripture cards inside each one.

Their son Cole, a ninth grader in the HUB Student Ministry, invited other HUB students over to serve their neighbors at last year's gathering. The family had

a chili bar, drinks and desserts for the students, who later went out to meet and greet the neighbors. Music from *Frozen* could be heard blocks away.

"I've become invested in my group of Jewish mom friends," said Michelle. "They all come over for Light the Night. All barriers are down, and everyone feels open and welcome." A couple from Taiwan visiting one of the neighbors wandered over and marveled at the number of children and adults gathered around Michelle's home. The couple was so taken with Michelle and Clark's event that they asked them if they could have a picture made with them standing in their driveway. "There was a bit of a language barrier, but I'm thinking they probably took the Light the Night idea back to Taiwan," said Michelle.

WHICH WILL YOU CHOOSE?

FIRSTFEST | LIGHT THE NIGHT
Sat, Oct 31
When making plans for Sat, Oct 31, choose between FirstFest or Light The Night. FirstFest is a free event open to the public at The Loop Campus (4-8p). Light The Night is hosted by you at your home or in your neighborhood. Both are opportunities to connect people with our church and Jesus Christ! Visit HoustonFirst.org/October31 for resources to help you make the most of both opportunities. The first 50 people who share their Light The Night plans on that page will receive a \$50 gift to help cover expenses!