

# LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

*“You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”*

Matthew 5:14-16

Believers are called to let the light of Christ shine through them, and at Houston's First that translates to being a Differencemaker — moving beyond being a bystander and actively meeting needs and sharing the love and truth of Jesus with others in the hope that they might respond to His call for salvation.

Through the ages, members of the Houston's First family have determined to speak the name of Christ and give their lives away in service to others in their community and to people around the world. For 175 years, they have been living out the Differencemakers Declaration long before it was written down:

*I was made for more than watching.  
I have a history-changing, difference-making,  
life-giving, Spirit-empowered legacy to leave.  
Jesus, I ask you to work deeply in me and clearly  
through me as I pray, give and go in Your love.  
I am a Differencemaker.  
In Jesus' name, Amen!*

So — are you a Differencemaker?



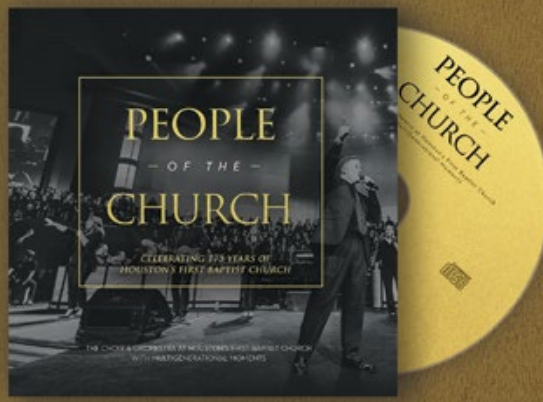
# THANK YOU, DIFFERENCEMAKERS!

As Houston's First celebrates 175 years of making a difference, we're thanking 175 local organizations who are also making a difference in the Houston area. Each Life Bible Study was asked to select a group — faith-based or secular — to present with a \$1,000 check provided by the church. So far, we've thanked a diverse assortment of groups, including fire stations, public schools, homeless shelters, adoption agencies and more. We're grateful for their contributions that make our city better!



## PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH

NEW CD AVAILABLE NOW CELEBRATING 175 YEARS OF HOUSTON'S FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



Featuring 10 songs, including several written by Houston's First worship leaders such as "People of The Church," "Unstoppable," "Grace, Grace" and more.

The Choir & Orchestra at Houston's First Baptist Church with MultiGenerational Moments

## THE *new* HOUSTONSFIRST.ORG

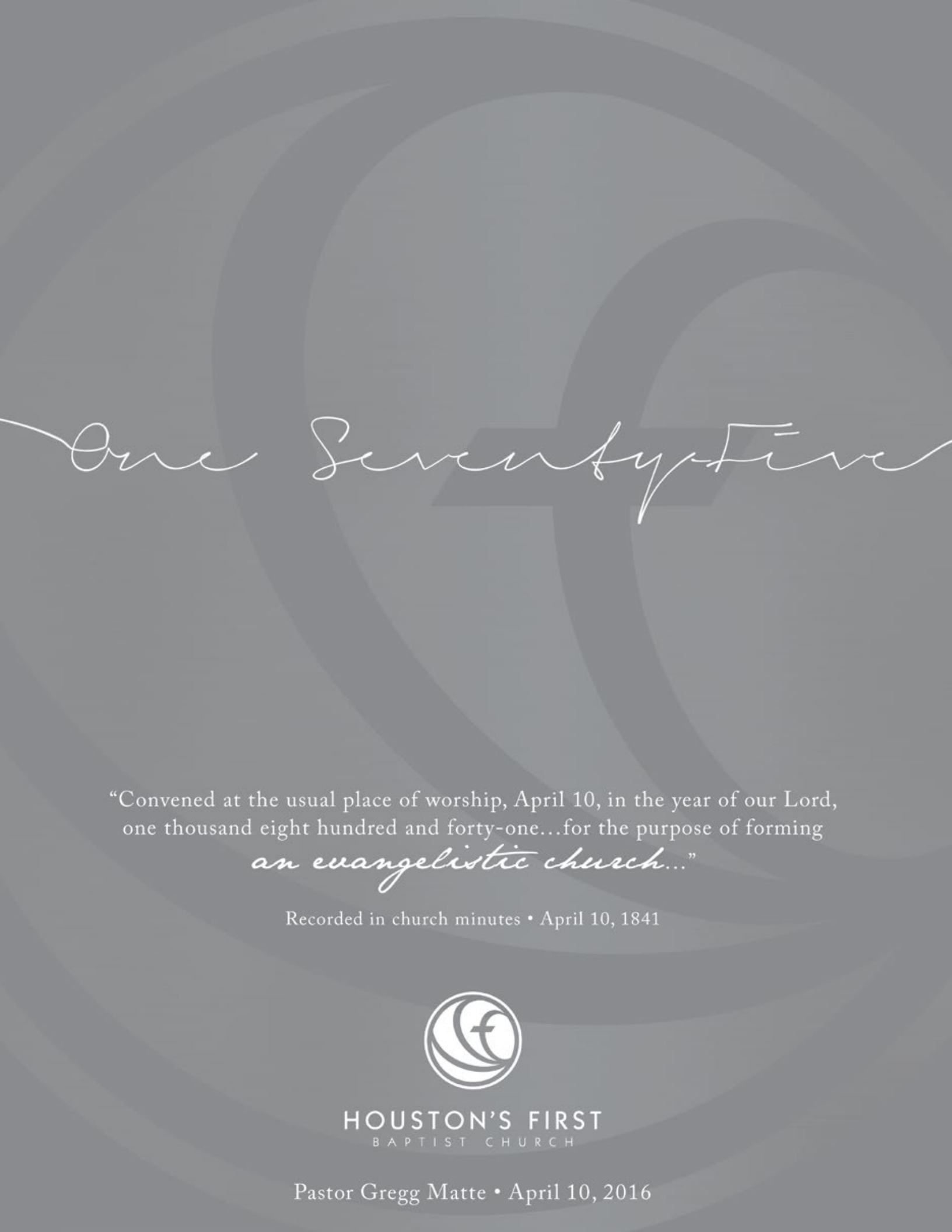


HoustonsFirst.org is an essential tool for our church — and a new version of the website launches on Monday, April 11!

- Enhancements include:
- campus-driven content
  - customizable calendars
  - advanced search capability

## OUR CAMPUSES

- 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



“Convened at the usual place of worship, April 10, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and forty-one...for the purpose of forming an evangelistic church...”

Recorded in church minutes • April 10, 1841



HOUSTON'S FIRST  
BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Gregg Matte • April 10, 2016

# A SURE FOUNDATION



God began laying a foundation for what would become the first Baptist church in Houston more than 175 years ago through a smattering of Baptists who began migrating to the tent city in the late 1830s. Then, a \$2,500 donation from a Christian layman in Georgia to the Baptist Home Mission Society of New York City funded a young missionary and preacher, James Huckins, who came to Texas and was instrumental in organizing and chartering First Baptist Church in Houston on April 10, 1841.

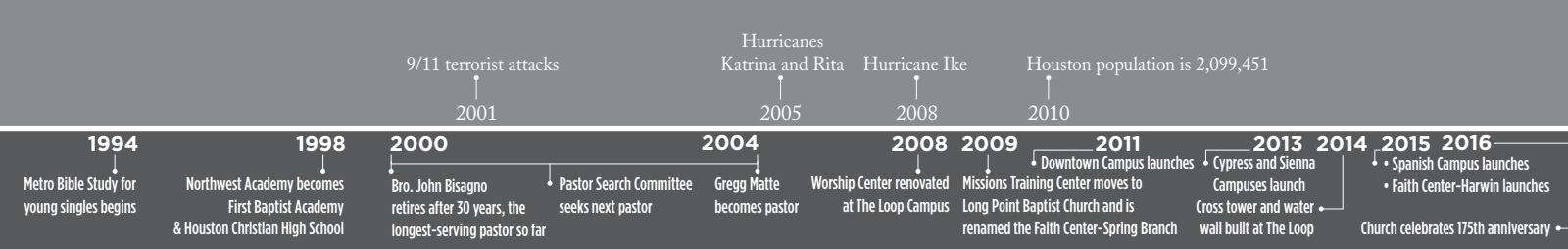
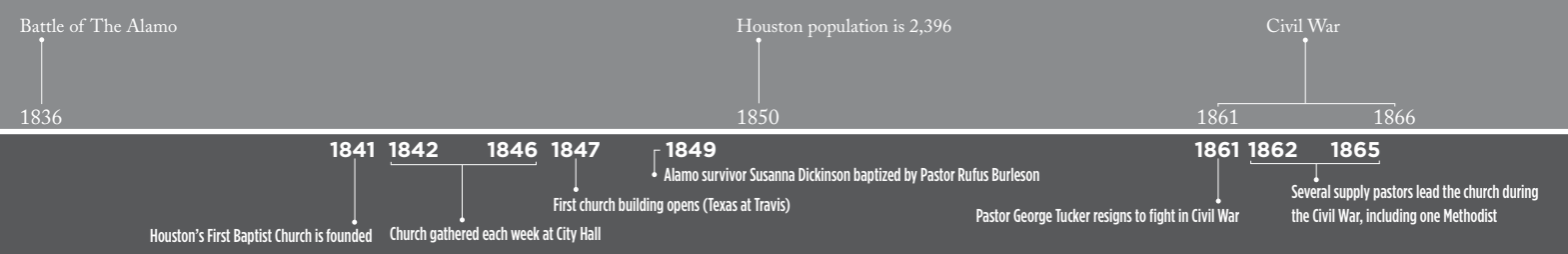
In seasons of war, sickness, scarcity and prosperity, God continued to use godly pastors to guide our church as we labored to build His kingdom in Houston — and beyond. We pay tribute to the many pastors who gave their hearts and lives as ministers of the Gospel at Houston's First. Among the more than two dozen men who have led us were natives of 13 different states, and one born in England. Some filled the pulpit until a permanent pastor was found while others faithfully served Houston's First for many years.

John Bisagno, a 35-year old pastor in Oklahoma, accepted the call to lead Houston's First in 1970. His commitment to evangelism and Christian education, love of worldwide missions, and his fearless attitude in using media to spread the Gospel led church membership to swell to 17,000 in the first 15 years of his tenure, up from 3,500 prior to his arrival. With no room to expand downtown, Brother John — as he is known — began to pray and plan for a move out west. In 1972, church members voted overwhelmingly to begin the next phase of growth at 7401 Katy Freeway at the 610 Loop. The first church service was held at The Loop on April 3, 1977.

God continued to bless Houston's First through increased membership and giving, even after Brother John's retirement in 2000 after 30 years of service — the longest tenured pastor in our history. Under the gifted leadership of Dr. David Self, the church was thriving, but all were praying for the right pastor to lead the church into the future.

On Easter Sunday in 2004, 33-year old Gregg Matte accepted the call to become our next pastor. Matte had never pastored a church, but had established and led Breakaway Ministries at Texas A&M University — a campus Bible study with more than 5,000 students each week. Pastor Gregg has built upon the foundation of evangelism and foreign missions laid by Brother John and others who came before him. He cast the vision for launching four additional campuses to reach our Houston neighbors with the Gospel, while at the same time leading the church to unprecedented giving in support of missional endeavors in our city, our nation and our world.

Today, Brother John and Pastor Gregg have a special friendship that perhaps only two such visionary and faithful pastors can share.





A Timeless Vision: Gather. Grow. Give.

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 (MATTHEW 28:19-20).

## GATHER OUR HEARTS



Though we may worship in different dialects at Houston's First, our hearts speak the same language of love for Christ. His name has been lifted high through prayer, the preaching of God's Word, and music since 1841.

During those early years, our church gathered at City Hall on Sundays before our first building was erected in 1847 at the corner of Travis Street and Texas Avenue. Later, after our second building was destroyed by the Great Storm of 1900, the people of Houston's First met each Sunday at a rented dance hall until a new building was built in 1904. The church moved again to a new building in the 1920s and remained there until 1977.

Houston's First now gathers at five area campuses: The Loop (1977), Downtown (2011), Cypress (2013), Sienna (2013) and Spanish (2015). Other churches gather at our Faith Center in Spring Branch, and Woodhaven Baptist Deaf Church, with roots dating back to 1924 when young Lillian Beard began interpreting for her deaf parents and others, has been a freestanding deaf church since 1983 and is a thriving ministry of Houston's First.

In addition to worship gatherings, Houston's First has long hosted a variety of community events, citywide revivals and Bible studies, Christmas musical productions, retreats and conferences, concerts, movie premieres and other special gatherings to edify and address the needs of the Body of Christ and to call on people to know Him.



## GROW OUR SOULS



As early as the Civil War, Sunday School classes were being taught informally at Houston's First by Mrs. T.B. Hadley. When the church moved to a larger facility in 1922, Sunday School was formally organized and better accommodated in the new building, and classes quickly outgrew their space.

Sunday School, or Life Bible Study as we call it now, continues at Houston's First, meeting together each week for the sake of community. In these smaller settings are where the deepest connections are made, both to the Word of God and between brothers and sisters in Christ.

Through Life Bible Studies, needs are met in every stage of life. The NextGen Ministry offers classes for babies through 12th grade, and college students, young and older single adults, single parents, married couples of various ages, empty nesters, senior adults, and men and women have classes tailored to them.

In addition to Life Bible Studies, for decades Houston's First has offered topical classes outside of Sundays. Today, these are called Milestones and they meet on Wednesday evenings and throughout the week, providing classes in various subjects — relationships, marriage, parenting, finances, books of the Bible and more.

After selling our downtown property to move to the Katy Freeway, we maintained the right to continue gathering on that block of land. Today, HighPoint Bible Study meets each Wednesday during lunch right there at 1010 Lamar — where our building once stood — and on Sundays our Downtown Campus gathers in that space for worship and Life Bible Studies. Houston's First has taught the Word of God there for nearly 100 years.



## GIVE OUR LIVES

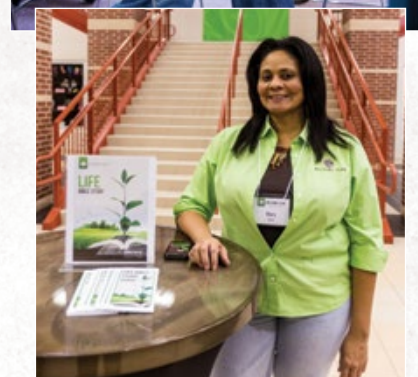
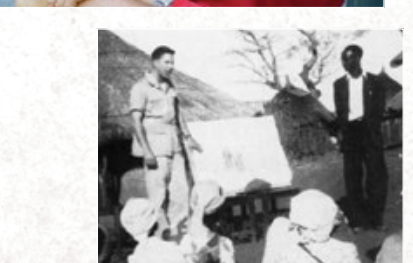


Early pioneers of First Baptist Church left a legacy of giving their time, talents and resources for God's purposes, casting the culture of difference-making we see around us today. W. M. Tryon, the second missionary sent to Texas, took the reins as our pastor in 1845. When yellow fever ravaged Houston, Tryon remained faithful to his call, staying at his post and caring for those who had contracted the deadly disease. He too was infected and died in 1847.

Houston's First members continue to give selflessly for the cause of Christ, and their sacrifices are making an impact not only on the nation's fourth most populous city, but also around the world. In 2016, our church is sending 30 teams on short-term mission trips to 14 nations on five continents, and we currently support 62 full-time missionaries advancing the Gospel in 21 countries.

Beyond the church's ministries, Houston's First has played a role in founding, funding, equipping and guiding a variety of organizations and churches throughout our history. Our church was instrumental in starting the Memorial Hospital system (now Memorial Hermann), Star of Hope Mission and Baylor University. Individual members followed God's lead and played a role in founding First Place 4 Health, C.H.A.R.M. Prison Ministry, Living Water International, Every Village and other ministries. As a church family, we have provided financial support for countless faith-based organizations, partner churches and church plants.

Here at home, individual members have made the ministry of Houston's First come to life by serving voluntarily in countless roles — welcoming guests, teaching classes, caring for children, leading worship, distributing food and clothes, praying for staff and members, visiting the sick — and more. Today, it's estimated that over 1,000 people make a difference by serving in some capacity every week at Houston's First.



## A GENEROUS CHURCH

The \$2,500 seed money that brought the first missionary to Texas and chartered the first Baptist church in Houston took deep root. Subsequent leaders and members watered and cultivated that first church plant with a spirit of generosity and determination as they embraced Christ's command to go and make disciples of all nations. Over the years, the ministry of Houston's First has continued thanks to God's favor, good stewardship and the ongoing generosity of the church family through their tithes and offerings as they have been given to special giving opportunities such as these:

**1948**  
Members contributed \$160,000 to retire the debt on the church mortgage at Lamar & Fannin Streets, which originated in 1926 for \$550,000.

**1977**  
Under Bro. John Bisagno's leadership, the Nothing is Impossible building campaign to relocate to the 610 Loop and Katy Freeway called on members to underwrite an initial \$8.1 million for the facility.

**1977-1980**  
For three consecutive years, the church, through the World Mission Offering, gave the largest amount ever given to state, national and international missions in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention.

**1981-1984**  
The 2x2 building campaign sought to raise \$20 million in 24 months by asking members to give a double tithe for two years. The funds enabled construction of the Christian Life Center (now the Fitness & Recreation Center) and for additional floors to be added to the building to provide more classrooms and meeting space. In addition, \$2 million was given each year to missions.

**2007-2010**  
The Be Part of The Story capital campaign under Pastor Gregg Matte asked members to give \$20 million to renovate the Worship Center, provide for capital improvements at The Loop, support various mission projects and retire the church's debt. With more than \$26 million raised, those goals were accomplished, and the church was able to build a new Children's wing to accommodate additional growth since the campaign began.

**2013-2015**  
In the MISSION 1:8 generosity initiative, Pastor Gregg introduced a "Generosity Ladder" that challenged members to pray and increase their level of giving during a two-year period in order to support the current ministry and operations while increasing the church's overall giving to missions endeavors from 22% to 41% of the budget. The MISSION 1:8 original goal was \$60 million, but members gave more than \$75 million. More than \$30 million of that was given to care for the poor, widows, orphans and prisoners, and to missional endeavors in our city, our nation and our world.

### WORLD MISSION OFFERINGS

Collected each year, this offering supports missionaries serving in Texas, the United States and around the globe. Thanks to the generosity of the Houston's First family, our church is often one of the top-giving churches. In 2015, Houston's First gave more than any other church in Texas to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program.



### GENEROSITY AT HOUSTON'S FIRST

Support the ministry of Houston's First by sharing your generosity

**Onsite**  
Place donations in collection plates or boxes at your campus.

**Online**  
Give one-time or recurring donations at [HoustonFirst.org](http://HoustonFirst.org).

**On Mobile**  
Text your campus code to 77977 to receive a secure link for giving on your mobile device.  
HFBCLoop • HFBC Cypress • HFBC Downtown • HFBC Sienna • HFBC Spanish • HFBC Webcast

