

Generosity

AT HOUSTON'S FIRST

GENEROSITY DRIVES MINISTRY

The focus of Houston's First to take ministry outside the walls of the church inspires confidence and generosity in members of the Sienna Campus.



Lee and Susan Eidson, and their boys, Luke, William and Noah

Lessons in stewardship shaped Lee and Susan Eidson's attitudes toward ownership and giving in the early days of marriage while attending High Altitude, a Married Young Adult Life Bible Study at The Loop Campus on Sunday nights.

"Do you really own the things you have, and why are you pursuing some of the things you are? Those were a couple of the questions posed to us about our finances and possessions," said Lee. "The lesson was that God provides money and possessions as tools for ministry and communicating the Gospel."

Having laid that foundation, over the years Lee and Susan went from being casual givers to tithers to becoming involved in giving for larger projects and ministries sponsored by the church.

The history of intentional, transparent and direct use of members' gifts for ministry has given the Eidsons confidence in contributing to Houston's First. "We have seen the wise management of finances by the church in paying off debt, and giving to the poor, widows, orphans and prisoners," said Lee. "We also see the funds that are given directly to churches and ministries all over the United States and throughout the world to build them up so they can minister to their own communities."

Generosity also factored into the purchase of their Pearland home based on the Eidsons' early acknowledgment of God's ownership of all their possessions. Since then, they have opened up their home for weekly small groups, celebrations and Backyard Kids' Club, a yearly, weeklong neighborhood gathering for children. "Our home is God's to use for His glory," said Lee.

One of the most compelling confirmations of their walk of generosity and God's provision for their family was the Eidsons' decision to give a lump sum over and above their regular giving. "Just weeks later I was given recognition at work and awarded a bonus in the same amount we gave," said Lee. "We clearly saw God's hand taking care of us."

Visit the Giving page at HoustonFirst.org to read more generosity stories, make one-time or recurring contributions, give to mission trips, and more.

GIVING AT HOUSTONSFIRST.ORG

MINISTRY IMPACT YEAR-TO-DATE TOTALS FROM JAN 1 TO JULY 31, 2016

DECISIONS

674 New Church Members
120 Joined By Baptism

17% OF NEW MEMBERS
WERE BAPTIZED

ATTENDANCE

148,351 in Life Bible Studies
(4,945 weekly average)
172,777 in Worship Services
(5,573 weekly average)
32,722 on Webcast
(1,056 weekly average)

MISSIONS

28 Mission Trips with
1,842 Team Members



NEWS + UPDATES

ALL CAMPUSES

HighPoint Bible Study

Wednesdays @ 11:30a — 1010 Lamar (Tunnel Level)
This weekly downtown Bible study is open to everybody! NextGen Minister Doug Bischoff will be teaching this Wednesday at 12:10p. Bring your lunch, or purchase one there for \$8. Visit HoustonFirst.org to learn more.

CONTACT Diane.Bagby@HoustonFirst.org

First H.O.P.E.

Sat, Aug 13 @ 9a-12p — The Loop (Rm 501/502)
For job seekers and those wanting a career change, First H.O.P.E. job ministry offers a professional consultant, resume/interview tips, career assessment, and more. Join us for this training with guest speaker Ernie Perez speaking about changing careers.

CONTACT Bob.Straud@HoustonFirst.org

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

Parenting Workshop with Dr. Tim Elmore

Sat, Aug 27 @ 9a-1p — The Loop (Worship Ctr)
Parents - ever wonder what you're getting right or wrong? In this workshop, author Dr. Tim Elmore will discuss *12 Huge Mistakes Parents Can Avoid*, providing insights to help you lead kids to succeed before/after graduation, prepare them to become adults, and much more! Register at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Katie.Walker@HoustonFirst.org

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

Oasis Conference for Single Moms

Sat, Aug 13 @ 8a-3p — The Loop
Are you ready for a break? Single moms can get away from the everyday and be refreshed at this one-day event! Jennifer Maggio from The Life of a Single Mom Ministries will speak and Lisa Pierre will lead worship. Children will have activities, too! Learn more and register at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Holly.Crain@HoustonFirst.org

WOMEN

Women's Retreat: Unchanging

Oct 7-8 — The Omni Westside
Every two years, the Houston's First Women's Ministry holds a retreat for women of all ages from every campus to encourage unity in Christ. This year's retreat theme is Unchanging, based on Isaiah 33:6. Invite your sister, mother, daughter, neighbor and friends to hear Gari Meacham talk about how God is unchanging. He. Just. Is. Visit HoustonFirst.org for costs, rooming arrangements, retreat personalities and online registration.

CONTACT Meredyth.Cann@HoustonFirst.org

MEN

Generation-to-Generation Orientation

Sat, Aug 20 @ 8:30a-12p — The Loop (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.

CONTACT Emily.Brown@HoustonFirst.org

THE LOOP

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

Welcome to The HUB

Sun, Aug 21 @ 12:30-2p — The Loop (The HUB area)
Having a sixth grader, and soon, a teenager, can be stressful, exciting and challenging. The HUB Student Ministry comes alongside parents and students, encouraging them as they begin navigating uncharted waters. Meet The HUB staff, sixth grade teachers and other families with students over an informative lunch to learn about The HUB and hear an encouraging word from Dr. Richard Ross, Student Ministry professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. RSVP at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Tony.Bianco@HoustonFirst.org

SINGLE ADULTS

Impact Beach Party

Sat, Aug 20 @ 12-8p — 23203 San Luis Pass Rd, Galveston
Sometimes you just need a beach day! Gather with other single adults from Impact for a fun relaxing day at the beach. With a house right on the water, everyone will enjoy an afternoon of swimming, floating, volleyball or hang inside with board games and a gorgeous view. Register and learn more at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Chris.Heitman@HoustonFirst.org

CYPRESS

Cypress Backpack Collection

Aug 1-14 — Smith Middle School

Cypress Fourth Annual Back-to-School Backpack Collection for Cypress community partnership Mansions at Hastings Green began Mon, Aug 1. We are collecting backpacks and school supplies for Pre-K through 12th grade. Drop donations at the Opportunities Table today or Sun, Aug 14, or at the Cypress Ministry Center Mon-Thur. Pick up a list of supplies at the Opportunities Table or online at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Toby.Thomas@HoustonFirst.org

DOWNTOWN

Men's Discipleship Course —

33 The Series: A Man and His Design

Every Monday, Aug 15-Sep 26 @ 7-8:30p

Vine Street Studios (1113 Vine St, Ste 117)

In this six-week study, men will be inspired and equipped to pursue authentic manhood as modeled by Jesus Christ in his 33 years on earth. Explore the basic foundations of authentic manhood and God's clear design for men, including the four "faces" of manhood. Register for just \$15 at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Peter.Lee@HoustonFirst.org

ESPAÑOL

Make it Your Church Orientation

Sun, Aug 21 @ 6:30p — The Loop (Reception Rm)

Discover what it means to be a member of Houston's First! Over dinner, meet staff members, hear about our mission, vision, and ministries. This is a perfect opportunity to invite your Spanish-speaking friends and family. RSVP and learn more about membership at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Karina.Bazaldua@HoustonFirst.org

SIENNA

WOMEN

Fall Women's Bible Studies

James: Mercy Triumphs by Beth Moore

Tuesdays, Sep 13-Nov 15 @ 10a-12p

Sienna Campus (The Corner)

In the ten weeks together, we will go through an eight-week video series with small group time that will provide encouragement and support through this book of faith, joy, prayer and hardship. And a bonus: in two of those weeks, we will serve together in local mission projects. Childcare available with registration.

Lies Women Believe

Wednesdays, Sep 14-Nov 16 @ 6:30-8p

Sienna Campus (The Corner)

10 Women. 10 Stories. 10 Weeks. Come and hear Sienna women share the ways God redeemed them from their own personal pit and the tools God used to help them break free from the lies of the enemy. Register at HoustonFirst.org for \$20 (additional \$5 for childcare).

CONTACT Cherry.Sears@HoustonFirst.org



Pray for our missionary Patti LaCarter and the team at Comunidade Batista Oceânica Internacional as they minister to those visiting for the Olympics. If you are traveling to Rio, contact Jessica Nolte (Jessica.Nolte@HoustonFirst.org) for more information about the church.

For more information on Giving Life Away, contact Charlotte.Nease@HoustonFirst.org



SHUTTLE PARKING

Do you attend The Loop on Sunday mornings? Use shuttle parking to make room for others! It's a simple way to expand the ministry of our church. Get details on the five garages at HoustonFirst.org.

LIFE BIBLE STUDIES

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



TEACHERS ON MISSION

AUG 7, 2016

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE
SERVING FAMILIES
THE DEEPEST PAIN
GENEROSITY DRIVES MINISTRY

Caroline Koontz — Teacher in Houston's Fifth Ward
Andy Walters — Teacher in Alief ISD

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. For information, call 713.681.8000, or visit HoustonFirst.org

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

Español Campus

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

Sienna Campus

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

TEACHERS ON MISSION

In a few weeks, teachers and students will get back into the routine as they begin the new school year. But to most teachers, there is nothing at all routine about their chosen vocation.

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

Two Houston's First members and teachers share their passion for serving students and explain that a blurry line exists between career and ministry.

Houston's First member Andy Walters is a seventh year teacher currently teaching fifth grade at an Alief area intermediate school. He began his tenure teaching ESL classes for primarily Burmese and other African, Asian and Middle Eastern students. Like Andy, fifth grade math teacher Caroline Koontz found her calling at a multicultural school in Houston's Fifth Ward. Both educators have seen God's power working in lives of their students inside the classroom — and the difference it is making for the rest of their lives.



Caroline Koontz and her fifth graders

Two years ago, Caroline worked at a Houston 1:8 (the Houston's First citywide, weeklong mission trip) ministry site in the Fifth Ward, where she was distributing food to children. Twin girls in bare feet came to her table. "They were starving," said Caroline. "Then the first day of school — my first year of teaching — these same girls walked into my classroom. The door to trust had already been open because I had served them outside the walls of the school."

Caroline was introduced to the Houston inner city school where she now teaches on a class field trip while attending Texas A & M University, and she immediately knew this is where she was meant to pour out her life. "The teaching there was the most incredible I've ever seen," she recalls. "Their mission is to prove the impossible is possible — breaking children out of the cycle of poverty through education." Her first year teaching at the school was challenging, she admits. Many children don't know about respect for authority; some don't speak English; some have been through more foster homes than they can count; one child couldn't even tie her shoes or count to 10. "I began to pray that God would give me some single truth to anchor me when the kids' stories seem just too big," said Caroline. "The word He gave me was 'unstoppable,' and that was before I had heard about Pastor Gregg's book or series. God is bigger than where we come from; with Him all things are possible."

One girl she taught came to Caroline as a non-verbal, physically large child who had tried repeatedly to kill people, including her parents, siblings, other teachers and eventually Caroline herself. Her stop in Caroline's class was the last-ditch effort to help her before she was placed into an asylum. "She came to us more like an animal than a person, but we worked with her consistently, loving her — I wept on my knees before God on her behalf — and He transformed her," she said. "Over the

past two years she has progressed beyond attacking people; in fact, she loves to stick up for the 'little guy,' often giving her chair to someone who has none, and she loves helping others. The change in her character has been a complete turnaround. It was a God-sized miracle."

Serving with middle school youth as a teenager set the stage for Andy Walters' future. A transplant from Nebraska, Andy's student teaching stint in Houston from the University of Nebraska landed him in an Alief school teaching international students. "I loved the city and the kids," he said. "I fell in love with the students' hearts to learn."



Andy Walters

The early days were spent overcoming the language barrier, but with the help of a student who could translate, his eyes began opening to a different world — the one his students were trying to make sense of after leaving their home countries. "I wanted to help my kids along as much as possible, to foster the heart they have for learning," he said. "It sparked in my own heart a love for international students."

About a year ago, Andy heard about the future opening of the church's Faith Center-Harwin in southwest Houston and its close proximity to SunBlossom Mountain Apartments. The complex is home for a variety of internationals, including those from Burma, Nepal and Bhutan. When he learned that Houston 1:8 would be serving SunBlossom residents, that's all it took for him to get involved.

"I saw a couple of my former students at Houston 1:8, who are by now in middle school," said Andy. "They were serving as translators to help kids and adults communicate. As a teacher, that's what we want to see in our students — them taking on leadership roles in the community. That's a great return on investment."

BACK 2 SCHOOL SUNDAY

Sun, Aug 21 — All Campuses

Let's show our support for teachers, administrators and students as they begin a new school year! To get in to the spirit of going back to school on Sun, Aug 21, we invite you to:

- Wear jeans and tennis shoes to church.
- Bring \$30 Academy gift cards to help kids in need buy shoes for school.
- Visit a Life Bible Study at your campus if you don't already go to one.

SERVING FAMILIES

Not all teachers earn a living at it. Some of the finest teachers express their calling in the many Life Bible Studies, Milestones classes or ministries that meet regularly at the five campuses of Houston's First. NextGen (birth-twelfth grade) ministers and teachers are on mission to provide resources that help parents create a God-honoring, peaceful home whose members are growing spiritually and in relationships with others.

Houston's First members Rhett and Morgan Dotson and their four children, Caleb, Aubrey, Reese and Peyton, are part of the Cypress Campus, a community of believers that, Rhett says, has made the single biggest impact on their lives. Resources provided for children and families at Houston's First are shaping the people they are becoming, and more importantly, providing a lifeline to the Dotson children, guiding them to an eternal relationship with Christ.

At age four, Caleb, now 7, began asking questions about the lessons he was being taught in Life Bible Study on Sunday mornings. "He was retaining a good bit at that age," said Rhett. "We would question him about the stories he heard and walk through them with him. It was a great starting point for conversation."

Puppets on video are often incorporated in Kids' Worship each week. 'Go home cards' are handed out at the end of each session with questions posed from a concept learned that week, which serves to involve parents and check each child's comprehension of the day's message. A bonus question intended to guide parents to curriculum on the web takes the child deeper in understanding and provides an opportunity for the child to earn a prize by bringing back the card the following week signed by parents.

At the Cypress Campus, first through fifth graders attend BLAST (Building Lives Around Scripture & Truth) on Wednesday nights. It is one of the many Milestones classes for individuals and families meeting on Wednesday evenings at Houston's First campuses. At BLAST, children meet 13 weeks to learn about God and the Bible, play games, and memorize and apply Scripture to real life using music and specific themes to aid in memory retention and heart application.

"Classes like these have prompted eternal questions," said Rhett. "And seeing kids being baptized has caused Caleb to question what it means to be a follower of Jesus." Aubrey, the Dotsons' five-year-old, loves the activities for kids at the Cypress Campus, like Mission Friends, which meets each Wednesday night during the school year. First Friends, Houston's First Preschool Ministry, provides classes and activities for kids of all ages, which the younger two Dotson children, Reese and Peyton, attend.

Learning about Jesus is primary, but Christ has also called followers to be His hands and feet. Rhett and Morgan are beginning early to teach their children to make a difference in the lives of others. Rhett takes the opportunity to teach service by participating in Men: Serve, where men and their sons, six and older, serve widows in the church, performing honey-do's that may not otherwise get done. "Our kids aren't just learning about Jesus, they're living it out," said Rhett. Opportunities for service of all kinds are offered throughout the year, and not only on weeklong mission trips, but also right here at home.

Houston 1:8 offers stay-at-home trips that minister to local residents in apartment communities and even in parks around the city. One of the Cypress Campus' most celebrated mission activities is Backyard Kids' Club, which has become a yearly favorite in reaching neighborhood children, three years to fifth grade, throughout Cypress. "The past four years, I led worship, taught music and was able to kick off the ceremonies as emcee at Backyard Kids' Club," said Rhett. "It's been a fun and effective way not only to minister to our own kids, but kids of all ages in our neighborhoods."



Morgan and Rhett Dotson with baby Peyton, Reese, Caleb and Aubrey

NEXT STEP

Be intentional about introducing a child to Christ. Visit Life Bible Studies any Sunday, MidLink activities and Milestones classes during the school year, or visit HoustonsFirst.org and select your local campus to find studies and classes for children, students and adults.



THE DEEPEST PAIN

How does a parent recover after the death of their child? One mom at Houston's First experienced rescue by holding tight to the Lord's promises, journaling and reaching out to share with others who have also experienced the same devastating loss. And through the pain of death a ministry was born and a lifelong friend was made.

We never know when we encounter people in our daily lives the circumstances they are facing in theirs. In the early 1990s, life was busy and full for Charles and Joanna Poor and their family. She was active in ministry at Houston's First, where she had been a member since age 17. Charles, a psychologist, started the Counseling Center at Houston's First in 1983, attending to hurts of countless individuals and couples. Their son Philip was away at medical school, and their daughter Julianna was a student at Oklahoma Baptist University. But in the fall of '90, Julianna was diagnosed with aggressive lung cancer. After a courageous battle, she succumbed to it the following spring. Julianna was only 21.

"I couldn't fall apart," said Joanna. "After Charles had worked all day helping other people with their problems, it wouldn't have been fair to him to come home to a crying wife."

On the recommendation of a friend, Joanna began journaling on her computer to sort out her feelings. And though she had a host of loving friends who earnestly prayed for her, she admits having a child die is a loss that no one can truly understand unless they, too, have suffered in the same way.

"After the death, many are afraid to speak the child's name for fear of opening the wound all over again," said Joanna. "But it was important to me to hear Julianna's name. I had a fear of her being forgotten."

In 2009, the Lord spoke to Joanna. "He put on my heart to do something for women whose child has died," she said.

After trading calls with Houston's First Women's Ministry Director Carolyn O'Neal, the two finally connected and, coincidentally (or not), church leaders had just discussed the idea of starting such a ministry at the church. Not long after, Pastor Gregg contacted Joanna about two women whose adult sons had been killed. She met with one of them whose 20-something son had been fatally injured in a motorcycle accident. She left a phone message for the second mother, Rosa Waters, but even after several attempts at reaching her, she never returned the call.

Joanna's search for a suitable book to use when meeting with mothers ended with Houston's First Minister of Counseling Services Adam Mason's recommendation of *Gone, but not Lost: Grieving the Death of a Child*, by David Wiersbe. It became the course textbook Joanna used for organizing Sisters in Support (SIS). Each class meets in 12-week sessions, and women are encouraged to attend as many sessions as they wish.

The first Sisters in Support meeting brought nine women together in a First Baptist Academy conference room in the fall of 2010. "We had a great book and we were learning as we went," said Joanna. "It turned out to be a very close, successful group."

Before the first SIS meeting, Joanna had a 'God appointment' at a Houston's First women's event. Joanna nodded a greeting to a woman she passed in the hallway, and in minutes, Carolyn walked over to Joanna's table with the same woman. She introduced her as Rosa Waters, the mother Joanna had been trying to contact about SIS for months. "In five minutes around that table, Rosa and I became instant friends,"

said Joanna. "Those months ago that I had tried to contact her she had not been ready to receive my message about a group."

Rosa and Rocky Waters' only child, Michael, a 24 year-old Arkansas police officer, was killed in the line of duty in 2003. He had only been married 10 months.

"My world collapsed," said Rosa. "I couldn't imagine there was anyone I knew who understood what I was feeling."

Rosa joined SIS after her impromptu meeting with Joanna, and after the first 12-week session ended she returned to participate in the third session. Pastor Gregg invited SIS to meet in the pastor's suite conference room as their new home beginning with the fourth session, just about the time Rosa began to co-lead the group with Joanna. By session five, Rosa was rotating as teacher with Joanna.



Friends Joanna Poor and Rosa Waters

"The tapestry of the group is so interesting from one 12-week session to the next," said Joanna. "Each group is different depending on the women who attend." Friendships are birthed in each group; and not only during the sessions, but also at retreats, parties and other events SIS members do together throughout the year.

"We are always hoping a sister will find another sister to identify with," said Joanna. "The death of a child can be isolating in that you can't really talk about it with your regular friends."

Some women find out about SIS through word of mouth and others have joined the church as

a result of their association with the group. A sense of camaraderie when settling in to SIS is part of the beauty of the gathering. "There is power in knowing you aren't alone," said Rosa. "Everyone to some degree feels the same. We're in a club we never wanted to join."

Rosa reminisced about Michael as a happy kid who seemed to have an inborn sense of service. Rosa's husband Rocky was her support after Michael's death, until Rocky died five years later. "As difficult as those days were, my faith never wavered," said Rosa. "I felt the Lord holding me. I never imagined there could be joy after our child's death. It's not how I dreamed, but good things have come out of this life."

As Pastor Gregg has taught, ministry can come from misery, and Joanna and Charles Poor have witnessed the unique ways the Lord brings it to pass. Inexplicably, with deep pain have come times of joy. In 1999, Houston's First honored Julianna by renaming the Counseling Center the Julianna Poor Memorial Counseling Center. It's an honor, they say, that humbles them, but makes them happy that she will be remembered well beyond her short 21 years of life.

Joanna marvels at the strength their daughter showed during her brief illness. "Truthfully, Juli taught me how to die," said Joanna. "She never questioned God, not one time, even when the treatments failed. Twelve hours before she died she was making us laugh. It has taken time, but we've learned to laugh again."

NEXT STEP

Pray for teachers and their students as they begin a new school year. Though Houston 1:8 is complete for 2016, Faith Center-Harwin and Faith Center-Spring Branch have an ongoing need for volunteers. To learn more, or to volunteer, contact Claudia.Reyes@HoustonsFirst.org.

NEXT STEP

There are many avenues of support for women at Houston's First. Meet new friends and hear stories of hope at the upcoming Unchanging Women's Retreat on Oct 7 & 8. Register online or find more information for all women's classes and events at HoustonsFirst.org, or contact Meredyth.Cann@HoustonsFirst.org.