

## GIVING BACK

During the church's 175th anniversary celebration in April, the generosity of church members enabled the church to continue its long legacy of difference making in the community. Using funds earmarked for community distribution, here's how one group of children from Houston's First honored a team of our City's first responders.

Opportunities exist all over Houston to change lives: in crisis pregnancy centers, prison ministry, homeless ministries; in local elementary, middle, and high schools; by fighting substance abuse, rescuing trafficked women and children, and for first responders, by keeping our community and its citizens safe.

Firefighters and EMTs at Houston Fire Department Station 13 received an unexpected blessing from one class of first graders in the First Kids Children's Ministry. They picked up the gauntlet for the churchwide initiative in blessing community Difference-makers. Life Bible Studies were asked to uncover a worthy organization and present a check to celebrate their making a difference in our city.

Houston's First members Mike and Cindy Morgan are directors of one of the first graders in the First Kids Children's Ministry and as they pondered ways to be a blessing with the funds provided to each Life Bible Study, she remembered the firefighters she had seen exercising in the park in their Oak Forest neighborhood.

Houston Fire Station 13 was undergoing a remodel that began in 2014 after being in service for 60 years. Firefighters were being displaced from the workout room in the station, so they walked in the park for exercise.

"They interacted with all of us who walked in the park," said Cindy. "They even brought the engine for the kids to see and climb in, and were just generally so friendly." Cindy had an idea that the children could reach out to that station with church funds so the firefighters could have the best possible circumstances while doing their jobs.

"I think it is very important to support our first responders," she said. "Not only do they fight fires and put their lives at risk for all of us, they also show genuine compassion when their emergency crews come to our aid during medical emergencies."

Part of the firefighters' job is maintaining the equipment on fire trucks, which includes periodically cleaning, stripping and repainting tools, and also performing weekly general maintenance. The bays that house the apparatus (fire trucks and ambulances) are not air-conditioned and the Texas heat can be brutal for firefighters.

"A majority of the funds the children brought allowed our station to purchase a four-foot fan that makes working outside in the bays bearable," said Will Gunderson, shift Captain at HFD Station 13. "Now we can work comfortably in the station during the hot part of the day. We are so grateful."



First graders deliver a special gift to Station 13

## GIVING AT HOUSTONSFIRST.ORG

Visit the Giving page at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) to read more generosity stories, make one-time or recurring contributions, give to mission trips, and more.

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

### DECISIONS

749 New Church Members  
135 Joined By Baptism



Of New Members  
were Baptized

### ATTENDANCE

169,795 in Life Bible Studies  
(4,994 weekly average)  
195,878 in Worship Services  
(5,597 weekly average)  
36,875 on Webcast  
(1,054 weekly average)

### MISSIONS

30 Mission Trips with  
1,856 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 [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) to learn more.

**CONTACT** [Diane.Bagby@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Diane.Bagby@HoustonsFirst.org)

### WOMEN

#### Cry Out

**Fri, Sep 23 @ 6–9p—The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)**

One evening...One heart...One cry! Hundreds of thousands of women will gather in thousands of locations to seek the Lord together—for such a time as this! What could be more vital at this critical time than for women to get on their knees together to cry out to the Lord for mercy? Experience the power and joy of corporate prayer as together we cry out to God, asking Him to do in us and in our nation what no man-made effort can accomplish. Learn more at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org).

**CONTACT** [Meredyth.Cann@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Meredyth.Cann@HoustonsFirst.org)

#### 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 [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) for costs, rooming arrangements, retreat personalities and register online by today, Sun, Sep 11.

**CONTACT** [Meredyth.Cann@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Meredyth.Cann@HoustonsFirst.org)

### MEN

#### Warrior's Heart

**Thursdays @ 6:30–7:30a—The Loop (Garden Rm)**

In our new series, *The Kingdom*, we will examine the Kingdom of God in the Old and New Testaments and all its implications on all of life, covering success, marriage, decision-making, conflict, friendship, career, and more. Different men teach each week, with Dr. Alex Gonzales from Dallas Theological Seminary teaching this Thursday. Breakfast is available for purchase in the Cafe. Registration at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) is encouraged, but not required.

**CONTACT** [Emily.Brown@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Emily.Brown@HoustonsFirst.org)

#### Wild Game Dinner

**Sat, Oct 1 @ 6:30–8:30p—The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)**

The Men's Ministry invites men of any age/stage to hear Jim VanSteenhouse's story of survival. CEO of Interline Mortgage Co. and an avid hunter, Jim was brutally mauled by a grizzly bear on a moose hunt in Canada. Come and be inspired by how the Lord intervened in saving his life. Tickets are \$10 and include dinner. Bring your father/son, friend, or coworker! Learn more and register at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org).

**CONTACT** [Emily.Brown@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Emily.Brown@HoustonsFirst.org)

### THE LOOP

#### NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

**MS Family Park Day: Tailgate with The HUB Sun, Sep 25 @ 1–4p—The Loop (Oasis)**

Middle School families (parents and siblings), come tailgate with other HUB families for a fun, relaxing afternoon in the Oasis. Parents—bring your tailgate gear: tents, coolers, tables, and cold food & drinks; the HUB will provide hot dogs, hamburgers, paper goods, games, fun and NFL games on the big screens! Find out more information and register at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org).

**CONTACT** [Tony.Bianco@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Tony.Bianco@HoustonsFirst.org)

### MARRIED YOUNG ADULTS

#### Marriage Matters

**Fri, Sep 16 @ 6:30–8:30p—The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)**

Your marriage matters! And, in marriage, there are a lot of matters to consider. Come enjoy dinner and an evening of marriage encouragement from guest speakers Steve & Debbie Wilson. Visit [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) to register for just \$25 per couple—including childcare! Space is limited!

**CONTACT** [Kristin.Hawkinson@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Kristin.Hawkinson@HoustonsFirst.org)

### CYPRESS

#### MEN

#### Fight the Good Fight

**Tuesdays, beginning Sep 20 @ 6:30–8a**

#### Cypress Ministry Ctr

What does it look like to fight like a man of God? God has called us to fight for our marriages, our families, and our spiritual health. Join the staff and men of the Cypress Campus as we explore, not how to fight like a man, but like a man of God.

**CONTACT** [Toby.Thomas@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Toby.Thomas@HoustonsFirst.org)

### DOWNTOWN

#### Men's Discipleship Course—Good Faith:

**Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme**

**Wednesdays, Sep 14–Oct 26 @ 7–8:30p**

**Vine Street Studios (1113 Vine Street, Suite 117)**

How do you live faithfully in a culture that seems increasingly hostile to the Christian faith? This seven-week study, facilitated by Lee Hsia and Peter Lee, will help you respond with compassion, clarity, and confidence to the most toxic issues of our day; discover significant cultural trends that are creating both obstacles and opportunities for Christians; and know what you believe and why it doesn't make you judgmental or extreme. Register for \$14 at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) by Tue, Sep 13.

**CONTACT** [Peter.Lee@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Peter.Lee@HoustonsFirst.org)

### ESPAÑOL

#### WOMEN

**Believing in Him—Women's Fall Bible Study Series**

**Wednesdays, Sep 21 & Oct 26 @ 6p**

**The Loop (Rm 403)**

Join us in this series where you will learn how to walk in the confidence of Jesus Christ. Many of us say we believe in Christ, but do you really believe IN Him? Learn more about the study and register at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org).

**CONTACT** [Karina.Bazaldua@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Karina.Bazaldua@HoustonsFirst.org)



**TWEET OF THE WEEK:** "It's better to be a stranger on earth and a child of the Father than a child of the earth and a stranger in heaven." — @GreggMatte

### SIENNA

#### WOMEN

**Fall Women's Bible Studies—Worship Ctr**

Register for each at [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) for \$20

(additional \$5 for childcare).

**James: Mercy Triumphs** by Beth Moore

• **Tuesdays, Sep 13–Nov 15 @ 10a–12p**

**Lies Women Believe**

• **Wednesdays, Sep 14–Nov 16 @ 6:30–8p**

**CONTACT** [Cherry.Sears@HoustonsFirst.org](mailto:Cherry.Sears@HoustonsFirst.org)

## MAKE IT YOUR CHURCH ORIENTATION

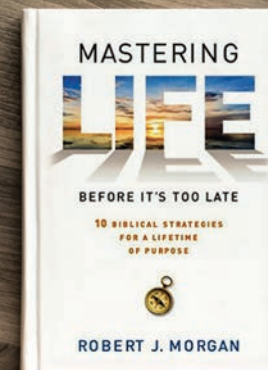
Discover what it means to be a member of Houston's First! You'll meet staff members, hear about our mission, vision, and ministries, and learn how you can make Houston's First your church. Visit [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.org) to learn more about membership and to RSVP to an upcoming session at your campus:

**The Loop—Sun, Sep 18 @ 12:30p—The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)**

**Cypress—Sun, Sep 18 @ 1p—Cypress Ministry Center**

**Sienna—Sun, Sep 18 @ 12:30p—NextGen Stee 220D**

**Downtown and Español** will host sessions on Sun, Nov 20.



### MASTERING LIFE

**Mastering Life Before It's Too Late:**

**10 Biblical Strategies for a Lifetime of Purpose**

Pastor Gregg's essential reading this fall provides 10 workable routines for aligning your daily agenda with God's perfect will. *Mastering Life* is available from CornerBooks, and author Robert J. Morgan will be our guest speaker at The Loop Campus on Sun, Nov 27.

### 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 Center Team at your campus for assistance.

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 [HoustonsFirst.org](http://HoustonsFirst.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 9:30a • 11a

Life Bible Studies 6:30p

#### Sienna Campus

4309 Sienna Pkwy • Missouri City, TX 77459

Worship 9:30a • 11a

Life Bible Studies 9:30a • 11a



HOUSTON'S FIRST  
BAPTIST CHURCH  
PASTOR GREGG MATTE

SEP 11, 2016

HIGHER CALLING  
WARM WELCOME  
WATCHING OVER YOU  
GIVING BACK



# LIVES ON THE LINE



# LIVES ON THE LINE

Every day, first responders put their lives on the line to save people they don’t know. Houston’s First members featured this month are emergency personnel who not only have a calling to save physical lives, but also as believers offer a lifeline to those who need eternal life, peace and a place of community.

## HIGHER CALLING

**For first responders, job stress can lead to alcoholism and divorce rates nearly 40 percent higher than other vocations. One Houston Police officer is devoting his life to mentoring young officers so that Christ can lead them to higher ground before the real stresses of a law enforcement career begin.**

Houston’s First member René Rivera wasn’t always a Houston Police officer, but he’s had a heart for rescuing people since his preteen years after God planted a seed for ministry. Service and a love for the Lord came almost effortlessly for René. His grandfather was a pastor, and his mother, a preacher’s kid, laid a foundation of faithfulness to God and service to others.

Though René worked in international sales for 11 years at Hewlett-Packard (HP), when the events of September 11, 2001, unfolded, his love of country prompted him to consider a career change. “I had just picked up a friend from the airport and we heard that the planes hit the World Trade Center,” he said. “The next day I told my wife Eleanor I wanted to join the Armed Forces. We had our babies, David and Jack, at home, so she said the timing wasn’t right.”

Since joining Houston’s First 20 years ago, he has been active in ministry in many ways: serving in the Singles ministry; as a singer for The Gathering, the genesis of band-led worship services at Houston’s First; and as part-time staff in Men’s Ministry, among other positions.

“I have a passion for seeing men get right with God,” said René. “God has put men from all walks of life, police officers, soldiers and the like, in my path during men’s events. They seem drawn to me for counsel, so I befriend them and have tried to help them manage their lives when they have felt under assault.”

For the past 17 years, René has met regularly each Wednesday morning at 6 am for breakfast and prayer with his accountability partners Mark Miranda, Allen O’Neal and Ken Tekell. Over the years, as many as nine men have met together at the breakfast meetings, but the four are steadfast in their commitment to be the iron that sharpens iron for their brothers in Christ. One day over breakfast, a friend encouraged René to go into police work.

The door was closing on René’s career at HP and a full-time staff position in men’s ministry at Houston’s First had been created with him in mind, but an invitation to a birthday party at his next door neighbor’s house changed everything. A recruiter from the Houston Police Department was also a party guest, and he extended an invitation for René to stop by the Police Academy for an upcoming open house. He signed on the dotted line and became an HPD cadet just 10 days after being laid off from HP. At age 42, and the oldest in his class, he became president of his cadet class and even gave a speech at the commencement ceremony.

“I have the greatest job in the whole world,” said René, who has been on patrol at the Westside Command Station the past four years. A year-and-a-half ago, God opened a door for René to become a Field Training Instructor to young HPD officers, many who are transitioning from civilian to officer, which can be daunting. Worry about the dangers of the job is never far from the minds of officers, most especially younger ones.

“I got into police work as a ministry, mostly to young men and women who may be 21 years old and in their first job,” said René. “These guys want to know how to do life, and I teach them how to be cops, and I reach out to them before their lives become wrecked.”

While the Houston Police Department has implemented many safety measures for officers and citizen organizations have purchased specialty equipment to further support and protect officers, incidents do happen, and René has not escaped injury.

“I’ve almost been killed twice,” he said. “During my evaluation to become a police officer, my partner and I chased a speeding car into a residential neighborhood in Alief. He was blowing through red lights and stop signs and we cornered him in a cul-de-sac. As I opened the passenger side door and began stepping out of the patrol car, the vehicle sped toward us, smashing into my open door and throwing me back inside into the center console. I realized I had pulled my leg back inside just in time.”

Another time, René fought a man in a stairwell who had been beating up his stepson. René and other officers overpowered the man, but René’s shoulder was dislocated, a rib cracked, and he was taken to the hospital. “I learned sometime after the trial that the same man had viciously raped a woman four years earlier,” he said. “He was put in prison, and now the woman no longer has to live in fear of her rapist coming back to hurt her. There are times God allows our lives to be in danger, but now the guy is off the streets.”



As a blogger on the topics of leadership and accountability, René has shared his experiences in uniform as well as the many lessons God has taught him throughout his personal life. Rookies and other young officers are the beneficiaries of his godly and sometimes gritty wisdom. “My life verse is Jeremiah 33:3, ‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know,’” said René.

Being in God’s word keeps him on solid ground and feeds his desire to be accountable to God, to his family and the guys in his prayer group. “I can’t imagine doing this job without God’s protection because you never know who you’re going to run into,” said René. “We all need watchmen on the wall (Isaiah 62:6) to pray for us.”

## WARM WELCOME

**Wherever they are stationed, believers have been called to extend a hand of welcome to people they encounter to make them feel at home. Members of Houston’s First featured here are using their gifts of hospitality both at home and while on the road.**

Retired Houston firefighters Tom and Lisa Slagle, who’s also a paramedic, left full-time jobs as first responders for the City of Houston a couple of years ago, but long before they left the fire department, they began employing their gifts of service regularly at Houston’s First.

“When we married in 2007, we began thinking about our path, what walking together with the Lord would look like,” said Tom. “Though we began tithing when we were married, we feel the biggest contribution we have to make is our time. There are so many opportunities to help, but we found our main place of service on the Houston’s First Welcome Center team.”

Tom and Lisa met in 1994 after graduating from the Fire Academy, where she was one of 12 female fire cadets in her class, joining only eight other women firefighters in all of HFD. When Lisa joined Houston Fire Department as a Firefighter/Paramedic at Station 1, Tom was District Chief at Station 6 on Washington Avenue. He was promoted to Assistant Fire Chief in 1998, and they crossed paths often responding to highrise fire calls downtown. The year she became a cadet, Lisa joined Houston’s First, and the following year began attending a Singles Life Bible Study.

Lisa began driving an ambulance for Station 11 on T.C. Jester Boulevard a decade after joining HFD. She earned the seniority to drive Engine 11, which she did until 2010. After the Houston Fire Chief left the department, Tom resumed his post as District Chief. Lisa became Tom’s driver at Station 6 until they retired in 2014.

Tom and Lisa began dating in 2006, and he began attending the church on his own, initially. Both had been married previously, and Tom had custody of his son, Jake, who was 14 when his parents divorced.

“Malcolm Marshall (now pastor at the Sienna Campus) baptized us together right after we were married,” said Tom, of his and Lisa’s start together at Houston’s First. They became part of a Life Bible Study, and Jake began attending church with them.

“We’ve made more friends and lasting relationships as part of the Welcome Team,” said Lisa. They also heard the testimony of David and Kaye Trickett, founders of C.H.A.R.M. Prison Ministry, and how their incarceration led them to start a ministry for those leaving prison to rebuild their lives.

“Little more than a year ago, a guy walks into the church looking for a class,” said Tom. “I tried to engage him in conversation, but he seemed really reluctant to talk to me. He had just moved into the C.H.A.R.M. House, and even though he was a former



member, he wasn’t sure how he would be received at the church.” In a short time, the man became a dear friend of Tom and Lisa’s. After a year of ministry in the church, he was diagnosed with cancer and passed away in July this year. “As a believer,” said Tom, “our friend’s ministry to inmates during his short incarceration was enormous. Meeting him and getting to know him validated our own ministry on the Welcome Center team. God has changed our lives while serving.”

Making others feel welcome is not Lisa and Tom’s only ministry. They volunteered for their third year at Rush Week, giving time to The HUB Student Ministry by making food during the weeklong camp/mission trip to Panama City Beach in July.

Unknown to the Slagles, and to the students and adult leaders who attended Rush Week, a Houston’s First welcome mat had been laid out a couple of years ago for Eleanor “Ellie” Spivey, principal of Patronis Elementary in Panama City Beach, where a group of HUB students were painting, landscaping and performing other beautification projects this summer.

The visit from students wasn’t the only blessing Ellie had received from Houston’s First. Her 29-year-old son, Russ, was diagnosed in 2013 with Acute Myeloid Leukemia, and was to be treated at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. The Hope House, a ministry of Houston’s First, provided lodging and other assistance so Ellie and Russ could receive emotional support and experience “a home away from home” while he received medical treatment in Houston.

“Peggy and Rick Jones (Pastoral Care Ministry) at Hope House welcomed and treated us so well,” said Ellie. “Access to housing is so important for families receiving medical treatment in a different city. Coincidentally, the condo had been decorated in a beach theme, so being from Panama City Beach, we walked in and felt right at home.”

Russ and Ellie spent some of his last months in the Hope House condo. “It was truly a godsend,” said Ellie.

In God’s unique and blessed sense of timing, HUB students not only showed up to work at Ellie’s school on the same week as the first anniversary of Russ’s death, but their outreach plan to Panama City Beach first responders inadvertently included Russ’s brother, Robb, a firefighter/EMT at Panama City Beach Fire-Rescue. Ellie had already told Robb about students from Houston’s First and their tireless work at Patronis Elementary, so when he saw them show up at the station, he immediately knew they must be the same students. He shared with them about his brother Russ and his family’s connection with Houston’s First.

After telling the story, one of the students asked Robb if they could pray with him. “We circled up and they prayed over me,” said Robb. “I really needed that. God works in mysterious ways. My mom—we were both—so blown away and grateful for everything the church has done for our family.”

### NEXT STEP

**Welcome people to Houston’s First by serving on the Guest Experience (GX) Team! Parking attendants, greeters, Welcome Center, ushers – roles vary by campus, but they all play a part in making first-timers and familiar faces feel welcome. Ask a current volunteer or staff member how you can join the team, or visit [HoustonFirst.org](http://HoustonFirst.org) and search “GX Team.”**

## WATCHING OVER YOU

**Very few people ever consider having a medical or other emergency while at church, but in each of the five campuses of Houston’s First there are dedicated first responders on call to deal with emergencies during Life Bible Studies, worship services and special events.**

Security and safety has been on the minds of church leaders since Houston’s First was a single-site church located in downtown Houston. In the early years there, one church member, a doctor, kept a couple of black attaché cases stored at the church stocked with oxygen and drugs in case of a medical emergency. The Loop Campus was initially constructed in 1977 with a dedicated first aid room. Over the years, with few actual emergencies and limited space for a growing congregation, the room was edged out to make room for other activities. Today, organized medical teams exist at The Loop, Español and Cypress campuses. The Downtown and Sienna campuses are manned by police officers with basic first aid knowledge that can respond to medical as well as security needs.

Since the first organized team of medical professionals began standing by “on call” in the early 1980s, they have responded to falls, diabetic emergencies, or in rare cases, chest pain. Houston’s First has several automated external defibrillators (AED) in various locations at The Loop and Español campuses, and in other spaces at the campuses in Cypress, Sienna and Downtown.

In nearly three decades of nursing, Houston’s First member Sharon Ragsdale was part of the early group that wrote protocols for the Emergency Medical Team (EMT) at The Loop. Years of experience in neurology, head & neck surgery, and acute wound care has given her special insight into treating patients who are experiencing medical difficulties.

“I’ve loved being a nurse from day one,” said Sharon. “The Lord knew way before I did that it was what I was meant to do. In all the years, I’ve never reconsidered or questioned it. Since God made clear to me the path I was supposed to take, I just jump in to help.”

The Emergency Medical Team at The Loop and Español campuses are made up of Sharon and nine others: Kathryn Brown, RN, specializing in pediatrics, now a school nurse; Sandra Cobb, RN; Dr. Linda Echevarria, Family Medicine; Carolyn (Carey) Holmes, RN, Nurse Practitioner at MD Anderson Cancer Center; Janice Lee, RN; John & Susan Murphy, both licensed EMTs and volunteers at Jersey Village Fire Department; Richard Ponce, accountability officer and licensed Paramedic, Houston Fire Dept-78; Young Shrout, RN, Certified Nurse Anesthetist & Manager at MD Anderson Cancer Center. Other first responders include Houston Police Officers, Jose Herrera, Patrick Norris and Tammy DeLuke, who are on call to respond to security emergencies and traffic detail.

Alecia Mallet heads up the Medical On-Call team at the Cypress Campus since they began planning the opening of the campus more than three years ago. She puts her experience as an RN and Nurse Practitioner to good use during the shifts while on call at the church. “A fire chief who used to be a member at the Cypress Campus donated the first AED and first aid kit, and those were the first resources for the team,” said Alecia. “Though we have a seven-week duty calendar, everyone tag-teams and works together to help when, and wherever, they’re needed.”

Cypress Campus Medical On-Call team members are: Candace Ganjavi, RN, Cardiac Cath Lab recovery, Memorial Hermann Memorial City; Julio Hernandez, Paramedic, Houston Fire Dept; Maria Lemond, RN, Cardiac ICU Memorial Hermann Heart and Vascular Institute, Medical Center; Mike Manis, RN, Emergency Room, Houston Methodist West; Alecia Mallett, Family Practice, Tomball; Bethany Spenn, Physician Assistant, Oncology, Houston Methodist Medical Center; and the newest addition, Amber Finn, RN, Cardiac Cath Lab recovery, Memorial Hermann Memorial City.

“Being part of the Medical On-Call Team allows us to use the gifts we have,” said Alecia. “We are thrilled to have the knowledge and use it to serve the people of our church.”

Though the relatively smaller Sienna Campus has no formal medical team, “Officer Dawn” Nolan is a longtime favorite among the regulars. For nearly three years Officer Dawn has faithfully been available for emergencies of all kinds each Sunday morning and for all special events. “I’m not exactly a member, but all the members treat me like family,” said Dawn. “If I take vacation, when I come back they ask me where I was. They’re genuinely concerned.”

Houston Police Officers Alex Roberts, Walter Shields and Mike Bruner watch over the Downtown Campus and parking areas each Sunday. They provide security for the campus, standing guard during Life Bible Study and beyond the worship service until all the members are safely out of the parking garage.

“There are many volunteer medical professionals and paid security staff at our campuses who are committed to keeping our members safe,” said Nate Finn, security director at Houston’s First. “With the number of people in our church across five campuses, we want to provide a safe environment for members and guests as they come to worship and participate in the life of the church.”

