

Generosity

AT HOUSTON'S FIRST

GREATER THAN OURSELVES

The identity of Houston's First as a congregation devoted to missions and the spread of the Gospel is rooted in the vision, prayers and generosity of its founders in the early 1800s. These many years later, members are still sacrificing as they hear God's call to give.

Houston's First continues its mission to be a relevant biblical community in principle and practice as it has been since the church was founded 175 years ago. At the end of February, Houston's First wrote its largest check ever in support of missions — \$1,156,100 — thanks to church members whose spirit of generosity honors the biblical command of being witnesses "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Gifts to the World Mission Offering from November 2015 through January 2016 (known this year as Unstoppable Gospel: The Offering) sought to raise funds for three Southern Baptist missionary-sending organizations — the International Mission Board (IMB), the North American Mission Board, and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

The nearly \$1 million given to the IMB is a much-needed blessing after a budget crisis forced them to recall 1,000 missionaries from the field, which was double the original estimate.

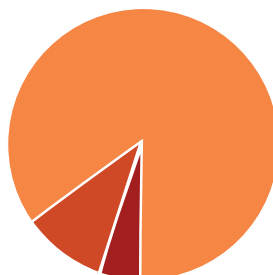
"We are seeing a larger number of refugees on the planet today than ever before," said William Taylor, missions pastor at Houston's First. "They're fleeing war-torn countries to places that are open to the Gospel, and they are more receptive to the message. We are living in times where people are being asked to sacrifice in order to spread the Gospel. Houston's First members are continuing the legacy passed to us by early church members: making a difference for the Gospel through the sacrifice of giving."

While the Houston's First family gave generously to these missionary-sending groups, ongoing financial support for our church is essential as well. Each week, several thousand men, women, and children gather at our five campuses and are "sent out" to be Difference-makers in our "Jerusalem" — at home, at work, at school, and in the community. While being a missionary often involves crossing borders, it can also mean simply crossing the street.

"Our church family sees giving to missions as a way to be part of something greater than ourselves, a way to be part of a worldwide movement in the kingdom of God," said William. "The generosity of the Houston's First family enables us to support missionaries on the field, but it also ensures that the day-to-day ministry of the church continues as we equip people to be Difference-makers for the Gospel."

UNSTOPPABLE GOSPEL: THE OFFERING (AKA, WORLD MISSION OFFERING)

INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD	\$983,750 (85%)
NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD	\$116,400 (10%)
SOUTHERN BAPTISTS OF TEXAS CONVENTION	\$56,950 (5%)



WHAT IS YOUR GENEROSITY STORY?

Share it at HoustonFirst.org/MyStory.

THERE ARE MORE WAYS THAN ONE TO EXPRESS YOUR WORSHIP THROUGH GENEROSITY:

ONSITE	ON MOBILE
Collection Plates and Boxes	Text your campus code to 77977 for a link
ONLINE	HFBCLoop • HFBC Cypress HFBCDowntown • HFBCSienna HFBCSpanish
HoustonFirst.org/Generosity	

MINISTRY IMPACT YEAR-TO-DATE TOTALS FROM JAN 1 TO FEB 28, 2016

DECISIONS

232 New Church Members
54 Joined By Baptism

23% OF NEW MEMBERS
WERE BAPTIZED

ATTENDANCE

47,172 in Life Bible Studies
(5,241 weekly average)
52,192 in Worship Services
(5,799 weekly average)
9,918 on Webcast
(1,102 weekly average)

MISSIONS

Pray for the many trips the
Houston's First family is taking
in 2016 to share the Good News
of Jesus across our nation
and world!

GENEROSITY

3,964 Givers to Great Commission Giving
350 were First-Time Givers

9% OF GIVING WAS A
FIRST TIME GIFT

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: "Overwhelmed today by your servant team leading from their roles unseen. @HoustonFirst you have amazing servants leading." — @HFBCProduction

ALL CAMPUSES

Deacons' Meeting & Church Conference Today — The Loop

The Deacon Administrative meeting is 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.

HighPoint Bible Study
Wednesdays @ 11:30a — 1010 Lamar (Tunnel Level)
This weekly downtown Bible study is open to everybody! This week, Dr. David Self will be teaching. Bring your lunch, or purchase one there for \$8. The lesson begins at 12:10p. Visit HoustonFirst.org/HighPoint to learn more.
CONTACT Diane.Bagby@HoustonFirst.org

SoFA Faculty Concert
Thu, Mar 31 @ 7p — The Loop (Rehearsal Hall)
Each semester, the School of Fine Arts faculty come together for a special evening of music. They are among the finest musicians in the city, and each concert they play is breathtaking. Come to be inspired and uplifted!
CONTACT Eric.Belvin@HoustonFirst.org

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES
Camp Intersect
June 12-15 — Carolina Creek, Huntsville, TX
At Camp Intersect, your 3rd-6th graders will experience God in fun ways with two camps in one location! FirstKids and The HUB Students each have their own games, worship, small groups, water activities, and more! There's no better way to start the summer! Registration is open now at HoustonFirst.org/Events.
CONTACT Tony.Bianco@HoustonFirst.org

Rush Week
July 22-28 — Panama City Beach, FL
The HUB Student Ministry from all campuses is returning to serve the churches and residents of Panama City Beach! Join other 6th-12th grade students for this unique experience with mission impact and camp fun! You don't want to miss it! Learn more and register at HoustonFirst.org/Events.
CONTACT Susan.Newman@HoustonFirst.org

WOMEN
The Table
Tue, Mar 8 @ 6:30-8p — The Loop (Worship Ctr)
Come to our final evening at The Table and experience the presence of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit with women from across Houston. Teachers Kay Altic, Kelly Matte, and Star Smith will lead us as we see how Jesus is MORE than enough! Invite others at HoustonFirst.org/Events.
CONTACT Meredith.Cann@HoustonFirst.org

MEN
Warrior's Heart
Thursdays @ 6:30-7:30a — The Loop (Garden Rm)
This spring we will continue our *Great Men of Faith* series as we look at men who show faith in all types of situations. Different men teach each week, with Dr. Darrell Bock teaching this Thursday. Breakfast is available for \$5. Registration at HoustonFirst.org/Men is encouraged.
CONTACT Emily.Brown@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

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

THE LOOP

Being A Game Changer
Wed, Mar 9 @ 6:30-8p — The Loop (Fellowship Ctr)
Dwight Edwards, best-selling author and Pastor Gregg's college pastor, will speak about what it means to be a game changer at this special gathering during MidLink the week before spring break. Come early for "Cajun Night" at MidLink Cafe (4:45-6:15p) featuring a crawfish boil (\$15) and fried catfish (\$6). Visit HoustonFirst.org/Events for more about MidLink at The Loop!
CONTACT Courtney.Schisler@HoustonFirst.org

MARRIED YOUNG ADULTS
Marriage Matters
Fri, Apr 15 @ 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 with John McGee, Director of the Marriage Ministry at Watermark Church in Dallas. Visit HoustonFirst.org/Events to register for just \$20 per couple — including childcare!
CONTACT Kristin.Hawkinson@HoustonFirst.org

CYPRESS

Blended Family Study
Begins Wed, Mar 23 @ 6:30-8p
Cypress Ministry Center
Discover the seven fundamental steps to blended family success and learn practical solutions to the issues stepfamilies face in this eight-week class led by Ed and Toby Thomas. Whether married or soon-to-be, you'll discover how to communicate effectively and solve the everyday puzzles of forming positive relationships with stepchildren. Registration is required at HoustonFirst.org/Cypress.
CONTACT Toby.Thomas@HoustonFirst.org

DOWNTOWN

XEE: Relational Evangelism
Every Mon, Apr 18-May 30 @ 6:30-8:30p
Vine Street Studios (1113 Vine St., Suite 117)
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. Register at HoustonFirst.org/Downtown.
CONTACT Lee.Hsia@HoustonFirst.org

SIENNA

3rd Annual Helicopter Easter Egg Drop
Sat, Mar 26 @ 9a — Sienna Campus (Sienna Lawn)
Thousands of eggs will drop from the Sienna sky for children in preschool-5th grade! Free registration begins at 9a and the helicopter will be there at 10a. Food trucks, carnival games and inflatables will be there to add to the fun of the morning! Bring the family and invite your friends!
CONTACT Kelli.Boylan@HoustonFirst.org

SPANISH

Baptisms Celebration
Sun, Mar 20 @ 6:30p — The Loop (Oasis Courtyard)
Gather with the Spanish Campus after the worship service to witness and celebrate all who have made the decision for baptism. There will be no Life Bible Studies at 6:30p. Bring chips, drinks or dessert to share afterwards! No RSVP required.
CONTACT Douglas.Hernandez@HoustonFirst.org



SHARE YOUR FAITH WORKSHOP
Sat, Apr 2 @ 9a-3p — The Loop (Rm 143)
Through the one-day workshop, the hand becomes a simple memory tool you can use to share a Gospel presentation. This class provides the basics of sharing the Gospel as well as practical application. Register for this free class at HoustonFirst.org/Events.
CONTACT Jonathan.Huegel@HoustonFirst.org

HOLY WEEK 2016

Visit HoustonFirst.org/HolyWeek for more about these and other opportunities as we celebrate Christ's sacrifice and resurrection together.

IMAGO HOLY WEEK ART SHOW
Mar 15-Apr 3 — The Loop Campus
In His Name: Art Inspired by the Names of Jesus

BROKEN FOR YOU
Thu, Mar 24 @ 7p — The Loop Campus
Every campus gathers together to reflect and remember

SIENNA HELICOPTER EGG DROP
Sat, Mar 26 @ 9a — Sienna Campus
Free community event for preschool through 5th grade

EASTER WEEKEND
Gather with Pastor Gregg and the Houston's First family as we proclaim that He is Risen!

Sat, Mar 26
• The Loop @ 5p - led by Band (no childcare)

Sun, Mar 27
• The Loop @ 8a, 9:30a, 11a - all led by Choir & Orchestra @ 5p - led by Band

• Cypress @ 9:30a & 11a
• Downtown @ 9:30a & 11a
• Sienna @ 8a, 9:30a, & 11a
• Spanish @ 9:30a



READY FOR TAKEOFF

MORE STORIES:

BLESSED ARE THE PIECEMAKERS
OUTSIDE THE WALLS
GREATER THAN OURSELVES

MAR 6, 2016

PLANTING SEEDS

Spring is the time to plant seeds for a lush summer garden. In this issue, Houston's First members are planting seeds for another purpose. Some will bear fruit in the here and now, and some may lie dormant for many seasons. We plant and water, but God makes it grow.

READY FOR TAKEOFF

Ever wonder how God births a ministry in the hearts and minds of one of His children? First Wheels Special Needs Mobility Ministry at Houston's First is a case study in how innate talent, following a dream and obeying God's leadership work together to make a difference in the lives of special needs children.

Houston's First member Blake Palmer's childhood fascination for constructing model airplanes laid the groundwork for a "dream" second career. But more than that, God opened Blake's eyes to the unique — and unexpected — way he could use his talents to be a Differencemaker in the lives of special needs children at Houston's First and around the country.



Price Stedham and Blake Palmer

After more than 15 years in the corporate world, a layoff prompted Blake to begin contemplating life's priorities. "About the same time, I lost my job, turned 40 and got saved," he said. "I began to see God at work making things happen."

Doors opened to revisit his love for tinkering with airplanes. He started to enroll in school to become an airplane mechanic, but through divine providence and volunteering at Galveston's Lone Star Flight Museum, Blake made a connection that allowed him to work and apprentice as an airplane mechanic at a drilling company.

After being laid off in 2009, the next 15 jobless months would be a challenge for both Blake and his wife, Gretchen, who was carrying the family finances. "We knew God had taken care of us before," said Blake.

In answer to a Craigslist ad, Blake sent his resume to an antique airplane restoration shop in Cypress. He showed up the following Monday to talk with the owner, and they hit it off. Six years later, he still sings the praises of his workplace. "Restoring antique aircraft is the best job I've ever had," he said. He had already learned a bit about fabricating in his prior job, a valuable skill in the restoration business, and one God would also use in ministry going forward.



Parents Kristen & Nathan Stedham and Price

Two years ago, a classmate in The Bridge Life Bible Study — and Blake's Facebook friend — posted a video from Go Baby Go, an organization that provides mobility to kids who have trouble moving around on their own. The video showed toy ride-on cars that had been modified to allow disabled kids to use them. "When I saw the video, I knew it was something I had to do," said Blake. "This was something I was supposed to do."

Blake made screenshots of the videos and started researching. Though Blake and Gretchen have no children and no experience working with children, they are the focus of his ministry. His first car was completed in the summer of 2014 and was

given to a young boy at Houston's First with cerebral palsy. "I saw his face light up," said Blake. "There's nothing I've experienced or anything I could spend money on in this world that would mean as much as that."

His newfound ministry manifested in building cars "God-style." Most of the adapted cars Blake saw were quickly put together with little attention given to detail. "My philosophy is the cars be well-built," he said. "We even personalize them with the child's name on Texas license plates." A Houston's First member sewed custom seat covers for one vehicle. "It meant so much to the child's mom," said Blake, "that some lady she didn't even know would take the time."

He ordered six different types of switches to determine which worked best to power the cars. After interviewing robotics specialists, doing online research, and tinkering with microprocessors, Blake invented the Fluid Motion Device, a speed control to accelerate and slow the vehicle to a stop without jerking the child, as is the norm with standard motorized riding toys.

Blake sent the prototype to volunteer researchers at the East Tennessee Technology Center, affiliated with Go Baby Go, and the Fluid Motion Device set them abuzz with excitement. "They told me my device duplicated the motion of a \$20,000 powered wheelchair — and I made it for under \$100," he said.

Perhaps most significant about the custom cars is that they are retrofitted to allow each child to drive his or her own vehicle regardless of disability. Some cars also promote rehabilitation by exercising little-used limbs. "They're fun and therapeutic,"

said Blake. A child who can only move her head received a car that requires her to hold up her head in order to power the car.

Price Stedham, a seven-year-old Houston's First member with undiagnosed developmental delays, was given a "stand-up" vehicle that would encourage him to use his legs. "I adapted a rock climbing harness on it so Price wouldn't fall down," said Blake.

His First Wheels Special Needs Mobility Ministry serves not only children at Houston's First, but also those in the Houston area and throughout the United States.

NEXT STEP

The Thru the Roof Special Needs Ministry loves, cares for, and welcomes children and adults with special needs into the church fellowship and community. Life Bible Studies, buddies for children, and a well-trained staff of volunteers make Sundays the best day of the week for guests and members alike. For more information on Thru the Roof, contact Interim Director Otis.Hall@HoustonFirst.org.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS

After a year of being fed spiritually in a Life Bible Study at the Cypress Campus, Darwin and Yolanda Campbell still felt something missing in their lives. A well-timed business appointment at a local retirement community opened a door to minister to elderly residents outside the walls of the church — even as cancer came knocking.

After a short hiatus from ministry to senior adults and youth while Darwin and Yolanda attended Life Bible Study, the first break since God's call during his college days, Darwin longed once again for an opportunity to minister to others. And though Yolanda had always been active in churches every stop along the way during her 20-year Air Force career, the couple had been praying for a ministry that would allow them to work together to make a difference for Christ.

"Elderly members at the church are well taken care of," said Darwin, "but I wasn't aware of any outreach to the elderly being done outside the church."

Darwin's call to ministry came during college, and as a Navy man, he had taken every opportunity to minister to students or retirees in local nursing homes when he shipped in to port in various countries or while on "liberty."

During the course of his studies, Darwin majored in communications and theology and later worked bi-vocationally as a journalist while leading small churches in Louisiana and Illinois that had no funds to pay a full-time pastor. He had interned at the New York Times and worked as a journalist in several large media outlets in those states and around the country while knocking on doors, ministering in nursing homes, and getting involved with "unchurched" youth and their families.

Last year, about the time Darwin and Yolanda began praying for ways to reach out in ministry, his small Green Technology business took him to Ashford Gardens, an elder care facility with 132 residents in Northwest Houston. Once he finished his presentation with the director, the subject of church came up. She was looking for someone to offer church services for residents. The timing couldn't have been better — or so they thought.

Darwin had been battling what he thought was a harmless infection. A biopsy and two surgeries later showed that he had cancer at the base of his tongue in his throat. In spite of 35 rounds of radiation and seven chemo treatments that lasted through the end of last year, Darwin and Yolanda moved forward on the idea put forward by Ashland Gardens' director to begin church services for its residents.



Darwin & Yolanda Campbell

"We refused to put the Lord's work on hold," said Darwin. "We determined that whatever the ailment, God is stronger." He was no stranger to health problems; an arrhythmia in 2005 required the implantation of a pacemaker to stabilize his heart rhythm. "God has things for me to do," said Darwin. During chemo treatments, he and Yolanda began teaching Bible lessons, leading worship, and visiting and praying with residents one-on-one. "Two residents have accepted Christ since we began," he said. "We reach out to residents, their family members and Ashford Garden employees to share the Gospel." When they began visiting Ashford Gardens in October, 15 residents came. Attendance has doubled since then.

Their ministry to residents has become a family affair since their 13-year-old son Patrick got hooked after his first visit. Yolanda was moved by Patrick's empathy for the elderly residents. "He said, 'I didn't know they didn't have many visitors,'" recalls Yolanda. "Patrick began looking forward to interacting with the seniors after that."

In addition to providing worship services for Ashford Garden residents, the Campbells get their Life Bible Study classmates and other Houston's First members involved in the ministry. They make lap quilts to distribute to residents and each holiday the seniors receive special baskets with treats and a Gospel tract so they can celebrate the season with a fun surprise.

"Differencemakers is the best series Pastor Gregg could have done to motivate others for the cause of Christ," said Darwin. He and Yolanda hope to expand their ministry to other nursing homes across the city. They most recently had a request to bring services to a retirement community on T. C. Jester, not far from downtown.

As the Campbells wait on the follow up report on Darwin's cancer treatments, they continue the ministry that God handed to them for such a time as this. "God laid it on our hearts to revitalize our ministry to senior adults," said Darwin. "We want to shine the light of Jesus to these residents while at the same time being motivators to get others involved in the community. They really *can* make a difference."

With spare money from his family budget and a few generous donors, First Wheels has gifted a total of five vehicles to special needs children. Blake says the groundwork has been laid for the ministry now that he has learned how things are done and believes this is just the beginning of First Wheels' ministry of making children with special needs mobile.

"I don't know where it's going to lead," said Blake. "For me, it's all about being obedient to do what God wanted me to do. Everything I ever learned in my life has come together for this."

BLESSED ARE THE PIECEMAKERS

Being a Differencemaker takes shape in a variety of ways. A small gathering of ladies whose intent each week is to meet together to quilt, knit or sew is also having a positive effect on the lives of little girls in a land whose government was once a military adversary. But with God, all things are possible.

Handmade quilts, blankets for young patients at Texas Children's Hospital, knitted caps for preemies, lap blankets for local long-term care facilities and retirement homes, and for the past two years, "pillowcase dresses" for needy Cambodian children and orphans — that's what hearts and hands in the Houston's First Piecemakers Ministry are stitching together. Just about every Wednesday morning during the school year, women ages 30 to 90 can be found handcrafting expressions of love for people spanning from the metro area to a riverside town on the other side of the world.

"Last year, Piecemakers made dresses for little girls in Kratié, Cambodia, on the banks of the Mekong River," said Carol Pierce, Piecemakers' leader and devotional facilitator for the past nine years. "We're always looking for ideas for ministry projects."

Ann Zallar, a Piecemakers member and quilter, knew her longtime friend and Houston's First member Terri Toy had delivered 75 dresses for little girls living in Kratié, where her 20-year old daughter Allison, a nursing student, and Terri's husband, a doctor, led a Houston's First medical mission trip in 2014.

Allison, her dad, and seven others traveled to Kratié, and in four locations offered basic medical check ups, vitamins, and drugs for high blood pressure, diabetes and other illnesses treated with medications readily available for patients in the United States, but difficult to obtain in rural Cambodia. In addition, the team worked in conjunction with a local Filipino missionary, his church, and in concert with a hospital to teach everything from basic first aid to neonatal resuscitation. The team was able to see 100 patients each day and, through an interpreter, shared the Gospel during each encounter.

The following year, the size of the missions team from Houston's First nearly doubled. They traveled back to Kratié and the Piecemakers volunteered to make the little girls' dresses. Ann, Carol and the rest of the group thought making 75 pillowcase dresses to be a worthy goal, but instead, enthusiasm for the project and a heightened sense of purpose led the women to deliver 90 instead.

"These ladies embraced this project," said Terri. "They made more dresses than they ever imagined!"

The women are readying their needles again this year to sew dresses that the Houston's First team can deliver when they leave for Kratié in May. They will join Allison and another girl from Houston's First who were called by God to return to Kratié a few months ago on extended mission trips, six months and one year, respectively. The local missionary told Terri that he sees the girls at the market from time to time and they are usually wearing the dresses the Piecemakers made for them.

"Some can't go, but they can sew," said Terri. "Sewing for children around the world — it's a practical way to show the love of Christ."



NEXT STEP

Whether a beginner or an advanced quilter, experience the time-honored tradition of quilting, learning to quilt or enjoying sewing sessions with other Christian women who also appreciate good old-fashioned conversation, laughter and food. Classes meet on Wednesdays from 9a-12p at The Loop in Room 143. Contact Meredyth.Cann@HoustonFirst.org for more information.

PASS IT ON!



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