

West Suffolk Baptist Church

Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant



West Suffolk Epistle



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Biography of Ben Scofield-Pastor/Elder



Pastor Ben Scofield was born in Ocala, Florida in 1948 and came to the faith late in his career as a Marine Corp Officer. After earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from the University of Georgia in 1982, he served in a variety of combat arms related billets, retiring as a senior Intelligence Officer for the Third Marine Division in 1992. After earning a Master of Arts Degree from Tabernacle Baptist Theological Seminary in 1994 he accepted a call to pastor Tabernacle Baptist Church, Suffolk, VA, in January 1995, after which he completed his Master of Divinity Degree at Central Baptist Theological Seminary (now Virginia Beach Theological Seminary) in 2002. He has pastored the same church for the past 31 years, leading

its transition, along with his own, from a somewhat legalistic mind-set with a reputation for discord, to fully embrace the reformed faith and the doctrines of grace, including the scriptural priority of the congregation being led by a plurality of elders. Every aspect of that transition, individually and corporately, was accomplished by and through the grace of God, who deserves all the glory. The church was renamed West Suffolk Baptist in 1998, and relocated, without incurring any debt, to its present site in 2011, and has been blessed by the ability to support a solid core of faithful missionaries and two reformed Baptist seminaries. It is Pastor Scofield's fervent and confident prayer, that West Suffolk Baptist Church continues to bear witness to the grace that has so obviously sustained it, and that its families grow and flourish in their love for the Lord and His kingdom.

Pastor Scofield and his wife Charlene were married in 1970 and have two grown children. Their daughter Jennifer is a pastor's wife in Virginia, and their son Collier is a retired Marine, now finishing his degree at the University of Georgia. They have three grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and a schnoodle named Gracie.

Biography of Mike Prince-Pastor/Elder



Pastor Michael Prince was born and raised in Suffolk, Virginia, where he graduated from Nansemond River High School. Growing up in a home with professing Christian parents, Mike's early exposure to faith was limited, as church attendance was infrequent during his childhood years. Like many young men seeking direction after high school, Mike left for the United States Marine Corps just weeks after graduation, beginning what would become nearly eleven years of faithful military service.

It was during his time in the Marines that Mike's life took its most significant turn. While serving his country, including two combat deployments to Iraq as a communications technician, Mike encountered the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

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Biography of Mike Prince-Pastor/Elder

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This transformation wasn't just personal—it connected him to a community of believers through Missions to Military (MTM), a ministry headquartered in Virginia Beach that focuses on discipling military personnel. Through MTM's faithful discipleship, Mike began to grow in his understanding of Scripture and his walk with the Lord.

Providence would orchestrate a meeting that would shape the next chapter of Mike's life. During a visit to MTM's headquarters, Mike was introduced to Ben Scofield, who was then pastor of West Suffolk Baptist Church and a student at Central Baptist Theological Seminary—another ministry founded by MTM's founder, Keith Davey. This introduction would prove to be the beginning of Mike's long relationship with West Suffolk Baptist Church.

It was also through MTM that Mike would meet his future wife, Cheryl. Her sister was married to the missionary who ran the servicemen's center at Camp Lejeune, and Cheryl would regularly come to help her sister provide meals for the Marines who attended Bible studies there. After dating Cheryl for two years they were married in August 2003. What began as faithful service in ministry would blossom into a relationship that would shape both of their lives.

After leaving Camp Lejeune, Mike was stationed in California, where he and Cheryl would experience another significant chapter in their spiritual journey. Both initially hesitant about Reformed theology, they found themselves in a solid church pastored by a recent graduate of The Master's Seminary. Under this pastor's faithful exposition of God's Word, Mike and Cheryl began to see clearly that Reformed theology was simply what Scripture teaches. Though their pastor never pushed Reformed convictions, his commitment to careful biblical exposition allowed the truth of God's sovereignty in salvation to shine through. This theological foundation would prove instrumental in shaping Mike's future ministry approach and his commitment to expository preaching.

Following his honorable discharge from the Marine Corps, Mike transitioned into the technology sector, where his military communications background served him well. He eventually rose to serve as Chief Technology Officer for Carefree Boat Club Network, overseeing technology operations across the entire network. He held this executive role until recently stepping down to transition into full-time pastoral ministry.

For approximately fifteen years, Mike has served as an Elder at West Suffolk Baptist Church, growing in his pastoral calling and developing his gifts for teaching and shepherding God's people. His commitment to discipleship is evident in his leadership of the church's Sunday morning Discipleship Classes and his dedication to expository preaching. Mike has faithfully worked through multiple books of Scripture, having completed an eleven-part series through Colossians, preached through Philemon, worked methodically through 96 of the Psalms, and is currently preaching through the Gospel of Mark. His approach demonstrates a commitment to careful, verse-by-verse exposition of God's Word.

Mike and his wife Cheryl make their home in Suffolk with their Doberman, Jax. Cheryl, a Bedford County native, has been a faithful partner in both life and ministry. Together, they have served the congregation at West Suffolk Baptist Church with dedication and love, supporting the church's mission of worship, discipleship, and biblical community.

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Biography of Mike Prince-Pastor/Elder

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Now serving as Lead Teaching Pastor of West Suffolk Baptist Church, Mike brings a unique perspective shaped by his military service, executive technology leadership, and years of pastoral experience. His journey from a young man with limited church exposure to a pastor committed to the faithful exposition of Scripture demonstrates God's sovereign grace in calling and equipping His servants for ministry. Mike's heart for discipleship, practical wisdom gained through diverse life experiences, and commitment to biblical truth position him to shepherd God's people with both compassion and conviction.

Biography of Scott Thomas-Elder



Elder Scott's early years were spent as the oldest of three children, in East Lansing, Michigan. They attended a non-denominational church, which he later learned was very much like a Methodist church. Though he attended Children's Sunday School through High School, and his parents sang in the choir, he never heard the gospel, or for that matter, ever knew there was anything but a social gospel. This was the 1960's to early 1970's, so the big thrill was when, during the Freedom Marches by Dr. Martin Luther King, the church hoped to have Dr. King speak one Sunday. Some were disappointed when one of his assistants came instead. His name was Jesse Jackson.

After high school Scott considered college options, and eventually decided to go "across the street" to Michigan State University. He referred to it as "across the street" because the enormous MSU campus was on one side of the main drag, and the rest of East Lansing was on the other side. At that time the population of East Lansing was about 35,000 and the MSU student body was about 55,000. He jokingly told people he majored in intramural sports, as he spent more time playing sports than he did studying. This was also the Vietnam War era, so there were protests and sit-ins. One week thousands of people took over the main street, and pretty much lived in the street for about a week or so.

After college Scott was accepted to Law School at Southwestern University in Los Angeles. Scott had always wanted to go to California, so was excited for that opportunity. The first year there was all studying, and the second and third years were mostly spent working as a law clerk at the LA branch office of a big NY City law firm, while trying to fit in classes around his work schedule.

Following law school Scott worked for a law firm in Los Angeles, and married a woman he had met in law school. They had two children. After a couple of years they moved to San Jose, California.

In San Jose Scott changed law firms, and first met Ruth, who was the office administrator of the new firm he had joined. At that time both of them were married to their exes, and they both thought the other were very happily married, and Ruth had a young daughter.

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Biography of Scott Thomas-Elder

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Consequently, they were nothing more than co-workers. Both of their spouses were actually quite determinedly unfaithful, without either of them knowing it about the other, and they both ended up getting divorced — Scott first, and Ruth a couple of years later. During their separations from their exes, each of them had dated other people, but not each other. Once the divorces were finalized, the Lord brought circumstances into play that put them together, and they began to date, and eventually marry. While they were dating, Scott went to church with Ruth, where the Lord was pleased to draw his heart to himself, and save him.

After a few years in San Jose, Scott was contacted by an attorney from Tupelo, Mississippi. He was with American Family Association, which was trying to form a Christian law firm to address Constitutional Law issues across the country. When Scott was offered a position there, he asked Ruth if she wanted to move to Mississippi, she said, “Sure, where is it?” Californians think that everything east of Arizona is on the East Coast. A few months later they were in Mississippi, and found a very sound church to join.

At AFA Scott was involved in some of the most interesting and worthwhile cases of his legal career. They involved everything from prayer in schools, to forcing children to engage in the practices of witchcraft, to LGBTQ+ issues, and more. Eventually, though, that time came to an end.

The internet was in its infancy in those days, and Tupelo did not have a local internet provider. All personal access was over phone lines, by dialup. Ruth and Scott, with another couple, started an internet provider in Tupelo. They eventually expanded it to offer nationwide dialup service, though it was always in a precarious financial situation. In God’s perfect timing, their company was bought by a Christian company in Charlotte, North Carolina. They moved there to be part of that business.

When the Charlotte company began to fail, Scott took a position with a software company, who eventually moved them to Northern Virginia, where they found a welcoming church to join. Eventually Ruth was asked to lead their Women’s Ministry, and Scott led the Men’s Ministry, and became an Elder.

Due to layoffs at the new company, Scott was notified by a co-worker that his name was on a list for layoffs. Ruth and Scott had enjoyed vacationing in Maine, so they looked into purchasing a Bed & Breakfast there. Both Scott and Ruth bought a B&B in Freeport, Maine (home of L.L. Bean!), and operated it for seven years. After that time they decided to sell the B&B, and retire to the southeastern Virginia area. When they found West Suffolk, they knew they were home.

Most of their church family are familiar with Ruth’s daughter, Heather, and her family, as they have visited WSBC a few times, and the church has given them occasional support in their missionary work in Papua New Guinea. Scott’s two children made professions of faith when they were young, but have since walked away from the faith. Both Scott and Ruth continue to pray for their salvation.

They have six grandchildren, the oldest of whom is about to start his first year of college, and the youngest is in elementary school.

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Biography of John McPhatter-Deacon



John McPhatter will turn 80 years young in December. He was born in Michigan to a military family which included several moves in his early years, with his family finally settling in Norfolk. He is the next to oldest among 4 other siblings. After graduating from Norview High School in Norfolk he worked for a while as a plumbing apprentice until he joined the Norfolk Police Department in the late 1960s. He enjoyed his career in law enforcement as a uniformed officer and later as an investigator and always prided himself in treating people fairly and with dignity. After retiring in the mid-90s from the Police Department he spent 8 years in the Norfolk Sheriff's Office extraditing prisoners from other localities to face trial in

Norfolk. He fully retired in the early 2000s. John and LeAnn have been married for 41 years and met while both were working for the City of Norfolk. They have 4 grown children, 8 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. John has a very competitive spirit and has always enjoyed many sports. In high school he played football and wrestled. As a father, he coached his children in football and baseball. He also played softball on police teams and later co-ed teams with his grown children. John loves golf and enjoys the fellowship and comradery with his buddies from church who have played together on Tuesdays for years. John & LeAnn moved to Suffolk in the mid-1990s and thoroughly enjoy the still and quiet country life here. Previously, John and LeAnn were members at Holland Baptist Church and then Providence Baptist Church, where John was a deacon. When Providence Baptist Church merged with West Suffolk Baptist Church in 2009, John remained one of the deacons. It has been his joy and honor to serve Christ's church in this capacity.

Biographies of Deacons John Hurst and Marlin Halsey



John grew up in Virginia Beach and attended school there. He received his HVAC training at Vo Tech and TCC. In 1991, he married Teresa Hurst, and together they have three children: Stephen, Lydia, and Sarah. John has been working for Trane since 1987, specializing in commercial HVAC controls.

Marlin Halsey and his wife, Sadie, live in Suffolk. He is President of Halsey Mechanical, Inc.



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September 28, 2025

On this day we had the opportunity to celebrate the ministry of Pastor Ben Scofield after pastoring the same church for the past 31 years, leading its transition, along with his own, from a somewhat legalistic mind-set with a reputation for discord, to fully embrace the reformed faith and the doctrines of grace, including the scriptural priority of the congregation being led by a plurality of elders. There were many in attendance to include those who presently attend to those who have moved on to other adventures. It was a great time of celebration, embracing old and new friendships and reconnecting with old friends. As part of the service we had the honor of hearing three pastors deliver a short message on how they have been impacted by Pastor Ben's influence in their lives. The first message was delivered by Dr. Patrick Joyner who is Pastor/Elder of Providence Reformed Baptist Church in Joshua, Texas. His message was entitled "Paul's Pattern of Faithfulness" and his text was taken from Acts 20:17-32. Our second message was from the Reverend David Nicholes who is a retired Pastor of Community Baptist Church in Suffolk, VA. His message was entitled "Ministers of Refreshment" and his text was taken from II Timothy 1:14-18. And our last message was delivered by Dr. J. Ryan Davidson who is Pastor/Elder of Grace Baptist Chapel in Hampton, VA. His message was entitled "An Earthen Vessel with the Treasure of Christ" and his text was taken from II Corinthians 4:1-12.



Dr. Patrick Joyner



Reverend David Nichols



Dr. J. Ryan Davidson



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If you have a birthday or anniversary in October that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at gwlcf10415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner October 2025

Birthdays

*Ezekiel F. (1)
Charlene S. (3)*

Hazel Kay T. (10)

Anniversaries

Andy and Emily L. (10)

No One is Righteous Romans 3:9-18

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."



West Suffolk Baptist Church Leadership

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.

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Deacons: Marlin Halsey, John McPhatter and John Hurst (L to R)(Back Row)

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Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or it's leadership.