

## **Sermons from South Norfolk**

It was a wonderful experience growing up from childhood to young adulthood in South Norfolk, Virginia (later merged with Norfolk County, to become the City of Chesapeake in 1963). It was a small town where most everyone knew everyone else. After high school at Oscar Smith, I would take the Norfolk & Western Railway train to Bluefield, which was still a Junior College, before transferring to Old Dominion University to finish. On one occasion, the conductor slowed the train at the South Norfolk station (see picture in that section) so I could debark and walk home. The station was right behind the South Norfolk Church! It was a privilege to attend there, where my father pastored.

I became interested in music at an early age. I'm told that as a child I would stand on a pew and wave my arms as if directing the music, along with Johnny Roberts, Jr., who was then Choir Director. (Mr. Roberts had a son, Marshall, who was a talented organist). As I grew older, I took piano lessons for 10 years, from Mr. A. Guy Hall, Jr. In my early teens, I would go up to the organ console and watch Gwen Whitehurst play after the service had ended. I was fascinated with the music emanating from the various "stops" on the console. This was to be an influential experience for me, as I began to practice on the organ with her supervision. Jim took piano lessons and also learned to play the trombone, playing with the Oscar Smith High School band. He also learned to play the Recorder, a woodwind musical instrument.

Jim and I both worked at the high school radio station, WFOS-FM, then both later at WRVC-FM, the classical music station in Norfolk. I also later worked at WCPK-AM. We had great friends from high school days working at the stations, especially Raymond Jones, who worked at all three stations, as announcer, station manager, and now as Cultural Resource Manager for WHRO-FM; he also played in the high school band. My first position in a church was as Choir Director, and later filled in as sub-organist with several churches, and while at college.

So many good memories: great hymn singing, with Gwen Whitehurst at the Pilcher pipe organ, Betty Miles LeBlanc at the Baldwin grand piano (recently retired as organist at Kempsville Baptist Church; she has a daughter who is musically talented, and a son, also talented, and pastor of a church); the choir led by great musicians, including John Roberts, Chauncey German, Herman May, Hammond Coates, Bruce Meriwether, Rusty Hughes, Mike Hopkins, Robert E. Clements; other outstanding organists, after Gwen Whitehurst retired (after more than 25 years,) included Russell Matthews, Kay MtCastle, Scott Foxwell, and Rosabelle Albright. The Evening Service was broadcast "live" on WXRI-FM for many years, and I along with my good friend at church, Eddie Briggs, Jr., took care of the electronic "side" of the broadcast.

Many fine Educational Secretaries, Directors, and Ministers of Education, including Betty LeBlanc, Sarah Rogers, John Tripp, Oscar Whitescarver, John Pruitt, Robert Clements, Harvey Brown, Cathy Hopkins, among others which are listed in one of the brochures attached, is a testimony to the wonderful ministry that was done in the Lord's Name. South Norfolk Baptist had many adults who were interested in working with the

youth, in Sunday School, Training Union, and in directing plays at Christmas, Easter, and other times. Vacation Bible School (VBS) was a high point for the children and youth for two weeks every June after school let out. I can still see in my "mind's eye," Mrs. Mary Benton, (who taught in the South Norfolk Schools) as principal of the Bible school, and Mrs. Betty LeBlanc, pianist, for many years. Dad always witnessed to the older children and youth on the last day's Joint Worship Service. It was a very good presentation. VBS was a great experience. One oddity that occurred for many years, was it rained on Parent's Night of the last day! It usually cleared up while the Joint Worship Service was in progress, where each class presented music or recitation from memory. During the two weeks, boys and girls learned many things about the mission work of Southern Baptists, learned Bible verses, music, and studied the Bible. We were also involved in arts and crafts handwork which was mentored by very fine men and women in the church. While at Ridgecrest one summer, Dad introduced me to Homer Grice, the man who developed the idea of Vacation Bible School. (From 1913 to 1915, Rev. Grice was professor of English literature at Ouachita Baptist College. Grice was pastor of First Baptist Church, Washington, Georgia, 1915 – 1924, where he conducted some of the first Vacation Bible Schools. In September, 1924, Grice became the first secretary of the Vacation Bible School Department at the Sunday School Board, Nashville, where he served until his retirement, January 1, 1953. He promoted VBS for Southern Baptists, edited all VBS materials, and wrote about 45 children's books. He died May 17, 1974.)

The Bible was faithfully preached, while the Baptist Hymnal provided great hymns of the faith, as well as use of the responsive readings in the back. The Choir was outstanding with faithful Christians who sang great anthems to the Glory of God. An Easter and Christmas cantata were performed, and the Youth Choir also presented Christmas cantatas.

The sermons attached on PDF files are representative of Rev. Hughes' manuscripts, with his notes, underlines, etc. exactly as used. You'll notice that he occasionally attached clippings that were pertinent to the subject, and these have been included. Pastors are encouraged to read and use these in their own sermon preparation study. Pastors can use entire sermons with title, but not publish commercially, which is under copyright 2012.

At the top right-hand corner, you'll notice he notes where and when they were preached, and the check marks indicated the number of people who made professions at the close of that service.

There were problems with the document feeder with some of the sermons; every effort was made to include all the pages, which are numbered, either as a separate PDF file, or in the main file, but some may not appear in numerical order, but are complete. Occasionally you will see a Part 1 and Part 2; this is where the sermon had to be included on two separate PDF files, in order to include all the pages. This also occurs when a "1" appears after the verse number with two sermons of identical title. Some pages returned upside down, but all pages are in each file.

But, most of the sermons in "Part 2" were professionally downloaded and converted into PDF by Hackworth Reprographics, Chesapeake Virginia.

Sermon manuscripts were typed by the Church Secretary, Mrs. Mary Morgan or her assistant, Mrs. Linda Elliott.

Additional sermon manuscripts, typed by Rev. Hughes himself, when he started preaching, will be added as available, to this website. Several are available now under the "Early Sermons from South Norfolk" web page.

May God Bless you, as you listen and read.

Joe Hughes

August 2012