



Religious Life: Annual Report

**The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina
The Anglican Diocese of South Carolina
Porter-Gaud Board of Trustees
November, 2021**

LEADERSHIP

J. Walker Coleman '87 is the currently-elected Chair of the Board of Trustees. He began his first 3-year term in July 2019. Jim Buxton '91 has been elected as the next Board Chair and will take on that role in July 2022. Richard Star is chair of the Porter-Gaud Foundation, which oversees the philanthropic efforts for the school including the current capital campaign for a new performing arts center and auditorium as well as a chapel. There are three clergy representatives on the board in addition to eighteen other members: The Rt. Rev. Mark Lawrence, The Rev. Canon Caleb J. Lee, and The Rev. Greg Snyder. Dr. John McCardell, Vice Chancellor of Sewanee, is also serving on the Board of Trustees. DuBose Egleston is in his 13th year as Head of School. DuBose currently serves on the Governing Board for the National Association of Episcopal Schools and the Board of Trustees for the Southern Association of Independent Schools.

CHAPLAINCY FACULTY AND STAFF

Mr. David Rowe - Lower School Chaplain

Ms. Henrietta M. Rivers - Middle School Chaplain

The Rev. Palmer Kennedy - Head Chaplain, Upper School Chaplain, and Chair of the Religion Department

Mr. Nick Rindge - Upper School Religion Faculty and Student Ministry Leader

HISTORY

Porter-Gaud has a long history of living out its spiritual identity as an independent Episcopal school rooted in the rich heritage of Anglicanism. For much of its history, Porter-Gaud had one chaplain who taught all the religion classes, conducted chapel services, and provided pastoral care for the school community. As the School has grown and the needs for ministry have increased, the Board of Trustees has bolstered the chaplaincy so that there are now three full-time chaplains on campus in addition to a faculty member teaching Religion classes and supporting student ministry.

WORSHIP AND DISCIPLESHIP

In addition to the traditional celebration of Holy Communion each Thursday morning in St. Timothy's Chapel, there is a weekly chapel on a divisional basis for the Lower, Middle, and Upper School students and faculty. The School observes the major festivals of the church calendar. Advent chapel services are held in all three divisions. The Lower School holds a Christmas chapel and the Middle and Upper Schools have a Christmas Eucharist. The School's service of Lessons and Carols, held at the Church of the Holy Communion, is a tradition that dates back over 30 years and is a highlight of the Christmas season for the school community. All three divisions mark Ash Wednesday in their respective chapels, and the Middle and Upper Schools celebrate the Eucharist during Holy Week. The Middle and Upper Schools have, furthermore, developed a vibrant ministry of student groups. Vestry and Bible study groups meet weekly with strong attendance. Vestry members hold significant leadership roles on campus and assist in leading worship in chapel, planning and leading retreats, leading small groups, and helping the chaplain plan and

refine weekly chapel services. The chaplains continue to develop this ministry and are discussing service opportunities, and how to develop a sequential curriculum for student spiritual growth.

ACADEMICS

Porter-Gaud offers Godly Play and character education curricula in the Lower School that focus on the major stories of the Bible in tandem with selected virtues each month. In Middle School, the character education thread is developed curricularly in 5th and 6th grade in C. S. Lewis's *Narnia* novels, Bible stories, and through Advisory, Chapel, and other divisional programming. Eighth graders take a survey course of the Old Testament. The Upper School features a required course in the New Testament and Ethics and an elective on the writings of C. S. Lewis. The Upper School Department of History curriculum includes World Religions as an elective every other year.

SERVICE

Porter-Gaud has an active community service program through which students volunteer thousands of hours annually to assist various agencies throughout the Lowcountry. Service opportunities are available with agencies working with at-risk and special-needs children, environmental and animal welfare, health and senior-adult issues, and hunger and poverty needs.

RELIGIOUS LIFE SINCE MARCH 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic necessitated numerous changes for the school, including religious life. For much of the time, education was fully or partially virtual, and weekly teaching hours were reduced. Similarly, the inability to hold large gatherings necessitated a shift in conducting chapel services. Middle School chapels were run virtually. Lower School chapels were held by grade level in the gym, or, when weather permitted, outside. Upper School services were conducted virtually by grade level. At the outset of the pandemic, when the school operated entirely virtually, chaplains produced devotional videos for students that found appreciation by their families and even wider audiences. This Fall, as vaccination rates among eligible members of our community continued to rise and student/faculty case numbers remained at a reasonable level, we have been able to resume our programming that preceded the pandemic with only minor alterations. Chapels are - at all levels - once again in-person in the auditorium. Vestry and Bible study gatherings have resumed and are picking up momentum, and religious education courses are operating as normal with proper masking and social distancing. While the pandemic is clearly challenging, it has brought opportunities for chaplains to offer significant ministry to students, their families, staff, administration, and faculty.

PORTER-GAUD MISSION STATEMENT

Porter-Gaud is an Episcopal, coeducational, independent, college preparatory day school. We acknowledge the sovereignty of God, recognize the worth of the individual, and seek to cultivate a school community that endows its citizens with a foundation of moral and ethical character and intellect. Porter-Gaud fosters a challenging academic environment that honors excellence in teaching and learning, respects differences, expects honesty, and applauds achievement. The school strives to create an environment that nurtures and protects what we value most in our children: their faith, their curiosity, their talents, their integrity, their humanity, and their dreams.

EPISCOPAL IDENTITY AT PORTER-GAUD

As an Episcopal school, Porter-Gaud stands on the foundation of Anglican theology rooted in the Scriptures and expressed in the Book of Common Prayer. Because the school community is inclusive and diverse, we cultivate a climate of respectful dialog in matters of faith. The School respects different faith

traditions while simultaneously emphasizing its Episcopal core. We uphold the principles of honesty and integrity and the pursuit of moral and ethical character. Inherent in the Porter-Gaud mission is the belief that we possess certain distinctive gifts and talents given to us by a loving God. The school community reflects this belief, and our teachers are committed to helping each student discover his or her gifts and talents.

THE WATCH PRAYER

O Lord, may our words be full of truth and kindness, our actions gracious and honorable, our thoughts unselfish and charitable, our character noble and upright, and our habits virtuous, that our school family may grow in faith, honor, and knowledge, as we watch together in all things. AMEN.